Nordic and British Reluctance towards European Integration

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor at Cambridge, Dr. Julie E. Smith for her invaluable help on writing this thesis. Also Professor John M. Veitch, at the University of San Francisco for helpful suggestions regarding the regressions in chapter 3, and finally Dr. Geoffrey Edwards for his help early on. It must be stated though that naturally, I myself take full responsibility for the empirical work and the results of this thesis.
Preface

This thesis is based on my primary and secondary research. Where I have drawn on the ideas of others, either directly or indirectly, this is indicated by a footnote. In the bibliography I follow the tradition to sort Icelandic authors by their first names.

List of abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>CFP</td>
<td>Common Fisheries Policy</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<td>ECSC</td>
<td>European Coal and Steel Community</td>
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<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EFTA</td>
<td>European Free Trade Association</td>
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<td>EMU</td>
<td>European Monetary Union</td>
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<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>Euratom</td>
<td>European Atomic Community</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>KRFÍ</td>
<td>Association for the Rights of Icelandic Women</td>
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<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Association</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Swedish Social Democratic Party</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
<td>Single European Act</td>
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<td>TEU</td>
<td>Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)</td>
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<td>TFCMA</td>
<td>Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance</td>
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<td>ToA</td>
<td>Treaty of Amsterdam</td>
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<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States (of America)</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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Introduction

During the ever-closer cooperation and integration within Europe in the last three decades, it seems that criticism and caution towards it has mainly come from Britain and the Nordic countries. The British, the Nordics and several other Western European countries originally stood outside the European Communities. Even after some of these countries joined the European Community (EC) and later the European Union (EU), the Danes, Swedes and the British especially seem to have preferred cooperation to integration and have made much of the importance of national independence and sovereignty.

In this thesis I focus on the reasons for the reluctance towards the European integration process in the Nordic countries and Britain and will, both in an analysis of the discourse in the primary and secondary sources; and empirical discussion, try to identify common characteristics that might account for the “scepticism” towards European federalist ideals in these countries.

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2 These countries were most notably Austria, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

3 In this thesis I will be referring regularly to the ‘European Communities’ originating in the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, the European Atomic Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958, and the merger of their institutions in 1967. According to Stephen George (1998, p. 2.) the reference should strictly speaking be to the ‘European Communities’, but he stresses that since the merger it has become logical and common to speak of the European Community (EC) in the singular. I will adopt this usage of terms, and write EC when referring to the communities before 1993, when the European Union (EU) was founded incorporating the EC. Therefore the usage will vary between the EU and EC after the historical context. The EEC, ECSC and Euratom will be referred to when discussed as separate entities, and when quoting other authors.

Sometimes the word “Euroscepticism” is used to describe this phenomenon, especially in Britain. “Euroscepticism” has been defined as referring to ‘those who have strong reservations about the process – and end point – of European integration as associated with the EC/EU’. 5

Together with Britain my discussion will take into account the five independent states in the Nordic family: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. Usually reservations towards European integration in Britain and the Nordic countries have been treated as separate phenomena. The aim of this thesis is to show that they are not. I will analyse several aspects of the discussion on European integration, especially in Iceland, together with the underlying cultural, political and economic factors and try to view them in the light of the discussion in the other Nordic countries and Britain to identify the similarities and differences.

It has been suggested that three of these states, Norway, Denmark and Iceland have followed a particularly “British approach” towards European integration, while Sweden and Finland have followed a more “German model”. 6 I will thus look more closely at the political debate in Denmark, Norway and Iceland, than the one in Sweden and Finland. Iceland should be a good case study, since she tends to combine important characteristics of Scandinavia (strong sense of national identity, highly

6 For models see table i, from Ingebritsen, p. 18 – 23.
“Scandinavian” institutional structure after 600 years of Danish rule, a Nordic language, Lutheran faith, and participation in Nordic institutions) and those of Britain (an island, highly Atlanticist elites, ancient and symbolically important parliamentary heritage and individualistic population, i.e. not as “social democratic” as Scandinavia).

Table i: Models of European Unity*

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<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>The German Model</th>
<th>The British Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Authority centralized in EC institutions</td>
<td>Authority vested in national institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Rapid (variable geometry)</td>
<td>Slowly (consensus of all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>Improve national and EC economies; obtain greater freedom from the United States</td>
<td>Resist subordinating national economy to EC; retain partnership with the United States</td>
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Icelanders might be considered to be the highly “Eurosceptic”, since there have never been any serious moves to join the EC by any Icelandic government. Iceland has never been torn apart in a debate around a referendum on the pros and cons of the European Union. Currently, no political party in Iceland has EU membership on its agenda, although the matter is slowly grabbing attention, most importantly through recent declarations by the Icelandic foreign minister Halldór Ásgrímsson that are rather positive towards an Icelandic application. He recently gave a report to the Icelandic parliament (Alþingi) on European issues, which had a more positive tone.

3 See for instance in ‘Visir.is’ (Website of the Icelandic newspaper DV), (www.visir.is), 25 June 2000.
towards a future Icelandic application to the EU than has been seen before in the time of the current government (1995 - ?).  

In the empirical part of the thesis the attitudes within the member states of the European Union, together with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, will be examined in order to identify the factors, economic, political, demographic and cultural, that show the best correlation with variations in attitudes towards European integration between these countries, while putting them in context with other more “Europhile” populations of EU member states.

The underlying assumption behind the research is that Europe can be viewed as culturally divided into three parts, which tend to reflect the traditional divides within European Christianity: The Orthodox east, the Protestant northwest and the Catholic southwest. If being a member of the European Union is not perceived as economically necessary, the cultural and political factors originating in this divide have a decisive impact on public attitudes towards membership of the Union. Populations in predominantly Protestant countries tend to identify themselves more strongly with the nation states than their Catholic counterparts and thus to be more sceptical of

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9 The concepts of “Western” and “Eastern” Christianity have been used as means to argue for a specific “Western” Civilization, consisting of Western Europe, North America and Australasia, (see for example Huntington, Samuel P. (1997) The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, (New York: Touchstone)). If one is to use the fragmentation of Christianity to explain the extent of “civilizations” it must not be forgotten that “Western” Christianity has been seriously divided for half a millennium. This division has caused an enormous amount of strife and suffering in Europe, by far more so than the division between “Western” and “Eastern” Christianity. This thesis will not deal in any particular manner with the “Orthodox” part of Europe, which by some is even seen as not really having a place in “Western European entities”.

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supranational decisionmaking characterized by the EU.\textsuperscript{10} The public attitude is then again, to a certain extent, reflected in the actions of the political elites in these countries when acting in European contexts.

It is not new in social sciences to look at the “Protestant factor” as being the root of certain social developments. One only has to point to the seminal work of Max Weber, \textit{The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism}, (London, 1930), together with R.H. Tawney’s \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism} (London, 1938) and, last but not least the writings of Karl Marx.\textsuperscript{11}

The Nordic countries and Britain are the only predominantly Protestant countries in Western Europe, with over 80 per cent of Christians belonging to that particular category. Germany, Switzerland and The Netherlands have similar proportions of Catholics and Protestants, and the rest of Western Europe is predominantly Catholic.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{i.i Populations vs. elites}

A clear distinction must be made between the will of political elites and the population in general. In his model for analysing attitudes towards European

\textsuperscript{10} The Swedish scholar Carl B. Hamilton says that ‘[o]ne of the basic and recurrent issues in European post-war integration has been the countries’ attitude to supranational decisionmaking... The Nordic EFTA countries, Denmark and the UK have traditionally been sceptical to supranational decisionmaking.’ from Hamilton, Carl B. (1991) ‘The Nordic EFTA Countries’ Options: Seeking Community Membership or a Permanent EEA-Accord’, CEPR Discussion Papers, Discussion Paper No. 524, April, 25.


\textsuperscript{12} With the exception of Greece, which is Orthodox, if we define Western Europe as EU15, plus EFTA.
integration, Clive Archer\textsuperscript{13} defines four major categories of “actors” in the political arena: interest groups, political parties, government and voters. My analysis will focus mainly on the actions and words of governments and the attitudes of voters as reflected in opinion polls and referendums, although interest groups are quite probably an important factor in deciding government attitudes towards European integration, as argued in Christine Ingebritsen’s study on the impact of the political influence of leading sectors in the Nordic countries.\textsuperscript{14}

Nikolaj Petersen uses the two-level formulation of Robert Putnam to describe the foreign policy behaviour of governments.\textsuperscript{15} It envisions national leaders playing two “games”; one with the external environment and another with domestic constituents. This is evident in most of the Nordic countries where opinion polls, elections and referendums have shown the general population to have a different view on European integration than the governments or political elites, forcing them to reconsider their preferences. A further indication is that governmental moves towards European integration in the Nordic countries and Britain, as well as with the founding nations, have usually been instigated by “external environmental” factors, such as macroeconomic, geopolitical or strategic considerations, the EC itself or pressures from interest groups, mainly from the industrial sector, rather than voters preferences.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Archer, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{14} Ingebritsen.
\textsuperscript{16} Julie Smith says that European integration began as an elitist process that paid little attention to the “peoples” that were to be integrated, see Smith, Julie (1999) ‘The 1975 Referendum’, Journal of European Integration History, Vol. 5(1), p. 42.
Anyhow it is a fact that out of ten referendums on European issues in Britain and the Nordic countries, only three have resulted in negative votes. However, with the exception of the two referendums in the 1970s in Denmark and Britain, support for the European integration measures, whether be they joining the EC or accepting a new treaty, has not been greater than 57 per cent.17 This is despite the fact that in all the referendums the majority of the political elite and important economic interest groups have campaigned relatively actively for a “yes” vote.

In line with Clive Archer’s argument, I will argue in this thesis that ‘[t]his ‘Euroreluctance’ can be explained by the Nordic populations’ adherence to certain belief systems, and the pursuit of these values and aspirations through their own state system rather than through the European Union.”18 This is also true of the British population, which, in spite of having voted overwhelmingly in favour of staying in the EC in 1975, remains according to opinion polls, together with the Swedes, the most sceptical towards European integration of all populations in EU countries.19 This view is reinforced by what Helen Wallace says on adherence to the symbolic dimension to European integration: ‘[It] is either absent or negative for large sections of British opinion. Only a minority of the British feel strong symbolic attachment to European integration as defined by the EU, while Nato attracts positive symbolic resonance, as

17 The close vote in France on the Maastricht Treaty in September 1992, when 51.5% of voters were in favour indicates that “Euroscepticism” is not confined solely to the populations of the Nordic countries and Britain, although one might argue that the vote in fact turned out to be on Francois Mitterand’s style of government in general.
does ‘Atlanticism’\textsuperscript{20} which is something that is shared by Iceland and Norway to a large extent and will be covered somewhat in this thesis.

This thesis shows that although the most decisive factor in attitudes towards European integration in the Nordic countries and Britain might be economics and the position of powerful economic actors, the “belief system” and the “symbolic dimension” of Nordic and British populations, quite likely a late derivative of the Protestant reformation, has contributed to their strong sense of national identity and does play a major role in the way their governments and political elites behave in the European context.

1. The “Bad” Europeans

Since joining the EC in 1973, at least until the change of government in 1997, successive British governments, despite the best of intentions, were ever more openly reluctant to take on the duties of membership of the European Community. This has for example been manifested in the reservations of Conservative governments towards Europe’s social charter and what they saw as “federalist” integration. More recently the debate on Britain’s entry into the euro has become the clearest example of these tendencies in Britain, which are not restricted to political elites, stirring up powerful public sentiments as well.

Similar things have happened in Denmark, where the government has sometimes been out of touch with the strong anti-integrationist forces amongst the general public. In June 1992 the Danish people rejected the Treaty on European Union (TEU) – the so-called Maastricht Treaty – in a referendum, even though it had the support of the government. This led to special agreements for Denmark within the Union and an acceptance of the treaty in a referendum a year later.

In the rest of Scandinavia too, the public has usually been more hostile towards European integration than the political elites. In 1994, Finland, Sweden and Norway held referendums on joining the European Union following accession discussions. EU membership had relatively strong support (57%) in Finland, which at the time was

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faring rather bad economically; it was a close call in Sweden (52.2%), while the Norwegians turned it down (52.2% against).\(^{23}\) Sweden and Finland, together with Austria, thus joined the European Union on 1 January 1995. The public opinion in these countries has although continued to be rather hostile towards the European Union, and according to opinion polls conducted by EU staff; more Swedes considered EU membership “a bad thing” in 1998, than “a good thing”.\(^{24}\)

It is unlikely that the question of membership is to be raised again in Norway for several years, after two failed attempts at joining, and although there appears to be a strong will to “bring Norway closer to Europe” within the newly formed Social Democratic government of Jens Stoltenberg, it has pledged that the will of the nation manifested in the 1994 referendum will be respected.\(^{25}\)

In Iceland, the question of EU membership has never been taken up seriously, although the Icelandic government had on its table an open invitation to discuss membership terms alongside other EFTA-countries in the early 1990s.\(^{26}\) Some Icelandic politicians were even reluctant to join the European Economic Area (EEA)\(^{27}\)

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\(^{24}\) The margin is small, with 36% saying it’s a “bad thing” while 35% say it’s a “good thing”, see Eurobarometer, p. 41.


\(^{26}\) The European Free Trade Association, (EFTA), was founded by Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Britain in 1960. EFTA was at first intended to offer an alternative route for European cooperation, focusing mainly on economic cooperation. Later Iceland, Finland and Liechtenstein joined this association, while most members have now left it for the European Union leaving only Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

\(^{27}\) The EEA agreement is the deepest of the EU’s trading agreements and extends the so-called four freedoms of goods, services, capital and people to the three non-EU EEA states of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.
in 1993, although many at the time argued it would give the country all the benefits of EU membership, without the downsides.\textsuperscript{28}

1.1 The “Awkward Partner” – Britain and Europe

\begin{quote}
\textit{‘Hark, countrymen! Either renew the fight
Or tear the lions out of England’s coat’}
\textit{(Henry VI)}\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Early on in the process towards European integration, Britain chose a different path from the nations that came to form the nascent European Community in the 1950s. She came out of the Second World War, bruised but far from beaten. After having been among the victors in the war, British self-esteem was at an all-time high. Britain’s industrial capacity was higher in 1945 than it had been in 1939 and her output had increased during the war, while the other major European powers were economically devastated.\textsuperscript{30}

Although Winston Churchill, in his famous speech in Zurich in September 1946, mapped out a way for a “United States of Europe”, a topic that originated in the inter-war years, it did not seem to have entered his mind that the destiny he envisaged for Europe, as the only way to prevent a repetition of the war, was something his own country should embrace.\textsuperscript{31} Britain was at the time a colonial power, engaged in complicated dealings with her Empire/Commonwealth, which included countries from

\textsuperscript{30} Young, H. p. 7.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p. 17.
every corner of the globe. Also, her “special relationship” with the United States was something to cherish and nurture. Thus British statesmen saw Britain as at the intersection of three circles, the United States, the Commonwealth and Europe. In Churchill’s words, British interests lay in remaining at that intersection and ‘never, he said, permit Britain to escape from any of them.’

