The Behaviour of Eurosceptic Parties in Light of Their Success: The Soft Eurosceptic Response to Brexit

Ingen, Laurence van

Universiteit Leiden

Master Thesis MA International Relations (EUS)

The Behaviour of Eurosceptic Parties in Light of Their Success: The Soft Eurosceptic Response to Brexit

How have Eurosceptic parties responded to Brexit?

Student: Laurence van Ingen

Student number: 1783521

Date of submission: 07/06/2022

Supervisor: Dr. M. Broad

Second reader: Dr. V. Scepanovic

Word count: 15000

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the behaviour of Eurosceptic parties, especially in light of Eurosceptic success. Specifically studying the Eurosceptic response to Brexit, this thesis conducts a case study of three Dutch Soft Eurosceptic parties and their rhetoric and behaviour in the years after the Brexit vote. The results of this qualitative content analysis are mixed, with every party analysed showing different results. Overall, though, it seems that a party's ideological orientation has more of a role in determining its response to Brexit than its Eurosceptic identity. This conclusion adds to doubts, previously articulated by other scholars, concerning the strength of classifying a party as Soft Eurosceptic. This thesis therefore calls for a renewed focus on national case studies in future research in order to expand our knowledge on what shapes Eurosceptic (parties') behaviour.

I. Introduction

When, in June 2016, the British electorate voted to leave the European Union by a slight margin (52 to 48 per cent), a shock wave swept over the entire continent. Even though the referendum campaign had been a tight race, it was generally anticipated that the *Remain* camp would pull through in the end (New Statesman, 2016). When it became clear, however, that the *Leave* campaign was victorious, Europhiles' biggest fears had come true: Eurosceptic forces, which had been on the rise around Europe for years, had now been successful in making a member state retreat from the EU. It was fittingly portrayed as Euroscepticism's "greatest political victory to date" (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2016).

In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum, it seemed as if pro-Europeans had good reasons to be worried about the future of European integration. Europhiles feared that the referendum could serve as a harbinger for continued success by Eurosceptic parties across Europe, as they expected more Eurosceptic calls for referendums in other member states (Lyons, 2016). Eurosceptics indeed hailed the result of the Brexit vote and called on their own countries to follow the British' example – Dutch politician Geert Wilders of the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) for example declared victory over the "europhile elite", and called for a "Nexit" (RTL Nieuws, 2016). The United Kingdom, in this scenario, would only be the first *domino tile* to fall over, with more to follow suit (see, e.g., Adler-Nissen et al., 2017; de Vries, 2017; or Walter, 2020a for more on the logic behind this often used Brexit domino metaphor).

So far, however, these fears have not (yet) materialised. No country has since organised a referendum on EU membership – let alone voted in favour of leaving. In fact, many Eurosceptic parties have dropped their demand for exiting the EU (Henley, 2020; Van Kessel et al., 2020, p. 76). Initial research suggests some parties have even shifted their position from all-out rejection of the European project, to a more policy-focused critique aimed at specific aspects of European integration (Chelotti, 2018; Kaniok and Hloušek, 2018, p. 521). This could be related with the observation that the Brexit negotiations, in the years after the referendum, have been difficult, and withdrawing from the EU has been anything but the smooth process that was promised by the Leave campaign before the referendum (Sommerlad, 2019). Could Brexit, then, paradoxically include a *silver lining* for pro-European parties outside of Britain? Whether such moderated Euroscepticism is the case, and if it will last, is still unclear – and might be for the time being – but we need to ask these kind of questions if we want to understand the political implications that Brexit carries for Eurosceptic parties in Europe.

This *Eurosceptic response* to Brexit in Continental Europe is the main subject of this thesis. It concerns the response of Eurosceptics in terms of their criticism vis-à-vis Brussels, and, perhaps more importantly, studies whether this response is similar for different Eurosceptic parties. Although all Eurosceptic parties certainly share a common dissatisfaction (or even disdain) towards the EU, Euroscepticism is by no means a homogenous movement. The Eurosceptic party family is politically diverse – as Euroscepticism is found on both sides of the political spectrum (see Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 968) – while Eurosceptic parties also differ in their degree of Euroscepticism. This thesis studies what these differences mean for a Eurosceptic party's response to Brexit, whether this response is primarily shaped by a party's Eurosceptic identity (or, rather, by its ideological orientation), and also analyses whether the responses have been largely persistent – or if we can observe any change over the last few years.

In this light, this thesis will answer the following research question:

"*How have Eurosceptic parties responded to Brexit?*"

In order to answer this question, this thesis will study the rhetoric, positions, and behaviour of Eurosceptic parties in recent years, from their initial response to the referendum result in June 2016 to the present day. This thesis will do so by analysing the significance that Brexit holds for Eurosceptic parties, hereby going further than merely measuring their support for (or

opposition to) EU membership. Through studying Eurosceptic parties within one particular national context – the case of the Netherlands, an EU member state with a rich Eurosceptic tradition – this thesis traces the response to Brexit (and the subsequent withdrawal process) of Dutch Eurosceptic parties. Such an in-depth case study, in contrast to the more often taken approach of only considering one Eurosceptic party within a particular party system, allows the gathering of more insight into the differences (and similarities) of Eurosceptic parties from distinct ideological strands, and permits this thesis to delve deeper into which fault lines sets these parties apart (or drives them together). Looking more at the bigger picture, this thesis will add to existing knowledge on the nature and behaviour of Eurosceptic parties in Europe – a still fundamentally understudied subject (Usherwood, 2018, pp. 553-554). Brexit is undeniably the biggest success for Eurosceptics to date, but how big is the risk it will spread to other member states? – (see, e.g., Walter 2020a and Walter 2020b on the question of "political contagion"). Finding out what Brexit means for Eurosceptic parties in other member states will help us to understand these parties in general, and their behaviour in light of Eurosceptic success more specifically.

As mentioned above, this thesis will conduct a case study of Eurosceptic parties in the Netherlands. There are several factors that make the Dutch case interesting and academically relevant to analyse when studying the Eurosceptic response to Brexit. A founding member of the EU (and its predecessors), the Netherlands has over the last decades seen a change from a largely integration-friendly towards an increasingly Eurosceptic public. And due to its proportional system of political representation, the current political climate in the Netherlands includes at least a handful of politically relevant Eurosceptic parties (as opposed to some of its direct neighbours, like Belgium or Germany, who only have a few). Crucially, Dutch Euroscepticism is not only found in the outer reaches of the political spectrum, but also exists in parties more in the centre. In addition, Brexit is politically salient within Dutch politics, due to the close ties between The Hague and London – both economically and politically – who often found themselves on the same side within the Union before the Brexit vote. These factors, in sum, render the Netherlands a suitable and unique case study for answering the research question set above.

The approach of this thesis will be fivefold. The next chapter will introduce the reader to the field of academic literature on the subject, and argue where these works fall short – a gap this thesis aims to fill. After this literature review, the third chapter will present the research design, detailing how this case study will be conducted. Chapter four of this thesis will

present the results of this case study, which will be further discussed and concluded in chapter five. This concluding chapter will also offer implications for future research in this field.

II. Literature Review

This chapter will introduce the reader to the academic literature relevant for answering the research question formulated in the introduction, and is divided into four subsections. Before moving on with the actual literature review, this chapter will first introduce and discuss the notion of Euroscepticism itself. The second section will show that relevant works can broadly be divided into three different schools of thought, or arguments, on the question of what Brexit means for Eurosceptic parties: Brexit could either serve as an inspiration for Eurosceptic parties, it could weaken them, or bring about no relevant change (for the time being at least) for these parties. Thirdly, this chapter will look more specifically at works that discuss the case of Dutch Eurosceptic parties. The fourth section, meanwhile, will subsequently discuss the multiple ambiguities in existing literature, as scholars have previously worked with a rather narrow definition of Euroscepticism, have only studied one party and/or one electoral cycle, and have largely focused on cases of high impact.

Euroscepticism Categorised

Although Euroscepticism (or opposition to the European project in a more broad sense) has been around for a long time, Brexit marks the first time a member state votes to leave the European Union. In 2013, Usherwood and Startin were writing that Euroscepticism "has not been able to achieve its objectives of stopping, reversing or fundamentally redirecting the development of what is now the European Union" (p. 12). The historic irony is particularly strong here, but, more importantly, Euroscepticism thus appears to have been underestimated as a potential force to (successfully) fight against European integration. Brexit is a monumental event in Europe's history, significantly altering the course of the EU as an international organisation. Moreover, as Harwood remarks, "the option to leave is now a reality and therefore a part of the political landscape in terms of options for party competition" (2017, p. 192). Exiting the EU has now become much more than a distant, unrealistic dream for Eurosceptics in Europe, with Brexit serving as the ultimate example of Eurosceptic traditions. But what exactly is Euroscepticism?

The concept of Euroscepticism itself emerged in the United Kingdom during the 1980s, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became increasingly critical of the European Communities and its plans for further integration. In these years, the European project evolved from a Community into a Union, and its competences grew further – especially with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. And as the EU grew into a more politically salient organisation,

opposition to this Union also grew (Usherwood and Startin, 2013, pp. 2-4). Having secured its relevance within the political arena, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism in turn became academically relevant within political science.

Despite this academic interest, defining the notion of Euroscepticism has not been easy. In fact, Leruth, Startin and Usherwood write that this exercise "has proved profoundly elusive, even from the earliest days of scholarship" (2018, p. 4). But this has not refrained scholars from introducing their own definitions, categorisations or typologies of Euroscepticism over the last two decades – although the impact of many of these have been "marginal" (Kaniok and Hloušek, 2018, pp. 509-511). As Kaniok and Hloušek observe, the typology of Szczerbiak and Taggart can be regarded as the "most successful of these models" (2018, p. 509).

In their work, Szczerbiak and Taggart divide Eurosceptic parties into two further categories: *Hard Euroscepticism* on the one hand, and *Soft Euroscepticism* on the other. Whereas Hard Euroscepticism implies "principled opposition" to the very concept of European integration (and thus the EU), Soft Euroscepticism has more to do with "qualified opposition" to specific areas or policies of the European Union (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008, p. 2). Hard Eurosceptics, thus, flatly refuse membership of the EU, while Soft Eurosceptics' criticism is focused on certain aspects of the EU and European integration. Although more typologies of Euroscepticism and Eurosceptic parties exist, this is arguably the most widely used in (and outside) academia.

