Ideology and Social Attitudes: A Review of European and British Attitudes to European Integration

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IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES: A REVIEW OF EUROPEAN AND BRITISH ATTITUDES TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

By

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The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
In memory of my grandfather, Joseph Paul Blanchard,
Whose gentle kindness I hope to always emulate.
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A number of suggestions about the source and nature of Euroskepticism have been put forward over the last few decades, but none of these broad definitions truly capture the phenomenon in all of the European Union’s member states. In the United Kingdom, the member state often cited as one of the most Euroskeptic, a unique set of economic, political and socio-cultural circumstances create a particular brand of Euroskepticism. While British Euroskepticism follows some common characteristics and patterns to other member states, it nevertheless relies on a pervasive, psychological, wide-scale nationalist sentiment to a degree not seen in other member states.

This thesis begins with an overall examination of Euroskepticism in the EU-15, testing possible definitions and characteristics that might hold true throughout all member states. Specifically, the national political ideology is tested against various possible sources of Euroskepticism, in order to both affirm the role of ideology in the formation of Euroskeptic attitudes and to test whether certain attitudes can be equated to Euroskepticism. The thesis then examines the example of Great Britain, drawing from regression data to make comparisons between Britain and the rest of the EU member states. Interest is given to the ebb and flow of Euroskeptic attitudes over time, the rightward ideological trend of Euroskepticism of late, as well as the specific role of political parties in shaping attitudes towards the European Union in the publics of member states. While the role of ideology is shown to be important, the presence of other critical factors (i.e. levels of nationalism, status as a recipient or contributor state, and salience of the European integration issue in domestic party politics) is shown to manipulate the overall level of Euroskepticism in member states.
INTRODUCTION

Not all “citizens” of the European Union are excited about their nation being a member of the organization. The phenomenon of showing reluctance towards European integration, generally labeled “Euroskepticism,” is evident in spite of the fact that it is both poorly defined (in a general sense) and difficult to determine its specific causes. Within the European Union, Britain has earned the reputation of being one of the most Euroskeptic nations. While Britain’s “cultural” background is often cited as the reason for Britain’s hesitancy towards outside governmental influence from Europe, this phenomenon deserves a more unambiguous explanation than one provided by an abstract notion like “culture.” Since the political environment in a nation plays a major role in shaping its culture, I believe that avoiding the shortcut of attributing Euroskepticism to “culture” by examining the political roots of this phenomenon stands as the best method to understanding its true nature. Furthermore, the importance of ideology in European (and especially British) politics seems likely to have an effect on attitudes of Euroskepticism, in the same way that it shapes attitudes on domestic political matters. Thus, the influence of political ideology on attitudes about Europe provides an interesting area of study.

In this thesis, I put forward four hypothetical arguments concerning the relationship between political ideology and Euroskepticism, generally in the European Union and specifically for the British example. First, ideology plays a role in determining the degree to which both political parties and individuals exhibit Euroskeptic tendencies. Second, British Euroskepticism has shifted from the political left to the right over time, as seen in the rhetoric used in political manifestos and the rise of certain new third parties in the British party system. While socialist-leaning parties have historically been most reluctant to accept further integration into the European Community/Union, right-wing parties in Britain have exhibited the more extreme examples of Euroskepticism recently. Third, the “rightist” nature of modern British Euroskepticism specifically stems from a sense of nationalism, used in the political rhetoric of Euroskeptic parties and contributed to by a long-established British tradition of nationalism. Finally, the primary parties in the British political system, the Conservative and Labour Parties, both display mixed signals about the European Union. In order to secure the maximum amount
of electoral support (which is, after all, the primary purpose of a political party), and simultaneously guarantee positive relations with other EC/EU member states should they achieve power in the British government, such mixed messages represent an attempt by parties to create two crucial political compromises. The parties seek a compromise between securing support from both Euroskeptics and Europhiles in the British public (as well as the individuals who fall between these two extreme poles), and between standing contractual obligations to the EC/EU and a desire to maintain a degree of national sovereignty. Thus, the role of the nation-state is central to the discussion of Euroskepticism in any EU member state, for individuals, parties, and the nation-states themselves.

In the process of concentrating on these hypotheses, this paper attempts to define Euroskepticism both in a EU-wide context and in a specifically British context. While “Euroskepticism” is frequently discussed in literature on the European Union, little in the way of definition has been offered to specifically show what is meant and/or suggested by this term. While it may be possible to offer a definition of Euroskepticism that cuts across nationalities, cultures, and political systems, the unique nature of the British example (with specific instances of Euroskeptic behavior associated with the British) calls for a more specific definition of Euroskepticism to be established. By the conclusion of this paper, a better idea about how Euroskepticism has specifically taken shape in the British political party context will be elucidated.
CHAPTER 1
EUROSKEPTICISM AND IDEOLOGY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Political scientists have made frequent attempts in the past to examine the role of ideology in how individuals behave politically. Furthermore, questions have been raised about the relationship between ideology and particular attitudes. One area where these inquiries about ideology have as of yet failed to show a specific link to either behavior or attitudes concerns the phenomenon known as “Euroskepticism.” Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest a link between the conservativeness of a country’s population and the degree to which that population displays Euroskeptic attitudes. This chapter attempts to examine the validity of this suggested link, employing a number of measures of ideology and Euroskepticism to do so. Through a series of bivariate analyses, this chapter will hopefully shed light upon the relationship, if one exists, between ideology and Euroskeptic attitudes in the mass publics of fifteen European Union member states: Austria (A), Belgium (B), Denmark (DK), Finland (FIN), France (F), Germany (D), Greece (GR), Ireland (IRL), Italy (I), Luxembourg (L), the Netherlands (NL), Portugal (P), Spain (E), Sweden (S), and the United Kingdom (UK).

