

The Long Brexit: Postwar British Euroscepticism

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Abbreviations

BNP	British National Party
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
LEL	League of Empire Loyalists
NF	National Front
TUC	Trade Unions Congress
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party

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Introduction

The Long Brexit: Postwar Euroscepticism in Britain

On June 23, 2016, by a close 52-to-48 percent margin, British voters elected to leave the European Union, ending a decades-long experiment in European integration. The so-called Brexit vote was greeted with global dismay, as the very project of Europe was called into question. Newspapers throughout the continent and across the Atlantic registered shock at the result and worried whether the EU could survive the vote.¹ Past scholarship on Euroscepticism has assessed Euroscepticism—an aversion to European integration—to be a deviant political view, one without a home in mainstream politics. Yet in mainstream British politics, the Conservative and Labour parties have made Eurosceptic arguments with regularity since one British politician, Winston Churchill, first called for British leadership in postwar European integration at the 1947 Congress of Europe at The Hague. Even after Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973 under Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath, its place in Europe was immediately questioned, and the subsequent Labour Prime Minister swiftly held a referendum on EEC membership in 1975. When placed in this broader context of Britain’s relationship with Europe since the end of World War II, the Brexit vote—Britain’s *second* plebiscite on European integration in 40 years—is less shocking.

In the postwar decades, British politicians increasingly used the issue of European integration as a strategy of their domestic politics to both encourage and resist European integration. In the 1980s, small-government Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, sought greater regional defense coordination—reviving institutions like the Western European Union, while lamenting the Brussels “superstate” as a threat to British self-governance. On the

¹ “How the World’s Media Reacted to the EU Referendum Result,” The Independent, June 24, 2016.

other end of the spectrum, the pro-Europe Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, enthusiastically promoted the creation of the Euro currency zone during his tenure as the President of the European Commission—an EU body—while acknowledging in London that Britain should not be required to join the single currency. These approaches to Europe reflected the importance of domestic political tradition in guiding the country’s attitudes toward integration. Yet scholars examining the rise in Euroscepticism have instead focused on specific political parties, defined by their anti-Europe positions, as the main drivers of popular Euroscepticism. In short, Euroscepticism has been treated as an creation of opposition politics.

This framing of Euroscepticism as a position adopted by non-mainstream parties led several scholars to propose typologies of Eurosceptic parties. Political scientists Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde focused on how general or specific to the European Union a party’s anti-Europe criticisms were. Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart focused on how Euroscepticism interacts with party systems. In their framework, Szczerbiak and Taggart suggested Euroscepticism is generally espoused by fringe parties, and that core, mainstream political parties only express Euroscepticism in factional conflicts within the party. Like Kopecky and Mudde, Szczerbiak and Taggart distinguished between outright rejection of the EU (hard Euroscepticism) and specific, contingent objections to specific manifestations of integration (soft Euroscepticism). In Britain, however, hard and soft Eurosceptic positions have been articulated both at the center and periphery of the political landscape—in short, the old frameworks fail to explain the run-up to Brexit.² These competing assessments of Euroscepticism treat Eurosceptic politicians as confronting a consensus, pro-Europe position. In the British case, however, to say there was a postwar pro-Europe consensus would be an overstatement.

² Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, “Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality” (Working Paper No 69, Sussex European Institute, 2003).

Recent evaluations of British Euroscepticism, including Chris Gifford's 2006 analysis of British Euroscepticism, traced its roots beyond specific reactions to the European Union, and interrogated the nationalist component of anti-Europe arguments.³ Scholarship on explicitly nationalist parties, such as the British National Party, has emphasized that party's movement from violent, street-level politics in the 1980s to respectable, electoral competition in the 2000s.⁴ As the BNP became a regular contender in British political contests, it articulated a nationalist anti-European position that criticizes the economic and immigration policies of integrated Europe. Emma Vines examined how broadly Eurosceptic parties in the UK, including the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Conservative Party, differentiated their arguments condemning European integration as they competed against each other in elections in the 2000s.⁵ I argue, however, that these were distinctions without a difference. Initial focus on UKIP and the Brexit vote has centered on party structure and how Brexit can be interpreted as a populist reaction to an integrated, technocratic Europe. Past scholarship has not considered Brexit as a consequence of the decades-long development of a Eurosceptic political environment that has built a consensus anti-Europe position.⁶

I join Gifford in rejecting the simple party-system explanations offered by Szczerbiak and Taggart in the early 2000s. I argue that Euroscepticism is a deeply rooted component of British politics. Divisions about European policy existed in both the Conservative and Labour Parties.

³ Chris Gifford, "The Rise of Post-Imperial Populism: The Case of Right-Wing Euroscepticism in Britain," *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 5 (August 1, 2006): 851–69.

⁴ Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou, "Towards a 'Civic' Narrative: British National Identity and the Transformation of the British National Party," *Political Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 583–92.

⁵ Philip Lynch and Richard Whitaker, "Rivalry on the Right: The Conservatives, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the EU Issue," *British Politics* 8, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 285–312; Emma Vines, "Reframing English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: From Populism to the British Political Tradition," *British Politics* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 255–74.

⁶ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash" (Harvard Kennedy School, August 2016).

Attitudes toward integration, empire, and economic regulations stemmed from specific beliefs about the roles of sovereignty and cultural difference in politics. Rather than compartmentalizing the Euroscepticism displayed in the Brexit vote within the campaign itself, or by the UKIP party itself, I examine the parallels between arguments made by the Leave campaign in 2016 and the Labour Party in 1962 about the implications of federalism for British sovereignty.

My thesis expands existing understandings of contemporary British Euroscepticism by emphasizing its roots in mid-twentieth century debates about British global engagement. Drawing from political party manifestos, newspaper articles, pamphlets, and parliamentary debates, I trace how British politicians—both in the mainstream and at the periphery—described Britain’s role in Europe. Proceeding from arguments made by nostalgic politicians concerned with Britain’s obligations to its Commonwealth and the continent, I examine how Eurosceptic arguments have been honed and refined by new political actors—including Churchill, Heath, Thatcher, Major, and Cameron—who each described Britain’s orientation toward Europe in specific terms. I argue that the decision to hold the 2016 referendum resulted from the ways that political parties discussed Europe at different stages of integration, contradictory arguments that activated diverse groups of voters to unite against Europe, and the inability of David Cameron to move his party beyond the issue of Europe—giving Eurosceptics momentum.

The Parties and Europe

Britain’s mainstream political parties articulated distrust of European integration early in the postwar period. While Winston Churchill—then leading the Conservatives in Opposition—organized a regional Congress of Europe in 1947 and called for the formation of a “United States of Europe,” he failed to bring his party and his Labour opponents with him. When Churchill entered government four years later, but failed to bring Britain into the European Defence

Community, he failed to make good on his promises of European integration—keeping Britain on the sidelines on the continent. As six core European nations led by France formed the European Economic Community in 1957, Britain failed to participate.

When another Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan tried to join the EEC in 1962, he faced pressure from his members in parliament to negotiate special terms of entry that preserved British sovereignty. When Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson also attempted to secure entry to the EEC in 1967, it was his own Labour parliamentarians who sounded the alarm against sacrificing control to a supranational body. Rather than treating European integration as a technical issue for economists and planners, British politicians tied their own political brands to Europe.

By politicizing Europe, politicians made European integration vulnerable to moral attack. Pitting European integration against British sovereignty, Eurosceptic politicians and activists argued that bringing Britain closer with the continent sacrificed Britain's cultural heritage. Edward Heath, Harold Wilson, and Margaret Thatcher each transformed European integration into a domestic political issue—a move that consistently weakened British attachment to the region and exposed internal divisions in British political parties. Parliamentary colleagues and Heath also failed to jumpstart the faltering economy, leading to his ouster. In 1974, Wilson succeeded Heath on the promise of renegotiating British participation in the EEC, only to make room for Eurosceptic arguments on the center stage of British politics during the 1975 referendum.

Far-right Eurosceptic parties also influenced mainstream politics. The far-right National Front made arguments against integration that closely aligned with the official “National Referendum Campaign” in 1975. Both called Britain a “mere province in Europe.” A similar argument was made by a mainstream British leader, Margaret Thatcher, who said in 1988, “We

have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels.”

Toleration of Contradictory Arguments Against Europe

As Europe continued to grow and transform, with the 1986 formation of the European Union, and the admission of new member states with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty at the conclusion of the Cold War, British politicians continued to question the value of British participation in regional institutions from several angles. Margaret Thatcher worried that a transfer of decision-making to Brussels would harm popular sovereignty. Eurosceptic Conservatives and fascist members of the British National Party were concerned about Britain’s special status as an island nation. Though failing to win many seats at any level of government in the 1970s and 1980s, the British National Party attracted hundreds of thousands of votes in local council elections—indicating its appeal to disaffected voters. The combination of Eurosceptic politics with racist and anti-immigration positions continued in the 1990s and 2000s. As the Eurosceptic party UKIP contested seats in European Parliament elections in the 2000s, they argued that Europe was inviting immigrants to steal British jobs. This imagery, deployed during the Brexit referendum campaign, appealed to lower-class white British voters in areas with few immigrants—where voters elected to leave the EU in high numbers. While UKIP’s tactics of promoting fear of immigration operated at a sub-government level, Britain’s leaders were unable to resolutely declare their support for Europe.

Cameron’s Weakness and Eurosceptic Momentum

Conservative MP David Cameron first promised a referendum on British membership in the EU to win a party leadership position in 2006. By 2010, he entered government and continued to offer vague assurances to his party that a referendum would be held soon. But Cameron, like

prime ministers before him, sought to grab Europe and repurpose it to suit his vision of Britain's role in the world. Following the Euro zone crisis of 2008, Cameron rejected close integration with Europe, but still argued that Britain would fare better as a member of the club, than as a nonmember on its borders. Facing repeated conservative rebellions in Parliament, however, Cameron was pressured to make additional promises for a referendum. By 2013, Cameron promised to hold a referendum in his next term as prime minister: trading his control of government for public input on European integration. He was bending to public opinion: A November 2012 Ipsos/MORI poll reported that 48 percent supported leaving the EU, with only 44 percent hoping to remain in Europe. When he won in 2015, he had no alternative but to call the Brexit vote. Yet by never strongly arguing for the merits of Europe, Cameron enabled a Eurosceptic coalition—drawn from Eurosceptic former Conservative MPs including his former allies London Mayor Boris Johnson and cabinet secretary Michael Gove, UKIP leader Nigel Farage, and BNP leader Nick Griffin, to deploy their patchwork of Eurosceptic arguments in service of the Leave campaign. In the final month of campaigning, UKIP resorted to blatant racism. Farage suggested that remaining in Europe would lead to a tide of sexual harassment in the UK. Though Conservative members of the Brexit campaign distanced themselves from Farage's racist implication that a "cultural issue" would lead immigrants to assault women, they did not defect from Brexit. Ultimately, this was the power of Brexit: toleration for extreme views to achieve exit from Europe. In the absence of a consensus position supporting European integration, these arguments faced little resistance.

Finally, Brexit

After forty years of the U.K.'s tentative moves toward Europe, the Brexit campaign preyed on long-standing British distrust of European institutions. Though the Leave campaign resorted to racist appeals in the final weeks of campaigning, it not only attracted radical voters, but also

mainstream voters who felt disenfranchised by elites. In tracing the long history of Brexit back to British ambivalence toward Europe in the 1940s-1960s, I aimed to situate Euroscepticism within discussions of mainstream, not extreme politics. Instead of treating the Brexit vote as a cry from the far-right, I demonstrated that Euroscepticism thrived in both major parties for decades. Each time Britain's leaders responded to Eurosceptic arguments against Europe, they legitimized Euroscepticism and admitted it to the public sphere. Thus, that Cameron ultimately called for an EU referendum and that the Leave campaign won is not surprising. Instead, it is remarkable that Britain was able to remain in Europe for so long, as opponents of European integration interfered at each step of the process.

1. Disunion on the Right: Britain's Relationship with Europe in the Early Postwar Period

Introduction

Competing visions of Britain's role in Europe and its obligations as a global power defined British foreign policy decisions in the early postwar decades. Formally inaugurating its postwar relationship with Europe under Clement Atlee's Labour government, Britain achieved peacetime recovery more smoothly than its continental neighbors. Whereas Britain emerged from the war as a great power with a global economic system rivaled in strength only by the United States and the Soviet Union, continental countries struggled to rebuild infrastructure and quell unemployment. While Atlee's government rejected a closer relationship with Europe, instead pursuing closer ties to the rising American superpower, Conservatives in the Opposition turned to the neglected continent. While Conservatives made overtures for political union in Europe, the Labour government, eager to receive outside assistance from American-led Marshall Plan, was forced to both highlight its role in Europe and prove its superiority to the continent its bid for greater economic assistance. In short, Europe quickly transformed into a political bargaining chip capable of earning support for politicians at home and boosting Britain's international profile. As Europe overcame the hurdles of immediate recovery, early moves to integrate the region economically through the Treaty of Rome were not taken seriously by Anthony Eden's Conservative government. A few years later, however, Harold Macmillan's Conservative government lodged the first of Britain's three bids to join the European Community. As approaches toward Europe changed with each government, even within the same party, cleavages on European integration became increasingly salient in the postwar period. Sowing division in both parties, issues of European integration drove Conservative and Labour politicians to extend Britain's reach into the

continent, often in vain hopes of domestic political gain. Early postwar disunity within the Conservative party over European integration brought criticisms of Europe to the surface of mainstream politics. Concerns about the federal structure of proposed regional institutions and the loss of national sovereignty inherent in integration would resurface after 2010 when Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron would face opponents in his own party about Europe. In this chapter, I outline early divisions in the Conservative Party, and in right wing British politics more generally, to illustrate how European integration became a regular feature of British politics.

In the postwar period, Britain's varied political actors grappled with Europe in their time, each embracing or dismissing it to advocate their vision for Britain. Prominent wartime Conservative leaders, including Winston Churchill and MP Duncan Sandys, articulated a vision of European unity through the creation of the United Europe Movement (1947) and at the widely attended Congress of Europe, located at The Hague on May 7-11, 1948.⁷ Yet once in power, Conservative governments in the 1950s failed to connect Britain to newly formed European communities. While nascent British attachments to Europe formed in the mainstream, British fascists who had been silent during wartime emerged as nationalist defenders of a specific, homogenous British culture.⁸ As strong nationalists articulated their defense of British identity, however, Britain and its international environment were shifting. In the early postwar decades, Britain slowly marched toward joining a united Europe, defined in specific terms compatible with preserving Britain's unique transatlantic relationship, emphasizing its economic and cultural primacy, and resisting Soviet interference in Western Europe.

Integration, Unity, and the Congress of Europe

⁷ *Congress of Europe: The Hague, 7-11 May 1948*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1999, 437-442.

⁸ Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson, *Cultures of Post-War British Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

As Britain transitioned into the postwar period, economic recovery was a significant priority. In war-ravaged Europe especially, securing economic assistance from American diplomats was a key strategy for economic recovery. Hoping for preferential treatment from American diplomats, British statesmen amplified Britain's connections to Europe and its need of a strong economy to ward against communist expansionism. In 1947 as planners were finalizing the Marshall Plan's aid provisions, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin sought generous aid for Britain. Conscious of the Marshall Plan's political significance in deflecting Soviet encroachment in Europe, Bevin attempted to leverage Britain's prominence in Europe to obtain American aid.⁹ On June 24, 1947, Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Dalton reminded U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs William Clayton that "we are something more than just a bit of Europe" in an attempt to secure a heftier aid package.¹⁰ Presenting itself as the backbone of postwar Europe, Britain sought to emphasize its importance to Europe while characterizing itself as non-European. This duality of Britain as both glue and exception to the European community expressed itself in Britain's relationship with the continent in the 1950s and 1960s, when Britain rejected specific forms of European integration while advocating general support for a united region. Disagreement about Britain's role in the world was not dictated by party affiliation, but rather by individual conceptions of the nation, Empire, and expectations of how a Europe compatible with Britain should be shaped.

Sidelined from its wartime government to the opposition in 1945, the Conservative Party was pulled in several policy directions by different factions vying to restore the party's political

⁹ Walter Lipgens, *A History of European Integration*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 490–91; William C. Cromwell, "The Marshall Plan, Britain and the Cold War," *Review of International Studies* 8, no. 4 (October 1982): 239–40..

¹⁰ Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After: Memoirs: 1945-1950*. London: Frederick Muller, 1962, 256 qtd. in Walter Lipgens, *A History of European Integration*. Vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, 491.

power. While some MPs—including Anthony Eden, Rab Butler, and Lord Woolton—focused on domestic issues, Winston Churchill and Duncan Sandys turned toward Europe. Concerned about the growing reach of Communism across postwar Europe, Churchill envisioned a united, capitalist, democratic Western Europe that balanced Soviet interference in Eastern Europe.¹¹ In 1947 Churchill and Sandys formed the European Movement, a lobby for regional integration. Led by Churchill, Paul-Henri Spaak, Konrad Adenauer, Leon Blum, and Alcide de Gasperi, and covertly funded by American government officials, the European Movement sought to unify Europe against communism.¹² Though its goals were not immediately realized, the Congress signified a first step toward regional integration by major Western European powers, including Britain, France, and Germany. Britain dispatched one-hundred-forty-six delegates to the Congress on May 7-11, 1948, including Churchill, who served as the Congress’s honorary President.

Convened at The Hague, the European Congress of 1948 provided the region’s pro-unity activists an opportunity to establish collective political goals and confirm their commitment to a postwar European project. Focused on ridding Europe of communist rule, Churchill commented in his opening remarks:

These [arrangements] can apply at present only to what is called Western Europe. In this we wish them well and will give them all loyal support; but our aim here is not confined to Western Europe. We seek nothing less than all Europe. Distinguished exiles from Czechoslovakia, almost all the Eastern European nations, and also from Spain, are present among us. We aim at the eventual participation of all European peoples whose society and way of life are not in disaccord with a charter of human rights and the sincere expression of free democracy.”¹³

¹¹ N.J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European Integration Since 1945: At the Heart of Europe?* New York: Routledge, 2007.

¹² Richard J. Aldrich, “OSS, CIA and European Unity: The American Committee on United Europe, 1948-60.” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 8, no. 1 (March 1997): 184-185.

¹³ *Congress of Europe*, 9.

Noting American primacy in the Western hemisphere and Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, Churchill argued that Europe needed long-term commitments of integration. Looking beyond this Congress, “We must here and now resolve that in one form or another a European Assembly shall be constituted which will enable that voice [of Europe as a united whole] to make itself continuously heard and we trust with ever-growing acceptance through all the free countries of this Continent.”¹⁴ The aspiration of a region-wide federal structure that coordinated European economies was not realized for several decades.

Other British representatives at the Congress expressed apprehension at aspirations for a European constituent assembly. Labour MP Mackay scoffed at the suggestion that the nations assembled would grant universal suffrage for a European Parliament quickly and noted, “It may suit very well for the papers tomorrow to contain this great resolution from M. Reynaud that we are now going out for universal suffrage for a Parliament in six months. But that is all moonshine and it is of no value in a practical way to secure the end that we want.”¹⁵ Mackay’s apprehension stemmed from different appetites in parliament for European integration. In the House of Lords, Viscount Swinton paid lip service to the project of integration as he encouraged a reinvigoration of the imperial economy and argued “the more prosperous the individual [Commonwealth] countries will be, the quicker they will restore their own economies and the more trade they will do with the rest of the world.”¹⁶ As the Western European powers sought to forge a European economic zone, some British politicians emphasized the imperial economy, which supplied 49 percent of British imports and received 54 percent of British exports from 1950-1954.¹⁷ This nationalist attitude toward postwar economic revival, which focused on revitalizing Britain’s

¹⁴ *Congress of Europe*, 11.

¹⁵ *Congress of Europe*, 105.

¹⁶ Viscount Swinton, United Kingdom, Lords, 1948, *Parliamentary Debates*, April 21, 321.

¹⁷ N.J. Crowson, *Conservative Party and European Integration*, 19.

colonial economic system, contrasted with the *sui generis* economic coordination that soon characterized the project of European integration. European approaches to policymaking, which led to policies like the Common Agricultural Policy in the following decade, established ahistorical rules and economic benchmarks for the entire region, instead of accommodating the specific needs of member countries. Such approaches were anathema to British Conservatives proud of their imperial history, who clung to the political goal of using commerce to purchase influence in Commonwealth countries.

Britain's decision to remain outside the European common market of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 epitomized unresolved domestic debates on the European question. Conservative Party politicians were split in their support for stronger European integration, and anti-Europe forces shaped the party's waning preference for economic coordination. At the October 1949 party conference, MPs conditioned Conservative support for European unity on a plan that was "consistent with the full maintenance of the unity of the British empire and continuing collaboration with the U.S."¹⁸ As the six common market countries proceeded to form the ECSC, and ultimately the European Economic Community in 1957, British efforts to participate in Europe were sluggish. While economic integration halted, defense policy provided an additional avenue for political integration in Western Europe. Some Conservatives welcomed the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 as a site for additional European collaboration, beyond the Council of Europe, a standing committee of Western European leaders formed the previous autumn. Yet when Conservatives regained control of government in October 1951, placing Winston Churchill back at the helm, they failed to bolster

¹⁸ *Conservative Conference Report 1949*, 60-5 qtd. in N.J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European Integration Since 1945: At the Heart of Europe?* New York: Routledge, 2007, 20.

the Council of Europe or support additional political integration. Still, Britain refrained from full participation in Europe.

Even when Britain supported the functional role of Europe in certain policy areas, like defense, it shied away from commitment due to symbolic concerns about its great power status and whether Britain was losing influence to Europe. Conservative governments in the 1950s, under the leadership of Prime Ministers Churchill, Eden and Macmillan, pursued defense coordination. The European Defence Community (EDC), formed on May 26, 1952 by French, German, Italian, Belgian, Italian, Dutch, and Luxembourg as a mechanism to achieve regional security consistent with the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty.¹⁹ Britain's lack of participation in the EDC, however, revealed a distrust of regional coordination efforts that originated on the continent. In the parliamentary debate surrounding Britain's participation in the EDC, skeptics raised the prospect that the EDC would commit British troops to aid Europe, without a guarantee of American aid, because the EDC was distinct from NATO (which included America).²⁰ To Churchill's government, the EDC represented a move toward a federal Europe, which would impair British sovereignty and limit British flexibility in foreign policy.²¹ At the request of the EDC's member countries, Britain entered into a treaty with the EDC that promised support within the framework of NATO, enabling Britain to voice its support for a united Europe without committing itself to a specific form of European collaboration.²² Unable to advance its goal of defense coordination without addressing the question of European federalism, the Churchill government's choice of

¹⁹ Senate Report from the President. "Convention on Relations with the Federal Republic of Germany and A Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty," 1952.

²⁰ United Kingdom. Commons. 1952. *Parliamentary Debates*. May 5, 14. Mr. Hale.

²¹ M. Türker Ari, "The European Defence Community in the U.S. Foreign Policy Context," *Perceptions* IX (2004): 83-98.

²² Türker Ari.

association with the EDC, rather than participation in it, highlighted the consequences of politicizing Europe.

Pressure from the Far-Right

As Britain's mainstream political leaders toyed with the notion of European integration, radical political actors expressed their own conceptions of Britain's role in Europe. Though not main drivers of the European integration debate, fascist and far-right political groups consistently influenced the contours of the discourse on Europe—offering Eurosceptic language to sympathetic mainstream politicians while also marking the boundaries of acceptable criticism of Europe and multiculturalism. Similar to the Conservatives, Fascists quickly identified Europe as a political tool after the war. Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists who was interned during World War II, returned to the public sphere in the postwar period. In 1948, as Churchill and Sandys pursued federal integration in Europe, Mosley called for a completely integrated Europe.²³ Capitalizing on Churchill's "new [European] impulse," Mosley attempted to reorient his Unionist Movement (UM) to style itself as an anti-communist, rather than anti-European, party.²⁴ Writing in his book *The Alternative* (1947), Mosley first advocated the achievement of a European nation that obliterated national and ethnic diversity as a corrective to the degeneration of British culture, and ultimately the dismantling of the British Empire.²⁵ Mosley's ideas, however, had little traction beyond the fascist community and even there were not universally accepted. In the 1949 London Municipal elections, the UM fielded candidates in eight boroughs—selected for their density of Jewish residents—and ranked last in each one.²⁶ Though various actors within the UM

²³ Janet Dack, "Cultural Regeneration: Mosley and the Union Movement." In *Cultures of Post-War British Fascism*, by Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson. New York: Routledge, 2015, 10.

²⁴ Graham Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007, 54.

²⁵ Dack, "Cultural Regeneration," 10.

²⁶ Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 56.

umbrella organization espoused specific brands of fascism that emphasized anti-Semitism, anti-Capitalism, and ecological preservation, Fascist preferences for British purity overwhelmed rhetorical differences.²⁷ Throughout the 1950s, the UM issued caustic statements about Commonwealth immigrants, which accused them of “rape, violence, living on immoral earnings, dope peddling and [other crimes].”²⁸ Demonstrating the far-right’s influence, these racist arguments would recur in discussions of European integration, even in the 2015 referendum on European Union membership.²⁹

Mosley repurposed the concept of Europe to fit his own racist global outlook. In his initial postwar opus, *The Alternative*, Mosley called for a “singular continental conglomerate,” that grew from biological, not political, union.³⁰ Writing against the backdrop of Churchill’s calls for European unity, Mosley embraced incipient discussions of European integration as an opportunity to revive fascist dreams of a pan-European empire along Nazi-style ethnic lines. He began, “The failure of Europe is quite simply a failure of will and spirit.”³¹ Mosley ascribed specific importance to national identity, “But the fear that a political and economic union leads at once to the loss of cultural and national identity is very easily disproved from relatively recent experience. The Scot feels no less Scottish since he was united with the British in Great Britain.”³² Mosley’s argument about identity contrasted the top-down imposition of communism with the bottom-up politics of Europe’s common history.³³ Even as Mosley called for a pan-European state, however, he appealed to the economics of empire. “But the last clash of interests will disappear entirely the

²⁷ Macklin, 57-64.

²⁸ Macklin, 70.

²⁹ Jessica Elgot and Rowena Mason, “Nigel Farage: Migrant Sex Attacks to Be ‘Nuclear Bomb’ of EU Referendum,” *The Guardian*, June 5, 2016.

³⁰ Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 79.

³¹ Oswald Mosley, *Europe: Faith and Plan; A Way Out from the Coming Crisis and an Introduction to Thinking as a European*, Essex: Washburn and Sons Limited, 1958, 2.

³² Mosley, 4-5.