This does not mean, however, that this typology is universally accepted by scholars as the only viable model. Another relevant typology, in part created as a response to certain "weaknesses" in the work of Szczerbiak and Taggart, is the categorisation of Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p. 300). They divide support for European integration into two dimensions: "diffuse" and "specific" support. The former implies "support for the ideas of European integration", while the latter category is defined as "support for the EU" (2002, p. 197). Kopecký and Mudde then create a matrix in which party positions on European integration are divided into four ideal-type categories: *Euroenthusiasts* (support for both the idea behind European integration as well as the EU itself), *Eurosceptics* (support for the idea of European integration, but not for the EU in its current form), *Eurorejects* (no support for either the ideas behind European integration, nor for the EU), and *Europragmatists* (no support for the

ideas behind European integration, but support for the EU) (see Kopecký and Mudde, 2002, pp. 299-304).

Taking inspiration from both Szczerbiak and Taggart as well as Kopecký and Mudde, the work of Vollaard, Van der Harst, and Voerman serves as an elaboration of the models introduced above. This categorisation is commonly used when studying Dutch Eurosceptic parties (see Hargitai, 2017), and makes it easier to discern the views of different political parties on the EU in order to compare and explain them in an international context (Vollaard et al., 2015, p. 100). This typology starts by distinguishing between the two main categories of *Eurosceptic* and *Non-Eurosceptic* parties, further dividing the first group into *Hard* and *Soft* Eurosceptic parties, and the second into *Europhile* and *Europragmatic* parties (2015, p. 101). As explained above, Hard Eurosceptic parties are against the principles of European integration itself, whereas Soft Eurosceptic parties deliver "qualified opposition" to the EU, and are against further integration. As for the second group, whereas Europhile parties are staunchly pro-EU and envisage a supranational Union somewhere in the future, Europragmatic parties regard individual member states as the most important actors within the EU (and want it to stay this way). Europragmatic parties, as Vollaard et al. write, can certainly still be critical of the EU and its policies (2015, pp. 100-102).

Conflicting Arguments

Research on what Brexit means for Euroscepticism has for a large part focused its attention to the case of UK Euroscepticism (see, e.g., Corbett, 2016; Usherwood, 2018; Usherwood, 2020). But what does the UK's withdrawal from the Union entail for Eurosceptics in Continental Europe? The amount of research to date has been modest in this respect, but several conflicting observations or expectations do emerge around the question of possible political contagion from Brexit. These can be grouped into three broad arguments, which will be further outlined in this section.

In a nutshell, these three arguments explained below can broadly be summarised as follows: (1) the success of Brexit has inspired Eurosceptics and has made them more convinced of their case, as they seek to replicate this formula in other member states; (2) Brexit, due to several reasons, has created negative side effects (for Eurosceptics) after which they decide to fight the EU from within rather than seeking the exit door; (3) Brexit has not (or not yet) led to a strong response of Eurosceptic parties, at least in the short-term. Important to note here is that these three arguments are not necessarily mutually exclusive on a national scale, as they

could all be present within different parties, or even within the same party at different points in time.

The first of these possible answers has been introduced by Szczerbiak and Taggart, two leading scholars on the phenomenon of Euroscepticism. Not long after the Brexit vote, they write that "there is *no doubt* that the longer term impact of the Brexit referendum will to be transform rejectionist Hard Euroscepticism from a marginal political current […] into a viable political project" (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2016, emphasis added). This remarkably strongly worded observation expects future success of Eurosceptic parties, as the Brexit vote could embolden these parties to campaign on an anti-EU platform elsewhere, and use the British membership referendum as an example. Brexit has shown these parties that their opposition to the EU can be successful, which could make Eurosceptics more convinced of their case. Brexit, then, could make such parties shift to be even *more* Eurosceptic in nature. Crucial to understanding the work of Szczerbiak and Taggart, is being familiar with their (earlier mentioned) distinction between Hard Euroscepticism and Soft Euroscepticism (see Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008).

This expectation, however, is not shared by everyone. Kaniok and Hloušek refute Szczerbiak and Taggart's claims and write that, rather than a "movement" towards Hard Euroscepticism, the opposite is true. In their case study on Czech Euroscepticism, they conclude that "positions were silenced and [Eurosceptic] parties' general approaches were rather softened than hardened" (2018, p. 521). In a study on short-term Eurosceptic reactions to Brexit in four European countries, Van Kessel et al. similarly observe that "three of the […] parties studied ultimately shied away from unambiguously calling for a unilateral withdrawal, and typically argued that membership should only be revoked in case the EU failed to fundamentally reform […]" (2020, p. 76). In other words, these works observe that Brexit, rather than emboldening Eurosceptic parties, keeps these parties in the fold, a development that could perhaps seem paradoxical at first glance. This second argument, as opposed to the first one, thus identifies a movement towards Soft Euroscepticism. An opinion piece in the *Irish Times* fittingly explains the logic behind this shift:

> The UK's attempt to extricate itself from the EU has been such a debacle that the idea of withdrawal has become toxic even for the continent's biggest headbangers. It's difficult to sell 'Frexit' as a means of retrieving French greatness and grandeur when everyone can look at the horror show across the English channel and see that, in

> practice, it seems to mean national humiliation, political stasis and long-term decline (Mac Cormaic, 2020).

Could Brexit, then, imply positive side-effects for the pro-EU camp in Continental Europe, as it scares off Eurosceptics to go down the same path as the UK, hereby possibly bringing the EU closer together? Glencross adds to this argument, by writing that this "risk aversion […] explains the lack of a Brexit domino effect" (2019, p. 191). He goes on to note that support for the EU has grown in the years after the Brexit referendum, especially "after the UK set out its negotiating red lines" (2019, p. 190). Political parties are, naturally, not deaf to such developments.

Chopin and Lequesne deliver further support – although they see Brexit as "a form of disintegration" – we should also look at the remaining 27 member states, where we can find "a paradoxical effect of Brexit, which is a movement towards cohesiveness to preserve integration" (2020, pp. 1-2). They write that the EU's internal cohesiveness has actually increased since the UK decided to leave. Chopin and Lequesne write that, partly due to the difficulty of the Brexit negotiations, "Eurosceptic parties in the EU27 accepted that it was better to criticize the EU from inside rather than outside. Brexit reinforced the cohesiveness of European integration in the sense that it paradoxically helped Eurosceptic parties among the EU27 to accept EU membership as an unavoidable component of national economy and politics" (2020, p. 10).

Thirdly, and finally, some scholars propose that Brexit is likely to be unimportant for Eurosceptic parties, in the short term at least. This explanation constructs a narrative in which the effects of Brexit are small (again, at least for now) and hard to see. Taggart and Szczerbiak claim, contrary to their earlier work, that "Brexit has had a very limited impact on national party politics, although this may change in the longer-term" (2018, p. 1194). The logic behind this argument mainly revolves around the degree of insecurity of the Brexit process over the past few years. Van Kessel et al. also hint at this by introducing their idea of a "wait-and-see" approach by Eurosceptic parties. This idea entails that these parties sit out the withdrawal process, decide whether they can frame Brexit as a success, and change their approach and rhetoric accordingly (2020, p. 78). This fits in well with the benchmark theory of De Vries (2017). De Vries writes that people will compare the quality of government in an EU member state to that of a non-member state. If they believe they can be better off outside the EU, support for withdrawal rises. As the long-term effects of Brexit become more clear as

time passes, this could convince voters across Europe that leaving would be the superior option.

The Dutch Case

Keeping these arguments in mind, it is important to look more specifically at what academic research has said about the response of Dutch Eurosceptics to Brexit. The two most important works in this respect will be highlighted here. Van Kessel et al. conduct a case study of Eurosceptic parties in four member states by researching the positions and language of Eurosceptics in the first national parliamentary elections that were held after the Brexit referendum, with France, Germany and Italy being analysed alongside the Netherlands (2020). This article only looks at a single party for the Dutch case, namely the Hard Eurosceptic Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) of Geert Wilders. Van Kessel et al. observe that the initial response of the PVV is strong and supportive of the Brexit referendum result, but also note that "Brexit and 'Europe' more generally are not crucial themes in the PVV's electoral campaign" for the 2017 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands (2020, p. 71).

The second work that specifically studies the case of Dutch Eurosceptics, is the article of Pirro and Van Kessel (2018). Again, this study does not only take into account Dutch Eurosceptics, but also looks at Italian parties. For the Dutch case, not only the PVV, but also the Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) is studied. Regarding the SP, Pirro and Van Kessel write that the party regards Brexit as a warning call for the EU, but also as "an opportunity to make Europe less neoliberal and more democratic" (2018, p. 337). In its electoral manifesto for the 2017 Dutch parliamentary elections, however, "Brexit was not mentioned a single time, although the SP did propose to hold a referendum on a revised EU Treaty" (2018, p. 337). For the PVV case, Pirro and Van Kessel note that this party shows "more enthusiasm for Brexit", but also that "[s]imilar to the SP, however, Brexit hardly featured in the PVV's campaign for the 2017 parliamentary election" (2018, p. 338).

Looking at these two works, it becomes clear that the amount of research on this topic is limited, and many questions remain unanswered. For example, neither of these works focuses on the Dutch Eurosceptics alone: Pirro and Van Kessel also study Italian parties, while Van Kessel et al. even look at parties from four EU member states. Moreover, both of these works only study a single electoral cycle – rather than analysing parties over a longer period of time. This is a missed opportunity. The next section will more deeply discuss where current works

fall short in their approach, and explain why we need to expand our knowledge on the subject.

Academic Literature Assessed

This section will discuss the multiple flaws of the literature introduced above. Broadly speaking, the existing literature contains three main ambiguities, which this thesis aims to address. Something that first comes to mind is the fact that a lot of the research discussed seems to work with a relatively narrow definition of Euroscepticism. This observation is visible, for example, in Van Kessel et al. (2020). This work mainly focuses on whether a political party supports withdrawal from the EU or not (anymore) – which is arguably not the best approach if you want to present a complete account of a party's Eurosceptic credentials. Opposition to (or support for) EU membership, although undeniably important, is not the only thing that defines Euroscepticism.