Although Churchill was not in office at the time, this attitude was adopted by a succession of British statesmen, and has been described as a ‘biblical text for the justification of strategic indecision’ in European matters.

Thus Britain chose in that period to stand aside from the developments towards European integration that were taking place on the continent. The insistence of the Frenchman Jean Monnet, a leading figure behind the Schuman Plan which led to the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), on an open-ended commitment with a pooled sovereignty had ‘a particularly detrimental impact on the chances of British participation.’

By the mid-1950s Britain started to follow the development on the continent more closely, and ‘the menace posed to British influence by decolonisation, the rise of the Superpowers and the West European revival was already becoming clear.’ In 1960 Britain took the lead in founding EFTA together with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Originally EFTA had two main objectives: To

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32 Ibid, p. 32.
33 Ibid, p. 32.
34 Young, J. W. p. 170.
establish a free trade area in industrial goods between the member states, and to create a base for making the whole of Western Europe a free trade area for industrial goods. These two objectives were met respectively in 1966 and 1977.\textsuperscript{36}

In July 1961 the British government led by the Conservative Harold Macmillan, decided that it was time to apply for membership of the EC. It had become clear that the Community was not developing by the lines initially proposed by Jean Monnet. The Six had not surrendered their national sovereignty wholesale. They had advanced in a careful, pragmatic way and kept the major decisions in the hands of national governments.\textsuperscript{37} Also, according to what Macmillan later wrote in his memoirs, the rhetoric of Charles de Gaulle, President of France made the EC look like the kind of club the British would want to participate in. De Gaulle wanted the kind of Community the British would feel able to join, but without the British in it: ‘L’Europe à l’anglais sans les Anglais’.\textsuperscript{38}

In spite of that later observation the British were met with fierce resistance by French negotiators, which originated in the outright hostility of de Gaulle towards Britain as an ‘American Trojan horse’ in Europe.\textsuperscript{39} Finally de Gaulle vetoed Britain’s entry in January 1963. It was a huge blow for British international standing, for the government and for Macmillan. It has been said that the ‘Anglo-French relations in the 1950s and 1960s, as in other periods, were conditioned at least in part by deep-

\textsuperscript{36} Nugent, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{37} Young, J. W. p. 170.
\textsuperscript{38} Quoted in Gowland & Turner, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{39} Young, J. W. p. 83.
seated suspicion and mistrust on both sides. Prejudice, as well as rational calculation of national self-interest, played a part in shaping attitudes and policies.”

Harold Wilson became Labour prime minister in October 1964. Relatively quickly pressure began to build up for a second application for the EC. There was sustained economic growth on the continent whereas the British economy was in trouble. The five member states other than France also pressed for a British application to end the division of Western Europe into rival trading blocks.

On 2 May 1967 the British cabinet confirmed its decision to reapply for EC membership. On 16 May de Gaulle held a press conference in which his words could not be understood otherwise than he still opposed British membership and pointed to chronic weaknesses in the British economy and the difficulties in correcting them as grounds for his opposition. The application process was in flux. In December 1967 de Gaulle held another press conference where he said that Britain’s entry would ‘obviously mean the breaking up of [the] Community’. This was as far as the application process went this time. A week later the Foreign Office decided to shelve Britain’s application.

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40 Gowland & Turner, p. 142.
41 Young, J. W. p. 87.
43 Quoted in Dinan, Desmond (1999) Ever Closer Union; An Introduction to European Integration, (Basingstoke: Macmillan), p. 53.
De Gaulle resigned as President in April 1969. The ground was set for going ahead with the accession discussions of Britain, Ireland, Denmark and Norway. Eventually, under the leadership of Edward Heath as Conservative prime minister and profoundly pro-European, Britain succeeded in joining the EC in 1973 along with Denmark and Ireland. EFTA became for the remaining members primarily a forum for organizing the trade with the EC. In contrast to Denmark and Norway, the British citizens had no means of expressing their will directly in a referendum.

Despite British determination to get into the EC, this first enlargement added a somewhat sceptical dimension towards the integration process. As Hugo Young has said, for Britain ‘entry into Europe was a defeat: a fate she had resisted, a necessity reluctantly accepted, the last resort of a once great power, never for one moment a climatic or triumphant engagement with the construction of Europe.’

Soon to live up to her later reputation as ‘an awkward partner’ in the European Community, Britain under a new Labour government in 1974 insisted on renegotiating her membership terms, following Labour’s pledge to do so in the election campaign. Although not the only reason for it, the renegotiation process is seen to be the peak of what was to be known as “Eurosclerosis” in the mid 1970s. It took eleven months and dominated two summits.

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45 ‘Skýrsla Halldórs Ásgrímssonar utanríkisráðherra’, p. 2.
47 Young, H. pp. 2-3.
48 A phrase attributed to Stephen George.
49 Dinan, p. 73.
Arguably British demands were somewhat met in the renegotiation process. On the issue of remaining in the EC, with a minority of seven ministers openly opposing it. Ministers were allowed the freedom to air their views in the referendum campaign. This was a breach of the rule of collective cabinet responsibility. Calls for a referendum had been made before the 1974 general election, but were typically rejected on the grounds that it might undermine the principles of parliamentary sovereignty. Ironically, as Julie Smith points out, those most willing to cede national sovereignty to the EC expressed the greatest anxiety about the loss of parliamentary sovereignty through the use of the referendum device.

The pro-Marketeers (those campaigning for a “yes” vote) were much better financed and organized than the anti-Marketeers. They had the backing of several strong labour unions and most sections of industry. The reason was simple; access to the common market was considered economically viable or even desirable. Furthermore most moderate politicians, most notably Heath, Wilson and Roy Jenkins, a leading Labour figure who later became Commission President, backed the “yes” vote. On the other hand the National Referendum Campaign, as the anti-Market movement was called, increasingly seemed mainly to consist of right- and leftwing extremists, like Enoch Powell, a conservative Eurosceptic and Tony Benn, Labour’s industry minister. They

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50 Some, for instance former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, have said that the renegotiations were mainly a face-saving cosmetic operation for the British government. See Young, H. p. 283.
51 Gowland & Turner, p. 203.
53 Gowland & Turner, p. 206.
54 Young, J. W. p. 128.
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represented the faction of anti-Marketeers that have been called the *Nationalists* on the left and the right, and could just as easily alienate voters as attracting them.\(^{55}\) A second category of opponents were the *liberal Internationalists*, which rejected the EC as “a rich mans club” and were typically found on the right in the Labour Party, and finally the *Atlanticists*, those most favouring cooperation with the United States to Europe.\(^{56}\) The arguments in the referendum debate broadly reflected the emphasis put on economic benefits of membership by the pro-Marketeers and the anti-Marketeers placing considerable weight on questions of national sovereignty and national identity.\(^{57}\) The voters however, beginning to see an improvement in their economic situation, seemed to favour the “bread and butter” aspect of membership over the possible loss of sovereignty highlighted by the anti-Marketeers but somewhat glossed over by the pro-Marketeers.\(^{58}\) The result of the referendum on 5 June was 67.2 per cent of those voting in favour of remaining in the EC.

In hindsight, there have been speculations that many of the most prominent pro-Marketeers really hid their “secret federalist agenda” during the campaign. David Owen says: ‘In this sense the anti-Europeans were right – there was a secret agenda. Yet many of the pro-Europeans were, like me, deeply suspicious of a federalist Europe.’\(^{59}\) Others, like Jim Callaghan, saw it differently: ‘Trying to get a pro-Marketeer to state the political case for entry is like trying to nail custard to the wall,’

\(^{56}\) For categories of actors in the 1975 referendum see Smith, J. ‘The 1975 Referendum’, pp. 49 – 51.
\(^{58}\) Ibid, pp. 53-5.
\(^{59}\) Quoted in Smith, J. ‘The 1975 Referendum’, p. 50.
he complained. Lord Tebbit says that entry to the EEC was ‘sold in Britain as entry into a trading system, not as a ticket on a train to economic, monetary and political union’.61

By 1979 Margaret Thatcher was in power as a Conservative prime minister. Some had hopes that she would bring improved relations with the EC, but it soon became clear that this would not be the case. Her foreign policy was in line with the tradition of British politics; strong defence, suspicion of European commitments and a desire for close cooperation with America. The new government was intent on reducing what it viewed as an unacceptable size of Britain’s net contributions to the EC budget.

‘This issue was to dominate Community affairs for the next five years, during which time Britain became more isolated than ever within the EC, and other member states began making plans to further European unity, if necessary without British participation.’63

Helen Wallace has argued that the moral indignation of Thatcher over the inequality of the budget issue was warranted, but that it led to a reinforcement of the view of “us”, the British and “them” the Europeans. Increasingly the voices that were critical of European integration set the tone, with the successive changes in the Conservative parliamentary party through elections and the government through frequent

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60 Quoted by Lord Tebbit in a speech on 2 March 1999, see The European Journal, April 1999, p. 3.
61 ‘Let the British Dog Cease to Occupy the Federalist Manger’ adoption of a speech by Lord Tebbit on 2 March 1999, The European Journal, April 1999, p. 3
63 George, p. 137.
64 Wallace, p. 679.
ministerial resignations and dismissals. Finally, a deep division on European issues led to a challenge to Thatcher in an annual leadership election in the Conservative Party in 1990 by Michael Heseltine, one of her critics on Europe. He won enough votes in the first ballot to force her to stand down, although John Major, the Chancellor of the Exchequer subsequently defeated him.\(^{65}\)

John Major shared to some extent Thatcher’s view on Europe, ‘favouring a single market but opposing any sign at political federalism.’\(^{66}\) The Conservative Party became ever more split on European issues and according to Helen Wallace the government had in 1997 drifted towards a radical reorientation of its foreign policy: ‘Gone was the symbolic language of the special US relationship…Gone was the rhetoric of a place at the heart of Europe and intensified partnership with Germany. In their place… the language of isolation and of free-riding.’\(^{67}\)

In 1997, when Tony Blair came to power as a Labour prime minister with a landslide victory behind him, he was determined to turn around his country’s negative approach towards the concept of Europe. Labour took office with a “modernizer’s” perspective. Positive attitudes towards European integration were considered to fit that perspective well: ‘Europe good, petty nationalism bad.’\(^{68}\) He even made a speech in French before the National Assembly in Paris in March 1998. Two months later, in May 1998, eleven of fifteen member states, but not Britain, pledged themselves to complete

\(^{65}\) Young, J. W. p. 160.  
\(^{67}\) Wallace, p. 681.  
\(^{68}\) The Guardian 23 May 2000, p. 6.
economic and monetary union. Ironically, as current President of the EU, Blair chaired the meeting. ‘Once again, Britain’s uncertainties about herself and her future condemned her to stand on the sidelines.’

The discussion on joining the common currency – the euro – is the main theme of the present European debate in Britain. Britain, together with Sweden and Denmark chose to stay out of that project, at least temporarily. Greece was the only EU country, which did not meet the criteria for membership and was thus forced to stay outside, although steps have been taken to allow her to join as soon as possible.

The British government has pledged to hold a referendum on joining the euro when five economic tests have been met. If these tests have been met will not be decided on until after the next general election, which might possibly be called in May 2001.

There is a division on the issue on joining the euro within the British government, with Gordon Brown the Chancellor of the Exchequer in doubt, and John Prescott, the deputy prime minister and Jack Straw, the home secretary even more reluctant. Others such as the influential Northern Ireland secretary Peter Mandelson are pushing for a referendum soon after the next elections and Robin Cook the foreign secretary believes that Britain will have little influence in the EU without the euro. However,

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the British public opinion seems to be fervently against joining the euro with a steady majority of two-thirds against it.\textsuperscript{71}

William Hague, leader of the Conservative Party, also remains fervently opposed to Britain adopting the euro. ‘If I did not stand for keeping the pound, the whole body politic in Britain would have conspired against the public to join the euro,’ he says.\textsuperscript{72} ‘It may be true that three-quarters of all Germans did not want to join the euro, but nobody represented them.’\textsuperscript{73} The Conservatives are determined to make “keeping the pound” a major issue in the next general elections. Hague says: ‘[W]e have issued a Sterling Guarantee that means that people can be sure that a vote for the Conservative Party at the next election is a vote to keep the pound.’\textsuperscript{74}

There are clear signs that some EU governments want to be able to push ahead with increasing integration while leaving other more sceptical countries, such as Britain, behind.\textsuperscript{75} Tony Blair, who wants Britain to be a ‘full and leading partner in Europe’, has resisted this view.\textsuperscript{76} He intends to hold a ‘landmark speech’\textsuperscript{77} on his vision for Europe in the autumn 2000. ‘Europe is not a conspiracy against Britain,’ he says, ‘Europe is an opportunity for Britain.’\textsuperscript{78} Even if that might be absolutely correct, the

\textsuperscript{71} According to the monthly Guardian/ICM “euro tracking poll” those who are against joining have increased from just over 50\% in January 1999 to around 60\% in May 2000. See The Guardian, 23 May 2000, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in ‘Little Boy Blue’, The Guardian Weekend, 8 July 2000, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{73} Idem.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{75} It seems to be the will of the French president Jaques Chirac that France and Germany lead the way in European integration as “pioneering states”, see for example The Economist 1 July 2000, pp. 43-4.
\textsuperscript{76} The Guardian, 1 July 2000, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{77} Idem.
\textsuperscript{78} Idem.
prime minister will have some persuading to do if/when his government finally decides on joining the euro.
1.2 Different Paths – Scandinavia and Europe

The Nordic countries, despite their many similarities and cultural bonds, have a history of choosing different paths when it comes to international cooperation. Thus Denmark, Norway and Iceland were all among the founding members of NATO, while Sweden and Finland maintained a policy of neutrality in security matters. Finland was somewhat forced to take that position in the wake of the Second World War by the Soviet Union, and had, despite claiming to be neutral, a pact of resistance to an attack by ‘Germany or any of its allies’ with the Soviet Union, the so-called Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (TFCMA) of 1948. This treaty was finally declared null and void by the Finnish and Russian governments in January 1992.79

On the economic side Denmark, Sweden and Norway were among the founders of EFTA in 1960, Iceland joined a decade later in 1970 and Finland finally became a full member of EFTA in 1985, after being an associate member since 1961.80

With the accession of Denmark and Britain into the EC in 1973, EFTA became ever more marginal in European context. The EC was ‘prone to present EFTA with de facto situations to which the EFTA countries had little option but to adjust’.81

79 Ingebritsen, p. 99.
81 Nugent, p. 32.
In the 1980s all the Nordic countries began to show an interest in closer ties with the EC, which was going through a revival period under a new and energetic Commission President Jacques Delors. Many of the EFTA countries had such extensive economic ties to the EC that the prospect of not responding to the change was not an option. The neutrality in military affairs that four of them (Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland) adhered to was although seen by the EC as a major impediment for full membership, and if that obstacle would be overcome their membership of the Community was seen to be likely to slow down the integration process.  

Hoping to fend off applications from the EFTA countries, Delors suggested a new form of association between the EC and EFTA. This was to be the European Economic Area (EEA).