What is Euroskepticism?: Seeking a General Definition

“Euroskepticism” is one of a number of terms used to describe the attitudes of individuals and groups toward the European Union. British journalist Martin Kettle attempted to differentiate the various groups and their attitudes by splitting these attitudes into four categories: Euroenthusiasts, Europhobes, Europrogressives (also labeledEuropositives), and Euroskeptics (Kettle 1994). He defines each group as follows:

- *Euroenthusiasts* are those who welcome membership of the Community and moves toward integration. They are generally uncritical of European measures.
- *Europhobes* are more than merely skeptical about British involvement in the European Union, and would gladly accept full withdrawal from the Community. This is a term most often meant by those labeled as Euroskeptics.
- **Europrogressives**, a position claimed by John Major during his term as Prime Minister, includes a majority of both Britons and citizens in other EU member states. While basically in favor of their nation’s involvement in the Community, Europrogressives nevertheless refuse to endorse all proposed changes towards a wider and deeper Union *en masse*. Instead, Europrogressives have a pick-and-choose attitude towards EU programs. While skeptical about some programs of the EU, this group would, on the whole, choose to maintain involvement in the Union. At times, there is a great deal of similarity between the positions of Europrogressives and Euroskeptics.

- **Euroskeptics**, in the most literal sense of the term, are those people whom, as Kettle describes, “doubt the wisdom of the European project but who are prepared to go cautiously along with it” (Kettle 1994). Certain arenas of involvement, such as defense, social policy, internal security, and most aspects of economic policy, according to members of this group, should remain the domain of the nation-state rather than the Union.

Arthur Aughey, on the other hand, attempts to divide European sentiment into two separate and competing groups:

> There are those who welcome the integration of Britain into a dynamic European Union and are sincere in their convictions that the process is not only historically inevitable but also politically desirable. There are those whose hostility to the process remains undiminished and are sincere in their conviction that the process is both misconceived and politically undesirable. Both exaggerate and dramatize through the medium of Europe the issues which have defined the question of Britain itself: identity, sovereignty, self-government and legitimacy (Aughey 2001, 171).

The “Euroskepticism” discussed at length throughout this thesis combines Kettle’s and Aughey’s conceptualization of Euroskepticism. While the more specific terms laid out by Kettle are used when a more precise disposition or attitude is meant, the “Euroskepticism” generally discussed in this thesis specifically represents any negative attitude towards the European Community, European Union, or integration and participation in these organizations. If Kettle’s conceptualization of attitudes on Europe is thought of as a continuum, and Aughey’s
conceptualization as a way of dividing the continuum into pro- and anti-European halves, then the “Euroskepticism” referred to (though not clearly defined) in the literature on Euroskepticism and in this thesis refers to the wide variety of anti-EU sentiment that exists.

One question that remains unanswered in the above attempts to define “Euroskepticism” is whether one lone definition can truly capture the phenomenon in a number of very different EU member states. While it can be broadly defined as a hesitant attitude to European integration, identification and/or involvement with Europe, Euroskeptic attitudes can develop from a number of factors (i.e. economic, political, socio-cultural, etc.) Furthermore, the degree to which Euroskepticism (in some form) presents itself also differs in various member states. Three commonalities seem to exist in the way Euroskeptic attitudes manifest themselves in EU member states: 1.) negative sentiment towards Europe and/or the European Union; 2.) lack of acknowledging benefits of association with the EU; and 3.) nationalist sentiment (which, at its strongest, takes the form of isolationism). These three characteristics should be sought in the comparative context of all EU member states, though the degree to which each of these expected traits occurs in individual countries may differ widely. This chapter represents an attempt at gauging the levels of Euroskepticism in relation to ideological leanings of fifteen member states, so that the levels of Euroskepticism in the context of ideology in Britain can be compared to the levels in other member states.

**Regression Hypotheses and Expectations**

The overall pattern that is expected in this portion of the study would be a direct relationship between the degree to which the voting public in EU member states are “right-wing” and the presence of Euroskeptic attitudes among those publics. Under this more general expected result, three hypotheses are tested in this chapter. First, EU member states with a right-leaning voting public (as measured by a median-voter scale) should have a higher public attitude of Euroskepticism, in the form of negative sentiment, than those member states with a left-leaning voting public. Second, EU member states with a right-leaning voting public should also display a lower degree of acknowledgement of benefits from the European Union by citizens than those citizens in left-leaning member states. Finally, citizens in right-leaning EU member states should, due to the pro-nationalist tendencies seen in modern European right-wing parties,
identify themselves solely on the basis of their nationality, rather than as “Europeans,” to a greater level than citizens in left-leaning member states.

While these hypotheses test only a few of the arguable measurements of Euroskeptic attitudes among European publics, I feel that they represent basic arguments that should be true if a relationship between ideology and attitudes on Europe. They do not, nor does any study that exists to date, account for all of the possible determinants of attitudes toward European integration. Rather, I feel these questions best represent the attempt to determine is a basic relationship exists. By testing these hypotheses, I hope to put Britain into a comparative perspective with other EU member states, thereby allowing for the particular characteristics of British Euroskepticism to be brought into greater focus.

* Literature Review on Ideology and Euroskepticism

The relationship between ideology and a number of types of political behavior have been discussed in political science literature for decades, though ideology’s relationship with Euroskeptic attitudes remains only a small subset of this body of literature. The reason for this relative dearth of material on attitudes to the European Union as opposed to other institutions and activities stems, one would assume, from the youth of the EU as an institution. The Euroskepticism phenomenon has taken on increasing importance of late as the EU has continued to grow as an institution, expanding into areas of economic, social, and cultural policy that at one time rested solely with the governments of EU member states. As some states are home to publics that consider the European Union’s involvement in these matters an intrusion upon their national sovereignty, cultural identity or overall welfare, determining the causes of these attitudes presents a rich area for comparative political behavior research.

The prolific writing of Ronald Inglehart on postmodernism, ideology, and government in Western democracies make him a natural candidate to delve into the issues of sovereignty and Euroskepticism at an fledgling stage of this research agenda. Arguing the importance of considering multiple aspects of ideology, rather than a simple abstract left-right dichotomy, Inglehart’s “Changing Value Priorities and European Integration” (1970) first argued that attitudes towards European integration in European publics shifted based on the priorities these citizens place on their governments. “Citizens’ political attitudes,” argues Inglehart, “are shaped by the socioeconomic conditions surrounding their formative, or pre-adult, years.” (Cited in
Gabel 1998, 336). These conditions are expected to instill certain values and attitudes, including national identity, that tend to persist over time. The notion that left- and right-leaning citizens value different government activities and involvement logically leads to the notion that positive or negative attitudes are created when bodies like the European Union prioritize certain activities over others. Those that think the EU is “a good thing” that “benefited” their country in the past are those who perceive the EU as accomplishing the goals they desire to see from institutions in power.