Secondly, most works only study one single party and/or electoral cycle within an EU member state. This approach does not allow for certain developments (over time) *within* member states (or even within parties) to be identified. How have certain parties responded? Has this response changed? And what happens in between electoral cycles? The arguments or discourse they use, and the way a party develops as time passes, are relevant factors here. Political parties never sit still, and can change course at any time over a certain subject. The phenomenon of change within these parties is in line with Conti and Memoli's observation of the "fluid nature of party-based Euroscepticism", which they regard as a "continuum of stances" (2012, p. 105). Usherwood's classification of Euroscepticism as a "reactive" movement also fits this logic (2018, pp. 553-554). Only studying the first domestic election after the Brexit vote, then, as many scholars have done, does not provide us with a complete picture of Eurosceptic parties' response. Most Eurosceptic parties initially responded with enthusiasm after the referendum result became clear, but has this enthusiasm survived the arduous withdrawal process in the years after 2016?

A third point of critique, as Pirro, Taggart and Van Kessel write, concerns the observation that research on the influence of Euroscepticism has a tendency to be limited to cases of "high impact. […] There is a danger then that the focus of our attention in considering the impact of Eurosceptic populists is on the spectacular cases […]. And while there are these cases, we need to be more measured and more rigorously comparative before we generalise from the spectacular cases to wider trends" (2018, pp. 387-388). Most scholars simply

consider the most well-known Eurosceptic parties within a party system (such as the PVV in the Netherlands, or the *Rassemblement National* in France). But while this choice might make sense to some extent, it is important to also take into account the lesser-known (or less spectacular) cases if we want to study and understand Euroscepticism as a movement.

Because of the reasons specified above, academic literature so far fails to capture the multiple peculiarities of Euroscepticism when studying its response to Brexit. Generally speaking, the academic literature discussed in this chapter will serve as a good starting point or foundation from where this thesis can continue to build, as this field of research is clearly a work in progress. Nevertheless, and perhaps most importantly, the picture emerges that the literature so far does not yet dig deep enough for us to fully comprehend Eurosceptic parties' behaviour in light of Brexit.

Euroscepticism is still a fundamentally understudied subject (Usherwood, 2018, pp. 553-554). Thus, a more thorough understanding of what Brexit – perhaps the largest threat to European integration in recent times – means for this movement is both desirable and justified. It is relevant to know more about their nature, strategic behaviour, and adaptability to outside events. Kaniok and Hloušek add to this by remarking that "[f]ew studies have tried to analyze how (and whether) Eurosceptic political success has transformed the phenomenon itself" (2018, pp. 507-508). Braun, Popa and Schmitt make a similar comment. They state that "the supply-side of political competition" (Eurosceptic parties themselves) has not received much attention in academic research: "there are hardly any comprehensive studies addressing the reactions of political parties towards the multifaceted crisis described above" (2019, p. 798).

Even though initial fears of a Brexit domino reaction have not materialised (or at least not yet), they certainly could in the longer term. More importantly, the fact that such a domino effect has not taken shape does not imply that Brexit has not had any impact on Eurosceptic parties. Euroscepticism has been fundamentally misunderstood and underestimated, and with political scientists calling the movement "alive and kicking" (Henley, 2020), studying the movement is as relevant as ever. Furthermore, as research introduced above has shown, the effects of Brexit on Continental Euroscepticism, is still a question largely left unanswered. This thesis aims to help fill this gap.

III. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter will present the research design for the remainder of this thesis. The rationale behind the chosen approach will first be further justified, before this chapter explains why the Netherlands is an academically relevant case study for this thesis. This chapter will then present the case selection as well as the method (qualitative content analysis) used for conducting this research.

Rationale

As the literature review has argued, the academic literature on this topic still leaves us with several questions on the phenomenon of Euroscepticism in general, and on its response to Brexit more specifically. To fill these gaps, this thesis will take an approach that is markedly different from the other works in this field. This thesis will conduct a case study of Soft Eurosceptic parties (and their response to Brexit) in the Netherlands in order to add to our current knowledge on the impact of Euroscepticism. In so doing, this approach will set this thesis apart from other works in this field. By studying Euroscepticism more broadly (rather than by merely measuring a party's support for an EU-exit), using a time frame that consists of more than just one electoral cycle, and by analysing Soft Eurosceptic parties (and not merely focusing on spectacular cases), this research will create an in-depth case study of multiple Soft Eurosceptic parties and their response Brexit.

Why only study Soft Eurosceptic parties? This is due to two major reasons. Firstly, as the literature review chapter has already shown, most comparative studies on Euroscepticism only consider one party for each country (which is usually the most staunchly Eurosceptic party for each case, i.e., a Hard Eurosceptic party). Pirro, Taggart and Van Kessel have criticised this emphasis on what they call "spectacular cases" (2018, p. 388). This thesis will therefore focus on the less *spectacular* cases that have often been overlooked. But despite these cases' unspectacular nature, they are, academically speaking, more relevant for this thesis – which is the second reason for choosing to analyse Soft Eurosceptic parties. As this thesis is interested in the response of Eurosceptic parties to Brexit, we are especially interested in parties that are actually *able* to respond. Braun et al., in studying how Eurosceptic parties respond to a crisis, find that parties have become more Eurosceptic after both the migration crisis and the eurozone crisis (2019, p. 813). They eventually conclude that far-right Hard Eurosceptic parties – compared to Soft Eurosceptic parties – are "closer to the preservation of the nation-state and more opposed to European unification […]. Thus, it is

not surprising that […] these parties further strengthen their already known negative stances towards EU polity" (p. 813). The natural reflex of Hard Eurosceptic parties in response to an EU crisis, is, thus, to become even more Eurosceptic. Therefore, responding to Brexit could be hard(er) for Hard Eurosceptic parties, as they are often deeply entrenched in their Eurosceptic positions and could lack the necessary room for manoeuvre to change their positions towards European integration. Soft Eurosceptic parties, by contrast, are probably less restrained in this regard, and could either become more Eurosceptic, less Eurosceptic, or remain similarly Eurosceptic after Brexit – which are the three possible trajectories of Eurosceptic parties that follow from the literature review. This is why this thesis will specifically target Soft Eurosceptic parties.

Importantly, the time frame is also favourable: with the Brexit withdrawal process now (finally) to an end, the time is ripe to analyse what these years have meant for Euroscepticism outside the UK. This thesis compares Eurosceptic parties within the same country and electoral system, rather than to other spectacular cases in different member states. All in all, this study is aimed at creating the most complete account of Euroscepticism concerning Brexit within an EU member state to date.

Why Study Dutch Parties?

Before elaborating on how exactly the research question will be answered, it is important to first explain why this thesis will conduct a case study of political parties within the Dutch political landscape. One of the founding members of the EU (and its predecessors), the Netherlands has for a long time been regarded as one of the more integration-friendly countries within the Union.

This has markedly changed, however, in the last decades. With the ever-increasing integration between the member states on the one hand (the 1992 Maastricht Treaty is probably the most significant step in this process), and the unpopular accession of numerous low-income, formerly communist states from Central and Eastern Europe on the other hand, public support in the Netherlands for the EU has slowly eroded. Political parties, such as the LPF of Pim Fortuyn, handily tapped into these public sentiments. Whereas Euroscepticism was formerly almost exclusively found within a few small left-wing or protestant Christian parties (see Vollaard et al., 2015, p. 378), (new) parties, also on the right of the political spectrum, began forming a Eurosceptic identity. These developments all culminated in 2005,

when the Dutch people, after the French earlier that week, voted against ratification of the proposed EU Constitutional Treaty in a referendum.

This major rebuke from the Dutch electorate against further (supranational) integration can be regarded as a turning point for Euroscepticism in Dutch politics (Vollaard et al., 2015, pp. 75-79). Vollaard et al. also write that, by 2012, political parties with a firmly enthusiastic, pro-EU base of supporters, had become the exception, rather than the rule (2015, p. 378). Similar developments have of course been identified in other European countries, as Euroscepticism slowly made its way into the political mainstream since the early 2000s. Several crises that affected the EU in recent years (such as the Eurozone crisis or the migration crisis) have given Eurosceptic parties further ammunition to criticise or lambast the Union (see Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2018). These events have led to the point where, in the early 2020s, there are at least a handful of (politically relevant) Eurosceptic parties in Dutch parliament. This is also partly due to the culture of proportional representation in Dutch parliament, which historically consists of a large number of parties.

Another factor that makes the Netherlands a relevant case study for this thesis, is the fact that, over the last decades, the Dutch were frequently stepping on the brakes when discussing further European integration. In this respect, The Hague often found a natural ally on the other side of the North Sea, closely working together with the British when their interests coincided. De Gruyter writes that "it is clear the Dutch feel better in Europe with the British on their side" (2020). Brexit thus carries political implications for the Netherlands, as the Dutch will find themselves increasingly isolated in the (European) Council after losing an important ally. The questions concerning the future role of the Dutch within the EU are also relevant for Eurosceptic parties, as they argue that, because of Brexit, the Netherlands (as one of the EU's founding members) continues to lose its grip on, or influence over, the EU even further (Korteweg, 2020). Moreover, due to the geographic proximity and integrated markets between the Netherlands and the UK, any economic impact of Brexit will disproportionately affect the Dutch economy (see, e.g., Barigazzi 2018, on the economic exposure of the Dutch market to Brexit). These observations demonstrate that Brexit has both political and economic implications for the Netherlands.

Case Selection and Method

The terminology of Vollaard et al. (2015, pp. 100-102) will serve as the conceptual foundation for making the case selection – see the second chapter for a more detailed

introduction of this typology. This thesis will study three Soft Eurosceptic parties' response to Brexit over the course of the last few years. The following parties will be included in this case study: the Christian Democratic ChristianUnion (*ChristenUnie*, hereafter: CU); the conservative orthodox-Calvinist Reformed Political Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP); and the hard-left, anti-establishment Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP). The next chapter will offer a better introduction of these parties.