³³ Mosley, 13.

moment we decide to make a viable economic unit of Europe-Africa, with no balance of payment problem because it will contain both its own market and source of supply.”³⁴ This British-centric European ideal became an anti-Semitic “defence of European interest against the creeping ‘red death’ of Communism.”³⁵ Mosley’s pan-European project stipulated the expulsion of Jews from the continent, which was massively unpopular in the wake of the Holocaust.³⁶ Nicholas Mosley said of his father that “while the right hand dealt in grandiose ideas and glory, the left hand let the rats out of the sewer.”³⁷ Mosley re-tooled fascist ideas to match the postwar environment, but his racial politics, reminiscent of the Nazi regime, minimized his influence on contemporary government integration policy. Mostly ineffectual in his lifetime, Mosley launched a decades-long fascination with European integration on the far right. His legacy was the survival of the British National Party and the success of United Kingdom Independence Party in twenty-first century politics. His role in British politics increasingly marginal, the development of right-wing politics was left to a new generation of activists.³⁸

Other far-right nationalists split from Mosley’s group to form the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL) in 1954, in a decisive rejection of British engagement with Europe. Under the direction of A.K. Chesterton, LEL activists voiced concerns about the deterioration of British sovereignty, and often resisted integrationist politicians for more than a decade using street-level agitation, or as Graham Macklin put it, “political spectacle.”³⁹ During the 1955 general election campaign, in which Anthony Eden’s Conservative government widened its parliamentary majority, LEL protesters heckled Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan, who supported Churchill’s

³⁴ Mosley, 14.

³⁵ Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 80.

³⁶ Macklin, 81.

³⁷ Macklin, 74.

³⁸ Macklin, 135.

³⁹ Graham Macklin, “Transatlantic Connections and Conspiracies: A.K. Chesterton and ‘The New Unhappy Lords.’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (April 2012): 270-290.

calls for a European Army and advocated British participation in the European Defence Community.⁴⁰ The Loyalists questioned his “[offer] to place British armed forces out of the control of the Queen and under the control of a supra-national authority ‘under heaven knows whom.’”⁴¹ By contrasting British sovereignty against an unknown other, Loyalists portrayed any movement toward integration as a departure from Britain’s essential character. When Macmillan argued that the erosion of sovereignty inherent in “every treaty” did not justify “a position of absolute isolation in the world,” he cited membership in the United Nations as a multilateral safeguard of the British nation.⁴² When the Loyalist asked, “Is loyalty now out of date,” Macmillan replied, “My loyalty has never been questioned, either in the first war or in the second.”⁴³ Macmillan’s answer suggested that in his view European and international collaboration, particularly in defense of democracy, was wholly consistent with the ideals and longevity of Britain. Though LEL rhetoric emphasized the symbols of nationalism, it seemed hollow in the context of World War II and the fight against communism being waged by Britain and its Atlantic and European allies. Macmillan implied that national loyalty now demanded international commitments to fend off the Communist threat.

While Mosleyites viewed Europe as a political asset, Loyalists regarded internationalism with suspicion. Several months after the heckling incident, Loyalists demonstrated against the flying of a United Nations flag in London’s Trafalgar Square by the Minister of Defense, Selwyn Lloyd.⁴⁴ One LEL activist felt the United Nations was “an international tyranny.”⁴⁵ To ward off

⁴⁰ “Empire Loyalists’ Heckle The Foreign Secretary,” *Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1955; Peter Catterall, “MacMillan and Europe: 1950-1956: The Cold War, the American Context and the British Approach to European Integration,” *Cercles* 5 (2002):93-108.

⁴¹ “Loyalists Heckle Foreign Secretary.”

⁴² “Loyalists Heckle Foreign Secretary.”

⁴³ “Loyalists Heckle Foreign Secretary.”

⁴⁴ “United Nations Flag Incident: Empire Loyalists’ Statement,” *Manchester Guardian*, October 25, 1955.

⁴⁵ United Nations Flag Incident.”

the UN's influence, the LEL turned against Macmillan, "who had advocated in Parliament the establishment of a World Government."⁴⁶ Beyond anti-Europe rhetoric, LEL activists turned to violence. In 1957 a LEL member hit a peer who had voiced criticism of the Queen, Lord Altrincham.⁴⁷ The culprit, Philip Kinghorn Burbidge, defended his violence in nationalist terms, "Due to the scurrilous attack by Lord Altrincham I felt it was up to a decent Briton to show resentment. What I feared most was the overseas repercussions and publication in the American newspapers. I thought our fortunes were at a low ebb and such things only make them more deplorable."⁴⁸ Through direct action, Loyalists brought attention to the Macmillan government's turn away from Empire. When LEL secretary Leslie Green interrupted Prime Minister Macmillan several times during a 1957 speech before the Women's National Advisory Committee of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, she was forcibly removed when she asked, "Where will you get your raw materials when you have thrown away the Empire?"⁴⁹ Framing European economic coordination as mutually exclusive with the Commonwealth economy, Green raised doubts about what British industry stood to gain from participation in the Common Market. As Britain's steady supply of goods and access to markets dwindled with the breakup of its Commonwealth, pressure increased for British leaders to find new markets for British growth. As Macmillan greeted the next decade, the newly formed European Common Market proved to be a compelling economic option.

Opposition on All Fronts: The 1962 EEC Bid

Loyalist antagonism toward proposed British integration with Europe reached new heights as Macmillan's government pursued entry to the European Economic Community in 1962.

⁴⁶ "United Nations Flag Incident."

⁴⁷ "Man Struck Lord Altrincham," *Manchester Guardian*, August 8, 1957.

⁴⁸ "Man Struck Lord Altrincham."

⁴⁹ "Claim By Empire Loyalist: Alleged assault at Tory meeting," *Manchester Guardian*, Oct 24, 1957.

Speaking above jeers and interruptions from Loyalist activists at a campaign event in Stockton-on-Tees, Macmillan offered hopes for, “Success in securing our Commonwealth interests, success in securing the interests of our manufacturers and farmers, success—at the end—in achieving an evermore dynamic influence in the affairs and the future of Western Europe and the Western world.”⁵⁰ Macmillan’s vision for British participation in Europe emphasized the prospect to expand Britain’s global reach, rather than retract from the world. At the Conservative Party conference in 1962, members “gave overwhelming backing to the Government’s negotiations for entering the Common Market.”⁵¹ Despite some protests that the Conservative Party’s first step toward Europe would result in a Labour victory in the next election, Deputy Prime Minister R. A. Butler declared, “It was not a choice between Commonwealth and Europe: there was a chance to give Britain greater strength to help the Commonwealth.”⁵² In qualifying their support, members reaffirmed the party’s image as an ally of “our farmers” and a defender of Britain’s sovereignty.⁵³ Defending the interests of romanticized British farmers became a rallying cry in the fight to protect national interests, even in the Eurosceptic campaign of 2015. Even at the Conservative Party conference, however, opponents—including Loyalists—jeered at the arguments made in support of entry.⁵⁴

Opponents to EEC entry, housed within the “Keep Britain Out” campaign, decried integration as code for abandonment of the Commonwealth.⁵⁵ Mr. Oliver Smedley, chairman of the campaign, proclaimed, “We have a Government of faint hearts trembling on the brink of selling out a thousand years of history, tradition, political independence, and individual liberty for a mess

⁵⁰ “Premiere Heckled Over Eec: Government’s hopes of success Stockton Campaign,” *Guardian*, April 3, 1962.

⁵¹ “The Common Market ‘ayes’ have it: Overwhelming vote for Government,” *Guardian*, October 12, 1962.

⁵² “Ayes’ have it.”

⁵³ “Ayes’ have it.”

⁵⁴ “Ayes’ have it.”

⁵⁵ “Rally opposes EEC: ‘First Step in a Long March,’” *Guardian*, August 27, 1962.

of pottage.”⁵⁶ Opponents of the Common Market responded to Britain’s multi-layered relationship with Europe. *The Guardian* summarized, chairman of the Forward Britain Movement Richard Briginshaw’s position that “84 percent of Britain’s trade was carried on outside the Common Market and only 15 percent was with the member-countries. Britain had been carrying an unfair burden of keeping armies in Germany and while this was going on, the Common Market countries had stolen our trade.”⁵⁷ Anti-Europe campaigners blamed the Common Market for the Britain’s economic malaise, even though Britain had faced structural unemployment challenges since the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Even in this early phase of British collaboration with Europe, Eurosceptics honed their strategy of blaming Europe first for British problems.

In discussing the terms of entry to the EEC, British MPs disagreed about the timeline and specific shape of Britain’s proposed entry to Europe.⁵⁹ On the matter of agricultural policy, British flexibility to make adjustments in response to the EEC’s national review process was not guaranteed during the major debate on British entry in the House of Commons.⁶⁰ Because Britain was a net importer of food, EEC rules forcing a redistribution of resources from food importers to exporters presented an acute threat of raising food prices.⁶¹ Reflecting the lack of a widespread, stable support for Britain’s application to the EEC—even in the Government’s party—Conservative MP Richard Nugent asked: “What is the mechanism by which we then fix control and enforce prices to give producers the same return? Or does it become a matter of the market? In that case let us be perfectly clear that the assertion that British producers will lose a great part

⁵⁶ “Rally.”

⁵⁷ “Rally.”

⁵⁸ Jim Tomlinson, “Inventing ‘Decline’: The Falling behind of the British Economy in the Postwar Years,” *The Economic History Review* 49, no. 4 (November 1996): 731–57.

⁵⁹ Mr. George Brown, United Kingdom, Commons, 1962, *Parliamentary Debates*, November 8, 1171.

⁶⁰ Mr. Richard Nugent, United Kingdom, Commons, 1962, *Parliamentary Debates*, November 8, 1181.

⁶¹ Marcus H. Miller and John E. Spencer, “The Static Economic Effects of the UK Joining the EEC: A General Equilibrium Approach,” *The Review of Economic Studies* 44, no. 1 (February 1977): 71.

of their stability becomes absolutely true.”⁶² Sir Cyril Osborne, a Conservative MP, articulated the need for an entry that recognized Britain’s laudable qualities. He inveighed:

There are many advantages to the members of the Six in having Britain, Denmark and Norway as full members and other European countries as associates. It is not only a question of their market and its value to us. There is a market here; there are resources here and elsewhere which are also of value to them. I always get the impression that somehow the negotiations must have got on to the wrong basis at the very beginning and that we have gone on behaving as suppliants. It is a label which has become stuck on us now and which may well bring some problems to the Six.⁶³

Conservative suspicions of the advantages to EEC entry and the risk to British sovereignty, nestled in the minutiae of Parliamentary journals, signified a lack of clarity about what Britain’s participation in Europe would look like in 1962. Dealing with a British political community that felt it was receiving an unfair deal from the Six, the EEC was unable to strike a deal. Fearful that British entry would transform the Common Market’s agricultural policy, General de Gaulle vetoed Britain’s application, and thus ended its negotiations to join the EEC, on January 14, 1963.⁶⁴ Britain would remain outside the European club for another decade.

Conclusion

In the early postwar period, British politicians espoused distinct visions for Britain’s relationship with Europe. Despite early Conservative party commitments to European integration at the Congress of Europe, successive Conservative governments were unable to reach consensus about the shape, limits, and direction of British engagement with the continent. As Conservative

⁶² Nugent.

⁶³ Sir Cyril Osborne, United Kingdom. Commons, 1962, *Parliamentary Debates*. November 8, 1184.

⁶⁴ “General de Gaulle’s first veto,” CVCE.

ministers sought to support a united Europe from a distance, radical fascist groups used the question of European integration to rebrand themselves in the postwar period. As passionate defenders of the empire, such as the League of Empire Loyalists, agitated against Conservative efforts to join Europe, they expressed the dangers of Europe in nationalist terms. British sovereignty and superiority were at risk when Conservative governments pursued integration. Though Macmillan's government reached late-stage negotiations with the EEC member countries about the terms of a British entrance to the Common Market, lack of unity among Conservative members about acceptable terms of entry and French fears of British hijacking of the market stymied integration efforts in the 1960s. Yet blame did not sit squarely on France's shoulders. As Europhilic British politicians made their case for Europe, they invited nationalist responses from mainstream politicians. Labour politicians, critical of Conservative approaches to Europe, used the nationalist language of Eurosceptics to thwart participation in the EDC and the EEC. With each call for European integration, Eurosceptic arguments gained increasing prominence in public debate. Some arguments made against Europe in the 1950s and 1960s would return to haunt British leaders in the 2000s and 2010s. As integrated Europe—conceived by the Treaty of Rome in 1957—matured, Britain continued to build consensus about the type of Europe it wanted to join as a participant. This articulation of a national vision that accommodated European engagement ultimately led to British accession to the EEC in 1973, under a new government and confronting a new Europe at the negotiating table.

2. Labour's Euroscepticism and the Heightened Lure of 1960s Europe

Introduction

Conservatives did not hold a monopoly on party infighting over European integration. Since its initial postwar government, Labour had eschewed European integration as a distraction from investing in Britain's domestic economy. Under Clement Atlee's 1946-51 government, Labour navigated postwar economic challenges by nationalizing industries and retooling Britain's trade agreements to match current demand for goods. Meanwhile tepid participation at the Hague Congress of Europe in 1948 and apprehension toward the federated European structure envisioned by Churchill left Labour split on the European question as successive British governments made incremental moves toward entry during the 1960s and 1970s. Both a domestic political party and a symbol of socialism in Western Europe, Labour acknowledged the importance of engaging Europe while also reinforcing Britain's unique stature and potential for global leadership.⁶⁵ These internal tensions complicated Harold Wilson's bid to join the EEC in 1967, following up on Macmillan's 1962-3 failed accession attempt. Ultimately, Wilson's efforts were swatted aside by another veto from French President Charles De Gaulle. Labour's flirtation with Europe did not pay dividends, leaving Europhiles to wait for Edward Heath's successful navigation of EEC accession in 1972.

British ambivalence toward European integration in the early postwar period coalesced at the apogee of British economic, diplomatic, and political influence in global affairs. At the conclusion of World War II, Britain was the only European nation that retained great power status

⁶⁵ Roger Liddle, *The Europe Dilemma: Britain and the Drama of EU Integration* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 18.

in the Atlantic world. Meanwhile, its continental neighbors—France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (collectively “the Six”)—entered peacetime in national crises of economic and political turmoil. As initial discussion of European integration took shape in the late 1940s, British politicians—both in Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee’s government, and in the Conservative opposition—articulated visions for Europe that enhanced the country’s top-tier status. Throughout the following two decades, however, Britain’s supremacy faltered, and the Six’s capital and influence would grow. Avoiding full commitment to new regional institutions like the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Defence Community, and the European Economic Community, British leaders turned their backs on European integration. British dynamism couldn’t be wasted on Europe when it could instead strengthen the Atlantic alliance with America and bolster the Commonwealth, the argument went. This obsession with maintaining and growing its power fueled British arrogance in the 1961 and 1967 negotiations to join the EEC. In this early stage, Anti-Common-Market Labour MPs framed their opposition to Europe as a defense of sovereignty. The same argument was a key feature of the 2016 campaign to lure British to leave the European Union.

Labour’s Early Skepticism

Labour did not embrace the possibility of European integration with the same enthusiasm as Churchill’s Conservatives. Only twenty four Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) attended the Hague Congress of Europe in May 1948.⁶⁶ At the conference, Labour MPs proposed a Western European Union committed to socialism and advancing workers. A series of letters, published on February 13, 1948, between Winston Churchill, Prime Minister Atlee, and Labour Party Leader Emanuel Shinwell, revealed Labour’s apprehension at any moves toward integration not initiated

⁶⁶ *Congress of Europe: The Hague, 7-11 May 1948*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1999, 437-442.

by its own government. Churchill entreated, “You will notice that prominent Socialist leaders in other countries have accepted invitations to attend. The cause of European unity is one which we both have at heart, and I trust it may be kept above the level of our domestic party politics.”⁶⁷ Atlee referred Churchill to the Labour Leader to avoid taking an official position that endorsed Churchill’s conference. MP Shinwell replied to Churchill:

“It was decided to reaffirm the decision to discourage members of the Labour party from participating in the proposed congress. It is felt that the subject of European unity is much too important to be entrusted to unrepresentative interests, and the proposed composition of the congress seems to us open to objection, in particular because the number of private individuals selected by an unknown process robs the congress of any real representative character.”

Shinwell’s wing of the Labour party desired integration, but on terms compatible with the international Labour movement’s interests. The Congress of Europe was, thus, thoroughly branded as Churchill’s project, and as lacking Labour support. Shinwell’s language was echoed in a statement issued three days later by Labour General-Secretary Morgan Phillips, which instead proposed the “convening of a conference of the Socialist parties of Western Europe to co-ordinate their efforts within the framework of the recovery program. By such practical initiative on immediate and concrete issues the Labour party hopes to make a contribution of real value towards the unification of Europe.”⁶⁸ Advocating a gradual approach to regional coordination, in which new policies developed out of necessity, instead of normative desires to unite Europe, Phillips

⁶⁷ E. Shinwell, “Labour Reaffirms Disapproval Of European Unity Congress: Reply to Mr. Churchill’s Approach,” *The Manchester Guardian*, February 13, 1948.

⁶⁸ “The ‘European Conference’: Labour Objection,” *The Manchester Guardian*, February 17, 1948.

wanted to wait for participation in Europe to clearly serve British interests, rather than pursue symbolic unity on the continent.

Notably these early notes of apprehension from Labour would resurface decades later, coming instead from the Conservative PM David Cameron in an attempt to scale down Britain's attachment to Europe. Phillips's failure to stir strong support within his own party indicated that his gradualist approach would not stir mass opinion. Indeed, British decisions on European integration rarely amounted to less than monumental shifts in policy. Gradualism's lack of appeal to voters and politicians mobilized in support of or opposition to European integration ensured that it would not be a successful political strategy for dealing with Europe. Consequently, Labour failed to take any significant steps toward Europe in the early postwar period.

Labour MPs splintered on European integration, with some embracing Europe as an arena for expanding socialism, while others viewed Europe as a distraction from pursuing domestic goals like public ownership. After Churchill articulated his grand vision for European federation in defense of democracy, Labour discussed European integration several days later at its annual party conference at Scarborough. Hugh Dalton, Atlee's Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressed his disdain for Churchill's European vision. The *Manchester Guardian* correspondent at the conference noted, "Those Labour MPs who indulged in such reprehensible political private enterprise as to go to the Hague in spite of the Executive's disapproval are not to be allowed even the satisfaction of being rebels. Mr. Dalton has deflated rebellion."⁶⁹ Rhetoric aside, however, party members wanted to address the European question. Delegate Fenner Brockway, of the Hornsey Divisional Labour party, moved a resolution calling for Labour to join continental Socialist parties in advocating "the United Socialist States of Europe based on public ownership,

⁶⁹ Our Labour Correspondent, "Call For A Socialist United States of Europe: Labour Delegates Move MR. Dalton Accepts Resolution, With Reservations," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 20, 1948.

economic planning, and individual liberty.”⁷⁰ The correspondent noted that Dalton accepted the resolution with so many caveats that, “it became rather difficult to determine what it all meant.”⁷¹ Disunity plagued the party on other issues too. Unable to specify a legal procedure for outlawing fascism and anti-Semitism, conference attendees left dissatisfied with their inability to do more than, “trust the common sense of the British public.”⁷² Atlee’s Labour Party fumbled on issues that extended beyond core Socialist goals, including nationalization of key industries like coal.

Labour members were divided in their emphasis on protecting British sovereignty or pursuing regional leadership, ultimately sitting on the sidelines of a continent dominated by French and American interests. In a 1950 shock to British morale, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman released a communique outlining his plan to unite the French and German coal industries under a supranational authority.⁷³ While American diplomats, including George Kennan and Dean Acheson, viewed British participation in postwar Europe as crucial to its strength to resist Soviet domination, Schuman argued that resolving Franco-German relations was an essential prerequisite to building a united Europe. He wrote, “The gathering together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. The first concern in any action undertaken must be these two countries. With this aim in view, the French Government proposes to take action immediately on one limited but decisive point; the French Government proposes to place Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole under a common high authority, within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.”⁷⁴ Yet in telegraphs between Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and the French foreign

⁷⁰ “Socialist United States of Europe.”

⁷¹ “Socialist United States of Europe.”

⁷² “Socialist United States of Europe.”

⁷³ Edmund Dell, *The Schuman Plan and the British Abdication of Leadership in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14.

⁷⁴ Dell, 14–15.

minister Jean Monnet, Britain objected to French leadership in the creation of a High Authority.⁷⁵ With France expecting Britain to pool resources for the high authority, without helping design the scheme, Atlee's cabinet rejected "forfeiting sovereignty on any terms" by agreeing to the Schuman Plan.⁷⁶ Even in narrowly defined policy areas, like the regulation of coal and steel industries, many Labour politicians were skittish to commit to any European project—and violate British sovereignty in the process.

Harry Hynd, a Labour MP who had attended the Congress, took stock on the Congress as a missed opportunity for Labour. He charged: "The 14 Socialist Parties of Europe...adopted a resolution saying that the ideal of European unity can be saved from corruption by reactionary politicians only if the Socialist movement place themselves at the head of the movement for its realization. Why did they not do this when they had this opportunity last week at the Hague."⁷⁷ Divisions among Labour MPs over the proper approach to Europe stymied Hynd's call to action. Hugh Dalton, Atlee's Chancellor of the Exchequer until 1947, remarked at the conference, "I am wholly for the practical British functional approach rather than a theoretical federation. Let us keep our feet on the ground."⁷⁸ In a pamphlet entitled *Feet on the Ground*, Labour warned against federation. "Europe's history of separate national existence has produced clearly defined interest groups. When such groups do exist no written constitution can by itself compel them to act against their perceived interests. More than most federal governments, a European federation would require forcible sanctions against secession. The prolonged and bloody American Civil War is not an encouraging precedent."⁷⁹ Invoking the visceral imagery of the American Civil War, Labour

⁷⁵ Dell, 144.

⁷⁶ Dell, 158.

⁷⁷ Labour Party Conference Report 1948, 117. In Roger Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair*, New York: Palgrave (2001), 14.

⁷⁸ In Roger Broad In Healey, *The Shrimps Learn to Whistle*, p. 70-84.

⁷⁹ In Roger Broad In Healey, *The Shrimps Learn to Whistle*, p. 70-84.

warned that distinct cultures in different European nations would prevent cooperation in government. These arguments, too, foreshadowed the racist arguments conflating the challenges of Europe with the cultural heritage of European migrants. In general, Labour's fears of federation aligned with more practical concerns about the styles of policies the EEC set for its members to dampen Labour enthusiasm for the 1962 bid to join Europe.

1962: France Says No

As Macmillan's government sluggishly moved toward European integration in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Britain's main political parties displayed ineptitude and disunity on the question of integration. Whereas Macmillan sought terms of entry that protected British agriculture and defended both Commonwealth interests and the EFTA partners, Labour Leader Hugh Gaitskell declared that British sovereignty and socialist elements were essential preconditions to EEC accession.⁸⁰ Gaitskell offered his assessment of European integration to labor union activists seeking guidance on how to counsel their members who were participating in the party's conference. He hedged, "The Labour Party is not committed to going in, nor is it committed to staying out....If we stay out, we run the risk of becoming nothing more than a little island off Europe."⁸¹ Earlier that year, in June 1962, the Trade Unions Congress General Council sent their concerns about Community policies to Edward Heath, chief British negotiator with Brussels. Though supportive of Community "controls on monopolies...and direct and indirect taxes that did not discriminate against other member countries," the TUC was dissatisfied with the Community's vague positions on "state aid to nationalised industries, capital issue controls, and the use of variable interest rates to influence the distribution of industry."⁸² Beyond desires for greater

⁸⁰ P. Williams, ed., *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell*, Jonathan Cape (1983), Appendix III. In Roger Liddle, *The Europe Dilemma: Britain and the Drama of EU Integration*, New York: Ibtauris (2014), 20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Roger Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 48.

welfare state funding and more flexibility for British exports of agricultural products, however, the TUC avoided the lofty debate about the role of Britain in Europe that consumed much of the Labour party.

In early 1962, Leftist Labour activists mobilized in opposition to Britain's bid for EEC entry. Members of the Victory for Socialists segment of the Labour Party distributed pamphlets to constituents and party leaders calling for the party to firmly reject European integration.⁸³ At the October 2-5, 1962 Labour Party Conference, Gaitskell cautioned against entry on the grounds it threatened Britishness. Entry meant, "we are no more than a state in the United States of Europe, such as Texas and California....It does mean the end of Britain as an independent nation state...it means the end of a thousand years of history....And it does mean the end of the Commonwealth."⁸⁴ Labour anti-Marketeters generally articulated their opposition in terms of concern for British sovereignty or concern that entry would derail the Socialist agenda in Britain.⁸⁵ As Labour deployed cultural arguments against European integration, its politicians moralized the question of economic integration. By transforming membership in the Common Market into a contest in which Britain's millennia of history hung in the balance, Labour prevented a technocratic discussion about the effect EEC membership would have on Britain's economy. At the same time, Labour's rank-and-file union members were not united in opposition to EEC membership, with only three unions clearly voting against European integration.⁸⁶ As Labour intensified its attacks on the Common Market, its efforts became superfluous. On January 14, 1963, French President Charles De Gaulle vetoed Macmillan's application for EEC membership.

⁸³ our Political Correspondent, "Anti-Market Move By Labour Left," *The Times*, January 15, 1962, The Times Digital Archive.

⁸⁴ Hugh Gaitskell, "The Common Market" In M. Holmes, ed., *The Eurosceptical Reader*, New York: Palgrave (1994), 23-24.

⁸⁵ Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair*, 46-47.

⁸⁶ Broad, 47.

The EEC's Maturation

On January 29, 1963, agents of six great European powers met in Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak's offices in Brussels.⁸⁷ At this meeting, however, de Gaulle, and French interests altogether, were absent. Instead Britain joined with the five other EEC members (Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) to console each other about French overreach and discuss how to proceed from De Gaulle's resignation. De Gaulle's simultaneous rejection of a NATO-style Multilateral Force with American President Kennedy and the unveiling of a Franco-West German bilateral agreement (Elysée Treaty) stoked fears of the "new six" that de Gaulle may be turning away from integrated Europe.⁸⁸ Yet when the British suggested announcing a united rebuke of de Gaulle, Spaak noted that "the fact that the Five should be meeting alone with Britain was already sensational enough."⁸⁹

Even before France's veto, however, French aversion to British entry was well established. In a January 14, 1963, press conference, De Gaulle responded to the question, "Could you define explicitly France's position toward British entry into the Common Market and the political evolution of Europe?"⁹⁰ De Gaulle emphasized the British difference:

England is in effect insular, also she is maritime, she is linked through her exchanges, her markets, her supply lines, to the most diverse and often most distant countries; she pursues essentially industrial and commercial activities, and only slight agricultural ones. She has in all her doings very marked and very original habits and traditions. In short, the structure,

⁸⁷ N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 11.