Matthew Gabel’s “Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories” (1998) examines the possible factors that create variation in support for the European Union within member states. Utilizing regression analyses of Eurobarometer survey results, the controversy over specific causes of Euroskepticism are addressed. While finding that “political values” play a less prominent role than was argued by Inglehart, “partisan context of integrative reforms” (i.e. party and ideological affiliation at the time of integration actions by government) and “utilitarian consequences of integrative policy (i.e. the degree one’s country benefits from deepening integration) are the most robust explanations for variation in EU support (Gabel 1998, 335-339). Gabel’s work opens another controversy, however; he cites that Eurobarometer surveys from 1973-1989 show supporters of Left parties were less supportive of European integration than those supporting the Right (1998, 338). The hypotheses presented in this chapter, however, argue the opposite of this trend. The problem with this finding by Gabel is the assumption the left-right ideology is determined solely by economic factors; the belief that integration and increasing manifestation of capitalism go hand-in-hand ignores the expanding role of the European Union into other arenas that go against rightist partisan values. Shifts in Euroskepticism from the Left to the Right over time should follow trends of the EU to grow beyond its role as an economic union earlier in its institutional existence. Messina (2002) credits the political right, and specifically “extreme right parties” in a number of EU member states, with “political ideologies, policies and public discourses…inspired by immoderate nationalist, xenophobic and chauvinistic ideas” and exploiting anti-European public sentiment, albeit to limited success until recently (2002, 1-2).

Structure Party Positions on European Integration?” (2002) examines ideology in a party context, arguing that variation in European Union support between parties is best explained by the parties’ ideological position. The authors acknowledge that since the inception of the European Union, extreme Left and Right parties have exhibited Euroskeptic behavior while moderate parties have supported integration (2002, 968). While Euroskepticism has shifted to the right of the political spectrum of late, over time the authors display an “inverted-U” curve when graphing left-right party position against EU support (2002, 970). In Britain, where both of the two major parties have experienced ideological shifts on their respective ends of the left-right political spectrum, one would expect from the Hooghe-Marks-Wilson hypothesis that parties will exhibit a greater degree of Euroskeptic behavior in periods where the party shift towards more extreme positions on the spectrum. This, in fact, seems to hold true over time (as discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). Currently the political right-wing of Britain, as seen in the Conservative Party and other nationalistic third parties, has the strongest incidence (albeit not a monopoly) on Euroskeptic behavior.

Drawing from this known relationship between party ideology and levels of EU support, Hooghe and Marks (2004, July 2004) attempt to relate public ideology to support for European integration. Central concepts focused upon by the authors include identity, reallocation of authority across levels of government (i.e. the creation of supranational authority in certain policy matters), and political cues by national elites who call citizens/voters to oppose further European integration. The interest in national identity as a possible indicator of Euroskepticism is introduced; “European integration…provokes a sharp sense of identity loss among defenders of the nation” (Hooghe and Marks 2004, 5). However, the authors are far from certain that nationalism will guarantee hostility towards the European Union. In some instances (i.e. with some farmers), those who identify with Europe “tend also to identify with their nation” (2004, 6). Hypothesis 3 expects nationalism to be tied to Euroskepticism, but the possibility that the ties between these two phenomena do not exist in all circumstances remains to be tested. (In other words, nationalism may be a factor in Euroskepticism for some of the nations studied, while not in others.) Hooghe and Marks (July 2004) also argue the importance of “collective” and “individual” economic circumstances, or at least the perception of benefit from the European Union, in determining support or antipathy for the EU. This political economy-based motivator of attitude is captured in Hypothesis 2 and tested below.
Leonard Ray’s discussion of ideological structure of mass opinion on European-level policymaking combines the traditional left-right ideological dimension with a non-traditional measure of ideology (the “New politics” cleavage based on a dichotomy of “green-alternative-libertarian” and “traditional-authoritarian-nationalist” mindsets). Ray argues that utilitarian support is seen on the “New politics” dimension at a greater level than the traditional left-right dimension, but that similar “curvilinear” results as those seen in Hooghe and Marks’ research exist over time (2001, 3-4). While “persistent weakness” exists over time in finding a linear relationship between left-right orientation and level of support for European integration, Ray states that a degree of curvilinearity in the relationship between ideology and level of support may make the apparent absence of a relationship “an illusion” (2001, 5). Furthermore, incorporation of additional factors in determining ideology (suggested by Inglehart and accomplished in Kim and Fording’s model, described below) increases the chance of capturing the relationship between ideology and either Euroskepticism or support.

Variables

One of the difficulties that exists in undertaking the task of determining if a relationship exists between ideology and Euroskepticism lays in defining these abstract concepts in a manner that suitably captures the desired phenomena while allowing for comparison of the phenomena empirically. Working with variables that can be precisely measured, such as survey data or a scale that allows for cross-comparison between very diverse member states in a large Union, allow for concrete representation of what would otherwise be abstract concepts.

The independent variable in this study, ideology, is captured using an estimate of the median ideological position within the electorate of the countries being studied. This measure was designed by HeeMin Kim and Richard C. Fording (1998, 2002). Kim and Fording’s measure of voter ideology through the median voter position has a number of strengths for an empirical study. First and foremost, its use of the left-right ideological dimension to classify voters allows for a great deal of cross-comparability across industrialized countries (Kim and Fording 1998, 76-77). The “comparability, continuity, and relevance of the left-right dimension” can especially be seen in the party system of European Union member states; Furthermore, alternative measures of ideology suggested by both Hooghe and Marks’ (2004, July 2004) and Ray’s (2001) research are captured in the data set employed by Kim and Fording.
The Kim-Fording voter ideology measure comprehensively combines a number of categories (26 total, of which 13 comprise “left ideology” and another 13 “right ideology,” drawn from an earlier study of ideology by Michael Laver and Ian Budge (1993)) to determine the median voter position, including data about external political relations, political system, economic, welfare, cultural, and social group categories (Kim and Fording 2002). Laver and Budge’s categorizations of leftist and rightist parties are used to determine the number and ideological preferences of voters in the countries being studied. By examining party manifestos and standardizing ideology across a number of variant political contexts, Kim and Fording’s measure of ideology allows for a “snapshot” of a particular country’s ideology at a point in time. The median voter measure is used to represent this study’s independent variable (1997) for each country; where median voter data was unavailable for 1997 (i.e. 1994 for Luxembourg, 1995 for Austria, Belgium, Finland, and Portugal, and 1996 for Italy, Greece, and Spain), information from the last year available closest to 1997 is utilized. Kim and Fording themselves justify this extrapolation from earlier data, stating “ideology is relatively stable in the short run” (Kim and Fording 2002). The measure of ideology is scaled from 0 to 100, with zero representing extreme “rightist” placement and one hundred an extreme “leftist” placement on a left-right ideological dimension used commonly in comparative political science literature.