These parties are all politically relevant, and have all won at seats in Dutch parliamentary elections in 2017 and 2021, as well as at least one seat in the 2019 European Parliament elections – with the notable exception of the SP, but due to the party's fairly large presence in Dutch parliament, the SP still deserves to be included in this case study. Besides, this selection provides an ideologically diverse overview of Dutch Eurosceptic parties, ranging from left-wing (SP), to more centrist (CU) and right-wing (SGP) parties. Moreover, this list both includes a populist party (SP), as well as a party that has been (and currently is) part of a governing coalition (CU). This is interesting, because Euroscepticism is usually found on the outer reaches of the political spectrum; the so-called "'inverted U curve" (see Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 968). In conclusion, although these parties can all be described as Soft Eurosceptic, in terms of the political spectrum (left vs. right), and style of politics (populist vs. more establishment or government style), these parties comprise an interesting, comprehensive overview of Dutch Soft Eurosceptic parties. Studying these three (diverse) parties will also allow us to examine which element serves as the main driving factor behind a party's response to Brexit: their Soft Eurosceptic nature, or their ideology. The introductory chapter of this thesis has already mentioned that the Eurosceptic party family is ideologically diverse. This raises the question of which factor plays a larger role in determining a party's response to Brexit: its Eurosceptic identity, or, rather, its ideological orientation.

These parties and their positions over the last years – from the Brexit vote until early 2021 – will be studied in a qualitative content analysis that consults two main sources: (1) party manifestos; (2) and official party documents and sources. For the first source, manifestos for three elections will be taken into account: the 2017 and 2021 domestic elections for Dutch parliament, and the 2019 elections for European Parliament. This time frame is favourable, as the 2017 election takes place within a year after the Brexit referendum, and the 2021 election was held only months after the so-called Transition Period ended and a deal had finally been reached between Brussels and London on their future relationship. The 2019 elections for the

European Parliament (EP) were held in between the national elections, which gives us a good look at Eurosceptic parties over the course of the withdrawal process.

As for the second source (official party documents and other sources), the websites of the respective parties will be searched for any official statements, articles, speeches and publications relevant for this research. This approach will allow for a more narrow focus on the position of these parties, and will thus be especially helpful in understanding what happens within these parties between elections. Kaniok and Hloušek have demonstrated that information published through party websites is valuable and appropriate information for studying a party's position on Brexit (2018, p. 513). But while Kaniok and Hloušek's last month of analysis is June 2017, this thesis studies the selected parties until the Dutch general election of March 2021. This is an important difference.

In order to be able to draw conclusions from these sources – and to avoid this research to be only descriptive in nature – this case study will utilise Eurosceptic frames for structuring and comparing the positions of the analysed parties. Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest best describe the rationale behind using frames when studying Eurosceptic parties:

> […] we are interested in how political actors frame the issues of integration – how they define a particular problem and which justifications they relate to which positions. In analysing their reasoning, we may better understand why European integration is criticised, and what political actors expect from it. In general, knowing how parties conceive and represent European integration will allow us to understand better their positions towards it, and to understand what factors give rise to feelings of Euroscepticism and Europeanism. […] we are not interested in the entirety of the framing process, but rather in one particular aspect – namely which arguments are chosen by political actors to justify their positions. By attending to this specific facet, we may better understand how political actors define a particular problem and find out which justifications are related to which positions (Helbling et al., 2010, pp. 496-498).

The frames used in this thesis correspond with the three conflicting arguments (or possible trajectories) of Eurosceptic parties that follow from the literature review. By analysing academic literature on this question, we learned that parties could become inspired and more convinced in their Euroscepticism (i.e., move into the direction of Hard Euroscepticism) because they want to capitalise on the success of Brexit; less convinced in their

Euroscepticism (i.e., move closer to the mainstream positions of most parties on European integration) because they realise Brexit has been unsuccessful, and therefore decide that the best strategy is to slow down the pace of integration from within, rather than outside of, the EU; or remain relatively unchanged in their Euroscepticism, either because they do not believe the impact of Brexit to be large, or (still) prefer to observe the UK post-Brexit and decide at a later stage whether they can (or should) frame it as a success or as a failure. These three frames through which Eurosceptic parties could portray and discuss Brexit are labelled as follows: (1) *Inspired* Euroscepticism; (2) *Weakened* Euroscepticism; (3) and seeing no relevant change, or *Stable* Euroscepticism. An *Inspired* Eurosceptic party would regard Brexit as an example, follow it with large interest, and perhaps even decide to seek an EU-exit. A *Weakened* Eurosceptic party, on the other hand, would conclude that Brexit has not brought the UK the success it hoped to achieve, and therefore decide to criticise the EU from within. A *Stable* Eurosceptic party would see no relevant change in its attitudes towards the EU, either because it has not yet made up its mind about whether it can (or should) frame Brexit as a success, or because it simply prefers to wait a little longer before making this judgment call. The case study in the next chapter will make use of qualitative content analysis to analyse which parties use which of these frames – and if we can discern any change within these parties in this respect.

A potential pitfall this thesis should recognise, is the risk that changes in the position of Eurosceptic parties might not be caused by Brexit, but, rather, by something else. In order to minimise this risk, this case study will apply a strict policy as to which statements will be taken into account – and which ones will not. Therefore, statements must regard Brexit, at least indirectly. This might include commentary on Brexit and the withdrawal process itself, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a possible *Nexit*, positions on (changing) the existing procedures for leaving the EU, or broader proposed changes to the EU's structure in order to prevent future disintegration. It is of course practically impossible to completely eliminate the possibility that something else has led to (or contributed to) a party's behaviour, but this strict approach does allow this thesis to focus on Eurosceptic parties and their response to Brexit specifically.

IV. Case Study and Results

This chapter will present the results of the case study. The response to Brexit of three Dutch Eurosceptic parties (*ChristenUnie*, *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, *Socialistische Partij*) have been analysed through studying party manifestos and other official party documents and sources. Each of the parties studied will first be separately discussed below, before the final chapter of this thesis combines the conclusions and implications we can draw from this research.

ChristenUnie

The ChristenUnie, or CU, is a *social-Christian* party formed in 2000 after a merger between two smaller protestant parties. Vollaard et al. write that the CU's predecessors (the GPV and the RPF) had already been Eurosceptic since the early days of European integration, and often preferred intergovernmental cooperation over supranational integration (2015, pp. 118-122). This is why, since 1984, the CU's predecessors (and, since 2000, the ChristenUnie itself) cooperated with the SGP, another protestant party, in European elections (p. 122). These parties participated under a combined CU-SGP list and formed one delegation to the European Parliament, which increased their weight in Brussels. As Vollaard et al. write, the CU campaigned against the proposed EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 – although the party did vote in favour of the Treaty of Lisbon a few years later when it was part of government (pp. 123-125). Because of this support, the CU was almost removed from the Eurosceptic Independence/Democracy group in the European Parliament, after which the party (together with SGP) decided to move to the European Conservatives and Reformists group, which had been formed by the British Conservatives (p. 125). In 2019, however, the CU decided to leave the SGP and opted to move to the EPP group instead, which meant a break-up of their decades-long cooperation in Brussels. The move was motivated by the recent entrance of another (Hard Eurosceptic) Dutch party to the ECR after the 2019 EP elections, Forum for Democracy (*Forum voor Democratie*, or FvD), as the ChristenUnie did not feel comfortable being part of the same political group as FvD. The fact that the CU transferred to the EPP (while the SGP decided to stay) tells something about each party's position towards European integration; generally speaking, the latter is usually regarded as more Eurosceptic than the former.

Despite this recent move to the EPP, the CU can indisputably be classified as Soft Eurosceptic. Especially after the Eurozone crisis, the CU has been (economically) critical of

the EU. It for example openly advocated for a *Grexit* (a Greek exit from the eurozone) when Greece was unable to pay off its debts in 2010, and the CU continues to raise doubts about the advantages of keeping the common currency – while also calling for alternatives to the euro to be explored (CU, 2017a, pp. 91-92). The ChristenUnie won five seats in the Dutch House of Representatives after the 2021 elections, and also has one seat in the European Parliament.

In its electoral manifesto for the 2017 general election, the CU states that, in terms of European integration, the party does not consider an expanding EU with more competences for "Brussels" to be a desirable solution (CU, 2017a, p. 9). They further write that the EU needs a "serious reset", in which the position of the "sovereign" nation states that form the Union should be enhanced (p. 89). With regard to Brexit, the party refers to the economic and financial insecurity that it brings (p. 16), and notes that Brexit is not just a "British problem" as "anti-EU sentiments are just as strong in many other EU member states" (p. 89). The CU advocates "exit-criteria" for the common currency and other elements of European integration, so that the EU is able to make "hard choices" when necessary (p. 90). But overall, the EU and European integration are more often being portrayed as a solution to international problems, rather than as a problem.

Before moving on to discuss the CU's 2019 manifesto, it is important to note that this electoral programme was written and supported by both the CU and the SGP – a cooperation that was ended a few months after the election. In this shared manifesto, the CU and SGP write that they want to provide an alternative between "nationalists" on the one hand, and "federalists" on the other, by envisioning a Europe of member states (CU-SGP, 2019, p. 5). On Brexit, the manifesto reads that it should be "an important lesson" for Europe, and the parties, while mourning the loss of the British, call for a period of "reflection and change" in order to prevent future "exits" (p. 7). Another relevant position here is the fact that the CU and SGP want the "ever closer union" phrase to be scrapped from EU treaties (p. 8).

Interestingly, Brexit is only mentioned a single time in the CU's 2021 manifesto, when it notes the vulnerability of the Dutch "open economy" (CU, 2021, p. 87). The CU calls for "more European cooperation" in the "large, cross-border challenges of our time" (p. 132), and it wants the EU to invest in good relationships with the UK – although the party also writes that the UK must adhere to the EU's high standards if it wants to retain its access to the internal market (p. 133).