The initiative did not succeed in fending off membership applications from the majority of the EFTA countries, since the EEA offered economic benefits, but not any considerable influence over EC decisionmaking.

With the removal of the obstacles posed by the cold war, the neutral EFTA countries followed by Norway applied for membership of the European Union. Finland, Sweden and Austria finally joined the EU in 1995, but history repeated itself in Norway, where membership was rejected in a referendum in 1994. Switzerland chose

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83 Dinan, p. 162.
not to go through accession negotiations after the population had rejected the EEA 
agreement in a referendum in 1992. 84

The Swedish and Finnish relations with the EC lack the dramatic overtones of those 
of Norway and Denmark. Sweden had, in the 1960s and 1970s, to tighten her relations 
with the EC for economic reasons, but the question of Swedish neutrality, which dates 
back to 1834, was always the barrier to full membership. Similarly, during the Cold 
War, Finland’s relations with the Soviet Union were an obstacle that was impossible 
to overcome. However, as soon as the bipolar international system collapsed in 1989-
1990, the Finnish and Swedish position changed, almost overnight.

It was clear from the outset that the Swedes had a “sceptical” outlook on European 
integration. Ulf Dinkelspiel, Sweden’s chief negotiator in the EEA talks and Europe 
Minister in Carl Bildt’s conservative government in the early 1990s said that it was 
his belief that “The United States of Europe” would never materialize, and even 
though borders were gradually wiped out, the nations themselves would prevail. 85

The Swedish populations disillusionment became clear in the first direct elections in 
Sweden to the European Parliament (EP) in 1995, where anti-EU candidates did very 

84 Switzerland is a country that has yet to warm to the idea of European integration, and her citizens 
turned down the EEA agreement even though it was backed by the Swiss Parliament and the Federal 
Council (the Swiss government) at the time (see for example The Economist, 13 May 2000, p. 46). For 
a comparison of European policies and referendum behaviour in Switzerland and Norway around the 
‘Single Cases or a Unique Pair? The Swiss and Norwegian ‘No’ to Europe’, Journal of Common 

85 Interview with Ulf Dinkelspiel ‘Bandaríki Evrópu verða aldrei að veruleika’, Morgunblaðið, 18 
well, while the Social Democratic Party (SAP), traditionally Sweden’s strongest political party, got its worst results ever in a national election, 28.1 per cent. Divided on the EU issue, the SAP offered two lists in these elections in five regions with the same top 12 names but in a different order: On one kind the pro-Europeans were given a higher placing on the list while on the other the priority was given to those of a more sceptical disposition.86 The scepticism of the public has translated into Sweden’s position within the EU, where ‘Swedish civil servants dealing with the EU are extremely critical of the Commission and the Council and, in deference to public opinion, the Swedish government decided not to participate in Stage III of EMU [European Monetary Union].87 Finland on the other hand has been participating in that project from the outset.

1.2.1 Denmark

Opposition to supranational authority has been prevalent in Denmark88 and she is often depicted as ‘a bastion of Euroscepticism’.89 This is despite the fact that a referendum on membership in 1972 showed a solid majority for entry (63.3 per cent against 36.7 per cent on a 90 per cent turnout).90 Political and business elites had successfully convinced a significant portion of the Danish population that joining the EC would be in Denmark’s best interest by facilitating trade.91

88 Hamilton, p. 25.
89 Archer, p. 1.
90 Idem.
Disillusionment with the EC gradually grew in Denmark and the percentage opposed to membership was above 40 per cent from 1976 to 1985. In a referendum on the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 the Social Democrats, then in opposition and ‘feeling the intensity of disappointment with the EC among their voters’ recommended a ‘no’ vote. They were disturbed by what they saw as moves towards a political union and worried about the enhanced powers for the European parliament. The vote went in favour of the SEA with 56.2 per cent voting “yes” and 43.8 per cent voting “no”. The prime minister, Poul Schlüter, trying to relieve the worries of the opposition that the EC was moving towards a union, promised that the SEA would leave the idea of a European union ‘stone dead’.

Then, in 1992, a thin majority rejected the Maastricht Treaty in a referendum, with 50.7 per cent against and 49.3 for. Peter Lawler says that the ‘impact of the coalition opposing the TEU was extraordinary given a pro-Treaty campaign supported by 75 per cent of the Parliament, the employers’ associations, the trades union leadership, the electronic media and all but one of Denmark’s 40-plus daily newspapers.’ The treaty had been negotiated by Schlüter’s centre-right government on the basis of an agreement between the three largest parties in Denmark, including the opposition Social Democrats. It had a firm backing of Danish political elites, despite the greater

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92 Archer, pp. 3-4.
93 Ibid, p. 4.
94 Idem.
95 Archer, p. 4.
96 Lawler, p. 578.
use of majority voting and more supranationalism, where only the Socialist People’s Party and the right wing Progress Party were against it. 97

The Social Democratic leadership seemed to be most out of touch with the majority of its supporters. Even though the Social Democrats had traditionally been divided on Europe, studies showed that two-thirds of Social Democratic voters rejected the treaty. The majority of the population showed reservations with respect to European integration in defence matters and justice and home affairs, plus a clear will to retain the Danish currency.98 This reflects the fact that debates on European integration in Denmark (and in other Scandinavian countries) have always exhibited a disjunction between the position of the political elite and the public. It has been argued that the participatory character of Scandinavian democracy and a tradition of transparency in government render this disjunction particularly significant.99

Negotiations between the major parties and the Socialist People’s Party resulted in a “national compromise” that fed into the re-negotiations of the Danish terms of accession to the Maastricht Treaty. The re-negotiations led to special agreements for Denmark within the Union, according to which

Denmark is not obliged to participate in the third stage of economic and monetary union and the introduction of a single currency; participate in drafting and implementing a common defence policy; restrict national citizenship under the plans for Union citizenship [and] any transfer of powers to the Community in the field of justice and home affairs will require the approval of the Danish Parliament by a five-sixth majority or a further referendum.100

97 Archer, pp. 5-6.
99 Lawler, p. 574.
100 Weidenfeld & Wessels, p. 226-7.
It was also made clear that Denmark could continue to maintain her environmental-, income- and social welfare policies. These concessions worked; the Danish people agreed to the Maastricht Treaty in a second referendum in May 1993 with a majority of 56.8 per cent.\textsuperscript{101}

A fifth referendum on EC matters in Denmark was in May 1998, on the Treaty of Amsterdam (ToA). Most political parties thought that Amsterdam was a good treaty, the Danish opt-outs were to be continued and the EU was considered to be moving in a direction Denmark favoured in areas such as subsidiarity, openness, employment and the environment. In spite of that the results were in no way resounding, with 55.1 per cent in favour. Politicians interpreted this, as a “cautious yes” and the prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, addressed the “no” voters by saying ‘we have not forgotten you… Healthy scepticism should not just be buried and forgotten’\textsuperscript{102}

It has been suggested that there are two schools of thought within the main opposition movement to European integration in Denmark, the June Movement (\textit{Junibevægelsen}). On the one hand there are the “Euro social democrats” who envisage Europe as a house of many rooms, one of which could be occupied by the Nordic states with their special model of democratic participation, social security and environmentalism – thus mostly criticizing the EU for being a facilitator of capitalist interests above all. On the other hand there are the “Green retreaters” who were

\textsuperscript{101} Archer, p. 5-6.  
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, (his translation), p. 7.
critical of environmental, social and political implications of the enlargement strategy. These two currents joined hands with the third stream of opposition, the nationalists, who first and foremost feared the erosion of Danish identity, political culture and language.\textsuperscript{103}

The Danish population is still, after a quarter of a century in the EC, firmly in the reluctant camp. Around 70 per cent of Danes believe that Denmark has benefited from being a member, yet, almost 58 per cent of those who have an opinion would be ‘indifferent’ or ‘very relieved’ if the EU were to be scrapped tomorrow.\textsuperscript{104} The EU might have won over the Danish stomachs, but it has not won over their hearts.

\textbf{1.2.2 Norway}

Norway’s efforts towards European integration have seen a large proportion of the political elites to be uncomfortably out of touch with the population on two crucial occasions. The two “no” votes on EC membership have left Norway as an “odd man out” in European context, being, together with Switzerland, one of only two major continental Western European nations that is not a member of the EU.

There was a clear majority in the Norwegian parliament (\textit{Stortinget}) for EC membership in 1971-72, around the three-quarters required for the approval of membership. This was not however reflected in the views of the general public at the time. An \textit{ad hoc} organization, initially founded in 1961 during the first round of the

\textsuperscript{103} Quoted in Lawler, pp. 575-6.
\textsuperscript{104} Eurobarometer, p. 46.
Nordic and British Reluctance towards European Integration

EC debate, was revived in 1970 and united city radicals, environmentalists and rural voters in opposition to EC membership.\textsuperscript{105} A restructuring of the political landscape took place, which lasted for years. The leadership of three political parties, the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party and the Christian People’s Party, sided with this opposition movement. Of the major parties only the Socialist Left and the Conservatives held their electorates reasonably intact, the former opposing and the latter supporting membership, while the leading Labour Party was split on the issue. It was a minority government of the Labour Party that promoted membership, tacitly supported by the Conservatives. The Labour prime minister threatened to resign (and eventually did) if membership was rejected, which added to a sense of lack of political leadership.\textsuperscript{106}

The vote in the September referendum went the “no”-side’s way with 53 per cent of the voters rejecting membership of the EC. Large segments of Labour party voters turned out to be on the “no”-side and voters in rural and peripheral areas were generally opposed to membership. Important segments of industry, most importantly the agricultural food industry, opposed membership, though industry in general was rather in favour of it.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, pp. 179-80.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, p. 181.
Thomas Pedersen says that domestic political issues have prevailed over economic considerations in Norwegian European politics. Geography and history, with centuries of foreign rule by Denmark and Sweden, combine to make many Norwegians fierce patriots. Moreover, the foreign policy links to Europe were rather tenuous, whereas many Norwegians have personal ties to America, and, like many British, seem to favour that relationship over the one with Europe. Pedersen also mentions a clear centre-periphery clash in Norwegian EC politics, where the question of membership pitted ‘the traditionalist north with strong currents of Protestant fundamentalism against the modernist south.’ The EC opponents in the north anyhow tend to have powerful allies in the south in conservative cultural groups and among academics.

The traumatic effect the referendum debate had on Norwegian society made it extremely difficult to raise the question of EC membership again. In spite of the unwillingness to do so, the decision of the Swedish government to prepare for membership in October 1990 inevitably had an impact on the stand of the Norwegian government. The turn of events in Finland had an even greater effect. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Labour prime minister told a Danish newspaper in April 1991 that the Finnish decision to apply changed the picture for Norway. On 25 November 1992, Norway applied for membership of the EC for the second time.

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109 Idem.
110 Ibid, p. 106.
In preparation for the debate, the Brundtland government prepared a document highlighting the benefits of membership over and above what the recently signed EEA agreement would offer Norway, including the chance to influence the shaping of European policies which a simple EEA affiliation would not give it.\textsuperscript{111} Furthermore the government promoted the view that it was time to ‘take exceptionalism beyond national boundaries for reasons of both necessity and virtue. It depicted the EU as offering a fraternal environment for an advanced welfare state.’\textsuperscript{112}

However opinion polls consistently showed the majority of the Norwegian population opposed to EU membership. In July 1992, after the Danish “no” to the Maastricht Treaty, only 34 per cent of Norwegians supported membership, 49 per cent opposed it and 16 per cent were undecided.\textsuperscript{113} In September, another poll showed 58 per cent against membership and only 31 per cent in favour.\textsuperscript{114} By 1994, the “No to the EU” movement had evolved into the country’s largest political organization, claiming to have 130,000 members.\textsuperscript{115} The movement had a clear “red-green” and progressivist public face, involving a plethora of dissidents from formal political parties, trades union members and members from the fishing and farming communities.\textsuperscript{116} When the final verdict came on 28 November 1994 it did not come as a surprise.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{112} Lawler, p. 578.
\textsuperscript{113} Pedersen, pp. 111-2.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{115} Lawler, p. 579.
\textsuperscript{116} Idem.
Norway has, together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, continued to use the EEA agreement to tighten her cooperation with the European Union. Norway, again together with Iceland, has also become an associate member of the Schengen agreement for the main reason of being able to continue with the Nordic passport free zone.117

The current Labour government in Norway is solidly pro-European and would like to forge closer ties to Europe.118 Desmond Dinan says: ‘Given the seemingly inexorable trend toward regional integration in Europe and elsewhere, nonmembership of the EU may ultimately prove economically disadvantageous, if not disastrous, for Norway and Switzerland. For domestic political reasons, however, their accession to the EU seems highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.’119

117 The Schengen agreement was concluded in Schengen (Luxembourg) in 1985 and is aimed at the gradual removal of controls at internal frontiers of EU member states. Norway and Iceland are associate members of the agreement. Now all EU member states are members of the Schengen agreement except for Ireland and the UK, which were allowed to opt out of the protocol.


119 Dinan, p. 168.
1.3 The View from Afar – Iceland and Europe

The question whether Iceland should apply for membership of the European Union has often been answered with the blunt remark that it is ‘not on the agenda’. If one sticks to the discussion, the reason brought up is that it would not be in Iceland’s interests to lose control over her most important natural resource: the fishing grounds.

According to Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson of the University of Iceland, the reason for resisting European integration in Iceland differed from those of “the EFTA neutrals”. Iceland, like Norway, is not a neutral state and thus the reasons ‘essentially concern sovereignty and economic interests.’ Others, like Sigurður Snævarr, an Icelandic economist, state that the Icelandic attitude towards joining the European Union is so influenced by the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) that if it is not taken into account it becomes incomprehensible. The CFP has been considered a major impediment for the discussion on membership of the European Union, or at least been used by politicians as an excuse for inactivity.

Iceland has probably been less integrated into European economics than any other Western European state. It traded extensively with the United States and Eastern

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122 Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, p. 160.
124 Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, p. 159.
Europe alike during the post-war period, although the importance of Western European markets has grown steadily over the years.¹²⁵

Nationalism in Iceland came triumphant out of World War II following a successful struggle for independence, and all attempts at bringing Iceland into international cooperation were strongly resisted by nationalist forces, fearing that the benefits of independence might be lost.¹²⁶ This even resulted in the only political riots in the history of the Republic on 30 March 1949, when the Icelandic parliament agreed on Iceland’s membership of NATO with 37 votes for membership and 13 against. The police had to use batons and tear gas to disperse an angry mob that attacked the parliament building in Reykjavík. Anyhow, Iceland was a nation that had no intention of having an army of its own and many Icelanders welcomed U.S. military protection. There was a solid majority for NATO membership in the parliament, but the nation was divided.¹²⁷

When the seven nations that formed EFTA started their discussions, Iceland together with Greece, Ireland and Turkey, was not offered the chance to participate. One reason is most likely that EFTA was mostly intended as a free trade area with industrial goods, and to a very limited extent with agricultural- and fishing products. Another important reason might be the serious dispute with Britain at the time over

¹²⁵ It had reached the level of 70% of exports and 65% of imports in 1998 (EEA), see Ísland í tölum 1999-2000, (1999) Helga Einarsdóttir (Ed.), (Reykjavík: Hagstofa Íslands), p. 15.
¹²⁶ Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, p. 160.
Iceland’s unilateral extension of her fishing grounds to twelve miles, which would probably have made it hard for Britain and Iceland to be members of the same trade association.\textsuperscript{128} Iceland’s economic policy at the time, which had been dogged by state interventions and restrictions on imports, was also such that it would have been inconceivable for her to be a founding member of EFTA.