Kim and Fording’s use of manifesto data as a method of determining both party and voter ideological placement provides and opportunity to make both internal comparisons within member states and external comparisons between them, based on the common presence of a left-right dimension in European politics. Manifestos, the method employed by political parties prior to elections for publicizing their proposed policies and ideas, provide the best means for determining attitudes present in political parties and (when coupled with electoral support) the resonance of the party’s message with the public. Kim and Fording cite the manifestos by searching for the incidence of the aforementioned “leftist” or “rightist” categories, though “Euroskepticism” is not included in these categories (even though “internationalism” is one category examined). Nevertheless, it seems that “Euroskepticism” will be tied to ideology in some way in European Union member states.

The dependent variable in this study, Euroskepticism amongst the publics of EU member states, requires survey information to determine the attitudes of citizens in member states. Eurobarometer public opinion surveys, given by the European Network of Market and Public
Opinion Research Agencies (INRA-Europe) and collected by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), are most frequently used to gauge public opinion among citizens of EU member states. One set of questions common to Eurobarometer surveys for years focus on three types of Euroskeptic belief that I hypothesizes will correlate with right-wing ideology: belief that European Union membership is “a bad thing,” belief that membership gives no benefit to one’s member country, and identification of oneself by nationality and not as “European” or a combination of European and nationality (Eurobarometer 47.1 (1997), Q. 15, 16, and 19). The Eurobarometer survey questions used read as follows:

- “Generally speaking, do you think that (our country’s) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is ...?” (percent)
  - A good thing
  - A bad thing
  - Neither good nor bad
  - Don’t Know

- “Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (our country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?” (percent)
  - Benefited
  - Not Benefited
  - Don’t Know

- “In the near future do you see yourself as ...?” (percent)
  - (NATIONALITY) only
  - (NATIONALITY) and European
  - European and (NATIONALITY)
  - European only
  - Don’t Know

Questions 15 and 16 are utilized because they specifically measure Euroskepticism in its purest definitional form, as the respondents’ antipathy (or lack thereof) to membership in the European Union. The utilization of question 19 as a measure of Euroskepticism assumes that a desire for national sovereignty will display itself in a respondent’s self-identification. Hooghe and Marks (July 2004), drawing from earlier and more general theories by Deutsch (1957), Haas (1958), and Inglehart (1970) on group attachments, argue that identity is a “source of public
opinion on European integration.” Hooghe and Marks’ study finds that those with “strong national identity are more, not less, likely to identify with Europe” (July 2004, 1). Hooghe and Marks also cite rightist political parties in France, Denmark, Italy, Belgium and Austria that “tap nationalism to reject further integration” (2004, 6). The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) can also be added to this list of parties, each of which has seen increasing support in Europe over the last decade. One can assume that as citizens/voters have shown increasing support for these nationalist parties, a degree of Euroskepticism has fueled this support. By utilizing responses to a Eurobarometer question on national identity, the regressions run in this chapter will retest this assessment and determine whether 1.) Euroskepticism can be measured by exclusive nationalistic attachment, and 2.) rightist ideology in a member state correlates with this possible measure of Euroskepticism.

All three survey questions were chosen in order to measure the percentage of respondents holding specific attitudinal orientations within the fifteen member states of the EU under consideration. The unit of analysis, though individual-level opinion is utilized for the dependent variable, rests in the EU member states being examined. The overall goal of this chapter is to establish patterns of attitude across various nations, specifically to determine 1.) which EU member states are the most left- and right-wing, 2.) which EU member states have the greatest incidence of Euroskeptic attitudes among citizens, and 3.) if a pattern exists across nations on the level of a particular ideology and expected Euroskeptic results. By doing so, additional comparisons with the primary member state under consideration, the United Kingdom, can be drawn.

**Data and Analysis**

With the variables decided upon, explained and justified, simple bivariate regressions are employed to determine the relationship between the independent variable (ideology) and dependent variable (Euroskepticism). Three separate regressions were run in this study, all utilizing the Kim-Fording voter ideology measure based on median voter data in regressions with different measures of Euroskepticism or a lack of Euroskepticism. The three different regressions used responses to three survey questions in Eurobarometer 47.1 (1997) focusing on Euroskepticism: 1.) Belief that membership in the European Union is “a bad thing”; 2.) Belief that membership in the European Union has “not benefited” the member state; and 3.)
Identification solely on the basis of nationality, as opposed to “European only” or a combination of nationality and European.

If the hypotheses presented earlier in this chapter are true, there are two expectations as to what will be seen in regressions and scatter-plot graphs. First, regressions of the Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure with percentages of respondents giving Euroskeptic answers (i.e. those saying membership is “bad,” that their country has “not benefited,” and that they identified themselves by “nationality only”) should show a negative “B” coefficient, an acceptable degree of significance, and a negative slope of a best-fitting line on a scatter-plot of the regression. These effects would be seen in the regressions and scatter-plots expressed in Tables and Figures 1, 2, and 3, below. Furthermore, outliers on the graphs, if the hypotheses hold true overall, should be explainable by extraneous circumstances besides ideological orientation. A set of bar graphs ranking member states on the basis of the proposed measures of Euroskepticism in the study and the variable of ideology captured by the Kim-Fording index reveal which member states show the degree of each expected type of Euroskepticism in each county. Also, right-leaning member states should show high levels of Euroskepticism, and will all be on the right side of their respective graphs. These graphs are seen as Figures 4 through 7, below. The expected results, all things being equal, would show reduction in the percentage of respondents claiming EU membership was “bad” and “not beneficial” as the Kim-Fording Voter Ideology measure approached its most “leftist” level (100), and higher levels of negative response to Europe as countries shift to the ideological right (0).