Regarding the ChristenUnie's publications, their initial response to the results of the Brexit referendum in 2016 is negative. MEP Peter van Dalen, in a first reaction, expresses regret for losing an important ally in Europe, and sees Brexit not only as a "wake up call", but even regards it to be about the fundamental question for the EU "to be or not to be" (CU, 2016a). Not more Europe, "but a better Europe" is the answer, he argues (CU, 2016a). Party leader Gert-Jan Segers writes that "Brexit mainly shows that the EU has alienated its citizens […]. The Union makes itself too large in small affairs and fails too often in large issues. This sombre moment must also be the moment for another Union" (CU, 2016b). A few days later, Segers criticises both European federalists ("for whom more Europe is the medicine against every ailment") and populist Eurosceptics ("who smell blood" and eagerly await future exits) on either side of the political spectrum (CU, 2016c).

The CU's criticism then focuses on the party's observation that, in the wake of the referendum result, many Europhiles are calling for *more* Europe, instead of less. Van Dalen lambasts Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker for his continued push for further integration: "[w]here is the lesson of Brexit? This I missed in Juncker!" (CU, 2016d). Segers makes a similar observation in Parliament when he argues that the EU is only further stepping on the "gas pedal of European cooperation" in order to save the European project (CU, 2016e). In early 2017, Van Dalen argues that Brexit shows that more Europe is not the answer, and calls for "exit criteria" for exits from both the EU as well as the eurozone (CU, 2017b).

Despite this clearly (Soft) Eurosceptic position, a central theme in the ChristenUnie's publications is their disappointment with Brexit. This is not only because the party feels that the future of European integration is in peril, but also due to their fear that, without the UK, the EU's "centre of gravity" will move southward – and hereby increase the influence of Europhiles such as French President Emmanuel Macron (CU, 2017c). The party also sees Brexit as disadvantageous for both sides, and it wishes an orderly exit in order to minimise its economic consequences (CU, 2017c, 2018a). In a highly interesting move, MEP Van Dalen openly calls on Dutch PM Mark Rutte to take up the former role of the British in the EU and act as a counterweight against the Franco-German axis and their pro-integration tendencies (CU, 2018c).

The ChristenUnie has never expressed any interest in a Nexit. Van Dalen states he believes that, due to its open economy, the Netherlands would be even more affected than the UK

(CU, 2018b), although Van Dalen adds that he finds the plans of people such as Macron "equally dangerous" (2018b). Party leader Segers also speaks out strongly against a Nexit when appealing for support in the 2019 EP election campaign: "[t]he suggestion of a Nexit and the end of European cooperation is playing with fire. The European future is a future in which we work together!" (CU, 2019). Especially this last statement might seem a bit Europhile at first glance, but it completely falls in line with the CU's long-held position as being firmly in between the two extreme positions on European integration. The party is neither federalist, nor advocating for a Nexit like some populist Eurosceptic parties – it is solidly Soft Eurosceptic.

A clear theme within the CU's response to Brexit, is its deep commitment to European integration. Although the party is also concerned about the direction the EU has been moving in in recent years, the principles (and benefits) of European integration in itself are never questioned. The party consistently expresses its disappointment with Brexit, about what it means for the future of the EU, and regrets losing a friend in Brussels. The CU has never regarded the nuclear option of a Nexit as a viable alternative to the current situation, and the party prides itself in representing a third way of looking at European integration by positioning itself in between populist Hard Eurosceptics, and Europhile federalists. Clearly, the party does not see Brexit as an example it wants to follow. If anything, the ChristenUnie has become a bit more Europragmatic, by moving to the EPP group within the European Parliament. But overall, their Eurosceptic position can be described as strongly consistent over the years. Taking into account the harsh words towards the EU when talking about financial integration and the common currency, Brexit, although important for the party, does not appear as the main avenue of criticism for the CU. That said, the party does spend a reasonable amount of attention on discussing Brexit (and a possible Nexit). The party sees Brexit as something negative, and it definitely cares about European integration, but this has not led to a different position towards the EU in general. In this respect, the CU can be classified as expressing *Stable* Euroscepticism in its response to Brexit.

Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij

The SGP is a conservative orthodox-Calvinist party, founded in 1918, and is the oldest party (still in existence) within the Dutch party system. The SGP was Hard Eurosceptic in the first decades of European integration, for example already voting against the Treaty of Rome (Vollaard et al., 2015, p. 114). However, after entering the European Parliament after the

1984 elections, the party gradually weakened these positions, and eventually transformed into a Soft Eurosceptic party (pp. 115-116). The SGP was even open to supranationalism in some areas, most notably within internal market integration. Despite the fact that they no longer rejected European integration in principle, the party still voted against the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, campaigned against the proposed Constitutional Treaty in 2005, and also did not support the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 (pp. 116-117). The only treaty the SGP *did* support, was the 2001 Treaty of Nice, mainly because this paved the way for membership for Central and Eastern European countries – whose accession to the EU would slow down integration, the SGP hoped (p. 117). The SGP cooperated with the CU for decades – although this cooperation broke down in 2019, as the previous section has shown. Today, the party is still in the Eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in European Parliament, together with parties such as the Italian Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*, FdI), or the Polish ruling party, Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS). The SGP has one MEP In Brussels. In domestic politics, the party was able to hold on to its three seats in the House of Representatives after the 2021 elections.

The SGP's electoral manifesto for the 2017 general election spends quite a bit of attention to Brexit. The party observes that "the idea that the EU must automatically grow and become more powerful" has been weakened since the Brexit referendum, a positive development in its eyes (SGP, 2017a, p. 12). The SGP labels Brexit a "symbolic low" for the EU, and calls on the Netherlands to take up the opportunity to reform the Union "thoroughly and realistically" (p. 86). And even though "the choice for Brexit is a fact", the party argues that good cooperation with the UK, also after Brexit, is to each side's advantage (p. 86). The SGP further seems to be especially concerned with the consequences of Brexit for the Dutch fishing industry, as it represents an important constituency for the party (see p. 71).

As explained in the section discussing the ChristenUnie above, the CU and SGP participated in the 2019 European elections under one combined list, with a shared manifesto (CU-SGP, 2019). As this manifesto has already been discussed, this section will now move on to study the SGP's manifesto for the 2021 parliamentary elections. In this electoral programme, the party laments the EU's trajectory over the past years. It notices that, despite promises made by *Brussels*, the Union continues to increase its power and competences (SGP, 2021a, p. 8). This stands in stark contrast to the hope expressed by the SGP in the 2017 manifesto that the EU would move in a new direction. The party now writes that Brexit should have led to "modesty and realism" in the EU, disapprovingly observes that the opposite seems to be the

case, and wonders whether the Union will take criticism seriously in the coming years – or if it will just accelerate the pace of integration even further (p. 162). The SGP then delivers its harshest criticism towards the EU:

> As long as the EU reforms […], the SGP does not consider a Nexit as opportune. […] When reform in a direction preferred by the SGP does not take place and the Netherlands has to give up even more of its sovereignty, for example through abolishing veto rights in some areas or the introduction of European taxation, then Nexit will increasingly become a serious option (SGP, 2021a, p. 164).

This position is incredibly interesting, as it directly links the future behaviour of the EU (and its success in realising fundamental reforms) to the SGP's willingness to remain within the Union. Can this argument also be identified within the party's publications in recent years? A few days after the Brexit referendum, the SGP gives its first reaction, and writes that the EU is at a crossroads in which the EU could regain the trust of its citizens, or alienate them even further (SGP, 2016). A reformed Europe, the party continues, would look "radically different", and give more room for the sovereignty and independence of its member states (2016). The SGP closes with a call to action: "Brexit is *the* moment! Let European leaders, but also our own government, use it for thoroughly reforming the EU" (2016).

About a year after the Brexit referendum, SGP lawmaker Roelof Bisschop sees Brexit as an "important loss" (SGP, 2017b). He is concerned about the negative consequences of Brexit for the Dutch position in the EU ("[b]ecause who else will now step on the brakes of European integration […]?"), and therefore advocates an active role for the Netherlands in reforming the EU (2017b). A few months later, Bisschop reiterates his wish for Dutch government to be active in this regard and proposes the building of alternating coalitions in order to make new proposals for reforming the EU, or to form blocking minorities for limiting the power of countries pushing further integration, like France (SGP, 2018a).

In late 2018, member of parliament Chris Stoffer is worried about the state of withdrawal negotiations (SGP, 2018b). He fears a no-deal Brexit, calls for a "constructive attitude" from European leaders, who should not be "condescending or humiliating" towards the British (2018b). Later, Stoffer again expresses compassion towards the UK, as he wants the EU to be more understanding about the concerns expressed by British Parliament during the negotiations (SGP, 2018c).

The SGP also discusses a possible Nexit. In February 2019, MEP Bert-Jan Ruissen writes that "cooperation also brings advantages. A Nexit might sound attractive. But it also comes with many complications. […] And even more important: a Nexit completely ignores the idea that in Europe we definitely have some shared issues, which demand a common approach" (SGP, 2019a). Senator Diederik van Dijk makes a similar point when he says that "we cannot just pretend that a Nexit will solve everything" (SGP, 2019b). Van Dijk also argues that a Nexit would make it increasingly difficult for the Dutch government to deal with cross-border issues effectively (2019b).

In early 2020, after the withdrawal agreement was finally signed between the EU and the UK, MEP Ruissen expresses mixed feelings, but wants the EU to learn something from Brexit: "[t]hey are not leaving for no reason", he says (SGP, 2020a). Ruissen then repeats his demands for a major reform of the Union, so that member states are again dominant: "[t]hat is the lesson of Brexit!" (2020a). In late 2020, party leader Kees van der Staaij argues against enshrining EU membership in the Dutch Constitution (a move proposed by pro-European party D66) during a parliamentary debate – while also mentioning Brexit:

> [t]he SGP position is clear: the EU is a means in order to cooperate, but not an end in itself. […] The end must be to work on a legal order that deals with cross-border issues more effectively. But EU membership is not the only solution for this. A strong legal order can also be shaped in other ways, as post-war history shows. In this regard, it is interesting to see how Brexit will play out in the longer term (SGP, 2020b).

Van der Staaij strikes a more nuanced tone, however, a few months later. In the 2021 election campaign, the party leader writes that "[a] broad public and political debate about the future of the European Union is necessary, because now that it appears as if there are only two possibilities: a Nexit and a federal Europe, the SGP thinks neither is an option" (SGP, 2021b).