In 1959 a new government, consisting of the conservative Independence Party and the Social Democratic Party, started to rethink the Icelandic approach to Europe. In the 1960s major steps were taken to liberalize the economy. Previous governments had subsidized exports and most investment had been directed by the governments into the fishing industry, which, in a period during the 1950s, even had access to foreign currency at a lower price than other industries.\textsuperscript{129}

In the spring of 1961 it was starting to become clear that several member states of EFTA would seek membership of the EC, thus the Icelandic government thought it would not be wise to seek membership of EFTA. Iceland considered three options: Membership of the EC, associate membership of the EC, although no one really knew what that would entail, and, thirdly, a customs agreement with the EC.\textsuperscript{130} Gylfi Þ. Gíslason, minister for trade and education at the time toured European capitals in 1961 to introduce the Icelandic position to the leaders of European states and the European Commission in Brussels. Gíslason expressed fears for Iceland’s economic,

\textsuperscript{129} Sigurður Snævarr, pp. 60-62.
\textsuperscript{130} Gylfi Þ. Gíslason, p. 201.
political and cultural isolation if she could not find an acceptable solution as to how to connect Iceland better to the integration process. On the other hand Gíslason made it clear that in the light of her small population and her reliance on fisheries Iceland would not consider it possible to give foreigners an equal access to running businesses in Iceland, nor allowing the free movement of capital and labour between Iceland and Europe. Also, Iceland would never back down from her position on the unilateral extension of the fishing grounds. The European ministers showed ‘great understanding for the problems Iceland was facing, and a large amount of goodwill towards Iceland’s position.’ In the discussions it became clear that most European statesmen considered associate membership of the EC the best choice in the circumstances, rather than full membership or a customs agreement.

However, with de Gaulle’s veto on British membership of the EC, the situation changed so that the matter was off the table for a while.

In 1967 the government started looking towards membership of EFTA as a way to pull the country out of a severe economic downswing. It was believed to be a way to revive other industries besides the fishing industry and to reach an agreement with the EC on lower tariffs for fish exports into the Community. Iceland applied for membership in 1969. In a vote in the parliament on the application, all members of the government coalition voted in favour (the Independence Party and the Social Democratic Party) together with three members of the opposition Socialist People’s

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131 Ibid, p. 204 (my translation).
132 Sigurður Snævarr, p. 356.
Alliance. The majority of the People’s Alliance and the Centre Party were against the application. In a speech at the beginning of the accession negotiations, Gíslason stressed the importance for Iceland to join her friends and neighbours in an ever-increasing cooperation. He said that ‘Icelanders wish from the bottom of their hearts to have their neighbours on both sides of the Atlantic as friends – even ever better friends – especially the EFTA nations. And they know that the only way to have friends is to be one.’ Iceland joined EFTA in March 1970. In 1972 she concluded negotiations with the EC on a significant lowering of tariffs on fish exports.

In the debate on the matter in the 1960s and early ‘70s there was a deep divide between the government and the majority of the parliamentary opposition, which considered closer ties to Western Europe unnecessary and that Iceland should not participate in supranational organisations, since that would weaken her sovereignty and independence and give foreign companies the opportunity to run businesses in Iceland. The government was accused of betrayal by the opposition and to be preparing for full membership of the EC. The supporters of the government in parliament held a different position. They considered Iceland’s membership of EFTA a necessary step to ensure the welfare of the Icelandic economy, and that there was nothing in being a member of EFTA that would weaken the nation’s sovereignty. In spite of this disagreement the Centre Party and the People’s Alliance took no

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133 Gylfi P. Gíslason, p. 207.
134 Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, p. 159.
measures to back out of EFTA membership when they took power after a general election in 1971.\textsuperscript{135}

When the EEA agreement was negotiated and ratified in the early 1990s it was considered in Iceland to be a sufficient step and a safeguard against an otherwise economically necessary application for membership of the EC.\textsuperscript{136} In a meeting of the leaders of the EFTA countries in Oslo in March 1989, the Icelandic prime minister Steingrímur Hermannsson, gave an account of special preconditions on Iceland’s behalf, including ‘we [Icelanders] can never surrender ourselves to supranational institutions. We can never surrender our sovereignty, or our right to make our own necessary decisions to ensure our financial standing and independence’.\textsuperscript{137}

In the autumn of 1992 there was a call for a national referendum on the EEA agreement and the opposition in parliament put forward a proposition on that issue which was supported by many in the labour movement and the national farmers movement. A special movement, ‘Solidarity for Independent Iceland’ (Samstada um óhád Ísland), was formed to fight against the EEA agreement. Members of the movement went from door to door collecting signatures for its cause. It was however clear from the start that the government had no intention of holding a referendum. The foreign minister and the government (a coalition government of the Independence

\textsuperscript{135} Gylfi Þ. Gíslason, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{136} See for example a speech by Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, the Icelandic foreign minister at the time, 20 August 1992 when he was introducing the EEA agreement to the Icelandic Parliament. (www.althingi.is/altext/116/08/i20125029.sgml).
Party and the Social Democratic Party) were accused of wearing the “emperor’s new clothes” and not daring to let the will of the nation decide,\textsuperscript{138} and, more importantly, of breaking the constitution by giving up Icelandic sovereignty.\textsuperscript{139} The government answered this argument by pointing to a report by a committee of four legal experts on the matter and the opinion of several other prominent lawyers, thus of five coherent legal opinions that the parliament got, only one came to the conclusion that the EEA agreement would possibly break the constitution. Also, a referendum on the matter would not change anything with respects to an alleged breach of the constitution.\textsuperscript{140}

According to an opinion poll published on the 5 November 1992, 75.7 per cent of those who had an opinion wanted the EEA agreement to be put to a referendum.\textsuperscript{141} On the other hand in an opinion poll published 16 October a slim majority supported the EEA agreement, with 46 per cent supporting it while 44 per cent were against it. Support for the agreement had increased compared with July when a poll had showed a majority against it.\textsuperscript{142} It is highly likely that support for the agreement in a referendum would have been a close call, although Hannibalsson proclaimed that even if the government agreed to a referendum he was certain that the EEA cause would win.\textsuperscript{143}


\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Morgunblaðið}, 6 November 1992, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Morgunblaðið}, 16 October 1992, p. 2.

Opinion polls usually showed that men were in general more favourable towards the EEA agreement than women, although a conference of the Association for the Rights of Icelandic Women (KRFÍ) in October 1992 seemed to look at the agreement as very favourable to equal rights and women in general.¹⁴⁴

A significant event took place in parliament in September 1992 when the spokesperson for the Women’s Alliance on Foreign Affairs, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir broke ranks and declared that she could not vote against the EEA agreement, although she supported the proposed referendum.¹⁴⁵ The leadership of the party responded by threatening to relieve her of her position in the parliamentary foreign committee, but the leader of the parliamentary party of the Women’s Alliance withdrew that threat a few days later after a public outcry against “Stalinist” measures.¹⁴⁶ Gísladóttir even went as far as declaring that she thought that Icelandic membership of the European Community was not out of the question and that Icelandic politicians might regret a downright denial of that at a later stage.¹⁴⁷

Some thought that the EEA agreement would lead to a massive influx of workers to Iceland, and that ‘foreign companies in Iceland…could import Greek, Irish,

¹⁴⁵ This controversial stand catapulted Gísladóttir into becoming one of Iceland’s most popular politicians. She was chosen as a mayoral candidate for a coalition of left of center parties in Reykjavík in 1994, and has been the mayor of the Icelandic capital since.
Portuguese or Spanish low wage workers to work instead of [higher paid] Icelanders.¹⁴⁸

Still others, surprisingly Svavar Gestsson, a former leader of the People’s Alliance, proclaimed that it would be a lesser of two evils to join the European Community than to have the EEA agreement. He would vote against it in parliament, although he said that he would not seek its termination if he were subsequently in government.¹⁴⁹

The parliament voted on the referendum proposal on 5 November 1992. It was rejected with 31 votes against 28. All members of the opposition parties supported the proposal together with two MPs for the Independence Party.¹⁵⁰ With this result it was becoming clear that not much could prevent the ratification of the EEA treaty in the Icelandic parliament.

The ferocity of the debate intensified when it drew closer to ratification. An example of the debate, which at times sounded as if Iceland was really joining the EC, is to be found in a speech by Páll Pétursson, minister for social services since 1994, but who was in opposition at the time, and who was in the forefront of those opposing the agreement:

I think it is rather idiotic to imagine that we will have any impact [on Europe] although we might wag there as the smallest bone in the dogs tail… From what I have seen in my time as a member of the committee of EFTA MPs, the European Community is not democratic. Democratically elected representatives do not have much say in anything. Bureaucrats, who

¹⁴⁸ Hannes Jónsson, p. 18, (my translation).
¹⁵⁰ Morgunblaðið, 6 November 1992, p. 31.
think they are kings over certain subject areas and concoct rules that the rest of us think are not of much worth, rule this Community.¹⁵¹

The argument used by Pétursson in 1992, that Icelandic influence in the European Union would be miniscule because of the small size of the population is a common one.

After the ratification of the EEA treaty, “Europhiles” in Iceland celebrated their victory. The foreign minister, Hannibalsson, became increasingly positive towards following other Nordic applicants into the European Union. At its congress in 1994 his Social Democratic Party adopted the position that Iceland should apply for membership of the EU as soon as possible. This was to become the main topic in the election campaign of the Social Democrats in 1995.¹⁵²

However, for domestic political reasons, the Social Democrats did very poorly in the elections, getting around 11 per cent of the vote, and the government only retained a majority of one in parliament. The prime minister, Davíð Oddsson, decided to change partners in government, and the Centre Party replaced the Social Democratic Party in the coalition with Oddsson’s Independence Party. Oddsson did not share the European enthusiasm of Hannibalsson, and the new government pushed all talk of applying for membership of the European Union off the table on the grounds of the EU’s

unacceptable fisheries policy and that all vital economic interests of Iceland were ensured by the EEA treaty.  

Since 1999 there has been a surge in enthusiasm for applying for membership of the EU on the grounds that Icelandic influence on legislation within the EEA is only during the preparatory stages. The argument is that this situation is not to be tolerated, thus Iceland should be a member to be in a position to influence European legislation, majority of which is automatically incorporated into Icelandic law on the basis of the EEA agreement.

While this upsurge in interest has been mainly at the level of grassroots politics, there has been a certain political backlash in the push for membership application of the EU on behalf of Iceland in the last five years on the elite level. Today, no political party in Iceland has the subject officially on its agenda. That has to do with a merger of three political parties on the left into a left-of-centre Coalition. Before that merger, the Social Democratic Party was the only Icelandic party that had application for membership on its agenda. The party was rather small, with traditionally between 11 to 16 per cent of the electorate behind it, and it has had to weaken its European approach somewhat out of consideration for its Coalition partners, the Women’s Party

153 See for example ‘Skýrsla Halldór Halldór Ásgrímssonar utanríkisráðherra’.

154 See for instance a proposal put forward by the Young Social Democrats and the Liberal Social Democrats on the founding congress of the new Social Democratic Coalition, 5 May 2000, webpage of the Young Social Democrats (www.groska.is).

155 With one important exception; in 2000 the foreign minister and the leader of the Centre Party, Halldór Ásgrímsson, declared that Iceland should start considering EU membership, since the EEA agreement could, within a few years, amount to a breach of the constitution. See ‘Visir’ 28 June 2000, (www.visir.is).

156 Its official name is Samfylkingin, which could be translated simply as “the Coalition.”
and the fervently anti-European and socialist People’s Alliance. When the new party was formed in May 2000, its newly elected leader, Össur Skarphéðinsson, said that the future task of Icelandic politicians would be to ‘define the objectives of an Icelandic application for membership of the EU’. Skarphéðinsson, previously a member of the Social Democratic Party, has obviously chosen to take a cautious view in order not to invoke disputes within the new coalition. At the founding congress there was a proposition put forth by the Young Social Democrats and a liberal faction of the Coalition, which suggested that Iceland should apply for membership of the EU as soon as possible. It was quietly sidelined by the congress, although most of the speakers who came up on the subject were rather positive towards the proposal. That might have to do with the fact that the fiercest nationalists in the People’s Alliance actually split from the party before the merger and founded their own party – the Greens – which got 9.1 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary elections in May 1999.

In a speech to a gathering of Icelandic business people in February 2000, in the wake of an opinion poll showing that only 32 per cent of Icelanders want to apply for membership of the European Union, prime minister Oddsson, tackled the issue of EU membership. He said

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157 Skarphéðinsson’s acceptance speech at the Social Democratic Coalition’s founding congress, Reykjavik, Webpage of the Social Democratic Coalition (www.samfylking.is), 5 May 2000.
158 Eirikur Bergmann Einarsson, ‘Skref í rétta átt’, Webpage of the Social Democratic Coalition (www.samfylking.is), 8 May 2000
159 In those elections Samfylkingin, which was at the time not a formal party, got 27 per cent of the vote.
it is not possible to exclude the idea of [Icelandic] membership of the European Union for all time, not least if the Union develops towards an open and intimate trade area and away from a federal state. Right now I see nothing that calls for Icelandic membership, because the Union is developing in a clear contrast to our interests. The bureaucracy of the EU and the extent of its lawmaking that has no relation to trade and the common market, are ever increasing. The extent of the Union’s meddling in affairs that have up until now been subject to the democratic processes of the individual member states, like taxes and social services, increases steadily. The smaller member states have less and less influence on their own affairs and get fewer important posts than before. The impetuous reaction of the Council of Ministers (sic) to the elections and the forming of government in Austria is a lucid example of these interventions and moved them into a new and hitherto unknown dimension.\footnote{Quoted in the web-edition of the Icelandic newspaper DV, ‘Visir’, 16 February 2000, (www.visir.is), (my translation).}

Being the leader of the largest party, the conservative Independence Party, which usually attracts around 40 per cent of the electorate in general elections and prime minister since 1991, Oddson’s words carry a considerable weight.

Some Icelandic politicians like to point out that Iceland fulfils all the conditions for membership of the European Union but chooses to stand outside it. Thus in a recent visit to the German Bundestag in Berlin, the president of the Icelandic parliament, Halldór Blöndal, quoted the president of the Bundestag, Wolfgang Thierse, as saying that ‘it was interesting that Icelanders, who fulfilled all the criteria of the European Union chose to stay outside, when other nations, that did not fulfil the Economic preconditions of the EU yet, wanted to get in.’\footnote{‘Morgunblaðið’, 6 May 2000, (www.mbl.is), (my translation).}

Guðmundur Hálfdánarson says that Icelanders have in fact been active participants in the process of European integration without having discussed the political factors behind it, probably in the hope of being able to enjoy the fruits of cooperation without having to give up the independence of the nation state. ‘This route will not be
available for long,’ Hálfdánarson says, ‘since in this world the rule of getting everything for nothing does not apply.’