⁸⁸ Ludlow, 12.

⁸⁹ British Public Records Office Archive, PRO, PREM 11 4524, Codel 103, Heath to Macmillan and Home, 29 January, 1963 In Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge*.

⁹⁰ Charles De Gaulle, "Press Conference by President de Gaulle, Paris, 14 January 1963. Reproduced from WEU, Political Union of Europe, Pp. 85-89," January 14, 1963, 85.

the very situation (conjecture) that are England's differ profoundly from those of the continentals....The means with which the people of Great Britain are fed....are obviously incompatible with the system which the Six have established quite naturally for themselves.⁹¹

Lack of alignment on agricultural policy and a perceived British stubbornness to adopt the Six's common rules were identified as sticking points—a preview of De Gaulle's ultimate veto. De Gaulle was also concerned about American influence. In the same interview, he foresaw “a colossal Atlantic community under American dependence and direction, and which would quickly have absorbed the community of Europe.”⁹² Charting a path for Europe, crafted by Europeans free from American influence, recalled discussions of the European Defence Community, intended to provide a non-NATO counterweight to Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe. De Gaulle looked ahead:

if the Brussels negotiation were shortly not to succeed, nothing would prevent the conclusion between the Common Market and Great Britain of an accord of association designed to safeguard exchanges, and nothing would prevent close relations between England and France from being maintained, not the pursuit and development of their direct cooperation in all kinds of fields, and notably the scientific, technical, and industrial.⁹³

These avenues of collaboration, however, were distinct from the thematic elements of the early EEC: coordination on agriculture policies and a readjustment of tariffs for members.

In its own terms, the European Economic Community of 1957-1962 functioned smoothly. Described as “a new constitutional order,” the EEC—given shape by the Treaty of Rome—was

⁹¹ De Gaulle, 86.

⁹² De Gaulle, 86.

⁹³ De Gaulle, 86–87.

more than a policy site of policy coordination; it was the foundation of “stable institutions and immutable rules” on which the new postwar Europe formed.⁹⁴ These institutions further internal (e.g., setting price levels for different agricultural products) and external goals (e.g., uniting Europe as a strong partner in the Atlantic alliance rivaling the Soviet Union). In the year preceding the Crisis of ’63, the Community’s economy barreled to new heights: four-and-a-half percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth, a 14 percent increase in intra-Community trade, and a reduction of internal duties by half of their original levels.⁹⁵ Divergent attitudes toward foreign policy held by member countries threatened the planning stability of the EEC. Only when France unilaterally rejected the United Kingdom’s bid for accession to the EEC in January 1963 was there a “major crisis in the Community.”⁹⁶ In the wake of De Gaulle’s unilateral veto of British admission to the Community in January 14 1963, EEC members were rattled by the departure from norms of consensus and regional coordination; on foreign policy, consensus was discarded for “old-fashioned power politics.”⁹⁷ The Commission rapidly endeavored to bolster the strength of the Community, noting, “The Community must go on. Its *raison d’être* and its long term objectives are in no way compromised by the setback it has just experienced.”⁹⁸ Yet the Community’s *raison d’être* was *cooperation*, which required goals to be articulated and pursued in good faith. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was blamed for abandoning the British plan, by virtue of failing to secure it, in pursuit of closer alignment with De Gaulle. Yet “Schröder’s Action Plan,” hatched in an attempt to prove Germany’s commitment to the Community beyond the newly minted Elysée

⁹⁴ “Sixth General Report on the Activities of the Community (1 May 1962 - 31 March 1963)” (European Economic Community Commission, June 1963), 15.

⁹⁵ Walter Hallstein, “Address Made to the European Parliament by Professor Dr. Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the Economic Community to Introduce the Sixth General Report on the Activities of the Community” (Strasbourg, June 26, 1963), 5–6.

⁹⁶ “Sixth General Report on the Activities of the Community (1 May 1962 - 31 March 1963,” 11.

⁹⁷ Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge*, 13.

⁹⁸ Ludlow, 15.

Treaty, aimed to mend relations with Britain and endow Germany with more control over the direction of the Community. Immediately after the veto, German Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder wrote to principal British negotiator Edward Heath, French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville, and U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, urging everyone to be patient as the Community worked to achieve its goal of expanding the Community.⁹⁹

Schröder's reinvigoration of the EEC's activities began with the common agricultural policy (CAP) goals established in 1962, intended to establish regulations on beef, dairy, and rice, and establish a price level for cereals.¹⁰⁰ By revising the timeline of CAP negotiations, Germany achieved the dual goal of keeping the Community on track to achieve its internal goals and placing Germany fully in charge of Community affairs. In short, EEC members aimed to prove there was more to Europe than French leadership. Addressing the British National Manufacturing Association in May 1963, Walter Hallstein discussed the breakdown in negotiations with Britain from the Community's perspective. "One effect of the breakdown of the negotiations with Britain, in fact, was a severe blow to the Community itself. No responsible person, I think, would suggest that because British membership of the Common Market has been postponed the Community should come to a halt."¹⁰¹ By describing the Community as a victim—rather than progenitor—of the breakdown, Hallstein defended the external face of the Community. Hallstein also commented on the political-judicial compatibility of the EEC with Great Britain. "I do not myself believe that the Community is likely to develop into a centralized State, even in the very long run. Rather, it is a federation in the making....Unity in diversity is what we are trying to achieve."¹⁰² Hallstein's

⁹⁹ Ludlow, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ludlow, 26.

¹⁰¹ Walter Hallstein, "Britain and the European Community: Present, Past and Future. Speech by Professor Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community before the National Association of British Manufacturers" (European Union, May 24, 1963), 6.

¹⁰² Hallstein, 6–7.

direct response to British fears of the EEC as a threat to their political tradition or their ability to bargain effectively across Europe was meant to allay lingering concerns about the merits of entry, particularly following De Gaulle's rebuff of Britain. While Labour struggled to find domestic political support for embracing the Common Market, European leaders were united in their recognition of the value of the EEC and their willingness to accept its common rules.

Unity emerged as the leading issue in EEC-wide meetings in 1964. At Seventh Conference of European Local Authorities, convened in Rome on October 15, 1964, Hallstein emphasized his dominant goal, the "completion of the unity of Europe."¹⁰³ Hallstein's description of regional policy as, "[not only] preserving pleasant local customs and traditions which, converted into tourist attractions, can serve as a gaily coloured wrapping for our Community. No, we aim at something more: when we speak of the variety that is Europe, we are thinking of a Europe with its rich spiritual and moral heritage, in which the multiplicity of the forms of its thought and action can unfold in resonant harmony."¹⁰⁴ By celebrating the EEC's ability to maintain diverse membership, Hallstein implicitly left the door open to future British (and other European) integration. Hallstein aimed to move beyond economic coordination to *political integration*. "The existing European Communities are called economic," but cover issues that would be handed by domestic political processes in the absence of regional coordination.¹⁰⁵ "Consequently our Communities are in themselves already a piece of the complete 'political union'....they are the centre piece, the finished section of an edifice which when completed will be the political federation of Europe."¹⁰⁶ The envisioned political federation was all-encompassing of legal, defense, and economic issues.

¹⁰³ Walter Hallstein, "The Unity of the Drive for Europe. Address by Professor Dr. Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, at the Opening Session of the Seventh Conference of European Local Authorities. Rome, 15 October 1964," 1964, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Hallstein, 4–5.

¹⁰⁵ Hallstein, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Hallstein, 8.

“The Community legal order, nevertheless, has many points of contact with law in the Member States. Administrative bodies and the courts in the Member States apply Community regulations together with their national law, which continues to be valid.”¹⁰⁷ The European Court of Justice voiced the prioritization of Community law above national law, in case of conflict, supporting the ultimate jurisdiction of the Community.¹⁰⁸ As European institutions acquired more power and guarded their new competences, the difficulty increased for countries like Great Britain to remain on the sidelines of Europe.

The logic of European integration was self-fulfilling. As the Community took greater steps toward synchronization of policies across member states, its actions legitimated future steps toward integration. Once the Six took actions to coordinate their economies (e.g., CAP) in the name of Western European prosperity, their economic successes of the early 1960s reinforced the Community’s external policy of promoting European unity through expansion. Hallstein described this dynamic:

Each Community action in itself creates the ground and the need for further Community action, both within the Community and beyond. One thing leads to another. If we wish to pursue a Community customs policy we must collate our economic policy. If we agree on a Community economic policy, and on account of the customs union, we also have a Community external customs tariff, then we must also have a Community concept for our external trade policy, etc. And we cannot stop short when we come to the boundaries of the spheres covered by our Community Treaties.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Hallstein, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Hallstein, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Hallstein, 10–11.

The growing sphere of Community activity ensured that the question of British membership could not be avoided indefinitely. Indeed, the specific policy challenges of 1962 were addressed as the Community tailored its CAP annually. By 1966, Britain's new Labour government—headed by Harold Wilson—prepared to retry admission to Europe. Hampered by internal divisions, Labour in government failed to achieve integration on any terms in Europe.

1967: Labour Tries Again

At the October 22, 1966 cabinet meeting, Wilson obtained his government's approval to embark on a new effort to join the EEC.¹¹⁰ Announcing to Parliament that his government was seriously exploring joining the EEC on November 10, Wilson was greeted with enthusiasm from his Tory counterpart, Edward Heath.¹¹¹ In January 1967, Wilson and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs George Brown traveled to European capitals in an attempt to build momentum for the British bid for entry. Meanwhile, Emanuel Shinwell build momentum at home, calling for "the creation of a Supranational Government and European Parliament."¹¹² As party leaders projected enthusiasm for Europe, however, Labour backbenchers cautioned against early excitement. On February 21, 107 Labour MPs signed an Early Day Motion reiterating Labour's five demands for acceptable terms in an EEC deal—the same demands Gaitskell had enforced on Macmillan in 1962-3.¹¹³ Though Labour MPs were divided in their support of entry, Wilson still received overwhelming support with a 488-62 vote margin in a House of Commons vote approving application to the EEC on May 10.¹¹⁴ Yet the early momentum of Wilson's EEC campaign fizzled out as Britain's fate rest in the hands of its European neighbors. Ditching its calls for a quick yes/no

¹¹⁰ Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair*, 65.

¹¹¹ "Prime Minister Says: 'We Mean Business,'" *The Guardian*, November 11, 1966.

¹¹² Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair*, 65.

¹¹³ Broad, 65.

¹¹⁴ Broad, 67.

vote from France, Wilson's government opted to engage in long-term dialogue with De Gaulle in hopes of gaining entry to the EEC.¹¹⁵ Despite these tactics, France appeared apprehensive to offer membership to Britain, with French Foreign Minister nearly vetoing Britain's application in an October speech to his EEC colleagues.¹¹⁶ By December, EEC ministers were urging Wilson to seek a special arrangement with the EEC besides full membership, in recognition that De Gaulle was unlikely to admit Britain to the club.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, Wilson failed in obtaining membership for Britain, unable to persuade de Gaulle to approve the deal. In addition to failing abroad, Wilson also failed to convince many of his MPs of the merits of the EEC. Though Wilson's government swiftly pursued entry to Europe, his parliamentary approval came with 51 Labour abstentions and 35 Labour votes against the government.¹¹⁸ European integration yet again failed at the hands of party divisions and diplomatic blunders with the continent.

Conclusion

As Britain exited the 1960s empty handed, it still desired to join the European club. Facing sluggish economic performance and increasing marginalization in global affairs, Britain sought to join the European club before it missed its opportunity. Division in the Labour Party about the emphasis that should be placed integration and sovereignty continued to undercut efforts to negotiate with the Six in Europe. Though European integration remained a politicized issue, greater consensus on Britain's role in Europe emerged across the decade. With an emphasis on participating in the Common Market, rather than pursuing political union, Britain's eventual European integration seemed likely. Facing economic crisis in the 1970s, a new government led by Edward Heath would tackle these same challenges and eventually admit Britain to the EEC.

¹¹⁵ Ian Aitken, "Britain Adopts Leisurely Approach to EEC," *The Guardian*, June 19, 1967.

¹¹⁶ Ian Aitken, "Mr Wilson Must Counsel Patience in Joining Six," *The Guardian*, October 25, 1967.

¹¹⁷ Hella Pick, "Britain Urged to Seek Special Link with EEC," *The Guardian*, December 4, 1967.

¹¹⁸ Broad, *Labour's European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair*, 67.

3. Resurgent British Nationalism During European Integration, 1973-1992

“For us the path of entry into the Common Market is the path of national doom. We must demand a General Election now.” – Richard Briginshaw of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, July 17, 1971

Introduction

Britain’s ultimate inclusion in the European club in 1973 failed to unleash the economic vitality Edward Heath sought in his several negotiations with Brussels. Instead, British participation in the EEC (and ultimately the EU) created an atmosphere of uncertainty and transformation for voters and politicians alike, as Britain’s sovereignty and economic prowess declined. Governments from Heath onward seized the European question and attempted to adapt it to their domestic political gain, each time finding the issue to be more difficult than imagined. Yet by discussing Britain’s role in Europe so frequently, mainstream politicians normalized Eurosceptic discourse, taking it away from more extreme political elements, especially fascist groups on the far-right. The Eurosceptic National Front party used violent tactics to resist European integration, and was disavowed by mainstream politicians. Yet the National Front’s rhetoric and basic arguments against Europe were incorporated into the respectable National Referendum Campaign’s drive for leaving the EEC. By admitting Eurosceptic arguments to the political mainstream and responding to them, pro-Market British politicians—including each government from Heath onward—gave Eurosceptics durability in national politics. As politicians sought to reap political points from their encounters with Europe, British membership in the EEC unleashed a new chapter of Euroscepticism.

Britain's ambivalence toward European integration in the 1950-70s was not a postwar development, but a marker of age-old strife with the continent. Cautious to join lesser continental powers and hesitant to withdraw from global affairs, British policymakers across the partisan spectrum notoriously avoided firm answers to the European question. In these two decades, Britain's global reach was in decline: a crumbling, expensive empire and devaluing currency signaled a crisis. American global supremacy in economic, military, and diplomatic spheres, along with Soviet expansionism, relegated Britain to a mere *great power*. Meanwhile, continental alignment through early regional vehicles of integration—including the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Defence Community, and the European Economic Community—took shape in the 1960s. As Britain's economy slowly contracted as its Commonwealth-based industries became less competitive in the world market, the EEC trade zone delivered much needed activity to the war-rattled France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Confronted with this dual movement, Britain's decline and EC ascendancy, Britain was pushed to join the EC to insure against further deterioration of its political and economic capital in the Atlantic, European, and global arenas.

Britain's ultimate entry to the EEC in 1973 was not cause for celebration, but relief. Prime Minister Heath, who participated in the failed negotiations of 1961, viewed European integration as a necessary step in Britain's path forward. Yet his drive into Europe collapsed on impact; Eurosceptic Conservatives loudly complained about the poor deal Britain received from the EC, and Heath lost control of Parliament in the 1974 election. Branded by his opponents as too eager to make a deal with French President Georges Pompidou, Heath lost the support of Eurosceptics in his own party who thought the terms of accession were weak in protecting British industries. In the subsequent government, led by Labour politician Harold Wilson, the question of belonging in

Europe was raised in a binding referendum on British membership in the EEC. In a resounding victory for Europhiles, 67.2 percent of British voters expressed support for remaining in the Common Market.¹¹⁹ Labour politicians had long been distrustful of the Common Market, particularly due to their concern about a rise in food prices stemming from EEC membership. The EEC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which redistributed resources from food consumers to food producers, was expected to increase British payments for food because Britain was a comparatively small producer of food in Europe.¹²⁰ The 1975 referendum indicated popular support for European integration, and signaled to Labour the need to rework, rather than abandon, Britain's role in Europe. Dealt this hand at the European level, Wilson government was also rattled by turmoil at home: rising inflation and the global oil crisis led to a series of strikes during the Winter of Discontent in 1978. On the promise of change, Margaret Thatcher led Conservatives back into the Parliamentary majority, which they would hold for the following 18 years.

Margaret Thatcher campaigned as a reformer of central government inefficiency, and as a steady hand for the economy. Her apprehension toward big government formed a philosophical argument against the centralization of power, chiefly Europe. As the European Community expanded to include new member countries and policy responsibilities throughout the 1980s, Thatcher took aim at socio-political European institutions. In the 1979 Conservative Manifesto, Thatcher described Britain as a country on life support, a shell of its former self and headed toward death. Promising to "turn things round," Thatcher focused on privatizing industry, renegotiating the role of unions in corporate negotiations and renegotiating rules for British industries governed

¹¹⁹ Alvin Shuster, "BRITONS ENDORSE COMMON MARKET BY LARGE MARGIN: 67% Back Staying in Community After Long and Bitter Debate British Vote by 2 to 1 to Remain in Common Market," *New York Times*, 1975, sec. The Week In Review.

¹²⁰ Miller and Spencer, "The Static Economic Effects of the UK Joining the EEC," 90.

by EEC agreements, such as agriculture and fisheries.¹²¹ During her tenure, Thatcher privatized telecoms, utilities, and airlines. She also used monetarist policies to adjust how Britain competed with European suppliers in the Common Market.¹²² Turning toward Europe, Thatcher initially sought to reduce British participation in European political programs while boosting military coordination. Yet as the EEC's regulatory state expanded, Thatcher adopted a harsher tone against the regional institution.

Heath, Wilson, and Thatcher each transformed European integration into a domestic political issue—a move that consistently weakened British attachment to the region and exposed internal divisions in British political parties. Heath's personal enthusiasm for the EEC clashed with his parliamentary colleagues and failed to jumpstart the faltering economy, leading to his ouster. Wilson succeeded Heath on the promise of renegotiating British participation in the EEC, only to make room for Eurosceptic arguments on the center stage of British politics during the 1975 referendum. Callaghan's poor management of the labor crises of 1978 limited his government to term. His replacement, Margaret Thatcher, applied her small-government philosophy to Europe, and pledged to bring control of policies back home from Brussels to London, and down to local councils. Each time Britain's leaders made Europe a political issue, they weakened the national sense of belonging in Europe and invited political opposition to the European project. At the end of World War II Britain's loss of empire coincided with its sharp economic decline, felt in the 1960s as Commonwealth markets dried up. Thus, Britain's bid to join the Common Market made good economic sense for a country seeking economic growth. When Britain gained entry to the Market, however, nationalists nostalgic for the bygone empire agitated for British leaders to defend

¹²¹ "Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979" (Conservative Party, April 11, 1979), Thatcher Archive.

¹²² Kathleen R. McNamara, "Consensus and Constraint: Ideas and Capital Mobility in European Monetary Integration," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 37, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 455–76.

national sovereignty. By responding to these arguments, and politicizing Europe in the process, British leaders shunted Europe from the technocratic realm of economics to the moral realm of politics. The cause of European integration would never recover.

As the European Community continued to press for integration, union, and ultimately federalism, British governments hastily attempted to qualify their support for Europe in terms compatible with national sovereignty. Meanwhile the consolidation of regional institutions into the European Union, the admission of new members, and the growing strength of members like Germany increased the specter of Europe in British politics. As Thatcher inveighed against the European encroachment on Britain, Eurosceptic elements that had been active since the 1975 referendum increased the volume and sophistication of their agitation against Europe. Despite the Euro-friendly efforts of British governments, their incorporation of Europe into their domestic political programs preserved a role for Eurosceptic discourse in British politics, leading to sharper and more competitive Eurosceptic politics in the 1990s.

Britain to EEC: Ready or Not, Here We Come!

When Britain dismissed participation in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, it operated on certain assumptions about its place in the world. British participation in the *Atlantic* sphere granted it influence in American foreign policy circles, reified its status as a world power (though diminutive in the United States' shadow), and magnified its role as a diplomatic power broker.¹²³ Cosmetically, Britain's conception of its role in the Commonwealth, Atlantic, and European spheres exuded great power status. Seeking to move past De Gaulle's 1963 veto of Britain's application to join the Common Market, Prime Minister Macmillan's government brushed aside the EC as a trivial exercise in continental cooperation by lesser powers. Yet as the EC stabilized

¹²³ Christopher Lord, *British Entry to the European Community Under the Heath Government of 1970-4* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993), 11.

through its early economic performance, it gained more prominence in international affairs. Waning British influence in the Commonwealth countries prompted American concerns about the value of close relations with the UK, which was no longer the diplomatic guarantor of many Commonwealth countries. Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs George Ball wrote President Johnson that the Commonwealth was little more than a “series of bilateral relationships that [were] rapidly wasting away.”¹²⁴ Without an array of diplomatic relationships with other countries, Britain’s imbalance with the U.S. in the transatlantic sphere sharpened, particularly as the EC increasingly coordinated with American diplomats in the 1960s.¹²⁵

British arrogance in its treatment of the early EC stemmed from its mid-century economic superiority in Europe. Yet while Britain bumbled on the sidelines of Europe, the Six experienced an economic revitalization and British negotiating power withered. By the time Heath’s government negotiated entry to the EC in 1971-2, British fortunes had reversed.¹²⁶ Its postwar 90 percent advantage in gross domestic product over the Six plummeted to a six percent deficit in 1973.¹²⁷ In its study of accession, Heath’s cabinet salivated at the prospect of joining a market five times larger than Britain’s.¹²⁸ Yet some Conservative politicians disregarded the economic argument in their concern for national identity. Nationalist nostalgia for Britain’s past as a food exporter led to protectionist demands, even though this romanticized Britain hadn’t existed for a century. Translating protectionism into self-rule, fascist Conservative MP Enoch Powell rated “the

¹²⁴ Ball to the President, 22 July 1966, *Lyndon B. Johnson, National Security Files* In Lord, 12.

¹²⁵ Lord, 13.

¹²⁶ According to Campos and Coricelli’s 2015 analysis, British GDP was 90 percent larger than the Six average in 1945. At the signing of the Treaty of Rome, British per capita GDP was merely 15 percent greater than the Six average, and by the time of Britain’s 1961 application to the EEC the gap had fallen to ten percent. At the time of the failed 1967 negotiation, British GDP per capita was six percent greater than the Six average. When Britain finally joined the EC, its GDP per capita was six percent *lower* than the Six average.

¹²⁷ Nauro Campos and Fabrizio Coricelli, “Why Did Britain Join the EU? A New Insight from Economic History,” *Vox - Centre for Economic Policy Research* (blog), February 3, 2015, <http://voxeu.org/article/britain-s-eu-membership-new-insight-economic-history>.

¹²⁸ Lord, *British Entry to the European Community Under the Heath Government of 1970-4*, 18.

freedom of a self-governing nation” as the “highest political good” and completely incompatible with the practice of European integration.¹²⁹ In the early phases of Heath’s negotiations with the Six, Labour politicians also invoked British identity—and its close relationship with the Commonwealth—as grounds for avoiding integration. On June 21, 1971 chief British negotiator Geoffrey Rippon struck an agreement with the Six on Britain’s contribution to the EEC budget and access of New Zealand dairy to the market.¹³⁰ In a deal that Heath praised, Rippon secured a guarantee for 80 percent of New Zealand butter exports for five years at the EEC’s guaranteed price level—higher than New Zealand had previously seen as a Commonwealth country.¹³¹ Yet protests from the New Zealand Labour Party would drive Wilson to criticize Rippon’s deal—indicating that Commonwealth interests were embraced by both main parties in attempts to score domestic political points.¹³² Though concerns about British sovereignty dominated speeches given by Conservative anti-Marketees during the EEC entry debates of July-October 1971, both Conservative and Labour MPs cited the prospect of economic growth as an attractive benefit of accession.¹³³

Beyond economic arguments, Conservatives appreciated the domestic political benefits offered by European integration. Labour’s internal divisions contributed to Conservative consolidation in support of European integration. At the Labour party’s Special Conference at Brighton on July 17, 1971, worker representatives railed against the Common Market while party leaders discussed embracing the European market. Richard Briginshaw, a delegate from the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, spoke against the “present great brainwash of the Tory

¹²⁹ Lord, 101.

¹³⁰ Clyde H. Farnsworth, “Britain and Market Gain In Shaping a Compromise,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1971.

¹³¹ Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community*, vol. II: From Rejection to Referendum, 1963-1975 (New York: Routledge, 2013), 412.

¹³² Wall, II: From Rejection to Referendum, 1963-1975:412–13.

¹³³ Lord, *British Entry to the European Community Under the Heath Government of 1970-4*, 102.

government.”¹³⁴ Predicting “national doom,” Briginshaw was prepared to blame Wilson for destroying “large areas of our country, both industrially and geographically” by submitting to “the very logic...of the structure and future of the E.E.C,” if he supported accession efforts.¹³⁵ This gloomy outlook was shared by activists on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

Prospects of entry weighed heavily on fascists’ minds, too, who viewed the EEC in direct opposition to British sovereignty. As parliamentary debates reached a fever pitch about accession, far-right commentators challenged the legitimacy of Europe, and questioned the veracity of Heath’s claims about entry, in the pages of the fascist monthly *Spearhead*. Published by John Tyndall, an influential leader in several far-right parties—including the National Front, the Greater British Movement, the British National Party, and the New National Front—*Spearhead* was the premier journal in the British fascist community and provided a veneer of intellectualism to their often-violent politics.¹³⁶ In this medium, Tyndall argued that Britain would become a “province of a European super-state.” Fearful of relinquishing policy control to the French, Tyndall and the fascists he represented were disgusted at the prospect of sharing a broader government with Turkey. His racist comment that “The Turks, being non-Europeans, are the perfect people to ‘police’ Europeans” signaled a hierarchy of identity: British, European, non-European.¹³⁷ Reacting against the “other,” Tyndall feared “World Government” though participation in the Common market and the subsequent reunification of Europe.¹³⁸ Beyond these symbolic concerns, Tyndall

¹³⁴ Labour and the Common Market, Report of a special conference of the Labour Party, Central Hall, Westminster, 17 July 1971. London: Labour Party, 1971. pp. 6-8; 13-14; 18-19., http://www.cvce.eu/obj/debates_on_the_common_market_at_the_british_labour_party_conference_brighton_17_july_1971-en-180db00c-9578-4ae7-9b63-7968ce9151a4.html

¹³⁵ Labour and the Common Market, 1971.