Having analysing the SGP's reaction to Brexit, a highly interesting case emerges. Like the CU, the SGP spends a fair amount of attention to Brexit over the years. But, unlike the consistency shown by the CU, the SGP's response to Brexit seems to show a movement towards an *Inspired* form of Euroscepticism. This is for example visible when comparing the SGP's electoral manifestos for the 2017 and 2021 general elections. The tone in the latter is a lot harsher than in the former. The document even directly links the party's willingness to

remain within the Union to the EU's ability to fundamentally reform. If these reforms are not realised, the party warns, a possible Nexit will become an increasingly attractive option (SGP, 2021a, p. 164). The party is not always so unambiguous in its stance towards a Nexit. Sometimes, lawmakers express caution and discuss possible downsides to a Nexit (see, e.g., SGP, 2019a, and SGP, 2019b), but on other occasions, the party seems more open to the idea (see, e.g., SGP, 2020b). Important to note, however, is that Nexit is not ruled out in principle by the SGP – like the ChristenUnie does. The SGP seems to be weighing its options, and is not scared of at least entertaining the idea of a Nexit, although it stops short of openly advocating one. The party's ambiguity seems to reflect genuine doubt about what course it should take: should they accept the EU as it is, or decide to seek an exit? Van der Staaij's comment in Parliament about seeing how Brexit will play out in the longer term (SGP, 2020b) also corresponds with the "wait-and-see" approach introduced by Van Kessel et al. (2020, p. 78). All in all, it seems the SGP has moved into an *Inspired* form of Euroscepticism over recent years, a movement at least partially inspired by Brexit. The outspoken statement in the party's 2021 manifesto is direct evidence of this (SGP, 2021a, p. 164). This is not to say, however, that the party is now Hard Eurosceptic (it has merely become *Harder*). The SGP does not refuse European integration in principle, and it is not in favour of a Nexit for the time being. But the movement of the SGP in this direction is undeniable.

Socialistische Partij

The SP was established in the early 1970s, but was first elected to Dutch Parliament in 1994. Vollaard et al. write that the party (unsuccessfully) campaigned for a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (2015, p. 148). Gradually, however, the party softened its stance towards the EU, thus becoming more Soft Eurosceptic. The EU itself was accepted, but further integration was resisted (p. 149). Like the CU and the SGP, the SP campaigned against the proposed EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 (p. 150). The party's more friendly stance towards the EU soured in the financial crisis. The SP, Vollaard et al. write, saw the EU not as part of the solution, but as the main cause of the crisis (p. 151). Throughout the years, the SP's criticism has often focused its attention towards their view of the EU as a neoliberal and undemocratic project. The party has nine seats in the House of Representatives after the 2021 elections, but it lost its two seats in Brussels after a disastrous election result in the 2019 European elections. Because of the SP's strong (Soft) Eurosceptic identity, and its fairly large role within domestic politics, the party should not be left out of this case study.

In its manifesto for the 2017 general election, the SP does not seem very concerned about Brexit. The document does not even mention Brexit a single time (SP, 2017). The manifesto does call for a referendum on a new European Union, rather than a referendum on a EU-exit. The SP wants to see negotiations on a new European treaty that would strengthen the independence of member states and increase the input of citizens (p. 53). The party does not provide any details as to what such a treaty would look like, or even how the party hopes to start negotiations in the first place.

For the 2019 European elections, the SP's manifesto reiterates the desire for a new European treaty that would replace the current treaties, by making member states again decide national affairs (SP, 2019a, p. 11). Brexit is only mentioned a single time, when the manifesto speaks of a rapidly changing world of "geopolitical instability" – which is only further destabilised by Brexit (p. 39). European answers to these challenges, such as a proposed EU army, are ruled out by the party (p. 39).

The party's 2021 manifesto again calls for a new European treaty to be realised – a treaty that should be approved by the Dutch people through a referendum, the party writes (SP, 2021, p. 27). Again, Brexit is not mentioned a single time in this electoral programme. Generally speaking, European integration, and the EU, are not major issues for the party. Even though it is staunchly Eurosceptic, the party does not spend a lot of attention to Brussels in either of its three manifestos studied. Is this different for the party's publications?

In a first reaction to the Brexit referendum result, SP lawmaker Harry van Bommel notes that the outcome shows that the EU cannot continue down the same path (SP, 2016a). Van Bommel wants the Netherlands to play a role in fundamentally changing the Union: "[o]nly with an open discussion and an honest answer towards justified Euroscepticism can we keep the EU. Muddling through on the road to a federal EU is unthinkable" (2016a). A few days later, then party leader Emile Roemer sees Brexit as an opportunity for a "New Union", and argues that the referendum result "proves that the European project cannot live on without public support" (SP, 2016b). If the EU does not learn from Brexit, Roemer warns, this will definitely lead to a "domino-effect" (2016b).

In November 2016, Van Bommel publishes an op-ed in which he proposes "alternative forms of cooperation" (i.e. differentiated integration) in order to keep the EU from collapsing (SP, 2016c). Party leader Roemer warns that only "radical reform" could bring the EU back on the right track (SP, 2016d). And in early 2018, parliamentarian Renske Leijten criticises the

European Commission for introducing proposal after proposal for further integration, despite the fact that the EU is losing a member state for the first time in its history (SP, 2018a).

In a blog entry in August 2018, MEP Dennis de Jong expresses his empathy towards the British, and calls on Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier to be "more flexible" about the internal market (SP, 2018b). De Jong writes that, if the EU can loosen its rigid position on the internal market, "a British Remain is not even out of the question, because then for the first time the worries of all the people that voted for Brexit will be taken into account" (2018b). Two months later, De Jong writes that this "tunnel vision" (an inflexible EU) about the internal market increases the risk for a hard Brexit (SP, 2018c). It is interesting to see here that De Jong thus still carries some hope of Brexit being called off.

In November 2018, leading candidate for the upcoming European elections Arnout Hoekstra, together with Leijten, observes that the common solution of the European elite is always "more Brussels" (SP, 2018d). "It is sad that Brexit has not brought self-reflection for the European elite", they complain (2018d). In early 2019, the pair writes another contribution published on the party's website (SP, 2019b). They believe that Brussels wanted to make Brexit painful for the UK, so that other member states will be dissuaded from following in its footsteps (2019b). Hoekstra and Leijten do not want the EU to punish member states that want to leave, and argue that it is not just a choice between staying or leaving: "European cooperation should be possible without uniform European solutions to problems different in all countries. […] Nothing stands in the way of variation, except for political will" (2019b). In April 2019, Leijten sees the EU as a prison from which no one is allowed to escape, as she calls on negotiator Barnier to step down in a parliamentary debate (SP, 2019c).

Weeks before the European elections in 2019 (in which the party would lose its seats in the European Parliament), party leader Lilian Marijnissen gives a lecture about European integration (SP, 2019d). She is disappointed that the Brexit vote, previously seen as an important "wake-up call", has not resulted in a rethink of the EU: "the outcome of the reflection process […] was that we need even more EU, that for all our problems a European solution should be found" (2019d). She also turns her criticism towards European Commissioner Frans Timmermans, who, she says, makes it look like as if there are only two options: "[t]he European neoliberal dream or scary nationalism. […] Exactly this politics of 'there is no alternative' drives people in the hands of an 'exit'" (2019d).

In November 2020, SP senator Bastiaan van Apeldoorn publishes an interesting contribution (ominously titled "the EU will be solidary and democratic, or she will not be"), in which he states that, in order to avoid a Nexit, "the EU must now, in the eyes of the SP, move in another direction" (SP, 2020a). This contribution, however, is the only one that directly references (the risk of) a potential Nexit.

In studying the SP, it immediately become clear that the party, in general, spends a lot less attention to the Brexit referendum, the withdrawal period, or to a hypothetical Nexit when compared to either the CU or the SGP. The manifestos hardly mention Brexit. Most publications discussed above are merely statements criticising the EU for integrating too rapidly. Overall, it seems as if the EU, and European integration, are not very important issues for the party, despite its Eurosceptic identity. And when it does talk about Europe, it usually delivers its critique through other avenues – by for example portraying the EU as a neoliberal project, mocking the European elite, or lambasting the EU's free trade policies. Therefore, this case study has not been able to identify any relevant change in the party's position towards Europe. It does not like Brexit, and it wants reforms to increase the weight of member states, but Brexit is hardly the driving force behind its' positions on the EU. Because of this general lack of attention to Brexit, the SP does not neatly fit into one of the three frames introduced in the previous chapter.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Having analysed these three Soft Eurosceptic parties' response to Brexit separately, this final section now turns to discuss the cases collectively. Going back to the research question of this thesis ("*How have Eurosceptic parties responded to Brexit?*"), we can overall conclude that a mixed picture emerges from the case study. Generally speaking, all three parties see Brexit as a negative thing, because they worry about the future of European integration, and/or because they worry that Brexit will weaken the position of the Netherlands in the EU and only lead to further integration. The SP seems to devote the least attention to Brexit. Brexit does not constitute an important driving force behind the party's Eurosceptic positions, as it spends more time criticising the neoliberal identity of the EU. Although this is an interesting observation in its own right, the fourth chapter of this thesis has concluded that the SP does not fit into one of the three possible frames, so will therefore be largely excluded from this discussion. This is because both the CU and the SGP, by contrast, regard Brexit as a lot more consequential and significant. But while the CU consistently defends the merits of European integration and wants to avoid a Nexit at all costs, the SGP appears to move into another direction. It does not rule out a Nexit (it has actually entertained the idea on several occasions) and has even directly linked the party's willingness to stay in the EU to the Union's ability to fundamentally reform (SGP, 2021a, p. 164). Whether the SGP will actually become a supporter of Nexit in the coming years remains to be seen. But it is evident that this party, unlike the other two, has moved in the direction of Hard(er) Euroscepticism, with Brexit definitely playing a role in this movement.