The first regression reveals the expected results for respondents who believe membership is “a bad thing.” The negative “B” coefficient (-.384) resulting from the regression of ideology with “a bad thing” respondents shows an acceptable level of significance (.075) at the 0.10 level. Slopes for the best-fitting line on scatter-plots of the regression’s results also show the expected results. The results provide support for Hypothesis 1. The basic measure used for the dependent variable, whether respondents see EU membership as “bad,” allows for the fundamental relationship between ideology and Euroskepticism/support to be determined by regression. The results reveal that, at least as a “snapshot” in time, a linear relationship can be seen between ideological placement and level of Euroskepticism, though Hooghe and Marks (2004) and Ray (2001) indicate a more curvilinear relationship over time. For the countries
studied, European industrialized societies all, ideology on a left-right scale seems to allow for cross-comparability and a clear indication of the phenomenon sought in a test of Hypothesis 1.

Table 1: Regression of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure and Respondents Claiming Membership in the European Union is “Bad” (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model†</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>36.946</td>
<td>10.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-F VI measure</td>
<td>-.384</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Dependent Variable: Percentage of Eurobarometer Survey Respondents Claiming EU membership is “a bad thing” for their country.

Figure 1: Scatter-plot Graph of the Regression of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure and Respondents Claiming Membership in the European Union is “Bad”

Responses on perceived benefits or lack of benefits from EU membership regressed with ideology should reveal similar patterns, on the basis of “Euroskepticism” present or not, as regressions with positive or negative attitudes about EU membership as the dependent variable.
The “B” coefficient of a regression of ideology and those perceiving no benefit for their country from EU membership is strongly negative (-.637) and significant at the 0.10 level (.092). At the same level of significance, a regression using responses showing perceived benefit is strongly positive (+.637). As with the above set of scatter-plots, a negative slope of a best-fitting line are present with the Euroskeptic dependent variable and a positive slope with the dependent variable representing non-Euroskeptic attitudes. These results support Hypothesis 2. Perceived utility of membership, suggested by Gable (1998), is influenced by ideology and stands as another valid measure of Euroskepticism.

Table 2: Regression of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure and Respondents Claiming Membership in the European Union gives “No Benefit” (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model†</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>73.277</td>
<td>18.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-F VI measure</td>
<td>-.637</td>
<td>.350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Dependent Variable: Percentage of Eurobarometer Survey Respondents Claiming EU membership has “not benefited” to their country.

Figure 2: Scatter-plot Graph of the Regression of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure and Respondents Claiming Membership in the European Union gives “No Benefit”
The test of the validity of Hypothesis 3 does not show the same degree of success seen for tests of the first two hypotheses. Pro-nationalist Euroskepticism as measured by respondent self-identification by nation alone was used as the dependent variable in one final regression with ideology. While the results shown in the regression’s “B” coefficient are in the expected direction at -.115, a very large significance coefficient (.608) renders the result invalid. The linearity present in the previous scatter-plot graphs, while it can be artificially expressed by a best-fitting line, is not seen in the scatter-plot from this final regression. A relationship between nationalism and Euroskepticism may not, as the third hypothesis would assume, be valid in all cases. Rather, some national sentiment may lead to negative attitudes on Europe, though in others there may be no relationship between nationalist sentiment, rightist ideology, and Euroskepticism.

Drawing from the validation of the first two hypotheses by regressions represented in Tables 1 and 2, one would expect to see the most right-oriented member states of the EU at the time of the survey (specifically, Austria, Italy, and the United Kingdom) exhibit much lower levels of support and higher levels of Euroskepticism than left-oriented states (Luxembourg, Greece, and Spain being the top three). Indeed, using some variables, this expectation is proven true.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model†</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>54.387</td>
<td>11.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-F VI measure</td>
<td>-.115</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Dependent Variable: Percentage of Eurobarometer Survey Respondents Stating that they identified themselves in the future solely by their nationality and not as “European.”
Figure 3: Scatter-plot Graph of the Regression of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure and Respondents Stating that They See Themselves as “(Nationality) Only”

Figure 4: Bar Graph of Kim-Fording Voter Ideology Measure (In Order of Most Left-Wing to Most Right-Wing)
Figure 5: Bar Graph of Percentage of Respondents Claiming EU Membership is “Bad”

Figure 6: Bar Graph of Percentage of Respondents Claiming the EU offers “No Benefit” to their Country
Bar graphs best show the highest and lowest levels on each of the variables above. The preceding four graphs order the EU member states in from most left-wing to most right-wing, and from lowest national percentage of negative attitudes to Europe to the highest. Figures 4 through 7 show that, as an overall trend, levels of Euroskepticism line up with increases in right-wing orientation across the sample states. This form of data representation, while showing that such a relationship does exist, also points out that only one of these variables should be used as a sole indicator of Euroskepticism. Certain member states also behave in a manner other than what would be expected from their ideological placement. For example, Ireland, the fourth most conservative state in the sample according to the Kim-Fording measure, exhibits both the highest public perceptions of the EU as “a good thing” and as having “benefited” their country. Spain, the most left-oriented member state, shows lower levels of support than other member states more conservative than it according to the Kim-Fording ideology data. While the overall trends this chapter tries to exhibit may be supported by data, other factors undoubtedly contribute to Euroskepticism in member states and warrant more detailed examination in other research endeavors. The results gained from the regression of ideology with “Membership Bad” and “No Benefit” respondents follow the data shown in the bar graphs. Of the seven states falling below
50 (and therefore right-oriented) in the Kim-Fording Index, only Ireland and Italy (in the case of the “Membership Bad” question) show an unexpectedly low level of Euroskepticism. For the nationality question, nations like Portugal, Denmark, and Greece display high levels of national sentiment in spite of their leftist orientation in the Kim-Fording Index. Furthermore, right-leaning states like France and Italy (long-time members of the European Community and leaders in the European Union) have lower levels of nationalism than expected. The United Kingdom seems to follow the expected trend of a conservative public expressing lower levels of positive sentiment towards the European Union in all three variables. Furthermore, the British level of nationalism is the highest of the fifteen states examined and (with Finland and Sweden) follow ideological expectations. Therefore, while ideology may not be an indicator of Euroskepticism in all countries, it obviously remains a critical determinant in certain cases. In the other countries, public nationalist sentiment (which remains above 50 percent in all but five of the cases studied) does not translate into Euroskeptic attitudes. Member states such as Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain, all net recipients of various types of aid from the European Union, tend to have a lower level of overt Euroskepticism than states that are net contributors (with Britain as a prime example of this type of member state). Furthermore, states that have been involved in the EC/EU the longest display lower levels of Euroskepticism than newer members, in a manner that sometimes contradicts the ideological expectations seen in these countries.