In a recent report from the Icelandic foreign ministry, there is a somewhat more positive tone towards membership of the European Union than has been seen at any time during the current government. Anyhow, Tómas Ingi Olrich, chairman of the foreign committee of the Icelandic parliament and an MP for the Independence Party says that this does not bode any changes in the government’s position towards EU membership. ‘It has been the policy of this government not to apply for membership, but to watch closely the development within the Union, and so it has done… This report constitutes a part of that policy.’ When asked if the EEA agreement would be a sufficient solution for Iceland if Norway became a member of the EU, Olrich says that there could be some delay before that happens. ‘Norway has twice applied for membership, and twice the nation has rejected the accession agreements it had in front of it. Even if Norwegian politicians wanted Norway to be a member of the EU, they are aware that it might be a dangerous game to play if the opinion of the nation hasn’t changed in a significant manner,’ says Olrich.

But even if we imagine that Norway would decide to join, I can not see that it would change the EEA agreement in any manner. It is possible that the parties to the agreement, Iceland and Liechtenstein on the one hand and the EU on the other, would want to simplify the institutions of the agreement and I believe we would find a solution that would not be less beneficial for Iceland than the institutional structure we now have. I do not think that the EU would want to terminate the EEA agreement. That would have to be done by consensus and I doubt that the EU would see any gains in doing so. Iceland is not important in EU matters, we create no problems for the EU, and the EEA agreement has been a success as the report of the foreign

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163 Interview with Tómas Ingi Olrich, chairman of the foreign committee of the Icelandic parliament, Reykjavík, June 2000, (my translation)
Nordic and British Reluctance towards European Integration

minister shows. If Norway would join, Iceland would still have a choice: To join the EU or to stay out. In politics it is important to have choices. The worst scenario I can picture is that Iceland would be forced to join the EU because it had no choice. That would be a sad entry into the European Union.164

According to the Icelandic foreign ministry it is not likely that Iceland would be given any special concessions in accession negotiations with the EU at present. The ministry assesses that the will to add further to the large group of EU applicants is not great, although some EU politicians, especially Nordic ones, have encouraged Iceland to apply, and it would be unlikely that an Icelandic application would be turned down since Iceland meets all the relevant criteria for membership.165

164 Interview with Tómas Ingi Oðrích, (my translation)
165 ‘Skýrsla Halldórs Ásgrímssonar’, p. 27.
2. Islands and Outskirts – the arguments against Europe

As can be seen from previous chapters several reasons have been given for the apparent scepticism towards European integration in the Nordic countries and Britain. When the trenches have been dug and the fighting has begun, arguments based on national sovereignty, national identity and the fear of losing what is considered to be superior to anything Europe has to offer, have been most prevalent, like in the Danish battle cry before the referendum on the Treaty of Amsterdam: ‘We want to regain our sovereignty and our free economy. We do not want Jacques Delors on our coins; we want to keep our Queen Margarethe on all our national symbols.’\textsuperscript{166} There is but one hurdle that all have to cross; the one of economics.

2.1 Economics matter

‘Rival states can be frightened into friendship only by the shadow of some greater danger,’\textsuperscript{167} says A.J.P. Taylor in his book on the origins of the Second World War. For the modern democratic statesman the prospect of economic decline is danger enough to consider pushing old rivalries aside.

It is safe to say that ideals of peace, cultural harmony and European unity are much less a consideration in the Nordic countries and Britain when it comes to joining “Europe” than the cold hard facts of economics. Helen Wallace says that a mix of


symbolic and substantive engagement with the EU characterizes most member states of the EU, except for Britain and Denmark and ‘at first sight’ (in 1997) Sweden and Austria, though Finland looks set upon an ‘Europeanization’ trajectory.\textsuperscript{168} For these countries the economic aspect clearly overshadows the symbolic cultural aspect that is interwoven into e.g. German and French sentiments on the EU. ‘The symbolic dimension [in France and Germany] forms a cradle in which other factors are nested and conditions other kinds of judgement about the pros and cons of integration,’\textsuperscript{169} says Wallace.

In Denmark the support for joining the EC grew in the 1960s and early 1970s for the reason ‘that Denmark was still a sizeable agricultural exporter and its two main markets were the UK and the Federal Republic of Germany.’\textsuperscript{170} Britain too had made her decision to join the EC primarily for economic reasons, and to a lesser extent to find new channels for British foreign policy, weakened by the loss of an empire.

John W. Young says that the costs of membership have been greater than the public was led to expect in the 1975 referendum, and the benefits not so great.\textsuperscript{171} Further he says that this cost-benefit analysis way of looking at the EC is perhaps too pragmatic.

Arguably it is because Britain was ‘sold’ EEC membership as a pragmatic step, and because the British people judge the results in these terms, that Britain has \textit{not} become a leading player in the Community. She does not share the idealism of other members, and this has an important effect on how she fares.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{168} Wallace, p. 686.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid, p. 685.
\textsuperscript{170} Archer, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{171} Young, J. W. p. 167.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid, p. 178.
The economies of the Nordic countries are small and export-dependent, although their primary exports vary greatly. For the Swedes, long cherishing their neutrality, membership of the EU was a question of reviving a declining welfare state. Significant Swedish industrial conglomerates put immense pressure on the government to apply. Finland, despite embracing the European symbolism with more enthusiasm than Britain, Denmark and Sweden, had a huge economic incentive to join, since important markets for her had collapsed with the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

In Norway and Iceland, the two Nordic countries that have chosen to stay outside the European Union, economic factors have played major parts in the decisions made by governments and voters. According to Christine Ingebritsen the political influence of leading sectors of the economy in the Nordic countries (Norwegian oil, Swedish manufacturing, Finnish manufacturing and forestry, Danish agriculture and industry and Icelandic fisheries) is the decisive factor in shaping the discourse on European integration. This view is supported by Sigurður Snævarr, which says that the

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173 Lawler, p. 567.
174 Ingebritsen, pp. 146-7.
175 Although Finnish elites have successfully played the part of “good Europeans” since joining the EU, the public is less enthusiastic. In 1998 Finland had the third largest proportion of citizens considering EU membership “a bad thing” (21%) after Sweden (36%) and Britain (22%), and followed by Denmark (20%). Eurobarometer, p. 41.
176 The difference is though that while the choice in Iceland is made by the political elites that have never taken steps to apply for membership of the Union, the choice in Norway more clearly rests with the electorate against governing elites that have twice agreed on terms of entry and campaigned for a “yes” vote.
177 Ingebritsen, p. 34.
Icelandic approach to the European Union is incomprehensible if not viewed in the light of the interest of the fishing industry. Tómas Ingi Olrich says:

I think fisheries are a determinating factor. The accession terms Norway was offered after negotiations with the EU the last time they applied would have been considered completely unacceptable to Iceland. Icelanders have also watched the fate of the British within the EC and realised that Britain sacrificed her fishing industry for membership of the Community. It is a deciding factor that the decision of the total amount of catches would not remain in Icelandic hands. The member states of the EU have not been very effective in controlling access to their resources and the total amount of catches as such. This has a great impact on the Icelandic attitude towards membership of the EU.

Pascal Sciarini and Ola Listhaug show in their study, which compares attitudes towards European integration in Switzerland and Norway, that if ‘joining the EU … is not perceived as an economic necessity, cultural and political factors may have a decisive impact.’ Although their study is on Switzerland and Norway exclusively, judging from the discussions in Britain, Sweden and Denmark this argument is likely to be extendable to other countries. Accepting that as a possibility would lead one to think that the most decisive factor is the relative economic state of the country in question, and if there are no compelling economic reasons for integrating with Europe the cultural and political factors are free to take centre stage.

In Britain, the sense that the EU has not brought the economic gains that its supporters expected, at least not on the scale that was predicted, has probably made it easier to stir up discontent using cultural and political factors, such as “the pound” against the

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178 Sigurður Snævarr, p. 355.  
179 Interview with Tómas Ingi Olrich, (my translation)  
180 Sciarini & Listhaug, p. 432.  
181 Young, J. W. p. 177.
euro (which is less about pure economics than national identity) as when John Redwood, a Conservative MP and a leading “Eurosceptic”, says:

Before a single-currency scheme is introduced it is important to make sure that the people living under it feel that they are one people. They have to believe that they can move to any part of the Union to get a job should the need arise. They have to wish to give money from the richer to the poorer parts of the Union as a matter of course. They need to feel that there is a way that their voices will be heard should things go wrong. In summary they need to feel that they belong to the same country.\textsuperscript{182}

Ingebritsen says: ‘Economists isolate the costs and benefits of integration but often give too little attention to the political dimension. For economists, entry into the EC was logical for all of the Nordic states to improve competitiveness, profits, and the overall health of national economies...’\textsuperscript{183}

Olrich does not subscribe to that view and puts economic factors among the origins of scepticism towards European integration in Britain as well as in Iceland:

The British have always had doubts about their participation in the EC and I think that it has its roots in the traditional international nature of British commercial interests. They find it troubling to be members of a trading block that defines itself in opposition to their traditional commercial associates like the U.S. Britain is an island that has developed her trade longer than any other nation and her international outlook is a factor in how difficult it has been for the British to convince themselves of the benefits of the EU and the participation in the common currency scheme. To a certain extent Iceland too has an international commercial outlook, and has to have close connections with the EU, but also to develop her connections westwards.

It is an inseparable part of the reality of Icelandic foreign relations that she is on the borderline between two political hemispheres. Iceland is a European nation, with European traditions and which looks to Europe as a source of ideas, goods and services, but Iceland is also a part of the New World. The Icelandic outlook is not fully European. We have solved our problems in a different manner from Europe, for instance over our social services. Our economic structure is much more flexible than in Europe and the economy has been molded by both hemispheres; the market oriented outlook of the United States and the social outlook of Europe.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{182} Redwood, John (1999) \textit{The Death of Britain?} (Basingstoke: MacMillan), pp. 185-6.
\textsuperscript{183} Ingebritsen, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{184} Interview with Tómas Ingi Olrich, (my translation).
This shows the difficulty of separating the economic discussion from the political and social discussion; the economic structure of a nation is a function of her culture and geography. Some cultures nurture extensive foreign trade, others do not. Geographic factors such as landlockedness or lack of access to navigable rivers have been found to have a detrimental effect on economic development.\textsuperscript{185} The peculiar development of Icelandic commercial relations has been a contributor to the lack of interest in European integration amongst Icelandic political elites. Furthermore, the extent of trade with the European continent has been a major factor in the building up of pressure for participation in the European project both in Britain and in the four other Nordic countries. Norway’s situation as one of the world’s largest oil exporters has, however, dampened the urgency of that particular argument and thus given her population a choice that was far less attractive to other European nations with sceptic populations. As Ingebritsen says:

\begin{quote}
[i]f Sweden and Finland shared the economic dependence on fisheries typical of the Icelandic economy or could count on petroleum like the Norwegians, the political implications of European unity would be quite different, as would the development of European politics.\textsuperscript{186}
\end{quote}

2.2 Cultural and Political factors

2.2.1 Atlanticism

Stephen George says that there are several reasons for Britain’s reputation for what he calls “awkwardness” in the European context. The first is domestic political constraints on the position governments could adopt towards Europe; secondly,

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\textsuperscript{186} Ingebritsen, p. 197.
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problems for the British economy adjusting to membership; then, awkwardness in handling the terminology of the political debate in the Union and finally an instinct among British politicians to look first to the United States for partnership.\textsuperscript{187} This is a trait Britain shares with Iceland and Norway to a large extent, and to a lesser extent with Denmark.

In a recent speech, the Icelandic prime minister Oddsson said that Iceland should take advantage of her situation in the middle of the Atlantic to strengthen the [already strong] relationship to North America, and improve Iceland’s access to NAFTA’s common market to a more extent than the ‘customs union [sic] of the EU can offer’.\textsuperscript{188}

Strange as it may sound, quite similar ideas have been circulating in British political circles. The idea that Britain should join NAFTA\textsuperscript{189} has been described by some members of the right as “the next big thing”, and \textit{The Economist} warns that ‘ideas which are dismissed in one decade as the preserve of right-wing eccentrics can quickly move into the mainstream when the ideological wind changes.’\textsuperscript{190} This has even gone so far as to have America’s International Trade Commission beginning hearings on the matter at the instigation of the Senate Finance Committee. Some say that is a perfect way to bury the proposal though.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{187} George, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{188} ‘Vísir’, 16 February 2000, (\url{www.visir.is}), (my translation).
\textsuperscript{189} The North American Free Trade Association (which some say could easily become the North Atlantic Free Trade Association).
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{The Economist}, 15 April 2000, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{191} Idem.
Preston Manning, leader of the Canadian opposition and Charlie Penson his Shadow Trade Minister argue that ‘[political leaders] can offer Britons a bold new transatlanticist vision that would take the country where she truly belongs in light of her history, culture and economic prowess. They can offer them NAFTA, a free trade area one and a half times the size in population and economic might of a pan-European federation.’\textsuperscript{192} They also mention that ‘[f]our non EU European countries have recognized this prospect: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein…have begun concrete trade talks with Canada…’\textsuperscript{193} And finally: ‘If British people [sic] expressed interest in this idea, then Canadians and Americans would welcome them warmly.’\textsuperscript{194} Conrad Black says ‘Britain, unlike all other EU countries, has a choice. It has a common Atlantic home,’\textsuperscript{195} and that there are better alternatives for Britain than being ‘herded and prodded into a European cul-de-sac…’\textsuperscript{196}

Recently there was a debate about the cooperation of British and American intelligence agencies in gathering information on Britain’s partners in the European Union. Jean-Claude Martinez, a French MEP\textsuperscript{197} said in the debate: ‘This is an Anglo-Saxon Protestant conspiracy. So much for Britain’s commitment to European solidarity; its real union is with America.’\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{193} Idem.
\textsuperscript{194} Idem.
\textsuperscript{196} Idem.
\textsuperscript{197} Member of the European Parliament
\textsuperscript{198} Quoted in \textit{The Economist} 29 April 2000, p. 27.
Tómas Ingi Olrich says Iceland’s position in security matters is very different to the situation of many other European nations. ‘The Finns, for example sought membership of the EU both for economic and, indirectly, security reasons.’ Olrich says Iceland has a very special agreement with the United States, in which she is connected in security matters to the most powerful military power in the world:

No other European nation has such an agreement. This gives us flexibility in our foreign relations and means that we have no incentive whatsoever to join the EU for security reasons. We already have the economic benefits of membership through the EEA and we have in fact ensured our security better than we could by being members of the EU. Icelandic security is intertwined with U.S. and Canadian, as well as with European security and that fact cannot be bypassed.