This shows that Soft Eurosceptic parties follow Brexit, and will let their opinions and positions on European integration be formed by it. They are, in other words, not static in their Eurosceptic positions. The fact that the three parties studied are all distinct in their Eurosceptic trajectory over the past few years, confirms that the Soft Eurosceptic party family is not a homogenous group of parties. It appears that, for the parties studied, a party's ideological orientation is the main driving factor behind their response to Brexit – as opposed to its Eurosceptic identity. This conclusion casts doubt on the conceptual usefulness of the classification of a party as Soft Eurosceptic, and makes one wonder about the added value of the notion of Soft Euroscepticism. Kaniok and Hloušek also discuss this "problematic internal coherence" of the Soft Eurosceptic party family, and write that "[i]f there is space for a finer conceptualization of different ideal types of Eurosceptic political stances, it is in breaking the category of soft Euroscepticism into different (sub)types or, more probably,

substantially redefining the soft Euroscepticism type" (2018, p. 522). This thesis provides further support for this position.

Overall, this thesis has contributed to research on Euroscepticism and Eurosceptic parties in general, and to their behaviour in light of their success (Brexit) more specifically. The approach of this thesis was markedly different from other studies in the field. By analysing one particular country, this thesis was able to paint a more detailed picture of different Eurosceptic parties within the same party system. Another aspect that distinguishes this work from others, is the fact that this thesis has analysed Eurosceptic parties over more than just one electoral cycle. Moreover, this study has focused on Soft Eurosceptic parties rather than on Hard Eurosceptic parties, as the vast majority of studies has done. Hard Eurosceptic parties, as this thesis has explained, are usually firmly entrenched in their Eurosceptic positions, and therefore do not constitute very relevant cases for this study. Soft Eurosceptic parties are usually more flexible in their positions and might thus actually (be able to) *respond* to Brexit in different ways, as we have seen.

Looking ahead, some avenues for further research in the field might be worth pursuing. Diving further into Euroscepticism as an academically understudied subject, this thesis has shown that Euroscepticism is not exclusively found on the outer reaches of the political spectrum, but can also manifest itself within centre parties (see especially the CU, but also the SGP). Furthermore, it is possible for a party to combine a deep commitment to (the principles of) European integration with a Soft Eurosceptic stance towards specific aspects of the EU. Again, the CU is the most interesting case here. This observation challenges the standard assumptions of many who primarily regard Euroscepticism as a fringe movement. However, the dividing line between Europhiles and Eurosceptics appears to be a lot vaguer in some cases. This puzzling question warrants more research in the future.

Lastly, this thesis has concluded that a party's ideology has played more of a role in determining its response to Brexit than its Soft Eurosceptic nature. This does not only challenge the strength of the notion of Soft Euroscepticism itself (as this concluding chapter has already argued), but also calls into question the default strategy of seeing Euroscepticism as a subject that requires comparative research per se. Many works in the field have studied Euroscepticism through analysing and comparing Eurosceptic parties across several EU member states. This thesis has demonstrated, however, that Eurosceptic behaviour is not only determined by a party's Eurosceptic identity: its ideology also plays a role. We should

therefore not forget to spend sufficient attention to the role of ideology within Eurosceptic parties. And research on a national scale – as opposed to comparative research – is arguably more suited to take into account the particularities of a national party system and, therefore, a(n) (Eurosceptic) party's ideology (and the role it plays in Eurosceptic behaviour). This thesis does not wish to dispute the usefulness of studying Euroscepticism in comparative fashion. It merely calls upon researchers not to forget the strength of studying Euroscepticism on a national scale. A renewed focus on national case studies in future research might prove very fruitful in furthering our understanding of Eurosceptic behaviour. Because, generally speaking, should we not first become experts on individual cases before generalising our knowledge to a larger population of cases?

VI. Bibliography

Adler-Nissen, Rebecca, Galpin, Charlotte, and Ben Rosamond. 2017. "Performing Brexit: How a Post-Brexit World Is Imagined outside the United Kingdom." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 19 (3): pp. 573-91.

Barigazzi, Jacopo. 2018. "Where Brexit will hurt most in Europe." *Politico Europe*, 8 January 2018. https://www.politico.eu/article/brexit-impact-on-european-regions-revealed-by-eu-report-phase-2-negotiations/

Braun, Daniela, Popa, Sebastian Adrian, and Herrmann Schmitt. 2019. "Responding to the Crisis: Eurosceptic Parties of the Left and Right and Their Changing Position towards the European Union." *European Journal of Political Research* 58 (3): pp. 797-819. https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/1475-6765.12321

Chelotti, Nicola. 2018. "Brexit may have strengthened Eurosceptic parties, but there is little prospect of other exit referendums." London School of Economics Blog, 30 April 2018. Edited by Roch Dunin-Wasowicz. Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/04/30/while-the-brexit-negotiations-strengthened-eurosceptic-parties-across-europe-there-few-prospects-of-other-exit-referendums-taking-place/

Chopin, Thierry, and Christian Lequesne. 2020. "Disintegration Reversed: Brexit and the Cohesiveness of the EU27." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, pp. 1–13. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14782804.2020.1714560?needAccess=true

Conti, Nicolò, and Vincenzo Memoli. 2012. "The Multi-faceted Nature of Party-based Euroscepticism." *Acta Politica* 47 (2): pp. 91-112.

Corbett, Steve. 2016. "The Social Consequences of Brexit for the UK and Europe: Euroscepticism, Populism, Nationalism, and Societal Division." *International Journal of Social Quality* 6 (1): pp. 11-31

CU. 2016a. "Peter van Dalen: Brexit dwingt EU tot nieuwe koers." 23 June 2016. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1008525/347467/peter-van-dalen-brexit-dwingt-eu-tot-nieuwe-koers.html

CU. 2016b. "Reactie ChristenUnie op uitslag van het referendum in het Verenigd Koninkrijk." 24 June 2016. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1008510/347467/reactie-christenunie-op-uitslag-van-het-referendum-in-het-verenigd-koninkrijk.html

CU. 2016c. "Bijdrage van Gert-Jan Segers aan notaoverleg Europese Raad." 27 June 2016. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n41555/news/view/1008871/932434/bijdrage-van-gert-jan-segers-aan-notaoverleg-europese-raad.html

CU. 2016d. "Waar is de les van de Brexit?" 14 December 2016. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1043778/347467/waar-is-de-les-van-de-brexit.html

CU. 2016e. "Bijdrage Gert-Jan Segers aan het plenair debat over de uitkomsten van de Europese Top van 15 en 16 december 2016." 14 December 2016. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n41555/news/view/1055198/932434/bijdrage-gert-jan-segers-aan-het-plenair-debat-over-de-uitkomsten-van-de-europese-top-van-15-en-16-december-2016.html

CU. 2017a. "Hoopvol Realistisch. Voorstellen voor een samenleving met toekomst. Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021." Parliamentary election manifesto. https://www.christenunie.nl/l/library/download/10071522/verkiezingsprogramma+2017-2021+christenunie.pdf?redirected=1

CU. 2017b. "De derde weg voor Europa." 9 February 2017. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1086390/347467/de-derde-weg-voor-europa.html

CU. 2017c. "Peter van Dalen in Straatsburg over Brexit en toekomst EU." 13 December 2017. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1144885/347467/peter-van-dalen-in-straatsburg-over-brexit-en-toekomst-eu.html

CU. 2018a. "Scheiding op basis van gezond verstand." 13 March 2018. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1202351/347467/scheiding-op-basis-van-gezond-verstand.html

CU. 2018b. “Staat van de (Europese) Unie in de Tweede Kamer. 26 March 2018. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1207402/347467/staat-van-de-%28europese%29-unie-in-de-tweede-kamer.html

CU. 2018c. Oproep aan premier Rutte: neem de rol van het VK in de EU over.” 13 June 2018. https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/1222021/347467/oproep-aan-premier-rutte-neem-de-rol-van-het-vk-in-de-eu-over.html

CU. 2019. “Waarom ik hoop dat u uw stem morgen aan ons toevertrouwt.” 22 May 2019. https://www.christenunie.nl/blog/2019/05/22/Waarom-ik-hoop-dat-u-uw-stem-morgen-aan-ons-toevertrouwt

CU. 2021. “Kiezen voor wat écht telt. Verkiezingsprogramma 2021-2025.” Parliamentary election manifesto. https://www.christenunie.nl/verkiezingsprogramma

CU-SGP. 2019. “Samenwerking Ja, Superstaat Nee. Voor een christelijk geluid in Europa. ‘Naar de kern.’ Verkiezingsprogramma ChristenUnie en SGP Europees Parlement 2019 – 2024.” European Parliament election manifesto. https://www.christenunie.nl/l/library/download/urn:uuid:3fe98a0a-377e-4a3b-90d9-9dae554dc2d3/verkiezingsprogramma+ep2019+online.pdf

de Gruyter, Caroline. 2020. “The Dutch Don’t Love Europe – and Never Did.” *Foreign Policy*, 16 September 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/16/the-dutch-dont-love-europe-and-never-did/

de Vries, Catherine. 2017. “Benchmarking Brexit: How the British decision to leave shapes EU public opinion.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55: pp. 38–53. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/jcms.12579

Glencross, Andrew. 2019. “The Impact of the Article 50 Talks on the EU: Risk Aversion and the Prospects for Further EU Disintegration.” *European View*, 18 (2): pp. 186–93. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1781685819879865

Hargitai, Tibor. 2017. “Analysis of EU positions of Dutch political parties.” Tibor Hargitai Medium, 12 March 2017. Retrieved from: https://tiborhargitai22.medium.com/analysis-of-eu-positions-of-dutch-political-parties-a6847fb0aa5d

Harwood, Mark. 2017. "How Euroscepticism Was Marginalised – Malta's Post-membership Euro-enthusiasm and the Impact of BREXIT." *European Politics and Society* (Abingdon, England) 19 (2): pp. 182-96. https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/doi/pdf/10.1080/23745118.2017.1391515?needAccess=true

Helbling, Marc, Hoeglinger, Dominic, and Bruno Wüest. 2010. "How political parties frame European integration." *European Journal of Political Research*, 49: pp. 496–521. https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01908.x

Henley, Jon. 2020. "Support for Eurosceptic parties doubles in two decades across EU." *The Guardian*, 2 March 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/02/support-for-eurosceptic-parties-doubles-two-decades-across-eu

Hooghe, Liesbet, Marks, Gary, and Carole J. Wilson. 2002. "Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?" *Comparative Political Studies*, 35 (8): pp. 965–89. https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/doi/pdf/10.1177/001041402236310

Kaniok, Petr, and Vit Hloušek. 2018. "Brexit outside of UK Politics: The Case of Czech Eurosceptics." *European Politics and Society* 19 (5): pp. 507-25. https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/doi/pdf/10.1080/23745118.2018.1463841?needAccess=true

Kopecký, Petr, and Cas Mudde. 2002. "The Two Sides of Euroscepticism. Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe." *European Union Politics* 3 (3): pp. 297-326. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1465116502003003002

Korteweg, Rem. 2020. "Wat zijn de gevolgen van de Brexit voor de positie van Nederland in de Europese Unie?" Europa Nu, 2 March 2020. Retrieved from https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vl5qg7iuije1/nieuws/wat_zijn_de_gevolgen_van_de_brexit_voor?ctx=vkrahi0jjyzj&tab=0

Leruth, Benjamin, Startin, Nicholas, and Simon Usherwood. 2018. "Defining Euroscepticism. From a broad concept to a field of study." In *The Routledge Handbook of Euroscepticism*, edited by Benjamin Leruth, Nicholas Startin, and Simon Usherwood, pp. 3-10. London: Routledge.