Conclusions

Hypotheses 1 and 2, which use positive and negative perception of European Union membership and perceptions of benefit from membership as measures of support/Euroskepticism, appear to be validly determined by ideology. The general phenomenon being sought in this study, a relationship between ideology and Euroskepticism, appears soundly supported in the first two sets of regressions performed. The controversy over the use of national identification as an indicator of Euroskepticism, and the relationship between ideology and identity, is not resolved by the fifth regression analyzed in this study. Furthermore, while a direct relationship between leftist ideology and EU support can be seen through comparison, outlier nations still exist in the sample of countries studied. The variance in levels of support reveals that ideology is not the sole factor in Euroskeptic attitude; context and extraneous factors should be considered in any full discussion of why Euroskeptic attitudes exist. While these other
factors may play a role in the presence of Euroskeptic attitudes, ideology is seen through this study to be a substantial indicator of whether the publics of particular EU member states will support or be opposed to their country’s membership. These data observations reveal two insights critical to the overall arguments of this thesis; First, ideology plays a role in the orientation of parties towards Europe, and secondly, recent (i.e. since the mid-1990s) Euroskepticism in the countries studied is seen most frequently in parties and governments categorically definable as “right-wing.”

The results seen in the various regressions above all coincide with the expectations I initially put forward for the British example. The “conservative” nature of British politics seems to exhibit itself in the degree of Euroskepticism present among the British public. This public Euroskepticism has seeped particularly into the behavior of political parties. The remainder of this thesis will delve into the specific characteristics of British Euroskepticism, how the ideological and political environment of Britain shapes its particular brand of Euroskepticism, and how Euroskepticism in Britain has changed over time. A few notes are warranted here, however. First and foremost, the study conducted above presents only a “snapshot” in time of how publics perceive the European Union. The survey data studied above gives an idea of where Britain fits into an overall European perception, but do not account for the possible changes that have taken place in ideological perceptions of the EU over time in the parties and public. Furthermore, surveys are only one method of gauging the relationship between ideology and opinion on the European Union. Another method involves party indicators rather than individual responses, with party manifestos being the instruments used to examine ideology and overall party sentiment towards the EU. While Kim and Fording utilize manifestos to determine overall national ideology on a left-right scale, additional information about specific party positions on the EU should also be considered. This examination is undertaken in the following chapter, beginning with a historical overview of Euroskepticism in the British political party system and continuing on to a textual analysis of election manifestos and their coverage of the issue of European integration and the European Community/Union in general.
CHAPTER 2

PARTY EUROSKEPTICISM: A STUDY OF BRITAIN’S “CONTENTIOUS” RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU

The previous chapter used specific questions from the Eurobarometer surveys to measure various types of Euroskepticism in a comparative manner. As previously mentioned, the questions chosen on the perceived benefits of the EU, whether it is seen as “bad,” and respondents’ identification on the basis of nationality have their limit. These questions only allow for a general sentiment of respondents to be observed, not revealing specific behaviors or characteristics of Euroskepticism in the context of countries surveyed. This chapter attempts to more specifically examine and define Euroskepticism in the British cultural, social and political context.

A few notes about this task are in order, however. First, any generalized definition of Euroskepticism that may be offered cannot capture the social and historical differences inherent in the Euroskepticism of different EU member states. As previously mentioned, definitions of Euroskepticism vary widely in individual member states, as each state’s citizens emphasize different activities of the EU when drawing conclusions on whether to support it or not. Because of the wide range of activities undertaken by the EU, on agricultural, industrial, commercial, social, governmental, and other matters, Euroskeptics (as well as Europhiles) base their sentiments about the EU on differing areas of emphasis, and therefore citizens and parties justify their “skepticism” in differing ways. Second, the title of “Euroskeptic” has been used in the academic literature as a “catch-all” for a number of different attitudes displayed by citizens and parties. I shall go into more detail on this conglomeration of behaviors into one category below. Finally, Euroskepticism is neither a static nor constant phenomenon. Not all parties in Britain have maintained the same degree of Euroskepticism over time; in fact, some party positions have changed drastically and repeatedly in a span of a few years within the forty-four years since Britain first applied for EC membership in 1961. Even within parties, then, reasons behind Euroskeptical/Europhilic behaviors and rhetoric have changed drastically over time. While this makes seeking a specific pattern of Euroskepticism all the more difficult, certain characteristics
are common to attitudes towards Europe in a temporal and national context. Most importantly, the main arbiters in public attitudes toward Europe are political parties. By the term “arbiter,” I mean that political parties act as intermediaries between the actions of the European Union and the perceptions of the respective publics of member states. As a result, political parties are crucial in understanding the overall sentiment towards the EU present in member states. Thus, the historical review and primary method for gauging changes in attitude presented in both main chapters of this paper (manifestos) center on the activities of parties and their interaction with their constituents, the public.

This chapter will begin with an examination of how specific historical circumstances have affected Euroskepticism in Great Britain. A clarification of the terms “culture” and “psychology” is made, with the goal of better explaining Euroskepticism in proper terms. Next, a historical overview of the British relationship with Europe since WWII, in the forms of ESCS, EC and EU, is undertaken. Finally, the chapter continues with an examination of the manifestos publicized by British political parties and their discussion of Europe.

Clarifying the Definition: The Effects of Social and Historical Context on British Euroskepticism

The various definitions suggested in the previous chapter, while useful in a general sense, are inadequate in capturing the nuances of attitude that are seen in different cultural contexts. While describing individual and group attitudes, they do not address more fundamental qualities of the British nation and its relationship with the European Union or Europe in general. Before examining the definition of Euroskepticism in party context, a larger-scale British context must be established.