Norway shares the tendency to look rather to the United States than to Europe in security matters and since the Second World War she has followed the leadership of Britain and the United States in her foreign and security policy. This has been reflected in her reluctant attitude toward expanding Nordic cooperation into the political sphere in a way that might have weakened NATO; in the policy of supporting the British “free trade area” approach within EFTA; and in subordinating her European integration policy to the aim of maintaining the wider Atlantic security system, built on NATO and U.S. leadership.

In the aftermath of the 1972 “no” vote, there was an increasing uneasiness within political elite circles about the consequences for Norway’s foreign and security policy.

199 Interview with Tómas Ingi Olrich, (my translation).
200 Ibid, (my translation).
201 Saeter & Knudsen, p. 179.
of non-membership, especially with Britain as a member state. In the years that followed, the Norwegian government ‘sought to ‘compensate for’ non-membership through a stronger emphasis on NATO and the United States in security and alliance matters.'\(^{202}\) The current Norwegian government has intentions to change the course in these matters and strengthen Norway’s security cooperation with the EU.\(^{203}\)

It is probable that this factor is rather at work on the elite level than with the general population. Icelandic membership of NATO has always been highly controversial and, though the majority of Icelanders support membership, it used to be one of the most sensitive issues in Icelandic politics before the end of the Cold War. As with Swedish and Finnish neutrality, its importance has now given way to other more pressing matters.

For the British public on the other hand, according to Helen Wallace, Atlanticism and NATO have very positive symbolic meanings,\(^{204}\) and to this can be added the curious fact that according to a poll in \textit{The Economist} in November 1999, more British people identify with the U.S. “Stars and Stripes” (23%) than with the twelve star flag of the European Union (21%).\(^{205}\)

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\(^{202}\) Idem.
\(^{203}\) Interview with Thorbjørn Jagland, (www.aftenposten.no).
\(^{204}\) Wallace, p. 686.
\(^{205}\) ‘Survey Britain’, \textit{The Economist}, 6 November 1999, p. 4.
}
2.2.2 National identity

Anthony D. Smith says that there ‘is little prospect of a European ‘super-nation’ until the majority of each European nation’s population becomes infused with a genuinely European consciousness.’ According to opinion polls regularly conducted by EU staff in the form of Eurobarometer there is a long way to go. Although the sense of “Europeanness” varies wildly among the member states, even in the country where the highest proportion of the population named a European identity before a national one, Luxembourg (which has a high proportion of citizens from other EU countries), only 28 per cent did.

In France, which ranks second in identifying with Europe, only 16 per cent named a European identity before the national one. In Britain and Sweden 62 per cent and 60 per cent respectively only mentioned their national identity and made no referral to a European identity at all, while 9 per cent and 5 per cent either mentioned European identity only, or before mentioning national identity.

But how are these identities formed and how are they categorized? Norman Davies says that [u]nlike citizenship, which is granted by the state, nationhood depends on individual people’s readiness to be identified with a national community. From the individual’s standpoint, one’s citizenship is an external, legal matter: one’s nationality is the result of an internalized psychological process.

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207 ‘Eurobarometer’, p. 59.
208 Davies, p. 1040.
According to Davies, there is an agreement among scholars on two main types of national community. One is generated from above with government policy, and relies on the use of force or on sentiments; that is “civic nationalism”. The other type is generated by grass-roots action, can be directed against government policy and relies on “ethnic” or “popular nationalism”. 209 Thus the former is the creation of the state, the latter of the “common people”.

It was this “popular nationalism” that played a large part in the “no” votes in Norway 1994 and Switzerland 1992 according to Sciarini’s and Listhaug’s study, where the majority of the political elites, in government and in opposition supported membership of the EU in Norway’s case and the EEA in Switzerland’s, although they call it ‘factors relating to the defence of traditions and national sovereignty’. 210

Anthony D. Smith claims that of ‘all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive.’ 211 He says that governments may succeed in muzzling the expression of it for a while, but it is likely to be costly and fruitless in the end, ‘[f]or the forces that sustain national allegiances have proved, and are likely to prove, stronger than any countervailing trends.’ 212

210 Sciarini & Listhaug, p. 432.
211 Smith, A. p. 143.
212 Idem.
John W. Young says that an island power, like Britain, with a strong national identity and a strong parliament will never find it easy to ‘accept the ideals of ‘closer union’ and a powerful European parliament.’\textsuperscript{213} Maybe that is why John Redwood feels cheated on behalf of the British people when he says, ‘[n]o one then [1975] mentioned that we were on course for the creation of a new European state. People glossed over the fact that the European community had a flag, an anthem, common institutions and a common destiny. The treaty of Rome talked of ever closer union.’\textsuperscript{214}

When looking at British national identity one is faced by the dilemma that the United Kingdom is not really, and has never been, a traditional nation state. In his book on British history, Norman Davies stresses exactly this fact: ‘[The United Kingdom] is essentially a dynastic conglomerate, which could never equalize the functions of its four constituent parts and which, as a result, could never fully harmonize the identities of the national communities within its borders.’\textsuperscript{215} Thus the interplay between “civic nationalism” and “popular nationalism” in Britain is quite complicated. British political elites are, or were at least up until the recent devolution, representatives of the United Kingdom exclusively in international context. Parts of the British population tends to identify with “Britain”, more so in England than in the rest of the UK, while other parts identify primarily with Scotland, England and Wales.\textsuperscript{216} I will not go deeper into this matter, since the emphasis here is rather on national identity vs. European identity, than the question what the national identity really is.

\textsuperscript{213} Young, J. W. p. 179.
\textsuperscript{214} Redwood, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{215} Davies, p. 1039.
\textsuperscript{216} Opinion poll in ‘Survey Britain’, \textit{The Economist}, 6 November 1999, p. 4.
Peter Lawler identifies a relationship between what he calls an ‘internationalist progressivism’ of the Scandinavian states (Norway, Denmark and Sweden) – which he claims is a key element in their claim to be ‘exceptional’ states – and the high level of antipathy towards European integration within them.\(^{217}\) In effect the debate on European integration in these countries revolves around the future of what he calls ‘Scandinavian exceptionalism’, which is the popular belief that these countries have created states that are unique, and should even serve as an example to the outside world. He identifies three normative positions in the debates about Europe in these three countries: i) membership of the EU (or a deepening of its cooperation) would mean a welcome end to the ‘costly myth of exceptionalism’; ii) EU membership as the only way to come to terms with new national and global economic and political realities, whilst preserving, and even transferring upwards essential features of exceptionalism; or, iii) membership should be opposed since it would accelerate the erosion of the “superior” form of society found in these countries. Lawler says that despite its

progressivist gloss, Scandinavian Euroscepticism could be viewed as a familiar mix of collective nostalgia and nationalism… Such sentiments… provide, nonetheless, only a part of the story. A more adequate analysis requires also a closer investigation of the blending of nationalism and internationalism in Scandinavian political discourse.\(^{218}\)

The blending of nationalism and internationalism is not unfamiliar in the British discussion on European integration, where the uniqueness of Britain being on an

\(^{217}\) Lawler, p. 566.  
\(^{218}\) Idem.
intersection of three circles; the United States, the Commonwealth and Europe, was used as a major argument for her to stand aside while Europe integrated. Recently, London’s status as an international financial centre has been in the centre of the debate on tax harmonization in Europe, as well as being a factor in the discussion on the euro.
2.2.3 Nationalism in Iceland

A man who strives to strangle a small animal in his grip will in the end grow tired. He holds the animal an arm’s length away, tightens the grips on its throat, but it doesn’t die; it looks him in the eye; its claws are out. This animal will not expect any help although a giant with a friendly face might arrive willing to help set it free. Its one chance of survival is that time will work in its favour and weaken the grip of its enemy.

If a defenceless small nation has in her misfortune had the luck to have a moderately strong enemy, time will join her side, just like in the case of the animal I was describing. If she, in her misery, accepts the giant’s offer of help she will be swallowed up in one bite. I know you gentlemen of Hamburg would bring us Icelanders corn that isn’t worm-eaten, and not consider it worth the bother to swindle us in trade. But when German villages and towns will rise on the shores of Iceland, how long will it take for German castles to rise with German nobles and mercenaries. What will then become of the nation who wrote famous books? Icelanders would then at most be the fat servants of a German protectorate. A fat servant is not a great man. A beaten slave is a great man, for in his heart freedom resides.  

This quotation from the novel Íslandsklukkan (The Bell of Iceland) by the Icelandic Nobel laureate Halldór Kiljan Laxness are the words of a character in the story; an influential Icelandic scholar in Copenhagen in the eighteenth century, Arnas Arnaeus. German merchants have offered him the governorship of Iceland in exchange for his support for their intentions of “liberating” Iceland from Danish rule. In the above words he turns them down. Laxness’s novel is based on real events and his version of the story had a great impact on Icelandic nationalist rhetoric in the twentieth century.

The book was published in 1943 a year before Icelanders voted by an overwhelming majority in a referendum, to declare their independence from Denmark, even though Denmark was occupied by the Nazis at time and had no means of objecting or

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220 Arnas’s character is based on the life of the scholar Árni Magnússon, who travelled around Iceland in the eighteenth century, collecting the ancient manuscripts of the Icelandic sagas and saving them from destruction.

221 97.86% of the electorate took part in the referendum, 97.36% voted for independence, (Björn Pórsteinsson & Bergsteinn Jónsson, p. 417.)
saying farewell to a country that had been part of the Danish kingdom for 600 years. The impact of the “struggle for independence” has yet to recede to the backstage of Icelandic politics.

It might be difficult for nationals of EU member states, which have somewhat got used to the notion of membership and shared sovereignty, to get to grips with the rhetoric of Icelandic politics when they touch on the sensitive issue of Icelandic nationhood and independence. Icelandic nationalism is at the heart of any debate on European issues, and if one can get beyond the discussion on the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union as an impediment for membership, nationalistic rhetoric takes over and the defence of Icelandic independence and sovereignty is paramount.

In academic circles there has been a discussion on the meaning of Icelandic nationalism, and in the words of Guðmundur Hálfdánarson: ‘In the period between 1830 – 1850, Icelanders chose to be counted as a separate nation with all the rights and responsibilities that entailed … Ever since, the liberty of the nation has been the final objective of Icelandic politics – the lifeblood Icelandic rulers have the duty to preserve.’

Sigríður Matthíasdóttir, analysing the rhetoric of prominent figures in Icelandic society and politics in the first half of the twentieth century, finds similarities between

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222 Guðmundur Hálfdánarson, p. 27, (my translation).
Icelandic nationalism and German nationalism in the nineteenth, in spite of very
different external surroundings. ‘In both cases we have communities that were on the
losing side of the demands of modernity for economic progress and individualism.’ She says that Icelandic nationalism, just like the German one, falls under the category
of nationalism of the weak put forward by Hans Kohn and John Plamenatz, and that
although the Icelandic society was backwards the nation had a rich literary heritage
and a language that had been preserved with minor changes through the centuries.
‘These conditions were ripe for ideas of superiority based on the feelings of
inferiority.’

Hálfdánarson says that Icelanders have never looked upon their struggle for
independence as anything but self-evident, because ‘in their eyes the nation is a
natural fact and not a political idea.’ He says that Icelanders do not give a second
thought to the idea that the world could have been classified in an entirely different
manner to what is now; Iceland could have become a part of a larger Danish state,
taken part in the construction of a Trans-Nordic state or been merged into a European
whole. He says that the last option ‘has been open to us for some time and the
reluctance of Icelanders to open a critical debate on that option shows in my opinion
the strength of the Icelandic sense of nationality.’

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225 Guðmundur Hálfdánarson, p. 27, (my translation).
Guðmundur Jónsson concludes that nationalism is so interwoven into the Icelandic mentality that there has not been a serious attempt to evaluate it in a deep sense and to look at it as a special force in the forging of the community. He also argues that up until recent years, with the upsurge of internationalism, there has not been any strong force to counter nationalism in Iceland.\textsuperscript{227}

Árni Bergmann, a novelist and a former editor of the Icelandic socialist newspaper Þjóðviljinn is among those who identifies with Icelandic nationalism and uses its concepts to oppose Icelandic participation in European integration. However, nothing would be further from Bergmann than identifying with any kind of nationalistic jingoism. He says nationalism is not a known entity, but everchanging, and can be used both for good and evil ends.\textsuperscript{228} His view is that in this day and age the rich are internationalists, since it is in their benefit to be able to transfer their wealth between countries at will, with no regard for the needs of their country. Meanwhile the poor become nationalists, since they do not have the money or the education to reap the benefits of the “opportunities” of the international system.\textsuperscript{229}

Bergmann draws a parallel between having the opportunity of participating in the decisionmaking of the European Union and participating in the running of the Danish kingdom in the nineteenth century by having four Icelandic members of the Danish

\textsuperscript{229} Idem.
parliament. Icelanders did not accept that offer and went for full independence from Denmark. ‘Probably many “realists” at the time thought that bore witness to stupidity and a superiority complex’, he says, thus referring to the words of Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, the foreign minister at the time, on shared sovereignty within Europe and the unfeasibility of the old concept of full independence.\textsuperscript{230}

Guðmundur Hálfdánarson says that it is simple to explain why theories of primordial nationality have been so resilient in Iceland. The Republic is still young and the struggle for independence still lives in the memories of many. Also, that many circumstances and conditions in Iceland differ from those of Europe.\textsuperscript{231}

In his discussion on the causes of British scepticism towards European integration, John W. Young says that Britain is “different” from “Europe” ‘simply because it is an island: this basic geographical fact has had a profound effect on national outlook.’\textsuperscript{232} He adds that although Britain is an island, it is too geographically proximate to the continent to cut itself off completely. The former argument could be said to apply to Iceland, the latter not. Continental interest in this far off island in the North Atlantic has never been great and has mostly been restricted to fish. Anyhow, during the Cold War Iceland took on some strategic importance for the United States, eager to hold the Soviet naval force at bay. Guðmundur Hálfdánarson says that the isolation that formed Icelandic popular culture for centuries has ended, and that just as nationalism

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{231} Guðmundur Hálfdánarson, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{232} Young, J. W. p. 167.
was the way Icelanders chose into modernity, modernity will finally undermine the
strongest foundations of nationalism.233

Árni Bergmann considers Hálfdánarson’s words to be a part of the political agenda
that Iceland should give up her independence and eventually join the bandwagon of
European integration. He claims that for this purpose, nationalism is vilified as the
source of self-righteousness, hatred and loathing of other nations and an attempt made
to make Icelanders co-responsible for the horror that has led to. This he will not
accept and claims internationalism can just as easily be used for evil purposes. He
claims that for small nations like Iceland, nationalism has been a source of good and
is ‘loaded with positive energy.’234

Nationalism is one of the most powerful forces in the world. Although I have focused
exclusively on its Icelandic manifestation in this chapter, it is obviously not a force
that will recede quietly into the background while European integration and
independent sovereign states are seen as opposing goals. It has taken on a
kaleidoscope of forms; religious, conservative, liberal, fascist, communist, cultural,
political, protectionist, integrationist, separatist, etc.235 If one refers back to the British
debate, Norman Davies says in the conclusion of his book on Britain that it is

a great pity that the British people, having won the Second World War (as they think), have
largely forgotten what caused it. In the 1930s, Europe was a continent of the independent
sovereign states which today’s Eurosceptics so strangely desire. And it was a bear garden…