Lyons, Kate. 2016. “Frexit, Nexit or Oexit? Who will be next to leave the EU.” *The Guardian*, 27 June 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/27/frexit-nexit-or-oexit-who-will-be-next-to-leave-the-eu

Mac Cormaic, Ruadhán. 2019. “How the UK killed Euroscepticism across Europe.” *The Irish Times*, 1 June 2019. https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/how-the-uk-killed-euroscepticism-across-europe-1.3910882

New Statesman. 2016. “Who will win the EU referendum?” *New Statesman*, 22 June 2016. https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/06/who-will-win-eu-referendum

Pirro, Andrea LP, and Stijn van Kessel. 2018. “Populist Eurosceptic Trajectories in Italy and the Netherlands during the European Crises.” *Politics* (Manchester, England) 38 (3): pp. 327-43. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263395718769511https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263395718769511

Pirro, Andrea LP, Taggart, Paul, and Stijn van Kessel. 2018. “The populist politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis: Comparative conclusions.” *Politics* (Manchester, England) 38 (3): pp. 253-262. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263395718784704

RTL Nieuws. 2016. “Geert Wilders: Hoera voor de Britten, nu is het onze beurt.” *RTL Nieuws*, 24 June 2016. https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nederland/politiek/artikel/528091/geert-wilders-hoera-voor-de-britten-nu-het-onze-beurt

SGP. 2016. “Brexit-debat.” 28 June 2016. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/brexit-debat

SGP. 2017a. “Stem vóór het leven. Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021.” Parliamentary election manifesto. https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/10869/1/Verkiezingsprogramma2017-2021SGP.pdf

SGP. 2017b. “Tegenwicht nodig tegen Frans-Duitse as.” 21 June 2017. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/tegenwicht-nodig-tegen-frans-duitse-as

SGP. 2018a. “Meer regie nodig om Nederland voor te bereiden op Brexit.” 24 January 2018. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/meer-regie-nodig-om-nederland-voor-te-bereiden-op-brexit

SGP. 2018b. “Geen ‘vechtscheiding’ me Engeland.” 17 October 2018. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/geen-vechtscheiding-met-engeland

SGP. 2018c. "Oog hebben voor de reële Britse zorgen." 12 December 2018. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/oog-hebben-voor-reele-britse-zorgen

SGP. 2019a. "Bert-Jan Ruissen wil een bescheiden Europa." 16 February 2019. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/bert-jan-ruissen-wil-een-bescheiden-europa

SGP. 2019b. "Senator Van Dijk: 'Europese Unie lijkt zwart gat.'" 16 April 2019. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/senator-van-dijk-europese-unie-lijkt-zwart-gat

SGP. 2020a. "Gemengde gevoelens over UK Withdrawal Agreement. 30 January 2020. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/gemengde-gevoelens-over-uk-withdrawal-agreement

SGP. 2020b. "Hou de EU uit de Nederlandse Grondwet." 9 December 2020. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/hou-de-eu-uit-de-nederlandse-grondwet

SGP. 2021a. "Verkiezingsprogramma 2021-2025. In vertrouwen." Parliamentary election manifesto. https://sgp.nl/actueel/publicaties/verkiezingsprogramma-2021-2025

SGP. 2021b. "SGP: EU moet zijn plek kennen." 8 February 2021. https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/sgp-eu-moet-zijn-plek-kennen

Sommerlad, Joe. 2019. "Ten politicians who claimed Brexit negotiations were going to be easy." *Indy100* (the Independent), 30 March 2019. https://www.indy100.com/article/brexit-easy-nigel-farage-theresa-may-david-davis-boris-johnson-8846041

SP. 2016a. "Brits referendum toont noodzaak andere EU aan." 24 June 2016. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2016/06/brits-referendum-toont-noodzaak-andere-eu-aan

SP. 2016b. "Roemer: Brexit uitgelezen kans voor afgeslankt en democratisch Europa." 27 June 2017. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2016/06/roemer-brexit-uitgelezen-kans-voor-afgeslankt-en-democratisch-europa

SP. 2016c. "Laat EU werk maken van alternatieve samenwerkingsvormen." 30 November 2016. https://www.sp.nl/opinie/2016/laat-eu-werk-maken-van-alternatieve-samenwerkingsvormen

SP. 2016d. "Alleen een radicale ommekeer brengt EU op het rechte pad." 3 December 2016. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2016/12/alleen-radicale-ommekeer-brengt-eu-op-rechte-pad

SP. 2017. "Programma voor een sociaal Nederland voor de verkiezingen van 15 maart 2017." Parliamentary election manifesto. https://www.sp.nl/sites/default/files/pak_de_macht.pdf

SP. 2018a. "Leijten: Rutte moet grenzen stellen aan de EU." 22 February 2018. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2018/02/leijten-rutte-moet-grenzen-stellen-aan-eu

SP. 2018b. "Weeklog: Barnier mag tegenover de Britten best wat flexibeler zijn over de interne markt." 5 August 2018. https://www.sp.nl/column/dennis-jong/2018/weeklog-barnier-mag-tegenover-britten-best-wat-flexibeler-zijn-over-interne

SP. 2018c. "Weeklog: de gevaarlijke tunnelvisies bij de Brexit." 21 October 2018. https://www.sp.nl/column/dennis-jong/2018/weeklog-gevaarlijke-tunnelvisies-bij-brexit

SP. 2018d. "Red Nederland en breek de macht van Brussel." 30 November 2018. https://www.sp.nl/opinie/arnout-hoekstra-renske-leijten/2018/red-nederland-en-breek-macht-van-brussel

SP. 2019a. "Breek de macht van Brussel. Voor een rechtvaardige EU. Programma Europese verkiezingen 2019 23 mei 2019." European Parliament election manifesto. https://www.sp.nl/sites/default/files/breek_de_macht_van_brussel_0.pdf

SP. 2019b. "EU moet uittreden niet afstraffen." 21 January 2019. https://www.sp.nl/opinie/arnout-hoekstra-renske-leijten/2019/eu-moet-uittreden-niet-afstraffen

SP. 2019c. "Leijten: EU-onderhandelaar Brexit moet vertrekken." 10 April 2019. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2019/04/leijten-eu-onderhandelaar-brexit-moet-vertrekken

SP. 2019d. "Europa-lezing van Lilian Marijnissen. Europa begon als een nobel streven." 6 May 2019. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2019/05/europa-lezing-van-lilian-marijnissen-0

SP. 2020a. "Van Apeldoorn: de EU zal solidair en democratisch zijn of ze zal niet zijn." 3 November 2020. https://www.sp.nl/nieuws/2020/11/van-apeldoorn-eu-zal-solidair-en-democratisch-zijn-of-ze-zal-niet-zijn

SP. 2021. "Stel een daad. Verkiezingsprogramma van de SP voor de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen van 17 maart 2021." Parliamentary election manifesto. https://www.sp.nl/sites/default/files/verkiezingsprogramma_2021-2025.pdf

Szczerbiak, Aleks, and Paul Taggart. 2008. *The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism. Volume 2: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Szczerbiak, Aleks, and Paul Taggart. 2016. "BREXIT will boost 'hard Euroscepticism' elsewhere in Europe." London School of Economics Blog, 25 August 2016. Edited by Roch Dunin-Wasowicz. Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/08/25 /hard-euroscepticism-to-become-a-more-viable-political-project/

Taggart, Paul, and Aleks Szczerbiak. 2018. "Putting Brexit into Perspective: The Effect of the Eurozone and Migration Crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European States." *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (8): pp. 1194-214. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13501763.2018.1467955?needAccess=true

Usherwood, Simon, and Nick Startin. 2013. "Euroscepticism as a Persistent Phenomenon." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (1): pp. 1-16. https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2012.02297.x

Usherwood, Simon. 2018. "The Third Era of British Euroscepticism: Brexit as a Paradigm Shift." *The Political Quarterly* 89 (4): pp. 553-59.

Usherwood, Simon. 2020. "Euroscepticism after Brexit." *Political Insight* (Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom) 11 (2): pp. 30-33. https://libkey.io/libraries/249/articles/391094603/full-text-file?utm_source=api_55

Van Kessel, Stijn, Chelotti, Nicola, Drake, Helen, Roch, Juan, and Patricia Rodi. 2020. "Eager to Leave? Populist Radical Right Parties' Responses to the UK's Brexit Vote." *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 22, (1): pp. 65-84. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1369148119886213

Vollaard, Hans, Van der Harst, Jan, and Gerrit Voerman. 2015. *Van Aanvallen! naar verdedigen? De opstelling van Nederland ten aanzien van Europese integratie, 1945-2015*. The Hague: Boom Bestuurskunde.

Walter, Stefanie. 2020a. "Brexit Domino? The Political Contagion Effects of Voter-endorsed Disintegration." Paper presented at the GRIPE Seminar Series, 17 June 2020.

Retrieved from https://s18798.pcdn.co/gripe/wp-content/uploads/sites/18249/2020/06/Walter.2020-06.GRIPE_.pdf

Walter, Stefanie. 2020b. "EU-27 Public Opinion on Brexit." *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 1-20. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jcms.13107