¹³⁶ Mike Cronin, *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Press; St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

¹³⁷ “Britain: Free Nation or Province of Europe,” *Spearhead*, August 1971, SCH/01/Res/BRI/01/001, Searchlight Archive.

¹³⁸ “Britain: Free Nation or Province of Europe.”

also questioned the purported economic benefits of integration. In Tyndall's view, tariffs on British manufacturing exports would rise in the Common Market, but British tariffs for Common Market imports would decrease, harming British firms.¹³⁹ Tyndall's swift movement from political to economic arguments against Europe underscored the consequences of Heath's politicization of Europe: it slowed integration to an agonizing pace.

Heath succeeded in achieving EEC entry because he confronted a new generation of European leadership. With de Gaulle's resignation and the selection of Georges Pompidou to replace him, the EEC embraced the project of expansion. A negotiator in the failed British negotiations for European accession in the previous decade, Heath ensured that his government's chief priority was cementing accession to the EEC before the opportunity evaporated.¹⁴⁰ When he led negotiations in 1961, then-Lord Privy Seal Heath remarked, "We are part of Europe. We shall continue to work with all our friends in Europe for the true unity and strength of this continent."¹⁴¹ In the decade following, successive British governments echoed this resolve in their assignment of blame to France for the challenges facing the EC and broader Europe; in 1966 Wilson referred to De Gaulle in noting "He who rejects change is the architect of decay."¹⁴² As long as De Gaulle controlled French politics—and concomitantly the EC—British prospects of entry were slim. Yet once De Gaulle resigned, and Georges Pompidou became President of France, British entry became possible. At a national council meeting of the Union of Democrats for the Fifth Republic (UDR) at Montpellier on November 29, 1969, Gaullists urged their leader President Pompidou to

¹³⁹ "'Benefits' to Britain an Absolute Myth," *Spearhead*, August 1971, SCH/01/Res/BRI/01/001, Searchlight Archive.

¹⁴⁰ Mike Cronin, *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 1996).

¹⁴¹ Hella Pick, "Six in The Hague: Let Battle Begin: The Snares and the Delusions," *The Guardian*, November 29, 1969.

¹⁴² Pick.

lead the Six in negotiations with British diplomats on terms of accession.¹⁴³ Reflecting the tenuous governing coalition of the UDR, Pompidou maintained public reverence for De Gaulle, but privately aimed to reform the party to “bring French policy into more realistic balance with the country’s resources.”¹⁴⁴ Charged with this new attitude of engaging, rather than manipulating, the EC to achieve French goals, Pompidou was primed to work with other “Six” leaders on expanding the community.

Though the 1971 negotiations with Europe were acrimonious, Heath also faced opposition within Parliament. Heath’s Chancellor of the Exchequer and temporary negotiator with the Six, Anthony Barber, acknowledged that unilateral action would never be sufficient for Britain (or any European country) to achieve its desired “economic and social advance.”¹⁴⁵ In direct negotiations with Pompidou, Heath slowly came to embrace the “Community spirit,” as the Commission put it.¹⁴⁶ In the months between the Treaty signing ceremony on January 22, 1972 and formal accession to the EEC on January 1, 1973, Britain would be consulted in the formulation of all new regulations. Meanwhile, Heath’s task became securing Parliament’s approval of the “mountain of existing Community rules.”¹⁴⁷ In a *Guardian* opinion piece, Lord Alun Chalfont—a former Labour MP who renounced the party in 1970 for veering too far Left—noted that “discord has been endless and toleration in very short supply” in the House of Lords debate on Common Market entry.¹⁴⁸ The threat to parliamentary sovereignty posed by the EEC would be difficult to resolve, particularly because relaying information from the EEC to MPs would be a clunky and lengthy process—rendering Parliament’s comments irrelevant in regional debates on policy.¹⁴⁹ Lord

¹⁴³ Boris Kidel, “Gaullists Urge Market Talks with Britain,” *The Observer*, November 30, 1969.

¹⁴⁴ Kidel.

¹⁴⁵ Lord, *British Entry to the European Community Under the Heath Government of 1970-4*, 27.

¹⁴⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, “A Historic, If Not so Glamorous, Day for Market,” *The Guardian*, January 22, 1972.

¹⁴⁷ Norton-Taylor.

¹⁴⁸ Alun Chalfont, “Power Play,” *The Guardian (1959-2003); London (UK)*, August 9, 1972.

¹⁴⁹ Chalfont.

Chalfont's complaints signaled a larger issue with the process of European integration. British expectations that important decision-making authority resided in Parliament were upended as new decision-making powers were passed up to Brussels. Instead of celebrating Britain's chance to revitalize its economy in the growing European market, politicians complained about process and abstract notions of sovereignty. By embracing Europe as a component of his political agenda, Heath invited distracting debates about the particulars of British involvement in Europe, instead of united efforts to compete economically in the Common Market. These Euro-politics continued to arrest economic growth for the rest of the decade.

'75 Referendum and the Crisis at Home: Labour and the Winter of Discontent

Britain, and the broader region, confronted a multiplicity of crises in the 1970s. Following more than a decade of impressive postwar economic recovery, European economies experienced a tightening labor market, shortened work weeks, and depleted capital stocks. The recession of 1974-5 countenanced a reduction in British manufacturing labor input by 5.8 percent, increasing social tension.¹⁵⁰ Politically, too, the country was rattled by crisis. The first post-integration election called by Heath for February 1974 yielded a hung parliament. With Heath unable to form a coalition, Wilson became Prime Minister, despite his lacking a firm parliamentary majority. He soon called a second election, to be held in October 1974. In the campaigns for each election, Wilson's manifestos focused heavily on British economic deterioration. In the February manifesto, titled "Labour's Way out of the Crisis," Wilson described the dual consequences of Conservative government: economic ruin and a violation of democratic norms in answering the European question.¹⁵¹ Not only had Conservatives "brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy and

¹⁵⁰ Laqueur, Walter. *A Continent Astray: Europe, 1970-1978*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 28-31.

¹⁵¹ "Let Us Work Together -- Labour's Way out of the Crisis." Labour Party, February 1974. <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab74feb.htm>.

breakdown,” but “the Common Market now [threatened the British people] with still higher food prices and a further loss of control of its own affairs.”¹⁵² Confronting the realities of integration, Wilson called a referendum on British membership in the EEC.

By offering the British people their first opportunity to provide input on European integration, Wilson guaranteed that Europe would remain a divisive issue responsive to the winds of public opinion. Though the referendum was called to secure his term in office, Wilson’s attempt to sequester Europe as an issue distinct from his governing priorities backfired. Instead, he used the issue of Europe to campaign for his reelection and to attract popular support through the publication of pro-Europe pamphlets. As the process of European integration implied a specific loss of sovereignty, Wilson’s method of dealing with Europe restored sovereignty to the people. By making the referendum binding, Wilson traded on his personal accountability. In doing so, Wilson inadvertently buoyed the Eurosceptics who complained so loudly about process during Heath’s accession to the EEC. By calling for popular input on Europe, Wilson enabled Eurosceptic elements on the far right to protest their alienation to faceless European bureaucrats. Transformations in far-right and fascist politics guided new parties like the National Front to seek members; wading into the European issue proved to be a viable recruitment strategy. But at the time, Wilson merely wanted to form a government.

Labour’s victory in October 1974 stemmed from their prioritization of EEC membership as an important campaign issue. Discussing agricultural policy, the new manifesto blamed the CAP for “an extremely grave crisis in the agricultural industry.”¹⁵³ Wilson promised to “renegotiate the Common Agricultural Policy of the Common Market to make sure shoppers get secure

¹⁵² “Let Us Work Together”

¹⁵³ “Britain Will Win With Labour,” Labour Party, October 1974, <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab74oct.htm>.

supplies of food at fair prices.”¹⁵⁴ Crucially, Labour distinguished itself from other parties by offering a direct referendum on Common Market entry. Framing Heath’s approach as an assault on individual choice, Wilson pledged that he would “give the British people the final say, which will be binding on the Government - through the ballot box - on whether we accept the terms and stay in or reject the terms and come out,” during his first year in office.¹⁵⁵ Wilson’s first caretaker government began renegotiation talks with the EEC to seek new contribution levels to the EEC budget; Wilson was perceived by his European counterparts as desiring to remain in the Common Market.¹⁵⁶ Once he led Labour to victory in October on the promise of seeking popular approval for the EEC, he also embarked on a campaign to save Europe.

In a pamphlet distributed to all British households by the postal service, Wilson’s government articulated a strong defense for British involvement in Europe. In the pamphlet, a map displayed Britain’s status-quo trading network of 75 countries beyond the confines of the EC.¹⁵⁷ Equating membership with a “New Deal,” Wilson emphasized how his re-negotiation of food, labor, and financial contributions to the Community was already fixing the mess-of-entry left by Heath’s government.¹⁵⁸ Addressing concerns of sovereignty, Wilson scoffed that “membership could [not] force Britain to eat Euro-bread or drink Euro-beer.”¹⁵⁹ Offering an honest assessment of Britain’s options as a “medium-sized nation.”¹⁶⁰ Referencing the United States and Soviet Union, Wilson blamed “political and economic forces which we cannot control on our own” for preventing Britain from “[going] it alone in the modern world.”¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, Wilson

¹⁵⁴ “Britain Will Win With Labour.”

¹⁵⁵ “Britain Will Win With Labour.”

¹⁵⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, “Legal Wrangle for New EEC Terms?,” *The Guardian*, May 15, 1974.

¹⁵⁷ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe” (HM Government, 1975), 6–7.

¹⁵⁸ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 8–9.

¹⁵⁹ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 11.

¹⁶⁰ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 11.

¹⁶¹ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 11.

emphasized that the obligations of EEC membership did not “[deprive] us of our national identity.”¹⁶² Some arguments were less emphatic, however. The government’s assurances that Community-level decisions were not immune from traditional democratic norms of accountability rested on the assumption that other EEC members “[did] not want to weaken their parliaments any more than we would.”¹⁶³ Entertaining a counterfactual, the government cautioned that leaving Europe would sever British participation in planning decisions that would continue to affect its economy and global trade. Britain would be an “[outsider] looking in.”¹⁶⁴ The government’s combination of technical and earnest/good-faith arguments for remaining in Europe aligned with those offered by the “Britain in Europe” (BIE) campaign.

BIE arguments for Europe demonstrated its faith in the Common Market as a starting point, rather than immediate salve, for restoring British prosperity. In a series of positive statements, BIE regarded EEC membership as beneficial for the economy, peace, the Commonwealth, and “our children’s future.”¹⁶⁵ The Common Market was appraised “the best framework for success, the best protection for our standard of living, the best foundation for greater prosperity.”¹⁶⁶ Appealing to peer pressure, BIE’s pamphlet emphasizes that the “old Commonwealth,” “new Commonwealth,” “the United States,” and “the other members of the European Community” wanted Britain to remain in the EEC instead of entering “a harsh, cold world.”¹⁶⁷ Like the government’s pamphlet, BIE’s pamphlet deployed the counter-factual of leaving Europe, only to argue “If we came out, the Community would go on taking decisions which affect us vitally—but we should have no say in them. We would be clinging to the shadow of British sovereignty while

¹⁶² “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 11.

¹⁶³ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 12.

¹⁶⁴ “Britain’s New Deal in Europe,” 13.

¹⁶⁵ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes’” (Britain in Europe, 1975), 2.

¹⁶⁶ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 2.

¹⁶⁷ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 3.

its substance flies out the window.”¹⁶⁸ Holding the hand of Eurosceptics, the BIE assured that “We can work together and still stay British. The community does not mean dull uniformity.”¹⁶⁹

Pro-Market arguments defending the consensus-based rules for European decision-making, which secured British food and prosperity, imbued Eurosceptic arguments with a veneer of plausibility—that participating in the Common Market might actually destroy sovereign institutions. By admitting Eurosceptic claims, if only to refute them, BIE and the government gave the arguments staying power in public discourse; anti-Market arguments preyed on voters’ confusion about Britain’s obligations within the Common Market and whether its sovereignty or economy were promoted by membership. Contributing to this void, the BIE campaign argued in hyperbole about the consequences of leaving Europe. Were Britain to leave the Common Market, it “may find [itself] standing at the end of a world food queue.”¹⁷⁰ Full of probabilistic statements, the pamphlet also acknowledged disunion in the anti-Market camp by listing six possible “alternatives” for Britain ranging from a United States of Europe to a communist bloc encompassing Britain.¹⁷¹

By transforming the question of European integration from a technical discussion about planning, goods, markets, and coordination into a domestic political question about rights, belonging, and choice, Wilson created a platform for popular expressions of Euroscepticism. The government public information office printed pamphlets created by the “Britain in Europe” group (BIE) and the National Referendum Campaign (NRC). The pamphlet arguing to remain in Europe, authored by BIE, wondered why “after years of striving to get in, under both Conservative and

¹⁶⁸ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 4.

¹⁶⁹ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 5.

¹⁷⁰ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 6.

¹⁷¹ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes,’” 7.

Labour governments, we should go through the agony of pulling out.”¹⁷² Making an appeal to the success of EEC economies during the previous decade, the Remain group argued that the EEC offered the “best framework for success.”¹⁷³ The NRC pamphlet first began by clarifying misconceptions about the Common Market, and Britain’s attachment to it. “It was agreed during the debates which took us into the Common Market that the British Parliament had the absolute right to repeal the European Communities Act and take us out. There is nothing in the Treaty of Rome which says a country cannot come out.”¹⁷⁴ By making an argument in the negative, the Leave campaign reacted to the European “other” from a position of fear, rather than strength.

For the NRC, “the fundamental question [was] whether or not we remain free to rule ourselves in our own way.”¹⁷⁵ The Common Market signified the transfer of political and economic power to “unelected Commissioners in Brussels.”¹⁷⁶ In an appeal to Conservative values, the pamphlet also referenced the deleterious effect of EEC membership on the housewife, who “will be paying more for her food” while the country would pay “many hundreds of millions of pounds a year to the Brussels budget, largely to subsidise Continental farmers.” The food issue overwhelmed opposition to the Common Market, even though 0.01 percent of British workers were involved in the agricultural sector in 1970.¹⁷⁷

The NRC campaign shared membership, ideology, and common cause—though not direct affiliation—with the National Front, a far-right political party led by *Spearhead* publisher John Tyndall. Founded in an attempt to unite competing elements of the British fascist scene, the

¹⁷² “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes.’”

¹⁷³ “Why You Should Vote ‘Yes.’”

¹⁷⁴ “Why You Should Vote No” (National Referendum Campaign, 1975).

¹⁷⁵ “Why You Should Vote No.”

¹⁷⁶ “Why You Should Vote No.”

¹⁷⁷ *Labour Market Statistics Time Series Dataset (LMS)*, (February 21, 2018). Distributed by Office for National Statistics (U.K.).

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/mgrz/lms>.

National Front primarily opposed immigration and espoused racial politics. Seeking to reform the far right's image as a violent element, the National Front endeavored to place far right candidates on the ballot—reaching new heights by the end of the decade.¹⁷⁸ During the referendum, however, the National Front supported the Eurosceptic campaign from a distance—fashioning the European issue into their own political tool. Writing in *Spearhead*, Tyndall commented on the European threat to British sovereignty in the hopes of recruiting new members. Indeed the loss of sovereignty to the EEC played into a broader NF narrative about decolonization, and the immigration it prompted, was damaging Britain. The NF sought to convince alienated Eurosceptics to join forces with their nationalist allies.¹⁷⁹ Using violent demonstrations to agitate in the name of Britain, Tyndall did not organize the NF into a respectable Eurosceptic political party.

The NRC did not welcome direct coordination with Tyndall for fear of being tainted by his Nazi sympathy, but his connection to the Eurosceptic movement was evident in their printed materials. Titles of the issue-area sections of the Leave pamphlet corresponded directly to articles published in *Spearhead* in the months surrounding the referendum. For example, the pamphlet section “Britain a mere province of the Common Market?” was titled in the style of an article published in the August 1971 edition of *Spearhead* called “Britain: Free Nation or a Province of Europe?” that discussed the symbolic significance of Britain joining the continent, and what it implied for British sovereignty.¹⁸⁰ That NRC and the National Front overlapped in their desire for exiting Europe threatened the respectability of the anti-Market campaign, and NRC leaders disavowed the violent tactics of the National Front.

¹⁷⁸ Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 176–77.

¹⁷⁹ Neil Farnell, “Workers Against Immigration,” *Spearhead*, February 1975, SCH/01/Res/BRI/01/002, Searchlight Archive.

¹⁸⁰ “Britain: Free Nation or Province of Europe.”

Electoral ambitions aside, *Spearhead* pursued its goal of connecting activists and unifying far-right ideologies by distributing propaganda. Following BIE's victory in the June 5, 1975 election, the National Front vowed to pursue exit from Europe in their July 1975 issue.¹⁸¹ The "facts" that accession to and remaining in the Common Market caused Great Britain to "fare disastrously" remained unchanged, and the referendum process was deemed unfair.¹⁸² "The odds were loaded in favour of the pro-Marketees" who "depended on their ability to whip up an atmosphere of hysteria, stimulated by fear."¹⁸³ Using language reminiscent of current U.S. President Donald Trump's attacks on news organizations, Tyndall's National Front complained of lack of coverage in the national media about the NF's nationalist zeal, beyond violent clashes with "Reds" or anti-fascist militants.¹⁸⁴ Tyndall's journal provided its readers with an *accurate* version of the events of May 12, 1975, in which a "NF contingent" of approximately 50 rightfully entered their meeting at the Oxford Town Hall, despite the "frenzied mob" of left-wingers agitating before the event.¹⁸⁵ The rabbleroxing article accompanied a solicitation for "donation[s] to the National Front Fighting Fund."¹⁸⁶

Violent agitation was merely one strain of social unrest in 1970s Britain. Poor economic performance throughout the decade had yielded mistrust between workers and management, leading to several strikes. Low popular confidence in the economy also reduced support for Labour, which formed a minority cabinet under Wilson following the February 1974 election. By 1976, following high inflation and growing unemployment, Wilson resigned. Though not pushed from office by his handling of the European crisis, Wilson's failure to pivot from his defense of

¹⁸¹ "Europe: The Fight to Get Out Goes On," *Spearhead*, July 1975, SCH/01/Res/BRI/01/002, Searchlight Archive.

¹⁸² "Europe: The Fight to Get Out Goes On."

¹⁸³ "Europe: The Fight to Get Out Goes On."

¹⁸⁴ "Lively NF Referendum Campaign," *Spearhead*, July 1975, SCH/01/Res/BRI/01/002, Searchlight Archive.

¹⁸⁵ "Lively NF Referendum Campaign."

¹⁸⁶ "Lively NF Referendum Campaign," 19.

Labour power in 1974 to an offensive pursuit of its economic agenda held his government hostage.¹⁸⁷ The perceived loss of sovereignty on Wilson's watch contributed to a rupture in support from Labour's traditional union bases, even though EEC membership had been approved in a popular referendum. Unable to de-politicize Europe from the start of his government, Wilson was consigned to govern within its constraints—both failing to achieve economic stability and to reverse his party's electoral decline.

Labour MP James Callaghan took charge of a government spiraling out of control. Callaghan quickly secured an IMF loan for 2.3 billion pounds, which prompted a reduction in spending on domestic programs. Meanwhile, union ranks swelled in the 1970s, reaching 13.3 million workers, a majority of the workforce, in 1979.¹⁸⁸ Crucially, membership in public sector unions expanded in this period, which made Labour's revision of the social contract with workers more painful in 1978. When Callaghan's government proposed wage restraint as inflation reached new heights, unions agitated against their government—one supposedly representing their interests.¹⁸⁹ Workers across the country organized strikes against the wage reduction, including 3,000 workers at Ford in September 1978. By the new year, public sector unions were preparing for a massive National Day of Action on January 22, 1979, in which 1.5 million workers participated – the largest labor action in decades.¹⁹⁰ By May 4, 1979, Britain had a new government led by Conservative MP Margaret Thatcher, as voters discarded a Labour government perceived to be unable to work with unions, and workers lost faith that their unions could protect them.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ "A Pragmatic Pilgrim, a Kind of Progress," *The Guardian*, March 17, 1976.

¹⁸⁸ John Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?: The Callaghan Government and the British "Winter of Discontent"* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 15.

¹⁸⁹ Shepherd, 16.

¹⁹⁰ Shepherd, 82–83.

¹⁹¹ Shepherd, 147–51.

Thatcher: Renegotiating Europe

When Margaret Thatcher entered government, she approached Europe as her predecessors had: ready to convert Europe into a favorable domestic political issue. Thatcher's chief concerns—labor policies, sovereignty, and regional defense—were distinctly European problems, and her nationalism developed in opposition to European governance. As her government enhanced its profile fighting the Cold War alongside the United States, Thatcher's desires for regional defense coordination would ultimately transform into European problems. The reunification of Germany, a top Cold War objective, implied the enlargement of the European Union's market and a validation of its political legitimacy. In pursuing military goals, Thatcher was unable to avoid the politics of Europe. By criticizing the growth of European institutions from Brussels, while expanding regional institutions like the Western European Union and NATO from London, Thatcher prioritized her military agenda while attempting to save face with her small-government base. Her policies divided her party in Parliament and her cabinet. In all instances, however, Thatcher could claim that her approach to Europe prioritized Britain's national interests. By repackaging Europe as a nationalist safeguard, while criticizing its role as an economic hub and monetary union, Thatcher ensured that the politics of Europe would persist long after her government resigned.

The new prime minister distrusted Leviathan—the big state.¹⁹² Certain that labor unrest and inflation stemmed from Labour's Keynesian policies and overreach from the center, Thatcher campaigned for the privatization of British industries. Approaching Europe, Thatcher applied her small-government philosophy and called for decreased economic regulation, while amplifying calls for regional security. For Thatcher, Europe was a theater to demonstrate military strength.

¹⁹² John Palmer, "Thatcher's Vision of the Future," *The Guardian*, November 29, 1979.

Turning to Europe as a military, rather than economic partner, Thatcher recognized the strength of continental collaboration through NATO in the lingering Cold War. Promising a fresh round of renegotiation with Brussels following her election, Thatcher made familiar promises to reduce Britain's contribution and increase its control of the region-wide decision-making process, while signaling her desire to boost spending on Europe's nuclear arsenal.¹⁹³ By the spring of 1980, European reception of British renegotiation efforts had soured, particularly as French Gaullist Leader Jacques Chirac chided Britain to play by the Community's rules or get out.¹⁹⁴ In a Luxembourg summit, Thatcher and other ministers of the EEC discussed refunding Britain's contributions, only to result in a "tantalising disappointment" in the words of EEC Commission President Roy Jenkins.¹⁹⁵ In the British press, however, Thatcher was praised for even obtaining an audience with European partners about her "budget complaint."¹⁹⁶ A MORI opinion poll from April 1980 revealed that seventy percent of the electorate desired to leave the European Economic Community, and a *Guardian* editorial encouraged Thatcher to mine Europe for "tangible economic benefits" before the Eurosceptic tide overwhelmed Britain.¹⁹⁷ Echoing the BIE campaign's predictions about the motivations and goals of EEC member countries, the editorial mused "it is in every EEC country's interest to meet Britain's case rather than face a crisis that might lead to our withdrawal."¹⁹⁸ British appraisals of European partners reflected Britain's self-conception of itself as an integral regional power player (despite its consistent discord with France). Seeing the greatest potency in British military power, as Thatcher took office amid widespread economic discontent, she turned to Europe not as an economic partner, but a military one.

¹⁹³ Palmer.

¹⁹⁴ "Memo to Europe: Help Britain to Stay In," *The Observer (1901- 2003); London (UK)*, March 23, 1980.

¹⁹⁵ "Europe: The Gap Can Still Be Closed," *The Guardian*, April 30, 1980.

¹⁹⁶ "Europe."

¹⁹⁷ "Europe."

¹⁹⁸ "Europe."

As Thatcher reinvigorated British defense policy, she raised its prominence in the arena of European coordination. Taking steps to enhance Britain's military capabilities through the funding of new weapons systems and the development of the Trident nuclear submarine program, Thatcher increased defense spending by 20 percent in real terms across the 1980s.¹⁹⁹ By the 1983 general election, Thatcher had successfully converted defense policy into a partisan political issue, disrupting inter-party consensus on the issue since 1945.²⁰⁰ In the Labour Party, too, defense policy became a wedge issue between MPs and party activists, who advocated reduction in British defense commitments at annual party conferences in the late 1970s.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, Thatcher's hawkish tendencies coincided with waning détente with the Soviet Union, which invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Thatcher's Defence Minister, Francis Pym, projected "continuity" in the government's commitment to nuclear deterrence, multilateralism in the Atlantic, and completion of the Trident submarine program.²⁰² The 1982 Falklands War, in which Thatcher responded to Argentinian invasion of British territory with naval force, played into her image as defender of British sovereignty across the globe. In Europe, the October 1984 revival of the Western European Union as a site of defense coordination within Europe presented an opportunity for Thatcher's leadership on the British side of the Atlantic.²⁰³ British leadership through regional coordination satisfied British desires to act as a great power. By sharing the burden of nuclear decision-making with the United States, Britain aimed to preserve its relevance in securing Cold War peace.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Douglas Stuart, "NATO in the 1980s: Between European Pillar and European Home," *Armed Forces & Society* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 428.

²⁰⁰ Peter M. Jones, "British Defence Policy: The Breakdown of Inter-Party Consensus," *Review of International Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 111.

²⁰¹ Jones, 113.

²⁰² Jones, 117.

²⁰³ Stuart, "NATO in the 1980s: Between European Pillar and European Home," 429.

²⁰⁴ Jones, "British Defence Policy."

The 1986 Single European Act consolidated the treaty-formed regional bodies of the European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Atomic Energy Commission, and subsequent related treaties into a singular European Union.²⁰⁵ Yet it was regarded as rather inconsequential by mainstream Conservative MPs during its approval in Parliament.²⁰⁶ Thatcher's Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, maintained that British consent to the Single European Act was a routine act of government—fit for perfunctory approval.²⁰⁷ Howe argued that the Single European Act fell short of creating “a United States of Europe or [...] vague political or legal goals.”²⁰⁸ Framed instead as a “Thatcherite measure” to stabilize the “internal Market,” by Howe, the Single European Act was criticized as tantamount to “monetary union” by the fascist Enoch Powell.²⁰⁹ Thatcher's supporters clung to Thatcher's absence from the country during this debate as a signal of her distaste for Europe, and Enoch Powell proclaimed that Thatcher signed the Single European Act despite her personal objections.²¹⁰ Though its political approval came smoothly, consolidation in Europe transformed into a threat to British sovereignty.