233 Guðmundur Hálfdánarson, p. 29.
Press), p. 3.
the new game of fighting with words in the council rooms of Brussels… is infinitely preferable to the old game of fighting with tanks over the remaking of Europe’s frontiers.\textsuperscript{236}

2.2.4 Religion

Recently, with the collapse of the bipolar international system, there has been an upsurge in looking towards religious factors as relevant in international politics. Perhaps the best-known example of this is Samuel P. Huntington’s controversial book \textit{The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order}, in which he aims to define the new cleavages opening up in the wake of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{237} Huntington asks in his book: ‘Where does Europe end? Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin. This is the answer which West Europeans want to hear, which they overwhelmingly support sotto voce, and which various intellectuals and political leaders have explicitly endorsed.’\textsuperscript{238}

Religion is clearly a defining force in shaping the institutions, morals, laws and identities a society inherits, and Anthony D. Smith says: ‘For the greater part of human history the twin circles of religious and ethnic identity have been very close, if

\textsuperscript{236} Davies, p. 1055.
\textsuperscript{237} Huntington
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid, p. 158.
not identical... Though one cannot argue conclusively for ethnic causation there are
enough circumstantial cases to suggest strong links between forms of religious
identity, even within world religions, and ethnic cleavages and communities.239

Huntington speaks in similar terms when he states that ‘[o]f all the objective elements
which define civilizations... the most important usually is religion...people who share
ethnicity and language but differ in religion may slaughter each other, as happened in
Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, and the Subcontinent.240 To this list one is tempted
to add Northern Ireland, for the sake of the religious divide here in question. John
Redwood refers to that particular example when he says: ‘Religion too can be
important. It was religion which pulled apart Pakistan from India; it is religion which
separates North from South in Ireland and religion which split up the original Holy
Roman Empire amongst the German peoples.'241

The decades around 1500 saw the rise of efficient bureaucratic states and several
strong kingdoms, among them France, the Iberian Peninsula, England, Denmark and
Sweden. In what was later to become Germany, strong principalities arose asserting
the control over their territories. The growth of such states and principalities
sometimes generated a loyalty that can be seen as a sort of early nationalism and anti-
papal sentiment. Countries north of the Alps increasingly looked upon the Pope and
his officials as foreigners who ‘unfairly interfered in local affairs and took a great deal

239 Smith, A. p. 7.
240 Huntington, p. 42.
241 Redwood, p. 46.
of money out of the country.\textsuperscript{242} It was attractive for the kings and princes of the North to join what had started as an attempt to reform the Catholic Church, but became a full-blown schism and in a generation (1517 – 1555) had permanently divided medieval Christendom into Catholics and Protestants.

The Protestants were in no way a united movement.\textsuperscript{243} While the rulers of Scandinavia and the North German principalities endorsed Lutheranism, Calvinism gained ground in Switzerland, France, Southern Germany, Poland, Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands and Scotland.

England had her own peculiar Reformation. It rested on Henry VIII’s desire to divorce his wife at whatever the cost. He declared himself the head of the English church in 1534. Despite resurgence in Catholicism in England under the rule of his daughter from his first marriage, Mary Tudor, the Anglican Church took formal root in the reign of his second child, Elizabeth I. It had the façade of the


Catholic Church but was inspired by Calvinism.\textsuperscript{244} England had permanently joined the anti-papal forces of the North.

An important ingredient of the Reformation everywhere was the emphasis on translating the bible into regional vernaculars. ‘Bible-reading became the prime duty of every conscientious Protestant’\textsuperscript{245} and every new Protestant community sponsored its own translation of the bible. This might well have played its part in fostering the sense of community and later nationality that can still be observed in opinion polls\textsuperscript{246} in these countries today.\textsuperscript{247}

Norman Davies stresses that although the United Kingdom is not, and has never been, a traditional nation-state, the historic task of the UK was to foster a common national identity among people who previously had identified themselves primarily with

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Picture23.png}
\caption{Picture 2.3: The proportion of population of the 15 member states of the EU saying that EU membership is ‘a bad thing’ according to Eurobarometer (1999) p. 41.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{246} For instance in the Eurobarometer reports which are published annually by the European Commission.
\textsuperscript{247} Interview with Karl Sigurbjörnsson, the Bishop of Iceland, June 2000, also, Davies (1999, p. 490) says: ‘The Protestant Reformation exercised a still greater influence on Englishness. Access to God through the medium of one’s own native language was one of its cardinal principles.’
England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. ‘The task was undertaken by [a] long list of instruments… among them, the monarchy… the anti-Catholic ideology of the Protestant Ascendancy, which set Britain apart form its neighbours, and the Empire…’\textsuperscript{248} The ‘English and later the British establishment took it to be axiomatic that its own Protestant proclivities should be formally promoted by law.’\textsuperscript{249}

Davies says that despite Protestantism in “the Isles” being anything but uniform, ‘the essential quality of British Protestantism was a negative one: ‘anti-Papism’.

\textsuperscript{250} This negative approach is not confined exclusively to Britain; Hugh McLeod says, ‘England and Sweden have both at times believed themselves to be chosen nations, whose victories over Catholic enemies were willed by God.’\textsuperscript{251} He argues further that ‘[i]n the nineteenth century Protestantism also played a part in the development of a distinct national consciousness among the various smaller peoples on the ‘periphery’ such as the Welsh, and … the Icelanders, Norwegians and Finns.’\textsuperscript{252}

Karl Sigurbjörnsson, Bishop of the National Lutheran Church of Iceland\textsuperscript{253} says that the watershed that came with the Reformation in Europe, revolved around the nationality. The national language became an important factor in the works of Martin

\textsuperscript{248} Davies, p. 1041.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid, p. 721.
\textsuperscript{250} Idem.
\textsuperscript{252} Idem.
\textsuperscript{253} Religion and the state are not separate in Iceland, and the Lutheran church is the official Icelandic church and Lutheran Christianity the official Icelandic religion.
Luther and his successors. ‘It might be said that with the Reformation the first seeds of the nation state were sown,’ says Sigurbjörnsson.

The Reformation was against the Pope, the [Holy Roman] Emperor and the Catholic Church as a supranational institution. The Nordic countries gained a new reason of being. Sweden became a nation state shortly after the Reformation and the Icelandic language is revived as a literary language with a new bible in Icelandic. Thus the church and the Reformation are important factors in us retaining our national self-image. This also happened in Britain to the extent that the British started to define themselves against powerful rulers on the continent, which they saw as their adversaries.254

Sigurbjörnsson says that the national churches in the Nordic countries, to which, as he points out, over 90 per cent of the inhabitants belong, have long looked at themselves as the defenders of nationality in a clearer sense than churches in most other European countries.

It has without a doubt to do with Luther’s emphasis on the language and the sense of togetherness people in these countries feel with the religion and the church. This does play a larger part in the Lutheran tradition than even in the Calvinist tradition where the interplay of nation, state and church tends to be more strained. That one can see in Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, Scotland and to some extent in Britain as a whole.255

But does the fact that Protestantism had a role as one of the symbols uniting peoples under one flag in the nineteenth century have any real relevance today? In spite of the fact that ‘[for] the great majority of British people in the early twentieth century, God still remained a Protestant English gentleman,’256 hasn’t religion lost its grip on the minds of the people in the highly developed industrial societies of Europe in the first decade of the twenty-first?

254 Interview with Karl Sigurbjörnsson, (my translation).
256 Davies, p. 727.
Hugh McLeod says that one of the most interesting parallels between Britain and the Nordic countries lies in the fact that in the period from about the 1880s to the 1950s, both Britain and the Nordic countries saw a rapid drop in religious participation and in the eyes of many were ‘pacemakers in secularisation – until in the 1960s and ‘70s they were overtaken by some of their European neighbours.’

Dag Thorkildsen says that the question of why the concept of the nation became such a powerful idea in the 19th century is linked with modernisation of society. The legitimacy of the pre-modern society came from religion and the state was symbolised by the prince, ‘modern society needed another and more functional ‘glue’ that could keep it together. Legitimacy did not come from God, but from the people itself, in the same way as the primary obligation of the individual became the nation and the people, not the prince and the will of God.’ Thus, according to this line of argument there might be a direct connection between early secularisation and an early sense of identification with the “nation”, an identification that has taken several generations to take its current form in these countries.

Also, institutions tend to mirror the past to a large extent. Thus it is possible for a Swede to state that ‘Swedes are probably the most unreligious people in Europe… but you cannot understand this country at all unless you realize that our institutions, social practices, families, politics, and way of life are fundamentally shaped by our Lutheran heritage.’

257 McLeod, p. 8.
259 Quoted in Huntington, p. 305.
This link might be highly relevant, since, as I will show later, there seems to be a very significant correlation between the proportion of Protestants in European countries and scepticism towards the European Union. This leads to the suggestion that deep-rooted cultural factors are important in this respect and the success of the Union might depend on identifying these factors and meeting them in an appropriate manner. Ideas that are institutionalised in a manner that Protestantism has been can be slow to die.

In his recent book on democracy in Europe, Larry Siedentop blames the particular form that the Protestant Reformation took in England, amongst other factors, for the current alleged lack of British contribution to the discussion on the evolution of European democracy. He says that the Church of England differed from the post-Reformation Church of Rome and the Reformed Churches on the continent in that it preferred to accommodate different opinions and factions within a national Church rather than to take a ‘conspicuous doctrinal position.’

According to Sigurbjörnsson this might be said of the Nordic churches as well to a certain extent. He says that the emphasis on historical continuity in the life of the nation is what the Anglican Church and the Lutheran Nordic churches have most clearly in common; ‘The structure of the churches remained similar as did their day-to-day functions despite some major doctrinal changes. The continuity remained, the same regional congregations, the same officials, many of the same priests continued

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Siedentop, p. 66.
to serve, only now as Protestant. So all in all the difference at first might not have been so overwhelming to the general public.  

A new opinion poll in Iceland on values and virtues has prompted a discussion on the idea that the “seven traditional virtues” of Christianity, wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, faith, hope and charity, have lost their hold on the minds of modern Icelanders. Instead the “new” virtues are honesty, frankness, trust, positiveness, diligence or drive, family bonds and friendship. Sigurbjörnsson does not see this as a lapse away from Christianity. He says that in Catholicism there used to be a great emphasis on the seven classic virtues. The virtuous or the “perfect” life was the life in the monasteries, where people could practice the virtues uninterrupted by worldly activities. ‘Protestants on the other hand emphasised that the highest virtue was in the daily life itself. Man’s highest calling is not to be confined within the walls of the monastery, but to harvest the earth, raise a family, help the neighbour, the sick and the poor. That is the calling of a Christian.’ Sigurbjörnsson believes this change is highly relevant to the early progress of Northern Europe, since this played a part in unleashing an enormous potential in society – the responsibility of the family unit in the production cycle. ‘Thus I believe that the virtues Icelanders mention in this opinion poll show a much more classical Christian Protestant way of thought than one might think at first.’

261 Interview with Karl Sigurbjörnsson, (my translation).
263 Interview with Karl Sigurbjörnsson, (my translation).
264 Ibid, (my translation).
For some reason the creation of democracy has been easier in predominantly Protestant societies than in Catholic ones. In 1938 all predominantly Protestant countries in Western Europe, indeed almost world wide, were stable democracies, and have remained so for all of the twentieth century. This also goes for most countries that have a somewhat equal proportions of both factions. Germany was the only exception in Europe as an authoritarian state with a sizeable Protestant proportion (and one that was probably attracted to the nationalistic form of fascism – which might tell a tale on the link between Protestantism and nationalism).\textsuperscript{265} Of the predominantly Catholic countries in 1938, France, Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg were democracies, that of France a shaky one. Italy, Spain, Portugal and Austria had authoritarian governments. To this can be added that universal suffrage arrived in the Protestant countries ‘a generation earlier than in Catholic nations’.\textsuperscript{266} This does not necessarily mean that there is anything in the Catholic doctrine that is opposed to democracy, but this simple historical fact might have reinforced prejudices in Protestant countries.

Karl Sigurbjörnsson does however not believe this is a coincidence. ‘I believe this is a direct result of the Reformation and Luther’s emphasis on the “public priesthood”. All are equal in the face of God. All are responsible so that the Christian individual is not just a receiver of the service of the church as an institution for salvation, but he is

\textsuperscript{265} In four general elections in Germany from 1930-33 the Nazi Party was markedly stronger in constituencies with a Protestant majority, gaining over 35\% on average in sixteen out of twenty-one predominantly Protestant opposed to only three out fourteen predominantly Catholic constituencies, (see handout in Jonathan Steinberg’s lecture on Fascism and Nazism, 1 November 1999, MPhil program in European Studies, University of Cambridge).

\textsuperscript{266} Anderson, & Zinsser, p. 356.
himself responsible for disseminating the faith. I think this has had more to say than anything else in building a certain kind of “democratic” way of thinking, though it was not called that until later; a “humanist” way of thought where man is himself responsible and not a receiver of the service of a godly institution.”

In the beginning of July 2000, Icelanders celebrated 1000 years of Christianity in Iceland. The prime minister, Davíð Oddsson, said in a speech marking the occasion that it was no coincidence that the

greater progress in the last millennium has been among Western Christian nations. There we can see individualism and the sense of community joined hand in hand. There no worldly authority can speak in the name of God. In the face of God, all men are equal and do not have to subdue to the power of “big brother”.

Is one mistaken to hear the echo of a particularly Protestant worldview in the words of the prime minister?

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267 Interview with Karl Sigurbjörnsson, (my translation).
3. Some sceptic factors

So far we have considered factors that could, perhaps, affect attitudes towards European integration. In this chapter we will look at a variety of factors in more detail and use regression analysis to identify factors, which seem to have contributed towards “Euroscepticism”.

Using a simple two variable regression model,²⁶⁹ this chapter identifies certain economic, political or demographic factors possibly relating to the attitudes towards European integration.²⁷⁰ It is known that within countries factors such as education, sectors of employment and the urban-rural divide have been found to play a part in voters’ choices in referendums.²⁷¹ But that does not explain the differences between nations. Why is a considerably higher proportion of citizens in some EU nations, for instance in Britain, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, more sceptical towards the integration process than others? Which factors are statistically significant in identifying “Eurosceptics” within the 15 member states together with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland?

I will look at one economic factor: GNP per capita, one demographic factor: urban population (in response to apparent cleavages within states between urban and rural

²⁷⁰ It must be noted that this method of using a two variable linear probability model has many limitations but it is a simple way to get at underlying correlations. It is not meant as an explicit model of how the proportion of “Euroscepticism” is formed.
²⁷¹ See for instance Ingebritsen, *The Nordic States...* and Sciarini & Listhaug.
populations with respect to attitudes towards the EU mentioned above), one political factor: neutrality in security matters, and finally a cultural factor: religious affiliation.