A number of scholars have made the claim that Britain is and always has been, by it nature, skeptical of Europe. Britain’s reputation for “awkwardness” stem from a number of factors, including the domestic political constraints on the positions that British government can adopt, the long-established centralized economic organization of Britain which contrast against the idea of allowing an outside influence to govern areas of the British economy, and a historically “Atlanticist” foreign policy orientation (George 1994, 255). While the advent and growth of the European Union has reinvigorated this particular viewpoint, it is far from new. Vernon Bogdanor, for example, claims that Britain’s entry into the European Community in
1973 marked a commitment to “membership in an organization whose constitution was likely to be both unfamiliar and uncongenial” (1996, 135). Bogdanor continues by stating that this membership strikes a “deep-seated psychological” chord with the British, with sentiments expressed that are not seen in the other European Union member states. This difference, “rooted ultimately in history…flow[s] in the last result from the fact that [Britain’s] historical experience is so profoundly different from that of [its] Continental neighbours” (1996, 135).

Central to this history is the fact that Britain, perhaps more than other European nations, has an exceptionally strong sense of its role as a nation-state. Perhaps the term “patriotism” can be claimed to determine how the divide between pro- and anti-European attitudes form, and is used by Richard Weight as the title of his review of British national identity. Weight focuses primarily on the cultural aspects of identity, though it is a construct designed and guarded by politicians (Weight 2002). Another view of identity, however, is that identity stands at the intersection of politics and culture. This fits with a more international, nation-state based definition of identity; instead of being an internal, artificial construction of the state, the fact that Britain is a nation-state means that the ups and downs that it goes through will work to shape its identity. The role of identity, national pride and the conservative nature of Euroskepticism in Britain today, as central factors in who and why certain people and groups might take a stance against Europe, is expressed in the words of Peter Shearman: “Britain has been an inherently conservative society, reluctant to endorse any change that would effect its traditions and self- perceived superior form of parliamentary democracy” (1999, 92). The many military, political and economic successes of Britain for centuries instilled in the British people a sense of superiority over other nation-states, especially those in neighboring Europe. This explains Britain’s reluctance towards changes that might alter its position as a strong nation-state, a very specific type of “conservatism.” Nonetheless, Shearman’s use of the term “conservative” in his assessment of British attitudes to Europe may not be entirely inaccurate; these feelings of superiority and the desire to protect traditions are just as easily held by those on the extreme left as they are by those on the right. In other words, national pride’s role in creating Euroskepticism, of late more common to ideologically right-wing parties, has been historically seen in British political parties across the ideological spectrum. Only recently has the political right had a monopoly on Euroskeptic and Europhobic behaviors. By calling the factor that
determines the degree of Euroskepticism “patriotism,” “national pride” or “nationalism,” one acknowledges that threat over some type of loss by the nation is involved.

Regardless of which term is used to describe the nationalist sentiment in Britain, a debate continues over whether Britain’s conservatism, nationalism and patriotism can best be described as “cultural” or “psychological.” Both terms are used regularly in the literature on Britain’s relationship with Europe; for both the political parties and the general public of Britain, Euroskepticism has been attributed to some inherently British quality tied to its identity. While either culture or psychology can be used to describe how the phenomenon of Euroskepticism comes about, psychology is the more concrete and explanatory of the two terms. While culture may lead to a particular psychological disposition held by the citizens of a nation, it is their psychology that causes these citizens to form their Euroskeptic opinions. The presence of a sort of national psychology, in the form of a widely held system of attitudes, beliefs and opinions, is seen and covertly expressed in discussions of the Euroskepticism held by Britain’s citizens. While many of these authors simply explain Euroskepticism in terms of cultural identity, taking the additional step of suggesting a large-scale psychological disposition plays a role in forming Euroskepticism provides the luxury of allowing for clearer historical and political explanations of the phenomenon. As parties and the public actively form opinions on European integration and involvement, it is on the basis of a specific thought process rather than characteristics of the people as a whole that cannot be changed over time. By citing psychology as a causal factor in Euroskepticism, the chance for a better explanation than one stating that the phenomenon is simply natural and compulsory is presented.

As will be discussed further below, the interaction between political parties and the public they strive to serve becomes especially clear on the subject of involvement with Europe. The parties themselves act as they do as a result of ideology, but it is an ideology shaped by the fact that Britain itself remains on the edge/outskirts/periphery of Europe. More than simply a geographical separation (which, if geography were the sole factor in an “outsider” mentality towards Europe, would mean countries like Ireland or Greece, which also lack borders with other European Union members, would show Euroskepticism at a much greater level than it does), Britain’s peripheral status has developed historically. Perhaps another viewpoint, that of Britain as a “reluctant” or “awkward” European nation (George 1994; Gowland and Turner 2000; Geddes 2004, 19), more accurately describes the actions of parties towards the EC and EU. In
other words, rather than looking at Britain as an outsider nation separated by geography from the European continent, the more accurate way to see Britain’s separation from Europe is through historical developments since the Second World War. While this argument has been criticized for over-utilizing hindsight while neglecting comparisons with other EU nations (Kaiser 1996, xvi-xvii), the very notion of “awkwardness” stems from Britain’s role as a nation-state and a reluctance towards altering that status in a way which might weaken it. In fact, the strengths of this viewpoint outweigh the suggested methodological disadvantages; the ebb-and-flow nature of British Euroskepticism over time, combined with a review of long-standing patterns of behavior towards Europe, show the presence of a unique relationship with Europe in terms of both Britain as a nation and its political parties. The distinctiveness of the British-European relationship can be traced historically, both in how governments acted in Britain’s integration into the EC/EU, and in how political parties, over time, have discussed Europe in their manifestos to the British public.