By the late 1980s, Thatcher's tone toward the European Community had sharpened. Addressing EU Commissioners at the Hall of Bruges in 1988 she fumed, “We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels.”²¹¹ An internal Conservative Party report, published in 1988, predicted that more than half of British legislation in the coming decade would emanate from the EC, stirring fears of “the law-making

²⁰⁵ “Single European Act” (European Union Publications Office, February 17, 1986).

²⁰⁶ David McKie, “When Europe Was Agreed on without Benefit of Foresight: David McKie Enjoys Hindsight to View 1986 and the Passing of the Single European Act,” *The Guardian*, October 31, 1990.

²⁰⁷ McKie.

²⁰⁸ McKie.

²⁰⁹ McKie.

²¹⁰ McKie.

²¹¹ John Palmer, “Thatcher Sets Face against United Europe,” *The Guardian*, September 21, 1988.

powers of the EEC institutions.”²¹² Though Thatcher feared the power of an unelected Brussels bureaucracy more than the EU parliament, her concerns about the British parliament’s influence were shared by Labour and Conservative MPs alike. Others from both parties desired a federal European structure, dismissing Thatcher’s concern for the role of Parliament.²¹³ As European coordination expanded on issues of health, education, and employment, Thatcher instructed her cabinet ministers to pull out from, or block, regional initiatives that would commit Britain laws to comply with community rules.²¹⁴ As in Europe, complexity in domestic policymaking increased during European expansion, as Health and Employment ministers sought to avoid participation in European initiatives, only to be countermanded by the Foreign Office.²¹⁵ The transformation of Europe into a postwar institution of economic and legal coordination exposed the two poles of Conservative thought on Europe, “embodied in Edward Heath and Enoch Powell.”²¹⁶ Old fears of being left behind an advancing Europe stirred as pro-European cabinet ministers, including Sir Geoffrey Howe and Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, called for Thatcher to abandon its isolationist position and commit to the European Monetary System before it was too late to join.²¹⁷

Conclusion

From British accession in the EEC to the formation of the European Union and beyond, British politicians sought to politicize membership in Europe. Though seeking to score political points, these politicians kept European integration on the minds of British voters, starting with the 1975 referendum on EEC membership. Together, the tactics and arguments of Eurosceptics

²¹² John Palmer, “Tory Fears of United Europe Heightened,” *The Guardian*, September 28, 1988.

²¹³ Palmer.

²¹⁴ David Hencke and John Palmer, “Thatcher Takes Helm on Europe,” *The Guardian*, May 4, 1989.

²¹⁵ Hencke and Palmer.

²¹⁶ Martin Walker, “Iron Lady Fights Old Dragons: Towards the New Europe,” *The Guardian*, November 16, 1988.

²¹⁷ John Palmer, “Europe Now the Battleground: European Issues Are at the Heart of the Government’s Crisis and Mrs Thatcher Is Coming under Increasing Pressure to End Her Isolationism,” *The Guardian*, October 30, 1989.

ensured that British participation in Europe would remain questioned in the public sphere, and on the agenda of mainstream political parties (Labour and Conservatives). With European membership still in question twenty years following accession, Britain was ripe for additional debate on the European question as Europe transformed into a massive economic-judicial-social organization—the European Union. As the E.U. admitted more members and gained new policy competences in the 1990s, it created fertile ground for Eurosceptics to attack British participation in the regional body. For Thatcher especially, the new EU served as a convenient proving ground for her nationalism, even as she pushed for a more coherent regional security policy. Europe persisted as a malleable political object, always the shape of a politician's hopes or a voter's fears. With the value of integration still contested two decades after the '75 referendum, the eagerness of politicians like John Major and Tony Blair to make their mark on Europe sealed Britain's fate to demand a new deal in Europe, and a new referendum, too.

4. After Thatcher: From Europhilic Government to Eurosceptic Consensus

Introduction

The transformation of the European integration question from one posed to party leaders and civil servants to a topic of popular discussions about British sovereignty was the immediate legacy of the integration-era governments under Heath, Wilson, Callaghan, and Thatcher. Thatcher, who was selected by voters to restore prosperity following the decline of Labour and its erstwhile union base, approached Europe through a philosophical inclination toward shrinking government. As the project of united Europe transitioned from a Cold War instrument of democratic capitalism into a federal, regional decision-making body, Thatcher tempered her support for European policy coordination—placing her at odds with key members of her cabinet and parliamentary party. At first softening her stance in June 1989, Thatcher admitted a certain resignation that British commitments to the Treaty of Rome and the Single European Act would obligate it to join the monetary union—but on British terms.²¹⁸ Poorly received by EC partners, Thatcher’s stipulations for pegging Sterling to the EMS were joined by age-old British Eurosceptic arguments criticizing “national subsidies paid to both agriculture and industry” as roadblocks to achieving the “fair and open trading system... which would allow Britain to take a full part in the EMS.”²¹⁹ Resisting overtures from her Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Geoffrey Howe and Foreign Minister Nigel Lawson, Thatcher avoided British commitments to the European Monetary System (EMS), the first regional move toward currency union. Nervous that Britain would become a pariah of the European Community, Howe and other Europhiles pleaded for Thatcher to

²¹⁸ Thatcher sets out terms for entry into EMS.

²¹⁹ EMS: Mrs Thatcher ‘moves the goal posts’

announce full participation in the EMS at a December 1989 EC summit in Strasbourg.²²⁰ In the meantime, EC governments wanted monetary union to continue apace, and planned to forge a new treaty on economic coordination, even without British assent.²²¹ Described by the Guardian's Europe correspondent, John Palmer, as a "political bandwagon," the EC's uninhibited drive toward monetary union signaled the fragility of Thatcher's leadership in Britain, and on the continent.²²² Driven to isolation in Europe and in her own party, Thatcher resigned.

In the next decade Tony Blair's Labour Party pursued the expansion of the European region, even as British politics prevented full British participation in the EU's economy. Divisions in Blair's cabinet, especially with Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, about the timing and degree of European integration Britain could stomach paralyzed efforts toward greater integration. Ultimately, Britain's most Europhilic government was unable to transform the island into the vanguard of the EU. Eurosceptic politics continued to develop into the twenty-first century.

Major, Britain, and Europe: A New Chapter?

Following Thatcher's 1990 resignation, a broad coalition of Eurosceptics used the next decade to reorganize and mobilize against the threat of Europe, as mainstream British leaders pursued further integration. As the Conservative John Major ascended to Downing Street in 1990, his career was skyrocketing: leaping from Chief Secretary to the Treasury (1987) to Prime Minister in four years. Having briefly served as Thatcher's Foreign Secretary and her Chancellor of the Exchequer, after Lawson's October 1989 resignation, Major became one of Thatcher's closest aides who, like Howe and Lawson before him, tried to steer her from completely isolating Britain

²²⁰ Europe Now the Battleground.

²²¹ Europe Now the Battleground. AND "Community closes ranks against Britain"

²²² EC battle cry could seal Thatcher's fate: Commentary

from Europe. At Major's insistence that economic integration would improve British inflation and mend her political toxicity, Thatcher finally pledged to join the EMS's Exchange Rate Mechanism on June 13, 1990.²²³ Still spewing Eurosceptic remarks following the October 1990 meeting of the European Council at Rome, Thatcher pushed Howe to resign from his isolated post as Deputy Prime Minister and invited a leadership challenge from Michael Heseltine.²²⁴ Failing to win a majority in the first ballot, Thatcher stepped down from office and ultimately backed Major, who became Prime Minister on November 27.²²⁵ With his leadership cemented by a 1992 general election victory, it seemed that Major's Britain would continue to drift toward Europe.

Major's government proceeded to exhibit similar pro-European tendencies displayed by the post-integration governments of Wilson, Callaghan, and Thatcher in their infancies. Determined to *win* the European issue in British domestic politics, Major championed the EU and Britain's place in it.²²⁶ Major embraced European integration, recognizing that Britain risked exclusion from the core of Europe, and continued subordination to Franco-German interests, if it failed to participate in efforts toward monetary union.²²⁷ Proceeding with this "two-fold strategy" of openness to a new relationship with Europe while preserving British ties to regional institutions, Major sought to unite his Conservative parliamentarians following the tumult surrounding Thatcher's resignation.²²⁸ Thatcher's resignation, the first since Neville Chamberlain's 1940 fall, marked a defeat for British nationalists whose anti-European rhetoric had found a voice in the Iron Lady. To left-wing Conservatives, Major's leadership rejected the divineness of Thatcher's

²²³ Edmund Dell, *The Chancellors: A History of the Chancellors of the Exchequer 1945-90* (London: HaperCollinsPublishers, 1996), 544–45.

²²⁴ Dell, 547.

²²⁵ Dell, 546.

²²⁶ Daniel Wincott, Jim Buller, and Colin Hay, "Strategic Errors and/or Structural Binds? Major and European Integration," in *Major Premiership, 1990-1997: Politics and Policies under John Major*, by Peter Dorey (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 1999), 90.

²²⁷ Wincott, Buller, and Hay, 91.

²²⁸ Wincott, Buller, and Hay, 92.

conservatism.²²⁹ Those on the right wing of the Conservative party, meanwhile, praised Major in the expectation he would continue Thatcher's economic policies.²³⁰ Despite holding relatively pro-Europe positions, Major was perceived to be more Eurosceptic than fellow leadership contenders Douglas Hurd and Michael Heseltine—prompting his Eurosceptic supporters within the party to view him as “one of them.”²³¹ His ability to connect with the disparate party membership enabled Major to rehabilitate the party's image with minimal drama between his government and Conservative parliamentarians during his honeymoon period (1990-2).²³² Yet as early as December 4th, Major faced Conservative rebellions on legislation regarding Europe.

Major's negotiations at Maastricht served as a proving ground for the new Prime Minister to test his Europe strategy. Hoping to paint a new Europe that honored subsidiarity—the notion that policy decisions should be made at the most decentralized level possible in a given policy area—Major focused on shaping the new EU to be independent of the European Commission (where Franco-German influence was tremendous).²³³ Whether the ultimate “victories” of removing references to the EU as a federal body, promoting subsidiarity, and converting the employment regulations, or the so called “Social Chapter,” into an ancillary agreement not included in the treaty text were achieved at the hand of negotiators from Britain or elsewhere in Europe is difficult to trace. While Major's ownership of the subsidiarity issue resonated with British Eurosceptics fearful of the superstate, its prominence in the Maastricht Treaty can also be traced to the German model of federalism that devolved several competences to local

²²⁹ Peter Dorey, *Major Premiership, 1990-1997: Politics and Policies under John Major* (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 1999), xiv.

²³⁰ Dorey, xv.

²³¹ Philip Cowley, “Chaos or Cohesion? Major and the Conservative Parliamentary Party,” in *Major Premiership, 1990-1997: Politics and Policies under John Major*, by Peter Dorey (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 1999), 4.

²³² Cowley, 4.

²³³ Wincott, Buller, and Hay, “Strategic Errors and/or Structural Binds? Major and European Integration,” 92-3.

governments.²³⁴ At Maastricht, however, Major was aiming to soothe the fears not only of European partners, but also of members of his own party. Though he navigated the complaints of his colleagues, particularly on the Social Chapter issue, Major's détente with Conservative Eurosceptics was short-lived. Within six months of Major finalizing the Maastricht deal, Thatcher criticized the proposed Treaty at The Hague on May 15, 1992, days before the Commons voted to reject it on second reading.²³⁵ Deploying inflammatory rhetoric, Thatcher warned of "insecurity, unemployment, national resentment, and ethnic conflict" under the aegis of Maastricht.²³⁶ While the Bill would not be approved for another year—only on its third reading—Thatcher's remarks exacerbated Conservative infighting.

Eurosceptics of all stripes—those who opposed the Common Market, those who guarded British sovereignty, and those clinging to imperial conceptions of nationalism—united to oppose British approval of the Maastricht Treaty in the Commons.²³⁷ The House of Lords broadly supported British participation in the community, and did not block the process of integration.²³⁸ The *Guardian* political editor Michael White surveyed the 1992 domestic political landscape and noted that "virtually the entire British Establishment" joined Major in his support of Maastricht.²³⁹ Opposing Europe, ranks of Tory rebels swelled under Thatcher: 10 voted against the Single European Act in 1986 and 22 rebelled against Major at the second reading of the Maastricht Bill.²⁴⁰ Though Major's cabinet broadly supported Europe, and Euro-friendly "Tory groups and dining clubs" agreed with the Establishment, they lacked "zeal" to mobilize a grassroots response to

²³⁴ Wincott, Buller, and Hay, 94.

²³⁵ Wincott, Buller, and Hay, 96.

²³⁶ Patrick Wintour and John Palmer, "Thatcher Rallies Rebels," *The Guardian*, May 16, 1992.

²³⁷ Michael White, "Major and the M Word .. Mayhem," *The Guardian*, November 4, 1992.

²³⁸ White.

²³⁹ White.

²⁴⁰ White.

Eurosceptics.²⁴¹ Meanwhile, the general election of April 1992 ushered in a new class of Eurosceptics who were eager to make their mark in the Commons.

The 1992 Conservative parliamentarians, elected amid a wave of retirement and defeat of the old guard, were the most Eurosceptic “cohort” to date. Thanks to plurality election rules, the largest popular vote for Conservative MPs to date failed to materialize into a strong parliamentary position; Major entered the new term with a 21 seat majority, much narrower than Thatcher’s 43, 144, and 101 seat majorities.²⁴² Despite its tenuous grip to power, Major’s government expected smooth approval of the Maastricht treaty (the European Communities (Amendment) Bill). Instead the June 2, 1992, Danish referendum prompted the government to postpone the vote so the Danish rejection of Maastricht could be studied. The postponement created an opportunity for Eurosceptics to voice their discontent.²⁴³ Eighty-four Conservative MPs signed an Early Day Motion urging the government to rethink its European policy, inaugurating a period of intra-party rebellion against Major’s Europhilic policies that would last until Conservatives fell from government in 1997. A year later, at the third reading of the Bill on May 20, 1993, 41 Conservatives voted against the government—the largest episode of dissent against Maastricht, and nearly double the rebellion in 1972.²⁴⁴ Averaging 18 participating members, the rebellions against Maastricht united parliamentarians who opposed Europe for various *reasons* and to various *degrees*. British political scientist Philip Cowley suggested three themes in Conservative approaches to Europe during the Maastricht period: 1) most Conservative MPs recognized the value of British participation in the EU *in some form*, 2) most members were skeptical of *further* integration with Europe, and 3) on each issue, a substantial minority vociferously challenged the

²⁴¹ White.

²⁴² Cowley, “Chaos or Cohesion? Major and the Conservative Parliamentary Party,” 7.

²⁴³ Cowley, 8.

²⁴⁴ Cowley, 9.

majority viewpoint.²⁴⁵ Ultimately those who supported John Major for being their ally in 1990 felt “alienated” by his government’s efforts to pass the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, whereas Heseltine, Hurd, and their supporters bolstered Major’s enthusiasm for integration.

One of Major’s contributions to the British-European relationship was to steer Britain into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). A precursor to monetary union, the ERM set fixed margins for currency exchange rates—trying member currencies to a weighted regional average. Yet two years after joining the Mechanism, aggressive speculation on Sterling triggered a crisis. Britain’s interest rates were too high, and its inflation rate too low, to remain within the parameters of the ERM, culminating in the Black Wednesday crisis of September 16, 1992. The merits of European integration were again called into question.²⁴⁶ Held up as an example of elite arrogance—the triumph of technocrats over pure Thatcherism—the ERM fiasco emboldened grassroots Eurosceptics to call for a popular referendum on Maastricht ratification.²⁴⁷ As Britain struggled to wrangle support for the Bill, the Netherlands also failed to swiftly ratify the Maastricht Treaty, instead opting for a popular referendum; British Eurosceptics hoped for a similar opportunity to express their opposition.²⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher praised the Danes for “[having] done a great service for democracy against bureaucracy.”²⁴⁹ The Eurosceptic Tory MP Tony Marlow called for June 2, the day of the Danish referendum, to be proclaimed a European holiday--“the day of democracy, or even better the day of the nation state.”²⁵⁰ By June 22, 1995 Major, unable

²⁴⁵ Cowley, 12.

²⁴⁶ Alan Budd, *Black Wednesday: A Re-Examination of Britain’s Experience in the Exchange Rate Mechanism* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2005).

²⁴⁷ Nikki Knewstub, “Major Rules out Referendum: Nikki Knewstub on the Growing Clamour to Allow Britain’s Voters a Chance to Have Their Say on Europe,” *The Guardian*, June 4, 1992; Norman Tebbit, “An Electoral Curse yet to Be Lifted,” *The Guardian*, February 9, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/feb/10/freedomofinformation.economy>.

²⁴⁸ Knewstub, “Major Rules out Referendum.”

²⁴⁹ Knewstub.

²⁵⁰ Knewstub.

to command loyalty from his members, resigned as leader of the party (but not PM) and called for a new leadership contest. This resignation over the issue of Europe highlighted the growing power of Eurosceptics. Challenged by the Eurosceptic John Redwood, Major was reinstated as party leader with a 129-vote margin. Yet the “small minority” of Eurosceptic MPs continued to agitate against Major on European issues, even if they agreed with his government in other policy areas.²⁵¹

Major’s government lived through the consequences of Thatcherism: devolution of major policy competences to local governments, privatization, and exposed fault lines within the party about Europe. The growth of Europe transformed traditional Tory issues, like defending local government, into what Wincott, Buller, and Hay described as a “structural bind,” as Conservatives attempted to reconcile participation in Europe with their governing principles.²⁵² Conservatives were so invested in dismantling Whitehall’s authority that they left policy decisions to local councils, which actually fell under Brussels-authored regulations. Major’s defense of the subsidiarity principle in the Maastricht negotiations was fueled by Eurosceptic fears of losing power to Europe and a broader Tory proclivity toward reducing the footprint of the central government.²⁵³ Under Thatcher and Major, local governments assumed control of healthcare for the “chronically sick,” and by 1996 Major sought to “privatize” home care services to further reduce the role of the state in welfare.²⁵⁴ These steps toward decentralization were complicated by the growing body of EU laws, which superseded British rule, and established regional goals for employment and health laws.²⁵⁵ After losing nearly 500 council seats in 1993, 429 seats in 1994, and 1800 seats in 1995, Major had failed to revitalize local Tory parties, even though their

²⁵¹ Cowley, “Chaos or Cohesion? Major and the Conservative Parliamentary Party,” 18–24.

²⁵² Wincott, Buller, and Hay, “Strategic Errors and/or Structural Binds? Major and European Integration,” 87.

²⁵³ John Kingdom, “Centralisation and Fragmentation: John Major and the Reform of Local Government,” in *Major Premiership, 1990-1997: Politics and Policies under John Major*, by Peter Dorey (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 1999), 63.

²⁵⁴ Kingdom, 58.

²⁵⁵ Kingdom, 63.

governments became more responsible for implementing policies including those dictated by Brussels. Major's crisis in Europe sprung from within: opposing forces within the Conservative Party demanded both local and supranational power—crippling Major's ability to govern effectively at the national level. Moreover, Britain's perennial lack of enthusiasm for European initiatives—ranging from monetary union to the labor standards—limited its power beyond its borders. In local elections, too, Conservative power was diminished. Beside the loss of council seats throughout Major's premiership, local elections had become contests for Eurosceptic reactionaries seeking power and attention in the years since accession. The Nationalist Front and its successor, the British National Party, converted their fascist rhetoric into local electoral politics. Though Major snatched power from the Eurosceptic Thatcher in the high-powered parliamentary halls of Westminster, he failed to quash grassroots Euroscepticism. These extra-parliamentary Euroseptsics would prove to be Major's undoing as they developed into a national political force.

Nascent Euroseptsics

As Major's government continued to lose support from rank-and-file Tory MPs, and Eurosceptic politicians called for action on Europe, extreme Eurosceptic elements on the far-right that had agitated against integration for decades entered mainstream politics. Characterized by electoral embarrassment and marginalization from the end of World War II through the 1960s, the far-right had attempted to organize in several organizations: the Union Movement (1948), the League of Empire Loyalists (1954), the National Labour Party (1957), the White Defence League (1958), the first British National Party (1960), the National Socialist Movement (1962), and the National Front (1967).²⁵⁶ Focused on racial politics, British white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration, and imperialism, far-right parties only attracted several thousand members and failed

²⁵⁶ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 175–77.

to win a representative in government—even in targeted constituencies and with movement leaders like Oswald Mosley on the ballot.²⁵⁷ The Greater Britain Movement, led by John Tyndall and Martin Webster, and the first British National Party, led by Andrew Fountaine and John Bean, felt that the League of Empire Loyalists had paid scant attention to electoral politics under the leadership of A.K. Chesterson. Yet Chesterson and his followers were skeptical of uniting with Tyndall, who was an open Nazi sympathizer.²⁵⁸ The union of these groups under the umbrella of the National Front indicated the pragmatism of the new generation of far-right leaders, eager to make an impact on politics. Meanwhile the omission of the National Socialist Movement from the new group symbolized reputational concerns about the NF's public stance on Nazism. Despite internal bickering about the direction of the organization, concerns about the visibility of Tyndall and Webster, and the departure of some Conservatives to form a short-lived National Party, the National Front steadily pursued its goals of controlling the far-right's political movement in the 1970s.

Though never a mainstream political actor, the NF and its successors were “a thorn in the side of British politics,” placing constant pressure on Tories to appeal to anti-immigrant nationalism and defend against claims that the EU threatened British sovereignty.²⁵⁹ Under the supervision of Tyndall and Webster, who had come of age in the earlier British National Party and National Socialist Movement fascist parties of the previous decade, the NF embarked to contest elections and stage street politics.²⁶⁰ In 1970, the NF fielded 10 candidates and received low support in constituencies where it competed.²⁶¹ By 1974, the NF ran 90 candidates, attracted

²⁵⁷ Ignazi, 177.

²⁵⁸ Martin Durham, “The Conservative Party, the British Extreme Right and the Problem of Political Space, 1967-83,” in *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, ed. Mike Cronin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 81.

²⁵⁹ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 180.

²⁶⁰ Ignazi, 176–79.

²⁶¹ Ignazi, 179.

113,844 voters overall, and in Leicester their candidate won 16.6 percent of the vote and was 62 votes shy of victory—made possible by Britain’s majoritarian election system.²⁶² Though initially electorally unsuccessful, the NF served as a crucial hub of white supremacist and nationalist ideology in the British political landscape. In the early 1970s, Enoch Powell’s wing of Conservatives—enamored with the immigration issue—sought a new home as Heath’s Conservative government adopted “liberal” stances toward migration during the Ugandan-Asian crisis, in which 50,000 people of Asian origin were expelled by Uganda.²⁶³ Though Heath defended his action as upholding Britain’s obligation to the Commonwealth, racist members of his party abhorred British assistance to “refugees,” as the Ugandan-Asians were portrayed in media.²⁶⁴ Finding the NF welcoming, the Powellites joined and staged a takeover of the party leadership in 1975—selecting John Read as their leader.²⁶⁵ As Britain became a full member of the European Community abroad and descended into economic crisis at home, the far right mobilized against the establishment—at the time, controlled by Labour. In September 1976, as anti-immigration rhetoric from the far right reached new heights, Labour activists gathered at their annual party conference in Blackpool to discuss “racialism,” its relationship to the National Front, and how it should be combatted. Tom Jackson, a representative of the Union of Postal Workers reflected, “We have been pussyfooting about the issue of racialism for too long and it has taken the National Front and the neo-Fascist parties to galvanise some of us into action.”²⁶⁶ Those in power were still slow to respond to the ills of racist politics. Callaghan’s Home Secretary Merlyn Rees defended the rights of immigrants but allowed some validity to the NF’s anti-immigrant position by

²⁶² Ignazi, 1798; Durham, “The Conservative Party, the British Extreme Right and the Problem of Political Space, 1967-83,” 82.

²⁶³ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 179.

²⁶⁴ Yumiko Hamai, “‘Imperial Burden’ or ‘Jews of Africa’?: An Analysis of Political and Media Discourse in the Ugandan Asian Crisis (1972),” *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 428–29.

²⁶⁵ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 179.

²⁶⁶ Peter Cole et al., “Rees Pledge to Beat and Not Ban National Front,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 1976.

admitting that Britain could not “absorb” everyone. A Labour candidate hoping to represent Woolwich West in Parliament, Diana Page, criticized her party for failing to disentangle economic malaise from the scapegoat of immigration. Despite the clamor for the party leadership to take action, Labour’s response was sluggish and not uniform. Meanwhile, the NF was bringing youth “out on the streets.”²⁶⁷ By 1977, NF candidates attracted almost 250,000 votes in local elections, with 119,000 coming in the Greater London Council elections.²⁶⁸

The NF proved to be a durable home for far-right ideologues in the 1970s, but its potency as an electoral vehicle was suspect. The NF’s apparent electoral momentum displayed in its 1977 performance was scrutinized in a psephological analysis in the *Guardian* that provided a sober assessment of the NF’s success. Though the party contested a growing number of seats across the decade, their average vote share in the 1977 by-election, 5.7 percent, was not substantially larger than the 4 percent the League of Empire Loyalists received in the first postwar bid for office by a far-right candidate in Lewisham (1957 by-election).²⁶⁹ Estimations of the NF’s performance nationwide hovered around one percent of all votes, translating into a sigh of relief for establishment politicians who assured themselves that the NF was a trifling element.²⁷⁰ Indeed, when Margaret Thatcher revitalized the Conservative Party in the 1979 election and played up the race card, voters flocked to elect Conservative MPs, and the NF withered to irrelevance. Tyndall’s monthly journal *Spearhead* questioned the authenticity of Conservative appeals to end immigration and regulate pornography and called Thatcher’s election “a gigantic confidence trick.”²⁷¹ Following her first election, the NF hoped for a “revival” that did not materialize.²⁷² By

²⁶⁷ Cole et al.

²⁶⁸ Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*, 179; Durham, “The Conservative Party, the British Extreme Right and the Problem of Political Space, 1967-83,” 82.

²⁶⁹ Jonathan Steele and Michael Steed, “The Violent Face of Politics,” *The Guardian*, August 20, 1977.

²⁷⁰ Steele and Steed.

²⁷¹ Durham, “The Conservative Party, the British Extreme Right and the Problem of Political Space, 1967-83,” 95.

²⁷² Durham, 96.

1979, the NF counted just a few thousand people on its membership rolls, down from 15,000 at its 1973 peak; most members and politicians had defected back to Thatcher's Conservative Party, in which racism was accepted in local politics.²⁷³ Hoping to survive the Conservative coopting of NF ideologies, the far-right movement transformed yet again in the 1980s.