3.1 GNP per capita

First I look at a cross section of economic factors. Gross National Product (GNP) per capita is the best indicator of a state’s economic strength. It gives us the average value of production per citizen in a certain defined period, usually a year. I test the attitudes towards the EU against GNP per capita in 1997 to find out if there are any indications of a connection between the two. A possible hypothesis would be that the higher the GNP per capita, the lower the enthusiasm for European integration, since a good economic situation might let people want to leave things as they are. The full results are given in table 1 (regression 1) in the appendix and they show that the GNP per capita seems to have a certain statistical correlation with attitudes towards the EU. Other similar regressions I did, for instance taking only into consideration EU member states, do not corroborate these findings, so it is at best possible to say that it is ambiguous if this factor is relevant in explaining “Euroscepticism”. Adding

\[ \text{NISEU}_{\text{Bad}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{GNPpc97index}) + \epsilon, \]

where \( \text{NISEU}_{\text{Bad}} \) is the proportion of the population of EU member states which considers membership of the European Union a bad thing ('Eurobarometer', p. 41.) plus the proportion of the population in Iceland, Norway and Switzerland opposed to an application for EU membership. It would be better if the Eurobarometer survey was extended to these three non-EU countries, but this variable will have to serve as the closest approximation available under the circumstances. Figures for Norway were obtained in ‘Aftenposten’, 19 April 2000 (www.aftenposten.no), for Iceland ‘Morgunblaðið’, 15 February 2000 (www.mbl.is) and for Switzerland "The Nando Times", (www.nando.net), 25 January 1998. \( \text{GNPpc97index} \) is an index created out of GNP per capita in 1997, (‘Human Development Report 1999’ (UNDP), p.180) where the highest GNP p.c. is defined as 1.

This can be seen by looking at the \( \beta_1 \) coefficient of the GNP, which stands for the slope of an imaginary line taking into account the position of each individual point in a two-dimensional graph with \( \text{NISEU}_{\text{bad}} \) on the y-axis and \( \text{GNPpc97index} \) on the x-axis. If there is a statistically significant correlation this coefficient should be significantly different from zero with 90%, 95% or 99% certainty. This coefficient passes the 90% threshold, but not 95% or 99%.

\[ \text{(1)} \]
Norway, Iceland and Switzerland to the regression does make the GDP per capita factor statistically significant, and thus pointing to the validity of the argument that the high level of economic prosperity in these countries gives their populations the flexibility needed to oppose European integration in a stronger manner than the population of current EU member states.

3.2 Urban/rural divide

It has been suggested that there exists an urban/rural divide within populations with respect to attitudes towards European integration, where the urban population is more positive towards integration than the rural population. I tested if the differences in the proportion of urban populations between EU member states could account for differing attitudes. My results were unambiguous; they did not (see regression 2).

3.3 Neutrality

A regression testing the hypothesis that nations that are neutral in security matters do tend to have more Eurosceptic populations did not point to the validity of that argument (see regression 3) probably since there are “Eurosceptic” populations in several NATO countries as well, which does more than offset the tendency towards “Euroscepticism” attributable to the will to preserve military neutrality.


275 Variable for neutrality is 1 for neutrality, 0 for NATO membership.
3.4 The Protestant factor

As has been pointed out before the “Protestant factor” is by no means unknown in social sciences. Thus I tested the hypothesis that the cultural and political factors originating in the Protestant - Catholic divide in Western Europe have a decisive impact on public attitudes towards membership of the European Union. The first regression tests the attitudes in EU member states together with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland\(^{276}\) against the proportion of Protestants. The results show a highly significant correlation (see regression 4).\(^{277}\)

Secondly I tested if there could be found a correlation between the sense of national identity\(^{278}\) and proportion of Protestants. The results also show a clear statistical significance, thus pointing to a correlation between these factors (see regression 6).

Regressing the proportion of Protestants against the proportion of the population saying that EU membership is a “good thing” as the dependent variable gave less decisive, but statistically significant results (see regression 7).

\(^{276}\) The NISEU\(_{bad}\) variable, see above.

\(^{277}\) In a regression with NISEU\(_{bad}\) as the dependent variable and the proportion of Protestants (Prot\(_i\)) as the independent variable (see regression 4) the slope is positive and significantly different from zero with over 99% certainty. Using only statistics for the 15 EU countries gave similar results, an apparent high level of correlation between considering EU membership “a bad thing” and proportion of Protestants, (see regression 5), (The proportion of Protestants relates to the year 1988 in Johnstone, Patrick (1988) Operacion Mundo), except for Germany, (www.adherents.com).

\(^{278}\) The dependent variable (Identity\(_i\)) is constructed of the proportion of the population that tends to view itself with respects to nationality only, opposed to ‘European only’, ‘nationality and European’ or vice versa.
When looking at a point in time before the predominantly Protestant and reluctant Finland and Sweden joined the EU it can be seen that the results do not change. On the contrary, the results are even more decisive using 1988 as a base year. The accession of Catholic “Eurosceptic” Austria seems to have blurred the picture more than the accession of Finland and Sweden has strengthened it (see regressions 8 and 9).

Does this mean that it is possible to draw the conclusion that a higher proportion of Catholics in an EU member state will mean more enthusiasm for European integration? Not necessarily. In regression 10 the dependent variable is the proportion of the population that considers membership of the EU a “good thing”, and the independent variable is the proportion of the population that is registered as Catholic. The results show that this connection cannot be made with certainty. The slope is positive, as was to be expected, but it is not significantly different from zero. Thus a high proportion of Catholics does not guarantee enthusiasm for the EU in the same manner a high proportion of Protestants relates to “Euroscepticism”. It is however likely that we would see less scepticism in countries with a high proportion of Catholics, precisely because there are by definition thus fewer Protestants and the results in regression 11 suggest that this is the case with the slope negative and very significantly different from zero.

279 For proportion of Catholics (Johnstone), except for Germany, (www.adherents.com).
4. Conclusions

It is a fact that populations in some member states of the EU are more reluctant towards European integration than others. One is tempted to draw the conclusions from the previous chapter that economic differences in terms of GNP per capita between the member states of the EU cannot be established as a primary factor in this respect, although there are indications towards the validity of the argument that economic prosperity makes the option of staying out of the European Union more viable for “Eurosceptic” populations. Proportion of urban population in the member states does not appear to have any significant explanatory power, nor does neutrality. The Protestant – Catholic divide on the other hand seems to have very significant explanatory power.

Scholars tend to find several reasons for the apparent reluctance towards European integration that can be observed in Britain and the Nordic countries in particular. There is a tendency to look at the Nordic countries as a whole,\textsuperscript{280} or even to compare them to Switzerland,\textsuperscript{281} and then to look at Britain as a singular case.\textsuperscript{282} This is understandable knowing the relative importance of the British position, and relative unimportance of the Nordic and Swiss positions. Britain is a major power in Europe, whereas the Nordic countries are all rather small or even tiny. The British position has thus often been viewed as a method to preserve the influence of Britain as an important European and global actor, whereas the Nordic stance is viewed either as a

\textsuperscript{280} Ingebritsen
\textsuperscript{281} Sciarini & Listhaug
\textsuperscript{282} Young, H., Young, J.W., George, Gowland & Turner etc.
derivative from the influence of the main economic actors\textsuperscript{283} or as means to the end of preserving an eccentric position in international relations or a superior welfare state.\textsuperscript{284} The argument presented in this thesis is that the dissimilarities between the two are not so significant. In both cases a strong sense of national identity is a major factor in deciding the attitudes of the public, which remains significantly more unfavourable towards European integration than in other European countries. The attitudes of the public have of course a defining influence on the attitudes of the political elites,\textsuperscript{285} which, despite being in most cases more favourable to European integration than the general public, ignore them at their peril in societies with sophisticated democratic traditions.

However, the perceived or real economic importance of membership of the European Union is probably a deciding factor whether or not these countries join. Thus the economic situation in Iceland and Norway has allowed, or even prompted, these countries to stay outside, while it seems that the same could not be said for the four member states in question. Although it has been suggested that non-membership might prove “economically disastrous” in the long run for Norway,\textsuperscript{286} that has still to come true for her and Iceland, which have been growing considerably faster economically than their Scandinavian and British EU counterparts on average over the last decade.

\textsuperscript{283} Ingebritsen
\textsuperscript{284} Lawler
\textsuperscript{285} Petersen
\textsuperscript{286} Dinan, p. 168.
In Iceland the arguments for economic benefits of membership are almost null and void, since it is perceived that the EEA agreement entails all the economic benefits of membership anyway.\(^{287}\) What is left then is: i) the argument for political influence inside the Union, which is usually met with the remark that Icelandic influence would probably not be very great, or ii) the ideals of European Unity, which tend to sound out of place in a fervently patriotic political environment.

Four of the six countries in question are also on the elite level entirely comfortable with the leadership of the United States in security matters. Britain, Norway and Iceland are strong in that persuasion, while Sweden’s experience of neutrality in the Second World War reinforced her position in that respect. Finland, which might have wanted closer ties to the Atlantic alliance, was not allowed to pursue them by the Soviets.\(^{288}\)

The empirical part of the thesis supports the argument that common cultural factors, quite possibly a late derivative of the religious schism in Western Europe, may be significant in determining Nordic and British reluctance towards European integration. The proportion of Protestants in the population appears to be a defining factor explaining the attitudes towards European integration. It might mean that

\(^{287}\) See e.g. ‘Skýrsla Halldórs Ásgrímssonar utanríkisráðherra’.

\(^{288}\) An opinion poll by the United States Information Agency in 1998 shows that of three neutral EU countries, Swedes tend to have more confidence in NATO dealing effectively with European problems than the EU (51% vs. 45%). Austrians and Finns have less confidence in NATO than the EU (A: 30% vs. 50%, and Fi: 45% vs. 52%). Also, Swedes seem to rely more on the U.S. in times of crisis than Austrians and Finns, since 42% of Swedes mentioned U.S. as the country they could rely on most. Only 14% of Austrians and 13% of Finns mentioned the U.S. It looks like Sweden is more “Atlanticist” than one would have a tendency to believe, (see ‘Opinion Analysis’, USIA, 13 October 1998).
European integration will only go so far with the predominantly Protestant Nordic countries and Britain as members, at least if all EU members are to move together in the same direction. There appears to be a different mode of identity, created by centuries of a religious and cultural divide between the Protestant north and the Catholic south. Different modes of religion have created different institutions and different attitudes towards miscellaneous worldly activities that persist in the culture even where the grips of the Protestant or Catholic faith have all but withered away.289

The Protestant countries are on the edge of Europe, not in her centre. This simple fact of geography is sometimes used to explain the attitudes of the populations, but it doesn’t explain the enthusiasm for European integration in Ireland, or even Portugal, which are also geographically peripheral, when compared to the British or Nordics. However it should be borne in mind that the economic situation was quite different in Portugal and Ireland when these countries sought membership of the EC from those of Britain, Denmark, Norway or Sweden.290

As John Redwood says: ‘It is easy to unite peoples where they speak the same language and worship the same gods. In modern terms they have a similar cultural inheritance. It is very difficult unifying a country with more than one religion and

289 It is worth a mention that the European Community had a distinctly Catholic appearance in the first decades of its existence. Not only do the six original member states put together have a vast majority of Catholic citizens, but the major players in the creation of the Community were men for whom the Catholic faith was more than just a mere formality. Hugo Young says that the Catholic nature of “Europe” was a generous source of prejudice against it, which acquired a strong political formulation for people who ‘saw in the Schuman Plan the beginnings of a Vatican conspiracy or, even more luridly, an attempt to recreate the Holy Roman Empire.’ (Young, H. p. 50).

290 Ireland had a large economic incentive to join, with GDP per capita just over a half of West Germany’s GDP per capita in 1973. The same applies Portugal whose GDP per capita was only 40% of West Germany’s in 1977, the year of her application.
culture. It is proving almost impossible to unite peoples divided by both language and culture at the same time.\textsuperscript{291} The first category could be taken to describe the Nordic countries, and, to a lesser extent Britain, the last describes the EU, where in Finland, Britain, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands,\textsuperscript{292} about 60 per cent of the population slightly or completely disagree with the statement: ‘There is a European cultural identity shared by all Europeans.’\textsuperscript{293}

If one is allowed to speculate somewhat at the end of a thesis, the disdain for the future of the European Union in the Nordic member states and in Britain\textsuperscript{294} should serve as a serious warning sign for the Union. Possibly, it is not heading in the right direction.

Although the idea of a two-tier Europe, with an integrated core and a less integrated periphery is usually met with resentment,\textsuperscript{295} the idea of a multi-layered Europe seems to be gaining ground. In a recent editorial in \textit{The Economist} the author describes what he calls a ‘paralysis’ in the European Union:

The reason for the paralysis... is that the EU’s main modus operandi – that all should move together, or not at all – looks unworkable. Different countries have different aims, and for perfectly good reasons, not the least of which is that their electorates feel differently about the whole process of European integration.\textsuperscript{296}

\textsuperscript{291} Redwood, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{292} Could this have something to do with the relatively high proportion of Protestants in the Netherlands?
\textsuperscript{293} ‘Eurobarometer’, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{294} On average 65 per cent of the citizens of Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Britain would be ‘indifferent’ or ‘very relieved’ if the EU was scrapped, not counting those who ‘don’t know’, (‘Eurobarometer’, p. 46.)
\textsuperscript{295} See for instance \textit{The Guardian}, 1 July 2000, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{296} \textit{The Economist}, 20 May 2000, p. 21.
The writer goes on supporting the proposals of, among others Lionel Jospin, the prime minister of France and Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, for a flexible Union, and adding that it should be so permanently: ‘A multi-system Europe, in which groups of countries proceeded to integrate and co-operate in different ways according to their different choices, would offer a more stable and viable way to run a large, liberal community of 20 or more countries.’ Flexibility has now been put on the EU’s agenda as one of the measures to be decided on before the end of the year 2000 as a part of reforming EU institutions in preparation for the membership of over twenty European states.

Flexibility could also be a boost for the legitimacy of the Union, when citizens and businesses in less integrated countries would be forced to make demands for further integration when it is tried and tested and the benefits of it have become clear, rather than having the sense that unwanted integration is being shoved down their throats by political elites and distant bureaucrats.

Julie Smith says ‘Europe has not won the hearts of its citizens – in some countries it has not even won their minds. Thus people feel little incentive to participate, raising questions about the legitimacy of the European enterprise.’ The answer to this

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297 In a speech in the Bundestag in Berlin July 2000, Jacques Chirac, the French president, joined those calling for a more flexible Union, although his vision seems to be more on the line of a two-tier Europe, see The Economist, 1 July 2000, p. 43.
problem could be to let the unquestionable diversity of Europe flourish; to allow the nations to participate in the European project while still retaining their peculiarities. Thus the Europeans would be more directly involved in choosing each careful step towards European cooperation, and ultimately – if they so will – an “ever closer union”.

## Appendix

### Table 1:

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<th>Regressions</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Estimated $\beta_0$</th>
<th>Estimated $\beta_1$</th>
<th>R-squared</th>
<th>No. of observations</th>
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** Significant at 5% level  
* Significant at 10% level
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