The British National Party (BNP) then emerged as the preeminent far-right political party in Britain. Tyndall, fearful that his association with the NF was undervalued by his colleagues who complained about his public association with fascism, formed the splinter group New National Front—which became the BNP—in 1982.²⁷⁴ Holding extreme anti-immigration positions, the BNP failed to attract many votes during Thatcher's rule: 14,621 in its first election (1983) and a mere 553 in 1987.²⁷⁵ Yet as Britain and Europe inched toward closer union through the Maastricht Treaty, Tory rebellion against European integration re-opened debates about the European threat to British sovereignty. When framed in racial terms, European integration was code for smoothing the path of immigrants to Britain—signifying a physical threat in the BNP's racist ideology. The BNP fared best in towns that had deindustrialized in the wake of the globalizing, Europeanizing economy, and had recently become home to immigrants. The BNP's first significant electoral achievement, in the May 1990 local elections, came in the form of winning 9.71 percent of the votes in Tower Hamlets, where the unemployment rate was 20 percent, a third of the population came from an ethnic minority, and the white population was aging.²⁷⁶ In short, the BNP's appeal was limited to places where racist arguments could appeal visually.

²⁷³ Roger Eatwell, "The Esoteric Ideology of the National Front in the 1980s," in *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, ed. Mike Cronin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

²⁷⁴ Eatwell, 106.

²⁷⁵ Nicholas Startin, "Contrasting Fortunes, Differing Futures? The Rise (and Fall) of the Front National and the British National Party," *Modern & Contemporary France* 22, no. 3 (August 2014): 282.

²⁷⁶ Nigel Copsey, "Contemporary Fascism in the Local Arena: British National Party and 'Rights for Whites,'" in *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, ed. Mike Cronin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 124–26.

Following a decade of electoral irrelevancy under Tyndall’s leadership, the BNP reformed its approach to electoral politics under the leadership of Nick Griffin—elected to lead the BNP in 1997 by a postal vote.²⁷⁷ Focused on purging the far-right of its association with skinheads and violent politics, Griffin emphasized “couching his politics in the language of moderation” as a tactic for participating in mainstream politics.²⁷⁸ Working with a tiny membership of just 1,500 members, the BNP embarked to bring race to the surface of British politics—capitalizing on a spree of racially-motivated hate crimes in 1999 surrounding an influx of refugees.²⁷⁹ The “crisis” of refugees seeking asylum—stemming from the displacement of Kurds and ethnic Albanians, and Britain’s U.N. obligations to accept refugees—was reified in the language of mainstream politics. Labour Home Office Minister Barbara Roche commented that asylum seekers had the “intention of exploiting the system and exploiting their children,” while Tory deputy leader Ann Widdecombe called for detention of all asylum seekers.²⁸⁰ While public opinion grappled with the apparent “flood” of migrants to Britain, as applications for asylum numbered 71,000 in 1999—up from 29,000 in 1996—the Home Office’s support of anti-immigrant measures reflected popular support for racism.²⁸¹ The BNP candidate in the 2000 London Mayoral race attracted “78,000 first and second preference votes,” and party leader Nick Griffin admitted that the asylum issue “legitimizes us.”²⁸² This legitimization of racist politics in a third party translated to electoral achievements. Improving on its 1992 results by 500 percent, the BNP received 35,832 votes in 1997, climbing to 563,743 votes in the 2010 general election. In an interview with the Guardian,

²⁷⁷ Startin, “Contrasting Fortunes, Differing Futures?”; Kevin Toolis, “Race to the Right,” *The Guardian*, May 20, 2000.

²⁷⁸ Toolis, “Race to the Right.”

²⁷⁹ Toolis.

²⁸⁰ Toolis; Patrick Barkham, “Beginner’s Guide to the Refugee Crisis,” *The Guardian*, August 27, 1999, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/aug/27/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices>.

²⁸¹ Toolis, “Race to the Right.”

²⁸² Toolis.

Griffin calmly complained that British “white nationalists” would be content “[i]f the liberals would just let us have one island, one place, where we could go and do what we want to do by ourselves.”²⁸³ In this utopia, Griffin would be free to enact his “policy of voluntary repatriation for non-whites” to leave Britain before they “stay.”²⁸⁴ Awaiting the crisis of late capitalism, BNP advocated for “withdrawal from the European Union, whatever the economic consequences, [imposing] import controls, and then [hoping] to rule through the following chaos.”²⁸⁵ Griffin was critical of Conservative politics, arguing that “The Conservative problem with immigration is purely reactionary. It’s because of black crime, or something like that. Whereas I would be opposed to immigration even if it was from people, who in larger numbers, were more law-abiding than us, more hard-working, cleverer than us and more productive.”²⁸⁶ Though frustrated with mainstream parties in Britain, Griffin was unable to achieve much electoral success in domestic elections. Even in supranational European Parliament elections, where the BNP gained the most votes in its early history, the BNP failed to achieve widespread support. Maligned by its fascist and racist image, the BNP stopped short of achieving mainstream support for Euroscepticism.

The European Parliament (EP) played host to several extreme political parties, particularly with Eurosceptic platforms, in the last two decades.²⁸⁷ Though the EP is an institution that brings political parties and the public into the EU’s decision-making process, it has served as a springboard for Eurosceptic candidates who claim to seek its termination; they promise to fight the super-state from within.²⁸⁸ EP elections certainly stirred British voters to take a stance on

²⁸³ Toolis.

²⁸⁴ Toolis.

²⁸⁵ Toolis.

²⁸⁶ Toolis.

²⁸⁷ Nathalie Brack, “Euroscepticism at the Supranational Level: The Case of the ‘Untidy Right’ in the European Parliament,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2013): 85–104.

²⁸⁸ Liesbet Hooghe, “What Drives Euroscepticism?: Party-Public Cueing, Ideology and Strategic Opportunity,” *European Union Politics* 8, no. 1 (March 2007): 5–12.

Europe, with 37 percent of those polled by Ipsos MORI ranking the issue of the “Common Market/EU/Europe/Single European Currency” as the “most important issue facing Britain” in June 1999—during the EP election, while its salience was only noted by just 23 percent of those surveyed by September of that year.²⁸⁹ Further boosting the significance of European policy was Britain’s procedural leadership of the European Union for the first six months of 1998—a time when Labour PM Tony Blair readied the launch of the single European currency (Euro) while refraining from implementing it in Britain.²⁹⁰ The disconnect between Britain’s national politics and its Europhilic diplomacy on the continent reflected the precarious balance of European integration in British politics—even twenty-five years after joining the European Community. Because EP elections focus on supranational, rather than national representation, governing parties traditionally perform worse than in domestic elections, as voters seek to express their views on European integration, often by supporting smaller parties.²⁹¹ So the results of the 1999 EP election, in which three Eurosceptic European Parliamentarian (MEPs) were elected, were not entirely surprising. Yet the Eurosceptic party that organized to win a full seven percent of the vote was not one with a long history; rather than electing BNP candidates with a decades-long history of protesting European integration, voters turned to a new party founded in 1993—the United Kingdom Independence Party.²⁹² Nick Griffin’s reformed BNP only received one percent of the vote, without obtaining any seats in the newly installed proportional representation method of

²⁸⁹ “Issues Index: 1997-2006,” Ipsos MORI, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/issues-index-1997-2006>.

²⁹⁰ Andrew Rawnsley, “Tony Blair Says He Is Leading Europe. Nice Idea, but It Doesn’t Translate into French. Or German...,” *The Observer*, April 5, 1998; “UK Presidency of the European Union: 1 January - 30 June 1998” (Internet Archive), accessed March 14, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20030731055047/http://presid.fco.gov.uk:80/newfront.shtml>.

²⁹¹ Sara B. Hobolt, Jae-Jae Spoon, and James Tilley, “A Vote Against Europe? Explaining Defection at the 1999 and 2004 European Parliament Elections,” *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 01 (January 2009): 93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000422>.

²⁹² Richard Cracknell and Bryn Morgan, “European Parliament Elections June 1999” (House of Commons Library, Social & General Statistics Section, June 21, 1999).

allocating British seats in the EP. Cognizant that the Eurosceptic cause had been tarnished by the blatant racism and fascism of the NF and BNP, UKIP's organizers took pains to frame their party as a rational voice against British involvement in Europe. In its 2001 General Election Manifesto, UKIP was quick to describe itself as "a non-racist, non-sectarian party" in the second paragraph of the introduction; they were the party of "tolerance."²⁹³ From the 1999 election onward, Euroscepticism was cloaked in the respectability of elected office, and it gradually crept into the main of British politics.

Euroscepticism in the Mainstream

Britain's relationship with Europe grew increasingly strained in the new millennium. The EU's three pillars—monetary, judicial, and policy coordination—expanded the reach of Europe into member countries, and institutions designed to democratize the EU—like the EP—opened up popular resentment toward European integration. Nationalists proclaimed the rollback of national sovereignty and prominent political theorists like Jürgen Habermas wondered if EU institutions had grown to constitute a new continental nation.²⁹⁴ Meanwhile in Whitehall, Major's ineptitude in holding together factions of his own party led to his ouster in the 1997 general election. The youthful Tony Blair installed the first Labour government in nearly two decades, and brought with him a warm orientation toward Europe. Six months after winning his landslide 418 seat majority, Blair's government spoke of a new approach to Europe. Articulating *New Labour's* vision, Blair sought to reclaiming of the continent to be, as Labour Minister Without Portfolio Peter Mandelson put it, the "People's Europe."²⁹⁵ Outlining Labour's goals for its temporary Presidency

²⁹³ Anthony Bennett et al., "UK Independence Party 2001 General Election Manifesto" (United Kingdom Independence Party, 2001), <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/e01/man/ukip/UKIP2001.htm>.

²⁹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, "The European Nation-State: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship," in *The Inclusion of the Other. Studies in Political Theory*, ed. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), 105–27.

²⁹⁵ Andy McSmith, "Today, Blair Runs Britain. Tomorrow, He Runs Europe," *The Observer*, December 7, 1997.

of the European Union, Mandelson stressed “re-creating a sense of ownership by the people of the European Union.”²⁹⁶ While Conservatives remained divided on how to approach Europe, Blair’s government stole the language of popular sovereignty from the Eurosceptics and deployed it to promote closer ties with the continent.

Despite its localist rhetoric, Blair’s government sought to protect the long-term growth and relevance of the European Union from sabotage by its opponents, both inside and outside Britain. The week before a December 10-13, 2000 EU summit in Nice, Blair met with his French counterpart—President Jacques Chirac—in the course of his government’s diplomatic efforts to engage with the EC. Falling within a series of discussions about the EU’s future structure and ability to accommodate its enlarged membership, their pre-summit lunch was an opportunity for Blair to preview his “red lines” to the French President.²⁹⁷ The previous month, Blair discussed different power arrangements in the EU with Chirac and the German foreign minister Joschka Fischer; while Fischer and Chirac proposed a European constitution, Blair advocated “more fluid political agreements” that could be joined by member countries when appropriate.²⁹⁸ Reflecting his understanding of the rocky domestic political terrain surrounding Europe—and popular fears that he was willing to liquidate British sovereignty—Blair suggested creating a second chamber in the EP, comprised of members sent directly from national parliaments.²⁹⁹ Blair’s proposal reflected his mercurial stance on Britain. To Europhiles, he was cooperating with European partners to expand the reach and bolster the legitimacy of the European project. To Eurosceptics, Blair could argue that he was demanding national oversight on run-away regional institutions that

²⁹⁶ McSmith.

²⁹⁷ Brendan Carlin, “Historic Toast to the Future of New Europe,” *Northern Echo*, December 1, 2000.

²⁹⁸ “Tony Blair’s Vision of Europe,” *Financial Times*, October 9, 2000, sec. LEADER.

²⁹⁹ “Tony Blair’s Vision of Europe”; D. Baker, “Britain and Europe: More Blood on the Euro-Carpet,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 55, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 317–30.

inevitably transferred policy decisions from Whitehall to Brussels. Constitutional questions aside, the immediate challenge in Europe was the creation of the single-currency: the Euro.

The implementation of the Euro single currency represented the biggest test of the EU's strength since ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. With Britain run by a prime minister whose approach to Europe was appraised as pragmatic and welcoming, the big question of 2001 was whether Blair would push Britain into the Euro zone.³⁰⁰ The *Guardian's* Hugo Young predicted that Blair 2001 reelection was nearly guaranteed, and that the real uncertainty was “whether sterling ought to join” the Euro zone.³⁰¹ Indeed Blair led Labour to an impressive victory on June 7, 2001, both securing the first additional term for a Labour government in the postwar period and maintaining a vast majority in the Commons—even larger than Thatcher's at the height of her term in office.³⁰² The failure of Conservatives, under William Hague's leadership, to offer a united front against Blair contributed to the lowest turnout in a general election since 1918.³⁰³ Reflecting the widening chasm between Labour and Conservative politicians on the issue of Europe, Thatcher warned in a September 2000 speech that Blair was set to “abolish Britain” if he joined the Euro.³⁰⁴ Following his electoral landslide and the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, which inspired a degree of national unity, Blair outlined his optimistic vision for Europe in a November 23, 2001 speech to the European Research Institute at Birmingham University.³⁰⁵ Deploying language both reminiscent of Churchill's visions of European unity and directly responsive to Thatcherite fears of a federal Europe, Blair called for “a union of nations working more closely together, not a

³⁰⁰ Hugo Young, “European Disunion,” *The Guardian*, January 4, 2001.

³⁰¹ Young.

³⁰² T.R. Reid, “Blair Wins Easy Reelection Labor Party to Keep Wide Majority in Parliament,” *Washington Post*, June 8, 2001.

³⁰³ “2001: Labour Claims Second Term,” *BBC News*, April 5, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/basics/4393329.stm.

³⁰⁴ Michael White, “Thatcher's EU Attack Marks End of Affair: Blair's Flattery Was Calculated, and Now She Has Served Her Purpose,” *The Guardian*, November 23, 2000.

³⁰⁵ James Hardy, “TONY'S BOLD EURO VISION,” *The Mirror*, November 24, 2001, sec. News.

federal superstate submerging national identity” in Europe.³⁰⁶ Invoking the language of Heath and Wilson, Blair reflected on the politicians who had “failed Britain’s interests” by letting opportunities for continental integration fly by while “Britain was left behind.”³⁰⁷ But Blair stopped short of endorsing the Euro for Britain. Despite his fervor for a united Europe, Blair’s Euro-enthusiasm was halted by division in his own party.

Tension between Downing Street and the Treasury flared as Blair warmed up for a fight on the Euro in 2002-3. At the European Research Institute Blair avoided a commitment to the Euro, instead posturing that passing the five tests outlined by Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown was a necessary prerequisite to him calling a referendum—the time-honored mechanism for injecting popular legitimacy to Britain’s integration policies—on joining the Euro. To Europhiles, however, Blair’s speech lacked substantive promises. The Tory MP and chairman of the European Movement pressure group, Ian Taylor, bemoaned Blair’s fear of “drawing the obvious conclusion that it is not in Britain’s national interest to stay out of the Euro.”³⁰⁸ Blair’s inability to take a stance on the Euro was partially due to disunion in his own cabinet. Chancellor Gordon Brown, and his chief economic advisor Ed Balls, publically questioned the value of British membership in the Euro.³⁰⁹ Meanwhile, Blair had instructed other cabinet ministers to promote the Euro publically, in what one minister felt was the beginning of a “referendum campaign.”³¹⁰ Eurosceptics also prepared for a potential referendum on the Euro, with the newspaper publisher

³⁰⁶ Hardy.

³⁰⁷ Hardy.

³⁰⁸ Philip Webster, “‘Be Ready to Share Sovereignty,’” *The Times*, November 24, 2001, sec. Home News.

³⁰⁹ Heather Stewart and Lucy Ward, “Treasury Warns against Hasty Decision over Joining Euro,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2002.

³¹⁰ Andrew Rawnsley, “COMMENT: THE NEW EUROPE: INSIDE POLITICS: The Challenge He Dare Not Shirk: If Tony Blair Loses His Nerve over Leading the Country into the Single Currency, the Man He Will Most Disappoint Is Himself,” *The Observer*, December 30, 2001, sec. Observer News Pages.

Rupert Murdoch promising a fight to “Vote No.”³¹¹ Lackluster public support for the Euro in polls and Brown’s silence on the compatibility of Britain’s economy with the Euro did not diminish the imprimatur of the currency for Blair, who privately admitted he was ready to call a referendum before his third general election.³¹² Yet Brown’s intractability on the Euro came to a head when reports surfaced in mid-April 2003 that the Treasury was unlikely to give the Euro flying colors on its five tests for the currency union—set up to measure the economic impact of the single currency on Britain’s economy.³¹³ Brown’s insistence on technocratic deliberation, instead of joining the Euro for political reasons, was perceived to be an attempt to avoid Major’s folly in advocating to join the ERM.³¹⁴ Blair courted Brown’s support of the Euro, however, and provided input on how the Treasury should frame the bad news as a postponement of entry, not “a straight ‘no.’”³¹⁵ A referendum during Blair’s second term was not ruled out, but was no longer discussed as a viable option without Treasury’s support. Despite these efforts to finesse Britain toward Europe, a lack of concrete steps toward joining Europe again prevented Britain from leading in Europe instead of following its partners at the eleventh hour.

Ultimately, there was no British referendum on the Euro. Instead, the Euro issue ignited a turf war between Brown and Blair about who ultimately controlled (hypothetical) British entry to the Euro zone. As the Treasury offered its bleak assessment on the Euro in May 2003, Blair reasserted his ownership of the Euro decision, undermining the Treasury and giving new responsibility to his own cabinet. By releasing the Treasury reports on Britain’s expected economic performance in the Euro to all cabinet members, Blair hoped for a full-cabinet discussion of

³¹¹ Rebecca Allison, “Murdoch Pledges to Fight Euro If Referendum Is Called,” *The Guardian*, June 11, 2002; Patrick Wintour, “Battle Pledge from Euro ‘No’ Leader,” *The Guardian*, July 26, 2002.

³¹² Patrick Wintour, “PM May Risk Euro Vote within a Year,” *The Guardian*, July 25, 2002.

³¹³ Larry Elliott and Michael White, “Brown-Blair Deal Sidelines Euro for Two Years,” *The Guardian*, April 16, 2003.

³¹⁴ Larry Elliott, “Euro Affair Is Put on Ice,” *The Guardian*, May 12, 2003.

³¹⁵ Kamal Ahmed, “Blair Signals Euro Go-Ahead despite Tests,” *The Observer*, April 20, 2003.

economic integration. Still, these maneuvers did not alter the government's timeline to hold a referendum or pursue adopting the currency. After a three-hour session with the cabinet on June 5th, Chancellor Brown announced that "We are all agreed that nothing must be done that will put the stability of the economy at risk."³¹⁶ The power of Britain's Europhilic prime minister was insufficient to overcome the 40-years-old divisions on Europe and launch Britain into the halls of European power. Despite this Eurosceptic outcome, the process by which Britain avoided entry to the Euro zone was relatively non-participatory. Decisions about Britain's future relationship with Europe were made *within* Blair's government, and because the issue was not presented to parliament or the people for a vote, Blair received little *recorded* rebellion on his approach to Europe.³¹⁷ Unable to accomplish his chief political goal and hobbled by criticism of the Iraq War, however, Blair weakened in the 2005 general election. Labour's parliamentary majority shrunk to 66 seats, down from 160.³¹⁸ Soon thereafter, Blair faced rebellion from 15 junior Labour ministers—anxious about Labour's electoral decline—who penned a letter calling for his departure and then tendered their own resignations in September 2006.³¹⁹ The following year, on June 27, 2007, Blair stepped down as prime minister and leader of the Labour Party to make way for his longtime colleague and intra-party rival Gordon Brown to take the reins. Blair's exit prompted scrutiny of whether "New Labour" was fit for governing. As disunity had fractured Conservatives at the end of Thatcher's premiership in 1990, it appeared that Labour was not immune from infighting. In June 2003, *The Guardian* published evidence of an agreement—made in the wake of the 1994 sudden death of Labour Leader John Smith—in which Brown supported Blair's

³¹⁶ Michael White and Patrick Wintour, "Cabinet Agrees 'not yet' on Euro," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2003.

³¹⁷ Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, "Where Has All the Trouble Gone? British Intra-Party Parliamentary Divisions during the Lisbon Ratification," *British Politics* 5, no. 2 (June 2010): 136–37.

³¹⁸ "The Rise and Fall of New Labour," *BBC News*, August 3, 2010, sec. UK Politics, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-10518842>.

³¹⁹ "Who Killed the British Prime Minister?" *The Economist*, September 14, 2006.

leadership of Labour on the condition that he retained significant policy authority.³²⁰ Rumors of an additional clause of the agreement, which suggested that Brown's support was predicated on an informal two-term limit for Blair, were published later that year in August.³²¹ These accusations undermined Gordon Brown's premiership, which was quickly hobbled by the 2008 global financial crisis. Viewed within the context of Britain's relationship with Europe, however, this leadership change represented the limits of European integration in domestic politics. The Europhilic Blair had failed to bring his country into the Eurozone, meeting opposition both from the usual suspects—Eurosceptic Conservatives and UKIP—and from his cabinet ministers, chiefly Brown. Despite his rhetorical enthusiasm for Europe, Blair had done little to alter British public opinion. British responses to a Eurobarometer poll asking if the country had benefitted from EU membership consistently exhibited a Eurosceptic reaction throughout Blair's premiership.³²² Brown's government did not seem well positioned to reverse this trend.

As Britain continued to operate at the periphery of Europe, prospects for further European integration dwindled under Brown's leadership. His muted enthusiasm for Europe translated to weak Euroscepticism in government. Quickly after entering 10 Downing Street, Brown was confronted with two questions of European policy left unsettled by his predecessor: whether to approve Britain's larger contribution to the EU budget and whether to ratify the EU Reform Treaty (Treaty of Lisbon). The budget bill was the same type of legislation that had forced Major to call a vote of confidence in 1994 and prompted rebellion in both parties.³²³ In 2008, the European Communities (Finance) Act 2008 called for a 20 percent decrease in Britain's rebate without

³²⁰ "Note Spells out the Blair-Brown Agreement: How the Sensitive Negotiation of John Smith's Succession Was Handled 'Sue,'" *The Guardian*, June 6, 2003.

³²¹ "Blair-Brown 'pact' under Spotlight," *BBC News*, August 8, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3134343.stm.

³²² Kai Oppermann, "The Blair Government and Europe: The Policy of Containing the Salience of European Integration," *British Politics* 3, no. 2 (June 2008): 160.

³²³ Cowley and Stuart, "Where Has All the Trouble Gone?" 137.

significant concessions made to Britain—like reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.³²⁴ Yet the bill passed parliament with only five dissenting Labour votes—indicating a new parliamentary unity on European issues. Even the parliamentary ratification of the Lisbon Treaty attracted relatively small rebellions compared to the Maastricht ratification process. Most significant was the March 5, 2008 rebellion of 28 Labour MPs joining with Conservatives in their call for a popular referendum on the Treaty, followed by 26 Labour MPs calling for the putting Britain’s membership in the EU to the voters, too.³²⁵ These Eurosceptic efforts failed to prevent the bill’s passage and Brown’s ratification of the Treaty. These calls for a referendum were driven by just 10 “hard” Eurosceptic Labour politicians who accounted for 58 percent of the “rebellion votes cast against the Treaty,” but they publicized Eurosceptic arguments on the precipice of the 2008 financial crisis. Conservatives, too, sounded the Eurosceptic alarm in 2008. Party leader David Cameron led his members in calling for a post-ratification referendum, only to revoke his promise in November 2009.³²⁶ Though made while leading the opposition, Cameron’s promise for a referendum would resurface to haunt him later.

The 2008 global financial crisis transformed the political terrain surrounding Europe in all member countries—even outside the Eurozone. As world markets descended into chaos into October 2008, depositors sought to withdraw all of their money from collapsing banks. By the end of “Black Friday” (October 10th), the deputy Governor of the Bank of England John Gieve declared that two UK banks, Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS, “had run out of capital.”³²⁷ In response, bankers camped at the Treasury to broker a deal to recapitalize the banks—a strategy the

³²⁴ Cowley and Stuart, 137.

³²⁵ Cowley and Stuart, 138.

³²⁶ Deborah Summers, “David Cameron Admits Lisbon Treaty Referendum Campaign Is Over,” *The Guardian*, November 4, 2009.

³²⁷ Andrew Rawnsley, “The Weekend Gordon Brown Saved the Banks from the Abyss,” *The Guardian*, February 21, 2010.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling championed at a meeting of G7 finance ministers that very weekend.³²⁸ Only two months later, however, Sterling had failed to stabilize and its value dropped below parity with the Euro for the first time since the single currency was launched; confidence in British economic resilience was plummeting in the currency markets and politicians in Britain squarely blamed Gordon Brown.³²⁹ To increase the pressure on his government, Conservatives quoted Brown's statement as shadow Chancellor about weak currencies signaling poor economies and ineffective governments.³³⁰ Meanwhile, proposals for a new financial regulatory scheme at the European level created a conflict between British and European control of the City of London—the EU's largest financial hub. Though Brown agreed with the notion of European-level risk monitoring, he wanted special treatment for Britain, which he felt would be disproportionately affected by new rules. Yet Brown's views were not shared by other EU members, who criticized "Anglo-Saxon" economics as the cause of the financial crisis.³³¹ As Brown failed to protect British sovereignty in post-crisis Europe, he continued to lose political support at home—where he faced criticism for ballooning the budget deficit, while declining to admit that austerity would be necessary in Britain's economic recovery.³³² In the June 2009 EP elections, Labour fared poorly, losing five seats to hold the same number as the Eurosceptic UKIP party, 13. Meanwhile, Conservatives held 26 seats, leading the British delegation to the EP.³³³ Though less salient than general elections, the EP election delivered a blow to Brown's

³²⁸ Rawnsley.

³²⁹ Toby Helm and Paul Gallagher, "Pound Slips below Euro on Britain's High Streets," *The Guardian*, December 13, 2008.

³³⁰ Helm and Gallagher.

³³¹ Ian Traynor, "Gordon Brown to Resist EU Attempts to Control Britain's Financial Sector," *The Guardian*, June 17, 2009.

³³² Nicholas Watt, "Gordon Brown Blamed for Labour's Lost Credibility on Economy," *The Guardian*, August 31, 2014.

³³³ "European Election 2009 | UK Results," *BBC News*, June 8, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/elections/euro/09/html/ukregion_999999.stm.

premiership, and to the cause of Europe. The EP elections served as a platform for the normalization of extreme Euroscepticism, as UKIP's plea for exit from the EU attracted nearly 2,500,000 votes. Later in November 2009 Brown announced strict immigration rules for non-Europeans and students, based on private polling indicating that immigration policy pushed Labour voters to defect to extremist parties or abstain from voting altogether.³³⁴ By seeking to score political points on immigration policy, Brown gave staying power to the issue that fueled support for BNP, UKIP, and other Eurosceptic parties. With his political capital waning, Brown called for a general election to be held on May 6, 2010.³³⁵

The 2010 general election represented a backlash against Brown, Labour, and Europe. In its 2010 manifesto, the Conservative Party called for “radical political reform” that pushed “power and control from the central to the local, from politicians and the bureaucracy to individuals, families, and neighbourhoods.”³³⁶ Added to this revolution in British governance, was a call for an amendment to the 1972 European Communities Act that would require a referendum for any future transfers of “areas of power, or competences” to Europe.³³⁷ Though Conservatives did not advocate revoking British membership in the EU in their manifesto, they used forceful language in promising that they “will never allow Britain to slide into a federal Europe.”³³⁸ Yet by calling Brown's “ratification of the Lisbon Treaty without the consent of the British people... a betrayal of this country's democratic traditions,” Conservatives implied that British participation in Europe should always be subject to popular approval.³³⁹ In line with this backlash to Europe, UKIP

³³⁴ Hélène Mullohand, “Gordon Brown Unveils Tougher Immigration Rules,” *The Guardian*, November 12, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/nov/12/gordon-brown-announces-new-immigration-rules>.

³³⁵ Haroon Siddique, “Gordon Brown Confirms 6 May General Election Date,” *The Guardian*, April 6, 2010.

³³⁶ “Invitation to Join the Government of Britain: The Conservative Manifesto 2010” (Conservative Party, April 2010), xiv.

³³⁷ “Invitation to Join the Government of Britain: The Conservative Manifesto 2010,” 113.

³³⁸ “Invitation to Join the Government of Britain: The Conservative Manifesto 2010,” 113.

³³⁹ “Invitation to Join the Government of Britain: The Conservative Manifesto 2010,” 113.

reiterated its call for abandoning the EU and its complaint that “bureaucracy overrules democracy at every level, from Brussels to Whitehall to the town hall.”³⁴⁰ Seeking to benefit from mass distrust of elite rule, parties at the center and fringes of British politics sought to present themselves as true defenders of British interests.

Riding the popular wave of direct democracy, UKIP intensified its positions as a protest party and embraced contradictory policies in hopes of attracting votes. Universalizing the principle of the Conservative call for referendums on the EU, UKIP called for referendums on any issue that “5% of the national or local electorate” identify as important. These proposals for democratizing British politics gained special appeal in the context of the Euro crisis, which was seen as an elite failure. But behind the Eurosceptic rhetoric lay racist proposals and contradictory statements on UKIP’s approach to diversity—given a veneer of coherence by the label “civic nationalism.”³⁴¹ Both criticizing high volumes of immigration and blaming EU membership for enabling immigrants to reach Britain, UKIP called for the embrace of “anyone who wishes to identify with Britain, regardless of ethnic or religious background” while banning the wearing of the burqa “in public buildings and certain private buildings”—a direct targeting of Muslims.³⁴² Sprinkled with more symbolic proposals like “[safeguarding] British weights and measures (the pint, the mile, etc.) which have been undermined by the EU,” UKIP’s manifesto did not imply a readiness to govern. But its hodgepodge of promises attracted nearly 1,000,000 voters nationally—not enough to win any seats in Parliament, but enough to remain a factor in national politics. Indeed, the issue of Europe shaped the formation of the new government.

³⁴⁰ Lord Pearson, Nigel Farage, and David Campbell Bannerman, “UKIP Manifesto: Empowering the People” (United Kingdom Independence Party, April 2010), 13.

³⁴¹ Pearson, Farage, and Bannerman, 13.

³⁴² Pearson, Farage, and Bannerman, 13.

The combination of Brown's unpopularity and the resurgence of Euroscepticism in electoral politics led to tremendous losses for Labour in the May 6 election, but failed to deliver a Conservative triumph. The relatively wide distribution of votes split between Tory, Labour, and Lib-Dem candidates resulted in a hung parliament.³⁴³ With Conservatives receiving the most votes, however, Brown acknowledged their prerogative to attempt to form a governing coalition. Realizing that Labour's political brand was too tarnished to lure the Lib-Dems away from a Tory coalition, Brown resigned as PM and party leader on May 10, 2010 and left Cameron to form a coalition government.³⁴⁴ Seeking to project strength from Britain's first postwar coalition government, Cameron appointed a moderate Europhilic David Lidington to the Europe Minister position, suggesting a rapprochement with the EU despite the appointment of the Eurosceptic former Conservative leader William Hague to run the Foreign Office.³⁴⁵ But Cameron's early symbolic warmth toward the EU did not last. Cameron's summer basking in the European sun came to an end when Tories convened their annual October party conference in Birmingham, and William Hague endorsed strong Eurosceptic proposals to safeguard national sovereignty.³⁴⁶ Though Cameron avoided more than a passing mention of his orientation toward Europe in his address to the Conference, Hague's calls to introduce laws reifying parliamentary sovereignty and further inserting requirements for referenda on all transfers of power to the EU were greeted with excitement by party activists.³⁴⁷ It seemed that old Tory divisions on European policy had not eroded with time, but instead still haunted the party into the new decade.

³⁴³ Polly Curtis, "UK Election Results: Clegg and Cameron Have First Shot at Forming Coalition, Says Brown," *The Guardian*, May 7, 2010.

³⁴⁴ Robert Booth, "Gordon Brown Resigns," *The Guardian*, May 11, 2010.

³⁴⁵ Nicholas Watt, "David Lidington Appointed Europe Minister in Sign of Tory Thaw on EU," *The Guardian*, May 13, 2010.

³⁴⁶ Nicholas Watt, "William Hague Heralds 'hardheaded' Eurosceptic Policies," *The Guardian*, October 6, 2010.

³⁴⁷ Watt; David Cameron, "David Cameron's Speech to the Tory Conference: In Full," *The Guardian*, October 6, 2010.

Conclusion

Falling from Thatcher's divisive leadership into 13 years of opposition, the Conservative Party faltered to offer a conclusive position on European integration. Yet they persisted to question the value of the European Union, sharing an ideological bed with the BNP and UKIP, as Tony Blair mishandled the task of European integration. Seeking to bring British interests to the core of Europe, Blair became ensnared in intra-party conflict about whether Britain was ready to adopt the new region-wide single currency, the Euro. With Blair lacking the strength to deliver Britain to Europe, his government gave way to Gordon Brown's long-awaited years in office. Quickly rocked by the 2008 global financial crisis, which acutely descended across the Eurozone, Brown's government held Britain at the periphery of the continent. Following a decade of broken promises to further tether Britain to Europe, David Cameron's Conservatives joined the Liberal Democrats to form a coalition government that sought to pick up where Thatcher left off. After electing the most Europhilic leader in a generation, Britain resumed its course to exit Europe.

5. From Bloomberg to Brexit

Introduction

Having led Conservatives back to 10 Downing Street after 13 years of exile and opposition, David Cameron brought the Tories into the twenty-first century. But his 2010 success was immediately complicated by a series of promises made to his own members and the British public. During his 2010 campaign, Cameron promised to take positive steps to protect British sovereignty in Europe by 1) preventing further transfer of power to Brussels, 2) creating a “referendum lock” as an additional hurdle for any new transfer of power to Europe, and 3) devolving European competences back to Britain.³⁴⁸ Little more than a year into Cameron’s premiership—secured by a coalition with the Liberal-Democrats, he faced a challenge from Eurosceptic members of his own party seeking to trigger a referendum on British membership in the European Union. Speaking to the Commons in advance of the vote on the referendum motion, Cameron cautioned that it was the wrong time to leave the EU, especially because “When your neighbour’s house is on fire, your first impulse should be to help put out the flames, not least to stop them reaching your own house.”³⁴⁹ Ultimately 81 Tory MPs rebelled to support the referendum, riding high on a *Guardian* poll declaring 70 percent public support for an EU membership referendum.³⁵⁰ Their threat of continued disobedience until Cameron followed through on his promises for greater popular input on European policy set the stage for Britain breaking away from Europe.³⁵¹

Trapped in a web of political assurances, Cameron became hostage to hardliners in his party who were dissatisfied that he had failed to bring back control of “social and employment

³⁴⁸ David Cameron, Speech to House of Commons, October 24, 2011, *Hansard Debates*, Commons, cols. 26-7.

³⁴⁹ Cameron, Speech to House of Commons, October 24, 2011, col. 27.

³⁵⁰ Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, “The Cambusters: The Conservative European Union Referendum Rebellion of October 2011,” *The Political Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (April 2012): 402–6; Tom Clark, “EU Referendum: Poll Shows 49% Would Vote for UK Withdrawal,” *The Guardian*, October 24, 2011.

³⁵¹ Cowley and Stuart, “The Cambusters.”

laws from Brussels.”³⁵² As the EU readied for another round of treaty amendment relating to European financial rules, Cameron stated his intention to defend British interests and use his veto power to protect Britain’s participation in the common market, which he declared to be a more important objective than holding a “multiple choice referendum.”³⁵³ But using the powers of his office were not enough to disquiet the Eurosceptics in his party. In 2012, Cameron was pressured by members of his own party into committing to hold a referendum on EU membership. By the 2015 campaign, Cameron used his promise to hold an EU referendum as leverage to secure a second term in 10 Downing Street. Yet by caving to demands for a referendum, Cameron broke with the patterns of European leadership forged by his predecessors from both left and right, which entailed attempting to convert participation in Europe into a winnable political issue.

As Cameron ceded elite control over European integration to popular whim, he generated new enthusiasm among Eurosceptic activists. UKIP, which had failed to secure a seat in the Commons since its inception, boosted its efforts to become a contender in the 2015 general election. Hoisting the banner of Euroscepticism but relying on appeals to popular anti-immigrant sentiment to win votes, UKIP secured 12.6 percent of the 2015 general election vote (but only 1 seat in parliament) and established itself as a regular player in Cameron’s political drama. No longer confined to the margins of the Conservative party, arguments about the merits of Europe took place in public as UKIP prepared for the referendum on EU membership. Using racist imagery and coded rhetoric about the “threat” EU migrant workers posed to British families and culture, UKIP fused economics and cultural politics to campaign against the European project. Only eight years after Gordon Brown declared his vision for a “Global Europe,” British politics projected

³⁵² Nicholas Watt, “David Cameron Rocked by Record Rebellion as Europe Splits Tories Again,” *The Guardian*, October 24, 2011.

³⁵³ Watt.

isolationism and emphasis on the island's *special* status.³⁵⁴ And yet, the holding of a referendum on Europe did not come as a shock to the British political system; it had been promised for years.

Cameron's Serial Promises

Cameron's gradual acceptance of Eurosceptic politics as the cost he had to lead the Conservative Party unleashed a political movement that eventually pushed him out of politics. Following the Conservative rebellion of October 2011, Cameron's support in the party—already thin due to his concessions to Liberal Democrats when forming his 2010 coalition government, dwindled to a new low. Cameron attempted to act as a responsible member of the core EU—and participate in regional efforts to mitigate the financial crisis in the Eurozone. But to his critics, Cameron's participation in Europe was a betrayal of his promises to restore British control over European policy—and to devolve power into the hands of individual voters.

Cameron struggled to defend his policy of maintaining the status quo in Europe as the continent's economic crisis implied political changes. The debt crises in Italy, Portugal, and Greece tested the cohesion of the political union, which lacked the financial tools to bailout the countries in crisis. Whereas some European leaders—including Germany's Angela Merkel—sought to use the crisis as an opportunity to restructure the EU's regulatory scheme, Britain's Conservative government used the impending defaults in Greece, Italy, and Portugal to justify more austerity.³⁵⁵ European Commission President José Manuel Barroso argued that Italy's debt crisis could tear the European club apart and that “Europe must either transform itself or it will decline.”³⁵⁶ Indeed, continental leaders feared that additional shocks to the club—economic or

³⁵⁴ Gordon Brown, “Lord Mayor's Banquet Speech - 12 November 2007,” Number10.gov.uk, November 12, 2007, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page13736>.

³⁵⁵ Larry Elliott, Heather Stewart, and John Hooper, “European Debt Crisis Spiralling out of Control,” *The Guardian*, November 9, 2011.

³⁵⁶ Elliott, Stewart, and Hooper.

political—would cause the EU to disintegrate.³⁵⁷ Adding to the pressure from Europe, Conservative backbenchers ratcheted their pressure on Cameron to accede to their demand for a referendum. Consistent with Conservative Party history since Heath’s government, internal party divisions prompted a radical change in the party’s approach to European policy.

After the Conservative uprising of October 2011, Cameron tread carefully in Europe, and attempted to signal his allegiance to the cause of his party’s nationalist wing. As European leaders prepared to convene for a summit to discuss the Eurozone crisis at Brussels in June 2012, Cameron announced his intention to defend British interests—using the veto, if necessary—to prevent the creation of a banking union.³⁵⁸ Cameron acknowledged the need for reform in the Eurozone, and desired the Euro’s stability, if only to avoid a collapse of Sterling, but regarded the creation of the banking union skeptically because it would 1) affect all 27 members of the single market and 2) require unanimous consent. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, referencing the banking union, announced, “They need to do that to make their currency work. It is massively in Britain’s interest that the currency works because an unstable euro [would do] enormous damage to growth and jobs in Britain. I think Britain will require, if there is a full-blown banking union, certain safeguards.”³⁵⁹ These safeguards were important for Britain’s economy, but also for its politics as Cameron tried to hold onto power. Having promised in the 2010 campaign, and subsequently enacted by statute, that any amendment to the EU’s powers would require the approval of a popular referendum, Cameron would be obligated to send the issue of a future banking union to the voters. Indeed, Osborne mentioned this political safeguard to silence former Social Democratic Party leader Lord Owen’s demand for a referendum on scrapping EU membership to participate in a

³⁵⁷ James Kirkup, “Cameron’s Backbenchers Demand EU Referendum,” *The Telegraph*, June 28, 2012, sec. News.

³⁵⁸ Nicholas Watt and Kate Connolly, “Eurozone Rescue: David Cameron Threatens Veto to Protect UK Interests,” *The Guardian*, June 7, 2012.

³⁵⁹ Watt and Connolly.

“looser single market stretching from Ireland to Turkey.”³⁶⁰ Later that month, Cameron and Osborne faced a new assault on their behavior in Europe when 100 Tory backbenchers sent a leader to the Prime Minister demanding a referendum on EU membership. Détente on Europe in his party had finally ended.

Conservative rebellion on Europe prodded Cameron to sharpen his tone against the EU and ultimately make concrete promises for a referendum. Cameron could no longer dodge the issue of Europe. Organized by the MP John Baron, the June 28 letter threatened that voters would not forgive Cameron for breaking his promise to grant more popular sovereignty on European integration.³⁶¹ Cameron’s response to the letter was initially incoherent. In an essay published two days later in *The Telegraph*, Cameron attempted to grant validity to those calling for a referendum, argue that a simple in-or-out vote would not serve British interests in Europe regardless of the result, and defend his nationalist credentials by touting his use of the veto in EU summit negotiations.³⁶² Cameron argued that a decision on Britain’s future in Europe would only be possible at the conclusion of the Eurozone crisis, which affected Britain’s financial sector. Cameron reminded his critics that “We won’t stand behind Greek or Portuguese banks, and our banks will be regulated by the Bank of England, not the ECB.”³⁶³ The prime minister had also succeeded in placing a British official as the head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development—part of a strategy to using the crisis as an opportunity to reform Europe to suit a British style of association, not German-style federalism. Avoiding making any lasting commitments, Cameron promised to study “how best to get the full-hearted support of the British

³⁶⁰ Watt and Connolly.

³⁶¹ Kirkup, “Cameron’s Backbenchers Demand EU Referendum.”

³⁶² David Cameron, “David Cameron: We Need to Be Clear about the Best Way of Getting What Is Best for Britain,” *The Telegraph*, June 30, 2012, sec. News.

³⁶³ Cameron.

people whether it is in a general election or in a referendum” and to seek to offer voters a “real choice” on British participation in the EU.³⁶⁴ Cameron conceded he was personally frustrated with Britain’s position in Europe, where “far from there being too little Europe, there is too much of it. Too much cost; too much bureaucracy; too much meddling in issues that belong to nation states or civic society or individuals.”³⁶⁵ Yet as pressure for a referendum increased, Cameron started to step back from Europe with his actions, and not just his words. Instead of seeking to provide input on the proposed banking union for the 17 Eurozone countries, Cameron explained “We made a decision not to join the single currency so we can’t expect to sit round the table every time they discuss things to do with the single market.”³⁶⁶ Preparing for the inevitable referendum, Cameron refrained from defending British interests *on every front* in Europe. This change in posture reflected Cameron’s resignation that Eurosceptics would ultimately vote on British participation in Europe. Clarifying his weekend commentary in *The Telegraph*, Cameron stated on Monday July 2 that his preference was to deliver a “fresh settlement” on European integration to voters for their consent, rather than immediately offer a referendum.³⁶⁷ Cameron’s promise had taken a clearer shape: some form of referendum was due to Britain *soon*.

Eurosceptics did not have to wait long for a stronger commitment to referendum. At the Tory annual conference in October, Cameron admitted that a referendum was the “cleanest, neatest and simplest, most sensible way” to alter Britain’s status quo position in Europe.³⁶⁸ Still not supportive of an in/out referendum, Cameron recognized that his claim to represent the “common

³⁶⁴ Cameron.

³⁶⁵ Cameron.

³⁶⁶ Rosa Prince, “David Cameron: I’m Not Afraid to Veto Future EU Integration to Protect Single Market,” *The Telegraph*, July 3, 2012.

³⁶⁷ Nicholas Watt, “David Cameron Says Britain Will Get Vote on Leaving EU, but Not Yet,” *The Guardian*, July 2, 2012.

³⁶⁸ Hélène Mulholland, “David Cameron Backs Referendum on Europe,” *The Guardian*, October 9, 2012.

ground of British politics” would not hold without opening up the party to popular input.³⁶⁹ Cameron’s call for a new settlement with Europe, rather than an in/out referendum was clearly an attempt to avoid immediate exit from the club, which was increasingly supported by the British public. A November 2012 Ipsos/MORI poll reported that 48 percent supported leaving the EU, with only 44 percent hoping to remain in Europe.³⁷⁰ Yet as Cameron shifted his promises to accommodate the Eurosceptics in his midst, they continued to demand more. The same November poll showed that 58 percent of Conservative respondents supported leaving Europe. This Eurosceptic public atmosphere enabled Tory MPs to continue to defy their Europhilic government and rebel on European issues. In late October, 51 Tory rebels joined with Labour MPs to reject the terms of the EU budget, complaining that it did not reduce spending in real terms.³⁷¹ As Cameron prepared to meet European leaders at a Brussels summit in November, he would have to argue for a new budget to quell parliamentary disunion at home, whereas Merkel would defend the existing budget on the grounds it was essential to save the Euro—a more convincing argument in the continental club.³⁷² This difficult negotiating position pleased Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, who praised the rebellion as preventing Cameron from wasting resources in Europe.³⁷³ Indeed, Cameron’s troubles at home did not seem to be going away anytime soon.

Cameron’s weakness as party leader continued to damage the project of Europe. By year’s end, Cameron faced mounting pressure from high profile Tory MPs to issue a referendum, especially to avoid further defections from the Tory camp. London Mayor Boris Johnson, who had featured prominently at the Tory conference, announced his support of a quick renegotiation of

³⁶⁹ Mulholland.

³⁷⁰ “Ipsos MORI Political Monitor November 2012,” Ipsos MORI, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/ipsos-mori-political-monitor-november-2012>.

³⁷¹ Nicholas Watt, “David Cameron Suffers Commons Defeat on EU Budget,” *The Guardian*, October 31, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/oct/31/cameron-commons-defeat-eu-budget>.

³⁷² Watt.

³⁷³ Watt.

Britain's role in Europe (centered exclusively on common market participation), followed by a simple referendum on the new terms of membership.³⁷⁴ Aligning himself with Johnson two weeks later, Cameron called a British exit from Europe “imaginable” as he attempted to quell the defection of former Tory voters to UKIP.³⁷⁵ Indeed, early demographic analysis of UKIP's success in the 2009 EP elections found that the typical UKIP's base was comprised of “middle aged, financially insecure men with a Conservative background,” driven to UKIP by their own Eurosceptic preferences. But when controlling for Euroscepticism, *immigration* and *rejection of elites* drove support for UKIP.³⁷⁶ A more recent poll, ordered by former Tory deputy chairman Lord Ashcroft, revealed that only a quarter of Tories flirting with UKIP rated the issue of European integration as an important challenge for Britain—confirming that shifting Tory policy Euroscepticism alone would not bring voters back from the far-right.³⁷⁷ Ashcroft's warning that a referendum would fail to bring UKIP voters back into the Tory tent was not heeded—and Tories distracted themselves with the European issue. In January 2013 more than 100 Tory MPs formed the Fresh Start group, calling for a renegotiation with Europe along the lines Johnson proposed in December.³⁷⁸ In the opposite camp—lead by onetime leadership contender Michael Heseltine, the anti-Thatcherite—barely 10 Conservative MPs felt comfortable vocalizing support for the EU and Britain's continued role in it.³⁷⁹ As Conservatives attempted to reform from within, UKIP rose in national prominence, achieving 13 percent support in national polling and coming within 5,000

³⁷⁴ Hélène Mulholland, “Boris Johnson: UK Should Renegotiate Relationship with EU,” *The Guardian*, December 4, 2012.

³⁷⁵ Nicholas Watt, “David Cameron: Withdrawal from EU Is Imaginable,” *The Guardian*, December 17, 2012.

³⁷⁶ Robert Ford, Matthew J. Goodwin, and David Cutts, “Strategic Eurosceptics and Polite Xenophobes: Support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2009 European Parliament Elections,” *European Journal of Political Research* 51, no. 2 (March 2012): 206.

³⁷⁷ Watt, “David Cameron.”

³⁷⁸ “Tory Group Wants EU Powers Back,” *BBC News*, January 16, 2013, sec. UK Politics, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21037590>.

³⁷⁹ Nicholas Watt, “David Cameron Hopes to Heal Divisions and Unite a Party Split over Europe,” *The Guardian*, January 14, 2013.

votes of winning a by-election seat in parliament, vacated by a Labour MP felled by corruption charges.³⁸⁰ With the rising tide of Euroscepticism threatening to rupture the Conservative Party, Cameron was pushed to act.

Finally caving to Eurosceptic demands on January 23, 2013, Cameron pledged to hold an in/out referendum on European Union membership by 2017.³⁸¹ In his speech, delivered at Bloomberg's London offices, Cameron insisted that he was "not a British isolationist" but he could no longer ignore British discontent "that decisions taken further and further away from them mean their living standards are slashed through enforced austerity."³⁸² Cameron envisioned a revised EU, built to be competitive in the global market. He mused, "In a global race, can we really justify the huge number of expensive peripheral European institutions?"³⁸³ Advocating this pared-down Europe, Cameron predicated the referendum on his own reelection in 2015. Though Cameron's Bloomberg speech was widely praised by members of his party, he still failed to eliminate Conservative electoral vulnerabilities on Europe. In the May 2013 local elections, UKIP received 25 percent of the vote in wards it contested—pushing the Liberal Democrats to fourth place nationally, and it placed over 140 candidates into council positions.³⁸⁴ UKIP's growing popularity diminished Cameron's Conservative Party.

In May 2014, Britain experienced what *The Guardian* described as a "political earthquake."³⁸⁵ When voters went to the polls in May 2014 local elections, Cameron's promises

³⁸⁰ Helen Pidd and Martin Wainwright, "Labour Holds off Ukip in Byelections," *The Guardian*, November 29, 2012; Toby Helm, "Ukip Achieves Record Support as Tories Drop 3% in Observer/Opinium Poll," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2012.

³⁸¹ Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron's EU Referendum Pledge Wins over Eurosceptic Tories," *The Guardian*, January 23, 2013.

³⁸² David Cameron, "David Cameron's EU Speech - Full Text," *The Guardian*, January 23, 2013.

³⁸³ Cameron.

³⁸⁴ "Farage: UKIP Gains a 'Game Changer,'" *BBC News*, May 3, 2013, sec. UK Politics.

³⁸⁵ Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt, "Ukip Wins European Elections with Ease to Set off Political Earthquake," *The Guardian*, May 26, 2014.

on Europe were not enough to halt the UKIP, which received unprecedented support. Though unpopular in London, UKIP polled above 20 percent across the rest of the country and gained 28 new councilors.³⁸⁶ And in the EP elections, UKIP delivered an unprecedented defeat to both major parties, climbing into first place with nearly 27 percent support nationwide.³⁸⁷ UKIP sent 24 delegates to the European Parliament, more than the 20 and 19 MEPs Labour and the Tories sent, respectively.³⁸⁸ As Conservatives regrouped following the EP loss, they modulated their policies to be friendlier to the typical UKIP voter preoccupied with immigration. Tory secretary of work and pensions Iain Duncan Smith announced his intention to halve the time EU migrants would be eligible to draw benefits.³⁸⁹ This jockeying foreshadowed the prominence of immigration in the coming electoral year.

2015 Campaign: UKIP's Breakthrough?

As the 2015 general election campaign kicked off in January of that year, Conservative victory was in doubt. Calling it the “most important election in a generation,” Cameron launched the campaign highlighting Conservative economic victories: bringing 1.75 million people into the workforce and reducing the deficit by half.³⁹⁰ Though the deficit claim was challenged on the grounds that it had only reduced by 50 percent in proportion to gross domestic product, not in real terms, Cameron’s choice to start the campaign with an economic argument, and Labour’s inaugural argument about reducing wage inequality, distinctly avoided the issue of Europe.³⁹¹ UKIP’s first

³⁸⁶ Rowena Mason, Helen Pidd, and Robert Booth, “Ukip Results Reveal Divide between London and Rest of England,” *The Guardian*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/23/ukip-results-divide-london-rest-england>.

³⁸⁷ Wintour and Watt, “Ukip Wins European Elections with Ease to Set off Political Earthquake.”

³⁸⁸ “Results of the 2014 European Elections - Results by Country - United Kingdom” (European Parliament, September 22, 2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/country-results-uk-2014.html>.

³⁸⁹ Wintour and Watt, “Ukip Wins European Elections with Ease to Set off Political Earthquake.”

³⁹⁰ Rowena Mason, “Cameron Launches Election Campaign with Controversial Deficit Claim,” *The Guardian*, January 2, 2015.

³⁹¹ Mason.

poster, too, focused on the economic threat posed by EU migrants—and they also faced controversy over their use of an Irish actor to portray a “destitute worker.”³⁹² The economy was also a rallying cry for the Green Party, which saw a surge in membership in January—registering more than 13,000 voters in one week to overtake UKIP’s overall party size by about 2,500 members.³⁹³ Embracing the crowded field of parties vying for parliamentary representation, Cameron opted to boost the Green’s profile, refusing to participate in a debate that excluded them, in an attempt to quarantine UKIP’s influence in the election.³⁹⁴ Despite this political theater, Cameron faced a difficult referendum on his failed promises from the 2010 campaign.

Immigration proved to be a difficult issue for Cameron to win in the 2015 campaign. In his previous election, Cameron promised to reduce the number of migrants to the UK to “the tens of thousands,” while the actual number of UK immigrants in 2015 stood near 300,000. Though the Conservative Home Secretary Theresa May had imposed strict regulations against migrants—limiting their income and restricting the number of visiting students allowed in the country, they proved ineffective in stemming migration, as workers both inside and beyond the EU sought to participate in George Osborne’s economic recovery effort.³⁹⁵ Though more migrants came from outside the EU’s borders than within them during Cameron’s first term, UKIP’s Nigel Farage argued that Cameron’s failure stemmed from his inability to extract Britain from the EU. Though not supported by the numbers, Farage’s argument was made in an attempt to rally anti-immigration voters to the party, as it received its lowest support in the polls since May 2014.³⁹⁶ UKIP’s views

³⁹² David Shariatmadari, “The Political Posters That Backfired – and Why You Can’t Fool the Internet,” *The Guardian*, January 5, 2015.

³⁹³ John Harris, “The Green Surge: Is This the Party That Will Decide the Election?,” *The Guardian*, January 21, 2015.

³⁹⁴ Harris.

³⁹⁵ Alan Travis, “The Failure of David Cameron’s Migration Policy Has Been Spectacular,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2015.

³⁹⁶ Rowena Mason, “Nigel Farage to Attack Cameron over Immigration Levels Pledge,” *The Guardian*, March 30, 2015.

on immigration evolved in its quest to earn votes, turning from a five year moratorium on immigration to a skill-based points system, then to a cap on net migration of 50,000 people, only to reverse course to only limit unskilled migration.³⁹⁷ Despite its policy inconsistencies, UKIP represented a significant threat to Tories, especially because two Conservative MPs defected to run under the UKIP banner.³⁹⁸ Indeed, political scientists Paul Webb and Tim Bale cautioned in 2014 that Conservative voters who felt alienated by Cameron's leadership were susceptible to being siphoned by UKIP.³⁹⁹ Yet the gatekeepers in the national press turned against UKIP once it released its manifesto, on April 15.

Leading Conservative-leaning newspapers, including the Daily Mail and the Telegraph, withdrew their support of UKIP in judgement of laundry list of policies published in its manifesto. Leading articles the morning after the manifesto's release warned that a vote for UKIP would elevate Labour to power.⁴⁰⁰ The *Telegraph's* editorial argued that "too many of Ukip's policies remain little more than incoherent ambitions. While the party has successfully raised the issue of immigration, its position on its signature issue remains remarkably confused."⁴⁰¹ Beyond the muddled policy, UKIP also lost support for its increasingly public acceptance of racism. The *Sun* criticized Farage for failing to admonish those in his party who booed a reporter who asked why the UKIP manifesto only featured a single black person in its photos. Ann Treneman of *The Times* described the scene:

³⁹⁷ Rowena Mason, "Nigel Farage Drops Ukip's 50,000 Cap on Immigration," *The Guardian*, March 4, 2015.

³⁹⁸ Paul Webb, Tim Bale, and Monica Poletti, "'All Mouth and No Trousers?' How Many Conservative Party Members Voted for UKIP in 2015 – and Why Did They Do So?," *Politics* 37, no. 4 (November 1, 2017): 432–44.

³⁹⁹ Paul Webb and Tim Bale, "Why Do Tories Defect to UKIP? Conservative Party Members and the Temptations of the Populist Radical Right," *Political Studies* 62, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 961–70.

⁴⁰⁰ Roy Greenslade, "Ukip, the Former Darling of the Right-Wing Press, Has Lost Its Support," *The Guardian*, April 16, 2015.

⁴⁰¹ Telegraph View, "A Vote for Ukip Puts Ed Miliband in No 10," *The Telegraph*, April 15, 2015.

Then came the inevitable question. ‘Nigel, are you happy that the only black face in the document . . .’ The Kippers, just a little oversensitive, went bonkers. ‘BOOOO!’ they shouted. A group of men gathered in the aisle, near the media, barracking us. ‘SHAME ON YOU!’ they cried, faces mottled. In a Richard Curtis movie moment, all the black and brown Ukip people in the room stood up, letting their legs do the talking. Still, it was true: 76 pages and one black face (from Africa). The best communicator in British politics was silent. The next contentious question was about whether he still thought people with HIV should be blocked from entering the UK. ‘DISGUSTING QUESTION!’ shouted a Kipper. You’ve heard of road rage. This was manifesto rage. Welcome to Ukip.⁴⁰²

Farage even argued that “Most of those that stood up and jeered that journalist were black and ethnic minority candidates standing for Ukip” and implied that charges of racism were lodged by “the establishment.”⁴⁰³ Roiling from public ridicule, UKIP never recovered in the remaining weeks before the election. In an election characterized by extreme newcomers and transforming mainline parties, the mainstream press supported their establishment candidate in the end.

Cameron received a surprise on election day—victory and a single-party majority. Benefitting from UKIP candidates splitting Labour’s support in crucial Midlands constituencies, the Tories won important seats. In total, the Conservatives won 331 seats, Labour earned 232, and UKIP only elected a single MP, despite winning 12.6 percent of the overall vote.⁴⁰⁴ With its support spread thin across the country, UKIP was uncompetitive under the plurality election laws governing Parliament but still an impressive potential force in a referendum campaign. With his

⁴⁰² Ann Treneman, “Sketch: Boo Boys Back Britain’s Best Communicator,” *The Times*, April 16, 2015.

⁴⁰³ “Ukip’s Manifesto Launch Turns Nasty,” *The Sun* (blog), April 15, 2015, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/83347/ukips-manifesto-launch-turns-nasty-as-supporters-heckle-journalist/>.

⁴⁰⁴ “Results of the 2015 General Election - Election 2015,” *BBC News*, accessed March 19, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/election/2015/results>.

new government underway, Cameron would need to follow through on his manifesto promise of a referendum on British membership in the EU within two years. Preparations for the referendum began swiftly, with talk of a 2016 referendum date—so as to avoid conflict with the French and German elections—coming from Downing Street days after the election.⁴⁰⁵

Finally, the Referendum

Chief among Cameron's priorities in his second term was making good on his promise to hold a referendum on membership in the EU. Though Cameron had muddled through his first term trying to use his veto power at European summits to demonstrate nationalist backbone against Europe, he opted against similar elite-level defenses of British sovereignty in his second term. Postponing efforts to secure British veto authority over decisions made by the court tasked with enforcing the European Convention on Human Rights, Cameron instead readied for a tour of EU member state capitals to renegotiate Britain's place in Europe.⁴⁰⁶ Careful to avoid the impression that Cameron's government was biasing the EU referendum, he submitted language for the referendum's question to the Electoral Commission and accepted its modified version. Instead of reading "Should the UK remain a member of the EU?" voters will instead decide "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"⁴⁰⁷ Yet the government's efforts to regulate campaigning before the referendum, through changes to the *purdah* period—the month preceding the election when government spending and announcements are restricted—failed to pass the Commons, in the government's first defeat of the term.⁴⁰⁸ In June 2015, the government proposed abolishing the traditional *purdah* period altogether, unsurprisingly

⁴⁰⁵ Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron May Bring EU Referendum Forward to 2016," *The Guardian*, May 11, 2015.

⁴⁰⁶ Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron Prepared to Break with Europe on Human Rights," *The Guardian*, June 1, 2015.

⁴⁰⁷ Nicholas Watt and Rajeev Syal, "EU Referendum: Cameron Accepts Advice to Change Wording of Question," *The Guardian*, September 1, 2015.

⁴⁰⁸ Rowena Mason, "EU Referendum: David Cameron Suffers Defeat in Parliament over 'purdah' Rules," *The Guardian*, September 7, 2015.

claiming the referendum, in which Cameron was biased, did not require the rules of non-interference.⁴⁰⁹ Yet Eurosceptic Tories balked at Cameron's suggestion, with former environment secretary Owen Patterson warning:

It absolutely must be taken on board by the government that if the British people sense there is no fairness, that this is being rigged against them, that a deluge of local government, of national government, and above all European government money and propaganda can be dropped on them ... that will be unacceptable.⁴¹⁰

In the end, 37 Conservatives voted against the government and the usual purdah rules, with a special 28 day period, were approved.⁴¹¹ After the bickering about process subsided, Cameron focused on negotiating a new deal for Britain, were the referendum to support remaining in the club.

On February 19, 2016, Cameron announced that he had reached agreement with EU leaders after a weekend of marathon summit discussions over the terms Britain would face if it remained in Europe.⁴¹² The centerpieces of the new rules included a seven-year “emergency brake” on employment benefits for migrants, which Cameron hoped would demonstrate his seriousness in addressing the immigration issue, and a specific British exemption from EU statements calling for “ever closer union among the peoples of Europe.”⁴¹³ With these new guarantees from Brussels, Cameron set the referendum date for June 23—leaving a four month campaign window.⁴¹⁴ Following a meeting of the full cabinet, justice secretary Michael Gove led five other cabinet

⁴⁰⁹ Rowena Mason, “Tories Accuse Cameron of Trying to Rig EU Referendum with ‘Propaganda,’” *The Guardian*, June 9, 2015.

⁴¹⁰ Mason.

⁴¹¹ Mason, “EU Referendum.”

⁴¹² Nicholas Watt, Ian Traynor, and Jennifer Rankin, “Cameron Will Put ‘Heart and Soul’ into Staying in EU after Sealing Deal,” *The Guardian*, February 20, 2016.

⁴¹³ Watt, Traynor, and Rankin.

⁴¹⁴ Watt, Traynor, and Rankin.

members in joining the Vote Leave campaign.⁴¹⁵ As both sides of the referendum started competing for votes, they quickly sought to discredit each other. Criticized for spreading misinformation about Brexit (the colloquial term for leaving the EU) through a Cabinet Office document that projected a “decade of uncertainty” following Brexit, Cameron appointed himself leader of “Project Fact.”⁴¹⁶ Vote Leave chief executive Matthew Elliott said the document lacked “credibility given the errors and wrong assumptions that litter the document.”⁴¹⁷ Elliot’s incendiary remarks indicated a desire to drum up support from the Eurosceptic base, rather than encouraging Remain voters to defect. A late February analysis from the polling firm YouGov found that older voters tended to support Brexit, and they were more likely to turn out to vote in the referendum than their younger, Europhilic counterparts.⁴¹⁸ So turnout among older, activated voters was crucial to a Brexit outcome. But infighting between rival pressure groups on the Leave side threatened to waste resources and depress turnout.

The Leave campaign threatened to implode before it reached the referendum. With elite Tory defectors represented by Vote Leave and Nigel Farage’s grassroots UKIP supporting the group Grassroots Out, the Leave camp’s crowded field split fundraising and resources between rival factions.⁴¹⁹ After the Electoral Commission designated Vote Leave as the leading Leave campaign, the billionaire financier of Grassroots Out, Arron Banks, threatened legal action against the government for anointing an establishment-based campaign.⁴²⁰ Ultimately deciding against the lawsuit, which could have delayed the referendum for months, Banks and Farage united in their

⁴¹⁵ Nicholas Watt, “Michael Gove and Five Other Cabinet Members Break Ranks with PM over EU,” *The Guardian*, February 20, 2016.

⁴¹⁶ Heather Stewart and Anushka Asthana, “David Cameron Says His EU Campaign Is Project Fact, Not Project Fear,” *The Guardian*, February 29, 2016.

⁴¹⁷ Andrew Sparrow and Graeme Wearden, “EU Referendum: Vote Leave Dismisses Government’s Brexit Report as a ‘Dodgy EU Dossier’ - Politics Live,” *The Guardian*, February 29, 2016, sec. Politics.

⁴¹⁸ Freddie Sayers, “Polls Suggest Brexit Has (Low) Turnout on Its Side,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2016.

⁴¹⁹ Rowena Mason, “Nigel Farage Calls for End to Brexit Campaign Infighting,” *The Guardian*, April 14, 2016.

⁴²⁰ Mason.

support of Vote Leave—giving the Brexit campaign a veneer of respectability. Yet Farage continued to campaign toward his base of voters disaffected with elites. Leaning on his prizewinning issue—immigration, Farage and Michael Gove sounded the alarm that immigrants from Europe threatened Britain’s national livelihood. In late May, Vote Leave released a video showing Cameron both dismissing and welcoming Turkish membership in the EU, suggesting that remaining in Europe would lead to an influx of 5.2 million Turkish migrants who would strain the beleaguered National Health Service.⁴²¹ Though the Remain campaign charged that the video had been pulled from the “Ukip playbook to create fictitious stores to scare people about immigrants,” they did little to halt Leave’s anti-immigrant rhetoric.⁴²² A few weeks later, Farage suggested that remaining in Europe would lead to a tide of sexual harassment in Europe. Though Conservative members of the Brexit campaign distanced themselves from Farage’s racist implication that a “cultural issue” would lead immigrants to assault women, they did not defect from Brexit.⁴²³ In the final weeks of the campaign, any behavior was acceptable if it spelled victory—especially as Brexit gathered momentum.

The Remain campaign faltered as its reasoned arguments for European membership failed to gain traction in public opinion. As the Archbishop of Canterbury denounced Farage as a racist and Cameron emphasized the Remain campaign’s issues-based approach, June polling painted a bleak picture for Britain Stronger In Europe, the Remain campaign organization. Despite issuing messages that leaving the EU would result in economic calamity, Remain’s efforts had only convinced 25 percent of voters in an Ipsos/MORI poll that Brexit would be bad for the economy. Meanwhile, 63 percent of those polled expected Brexit would curb the flow of immigration to the

⁴²¹ Rowena Mason, “Gove: EU Immigrant Influx Will Make NHS Unsustainable by 2030,” *The Guardian*, May 20, 2016.

⁴²² Mason.

⁴²³ Elgot and Mason, “Nigel Farage.”

island.⁴²⁴ Indeed, in the final weeks of the campaign, racism was excused for the authentic “working class anger and frustration.”⁴²⁵ When the vote was held on June 23, 2016, working class voters from non-urban areas turned out in significant margins. By a 52-48 percent margin, Brexit won.⁴²⁶

Conclusion

In the post-election analysis, commentators spread blame across the political spectrum. One scholar on British radical politics, the political scientist Matthew Goodwin, anticipated Brexit based on the failure of Labour to maintain its traditional working-class base.⁴²⁷ Others blamed popular fears of immigration, particularly because the Remain campaign polled well in areas with high immigrant populations and the Leave campaign succeeded in places with scant immigrants.⁴²⁸ In the words of Brexit voter and Guardian columnist Giles Fraser, “The London bubble has burst.”⁴²⁹ Others still blamed print media, whose Eurosceptic pillars (the Mail, Telegraph, Express, and Star) reached four times as many readers as their Europhilic counterparts with clear signals to support Brexit.⁴³⁰ The Guardian’s dedicated Brexit-watcher attempted an all-in-one answer ranging from the Euroscepticism of the 1970s to Conservative rebellion against Cameron.⁴³¹ Indeed, reports of Brexit leaders almost immediately walking back their pre-referendum promises

⁴²⁴ Heather Stewart, “UK Poll Finds Just 25% Believe Brexit Would Reduce Living Standards,” *The Guardian*, June 9, 2016.

⁴²⁵ Lisa Mckenzie, “Brexit Is the Only Way the Working Class Can Change Anything,” *The Guardian*, June 15, 2016; Dreda Say Mitchell, “Of Course Ukip Plays the Race Card. But I’m Still Voting for Brexit,” *The Guardian*, June 22, 2016.

⁴²⁶ Will Franklin et al., “EU Referendum Full Results – Find out How Your Area Voted,” *The Guardian*, June 23, 2016; Anushka Asthana, Ben Quinn, and Rowena Mason, “UK Votes to Leave EU after Dramatic Night Divides Nation,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016.

⁴²⁷ Matthew Goodwin, “Labour’s Traditional Voters No Longer Share Its Progressive Values,” *The Guardian*, June 23, 2016.

⁴²⁸ Alan Travis, “Fear of Immigration Drove the Leave Victory – Not Immigration Itself,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016.

⁴²⁹ Giles Fraser, “Brexit Brought Democracy Back – Now We Need to Start Listening to Each Other | Giles Fraser,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016.

⁴³⁰ Jane Martinson, “Did the Mail and Sun Help Swing the UK towards Brexit?,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016.

⁴³¹ Rowena Mason, “How Did UK End up Voting to Leave the European Union?,” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016.

of reducing immigration and infusing the National Health Service with the savings from leaving the EU led commentators to seek an external explanation of Leave's success.⁴³² But none of these explanations offered a complete answer.

Brexit's success was the defining moment of Britain's relationship with Europe. Since Churchill's opportunistic calls for a United States of Europe from the depths of Opposition in 1947, British politicians had turned to Europe as a means to their own success. Overcoming French hostility toward Britain in the 1960s, Edward Heath steered Britain into the Common Market before it was too late, only to have his triumph immediately challenged in the 1975 referendum. Deconsolidation of working class support for Labour during Callaghan's turbulent government cascaded to rehabilitate parties on the far-right—from the BNP to UKIP—that promised a better deal for poorer, out-competed workers who had been shut out from the mainstream parties. Thatcher's sharp criticisms of the European Leviathan sparked a nearly three-decade frenzy of uncertainty about her party's support of European integration. As Tony Blair approached Europe with glee, he did little to stem the rise of UKIP as an electoral force in by-elections, leading to their impressive performance in the 2009 and 2014 European elections. In a bout of self-service attempts to wrangle his party's support, Cameron's serial promises to gather popular input on European integration became so meaningless with each iteration that he surprised everyone by fulfilling his 2015 campaign promise. But in this context, Cameron's decision to grant a referendum and the subsequent victory for Brexit did not come as a surprise. Far from signaling the end of rationality, democracy, and decency, the Brexit vote was the culmination of a well-oiled voting base that sought to express its preference against elites and far-away decision-making. The Remain campaign's tactics of rational explanations about the abstract economic catastrophe of

⁴³² Ben Quinn, "Leave Campaign Rows Back on Key Immigration and NHS Pledges," *The Guardian*, June 25, 2016.

Brexit had little chance of persuading voters who felt excluded from the economy in the first place. Despite the organizational chaos exhibited by the Leave campaign, its hodgepodge message that Brexit was a cure-all worked as intended: convincing British voters to stop their decades-long equivocation and just leave, already!

Conclusion

The Brexit result was the culmination of decades-long ambivalence toward Europe and successful electoral mobilization by the Eurosceptic coalition; in context, the Brexit vote seemed far from extraordinary, but instead a rational outcome of normal politics. The success of Eurosceptic arguments in the 2016 British referendum on European Union membership reflected the breadth of the “Leave” coalition and the poor organization of the “Remain” campaign. In 1975 the reverse was true, as Harold Wilson used his fresh political capital from the October 1974 general election to lobby the British public to remain in the EEC. The same trick did not work for David Cameron in 2015-6. A combination of disaffected Tory MPs, rehabilitated fascists, and media insouciance toward UKIP’s successful electoral history gave Brexit momentum while the rearguard of Europhilic British politics did little to secure British membership in the continent. Yet to characterize the Leave campaign as a mass social movement would be a misstep. Rather than reflecting the frustration of an overlooked group of British voters, the Brexit vote resulted from decades of ministerial hedging on European integration and acceptance of Eurosceptic views by party leaders. My thesis explored how British politics morphed from a contest over the welfare state to the battlefield over European integration. Rather than treating European integration as a partisan issue postwar period, I traced how leaders from both parties came to regard European integration as a standard political issue to be addressed in the pages of party manifestos and through speeches at annual conventions. Once the issue of European integration was sanitized of its technocratic origin and transplanted to a wholly political arena, its trajectory was placed in the hands of voters and parties.

British politicians in the immediate postwar years used the prospect of a unified Europe to glorify Britain’s great power status and bolster the transatlantic relationship. Winston Churchill’s

calls for regional association at the Congress of Europe were intended for European, American, and domestic audiences. Yet the ensuing discussion at home about the acceptable terms of integration indicated disunity about Britain's role in Europe from the initial days of the European project. British non-participation in nascent regional organizations (European Coal and Steel Community, the European Defence Community, and the European Atomic Energy Community) persisted through more than a decade of British economic decline and the dismantling of empire. Though Labour and Conservative governments attempted to join the European Community in the 1960s, their unwillingness to negotiate generously with French President Charles De Gaulle both hampered integration efforts and underscored the exceptional status British negotiators accorded to the island nation.

As European institutions expanded for the first time in their young history, Britain joined the Six as a new partner in trade and economic policy in 1973. Though the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath steered Britain to accession, his success waned when he attempted to capitalize on his foreign policy "success" to bolster his majority in Parliament in February 1974. Though Heath achieved the longtime goal of European integrationists, he misjudged the influence his European policy had on his party's electability. A hung parliament prompted new elections, and his Labour opponent Harold Wilson won in October on the promise to hold a popular referendum on European Economic Community membership. Though Wilson campaigned in favor of integration and voters overwhelmingly elected to remain in the EEC, the featuring of European integration as the central question of 1970s British politics ensured that Europe would be vulnerable to political attack for decades to come. Rhetoric from fascist groups like the National Front was echoed by the official campaign to leave the EEC, and the connection between fascist and Eurosceptic politics developed into the twenty-first century. Disagreement about Britain's

contribution to the European budget and its participation in schemes like the Common Agricultural Program periodically diminished popular support for Britain. The labor unrest and economic uncertainty of 1978 sowed distrust of Labour government, culminating in the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher and the decades-long celebration of Euroscepticism in the Conservative Party.

Thatcher applied a signature small-government philosophy to her leadership both at home and in Europe. Domestically, Thatcher blamed government largesse for social unrest and lackluster economic performance; Britain's obligations in Europe were also characterized as distracting from the success of British individuals. Privatizing British industries and criticizing the economics of the European trade area, Thatcher's commitment to shrinking government was limited to social and economic policies. Still, the project of Europe played a role in Thatcher's pursuit of aggressive Cold War defense policy through regional coordination. By reviving the Western European Union and investing heavily in defense technologies, Thatcher suggested that regional unity was crucial in the Atlantic sphere (opposing the Soviet Union). This practice of re-characterizing the value of Europe to comfit domestic political agendas was used by every post-integration government; its effect was to totally politicize European integration and deny non-partisan, intrinsic value to the regional club.

Conservative and Labour governments in the 1990s vocalized greater support the expansion of the European Union but refrained from inserting Britain into this broader regional dynamic. John Major ousted Margaret Thatcher in 1990 on the charge that her hostility toward Europe was detrimental to Britain's currency. Just two years later, his government was embarrassed by the collapse of Britain's currency and its withdrawal from the European currency exchange mechanism. When Tony Blair entered office and encouraged regional efforts to form a currency union, he recalled the Major misstep and kept Britain out of the Euro-zone. Though not

economically integrated with Europe, Blair's Britain adopted new regional legal schemes that governed social and judicial policy (e.g., Human Rights Act of 1998). On the surface Europe's reach into member states like Britain expanded tremendously in the 2000s, especially as the EU itself admitted post-Soviet Eastern European states. These dynamics of expansion and the subjectivity of Britain collided with sharp disunity in the Conservative Party to dismantle Britain's relationship with Europe.

David Cameron's rise to power in British politics occasioned the disruption of Britain's fragile participation in Europe. His selection as party leader in 2005 and Prime Minister in 2010 stemmed from promises he made to the base of the Conservative Party. First agreeing that changes to the UK-EU relationship could not be made without popular input, Cameron ultimately agreed to hold a referendum on EU membership itself. During the 2015 general election campaign, Cameron insisted that he would hold a referendum within a year of his reelection. Cameron's decision to keep that promise, and hold the Brexit referendum in 2016, terminated Britain's relationship with the EU. But Cameron himself does not hold all the blame. The success of the single-issue UK Independence Party, both in the referendum and European Parliament elections, stemmed from a tolerance of far-right, anti-immigrant, and anti-Europe positions at the fringes of British politics for decades. Once Cameron made European integration the central question of his political moment, as Wilson did forty years previously, he provided a platform for a restless and well-developed group of Eurosceptic politicians from the far-right to articulate their message. Unlike the National Front of the 1970s, which suffered associations with Nazi sympathizers and old British fascists, UKIP enjoyed a decades-long history as the anti-Europe party—one distinct from the overtly fascist British National Party. Though it crusaded as a populist anti-government party, UKIP capitalized on its institutionalization, and clear support from Conservatives and others

in mainstream politics, to operate as a respectable political actor. Brexit, then, was as much as result of regular politics as it was an expression of popular sentiment.

Brexit's lesson lies in its attachment to normal, rather than extraordinary or violent, politics. The meaning of Brexit for British and European politics has been hotly debated in the months since the historic vote. In Britain, concerns about the appeal of overtly racist arguments to a majority of voters, the immediate collapse of UKIP after the vote, and the paralysis of the Conservative Party have gained salience due to Brexit. Across the region, fears about the march of populist politics have been directed toward elections in Austria, Italy, and Hungary. But the Leave campaign was not an aberration nor external to normal politics in Britain. Leave's success owed to the support it found in the Conservative Party, frustration with elite politics in de-industrialized regions, and racist politics that had encoded mainstream policies addressing immigration for decades. Rather than an expression of a silent majority, Brexit should be characterized as a moment where Eurosceptic elements aligned to defeat a fatigued and poorly-organized pro-Europe wing of British politics. The danger of Brexit is that its seeming disruption of regular politics stemmed from within, not beyond, the borders of British politics. Britain's formal exit from the EU and the region's response will rely on the mores of regular politics, too. Those shocked by the outcome of the Leave campaign should focus less on referendum politics, and instead seek to reengage in the arena of regular politics, namely by voting early and often.

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