**Britain and the EU: A Historical Overview, 1945 to the Present**

Emerging from WWII, Britain remained the strongest of the European states in terms of economics and its sense of an independent nationalism. Maintaining political and trading ties with the Commonwealth, the United States and Europe (arguably prioritized in that order), the European “experiment” initiated in the early 1950s never held the same importance for Britain as it did for the states which formed the European Coal and Steel Community and European Defense Community (namely, France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries). A speech by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the House of Commons in May 1951 captures Britain’s Euroskepticism during this period:

> Where do we stand? We are not members of the European Defense Community, nor do we intend to be merged in a Federal European system. We feel we have a special relation to both, expressed by prepositions: by the preposition ‘with’ but not ‘of’ – we are with them, but not of them. We have our own Commonwealth and Empire. (Geddes 2004, 24)

Churchill viewed Britain as the center of three distinct circles of influence. While “with” these three groups, the strength of Britain on its own (symbolized by its success in the war against overwhelming odds) created a sense for Churchill and others like him that Britain would remain
in control of its own destiny and, therefore, able to decide the degree to which it became involved with any of these groups. Churchill’s conservatism on the issue of Europe is not an isolated phenomenon to him as a political leader, but instead captures the notion of a distinct form of British national identity that is incompatible with a supranational or federal Europe. This identity is central to a proper understanding of British Euroskepticism in general and, more specifically, the source of Euroskepticism in particular political parties.

A wide literature exists on the topic of British identity, its formation and manifestations. In terms of both domestic and international politics, the effect of this strong sense of national identity is a desire by many for national sovereignty. A similar analogy in the American context can be seen with conservative claims that the United Nations threatens to dissolve powers of individual nations, and that American involvement in the UN should be selective and subject to domestic support. Domestically, John Redwood’s statement that “British governments, whether right, left or center, do believe that the most important decisions about British life should be taken by the British government and debated in the British Parliament” (2001, 57). This is a fundamentally different approach to the notions of nationhood and sovereignty, as opposed to Britain’s continental neighbors who prefer, in general, to allow a great many decisions to be made by the power structure of the EU based in Brussels. More than any other factor, nationalism has created a rift between Britain and its less hesitant neighbors on the Continent.

This difference in preference effectively isolates Britain from the rest of Europe. Such differences in philosophy on how decision-making can also be seen in an international context. Based on the Westphalian model of international politics, which gives states the authority to exercise power over certain arenas of politics controllable from within their territorial borders, it is national sovereignty which forces nationalists to question extraterritorial (or, in the case of the European Union, supranational) influence over these political arenas. For centuries, the Westphalian model has elevated the nation-state over all other types of political organization in the international system; while some in Europe have called the superiority of the nation-state into question as the European Union has continued to gain influence, others maintain nationalist sentiments which do not allow them to acknowledge a possibly lessened position of their nations in a wider international context. G. Gordon Betts, in his *The Twilight of Britain: Cultural Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and the Politics of Toleration*, states that the reluctance of Britons towards a supranational European state stems from “forfeiture of sovereignty” otherwise
promised in the generally accepted definition of the nation-state (2002, 118). Those that hold this fear, a great many of them currently in the Conservative Party and the parties of the extreme right, must deal with the conflict arising between the idea that Britain must be reserved and the practical reality that Britain’s strength has paled in comparison to either the European conglomeration of states that seems to continue on regardless of Britain’s full support or the United States, which Britain has increasingly cast its support to in the recent past.

Nationalists, and most notably the most extreme anti-European parties in Britain, equate the integration process to an irrevocable loss of political and economic sovereignty, accompanied by a reduced sense of national identity. As Vernon Bogdanor has described it:

It is, in the last resort, the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, the idea of Westminster as the only sun which provides light and around which other institutions move and have their being, which forms the main conceptual block to appreciating a new division of power. For the concept of sovereignty implies that there must somewhere be a supreme political authority in the Community – either the member states, which means that Community decisions can be nothing more than the product of intergovernmental agreement; or the Community itself, and that would mean…the end of a thousand years of history, the end of the nation-state. (Bogdanor 1996, 149-150)

Proponents of increased involvement with Europe, on the other hand, accept the sentiments of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on the subject of national sovereignty: “[it] will soon prove itself to be a product of the imagination” (Betts 2002, 121). Artificially imagined or not, Britain’s sense of identity and sovereignty have developed from its role as world superpower in the Nineteenth Century, an industrial and economic powerhouse, and the nation’s emergence from WWII as an unoccupied and undefeated nation. Britain’s detached nature from the European continent, not geographically but instead cognitively, make it a distinct and unique case for studying the effects of self-interest and self-identification on political attitudes to Europe. Discussion of this detachment is universal in the literature about Britain and its place in Europe, and stands as the most important (though not the only) factor in determining attitudes towards Europe.

An examination of Euroskepticism as a consequence of identity relies on a clash between nationalism and the trend towards supranationalism and broader international organization seen
in recent decades. For example, polls conducted as recently as 2000 reveal that the desire to join the Euro monetary system increase as feelings of pride in “being British” decrease, and vice-versa (Evans 2003, 223). Still, even those stating that they were “not at all proud” of being British still contained a majority (fifty-three percent) who desired not to increase involvement with Europe, revealing that other extraneous factors beyond identity play a role in determining Euroskeptic attitudes. It is clear to see from these numbers that a psychological disposition, present on a large-scale level, can be seen in Britain today. Rather than the vague “cultural” disposition often cited in the popular press and some academic literature, the acknowledgement of a psychological factor in British Euroskepticism allows for a discussion of how this Euroskepticism arose in the first place and how it manifests itself in modern British political party activity. This psychological disposition is a direct result of centuries of British history, but “Euroskepticism” as it relates to the organization, under many names but generally called the “western European Union,” grew out of post-World War II British political history.

Four distinct phases of British involvement with the European Union must be examined. The first period, from 1945 to 1961, centered on debate over whether Britain should participate at all in the young European Community and how it should deal with those already grouped into a multinational body. Next, the period from 1961 to Britain’s eventual entry into the EC in 1973 and referendum in 1975 centered on discussions of terms of entry and on earlier slighting by European states. Third, from 1975 to 1992, the debate focused on whether to maintain membership and, if so, on how to minimize the loss of influence it held as an independent nation in an environment where sovereignty was being taken away from them on certain fronts. Finally, the period from Maastricht in 1992 to the present can be characterized as one of reluctant acceptance of Union, where the impracticality of withdrawing from the Union has led a hardening of positions on both pro- and anti-European sides of the integration issue combined with fractionalization on each side over the degree to which further integration should be sought.

Following World War II, Britain’s initial drive for membership in the European Community in the early decades of the 1950s marks the beginning of a trend of British distrust in European integration. As one historian describes Britain’s views on the calls for an open-ended commitment to the principle of supranationalism,

Behind this definition lay Britain’s faith in national independence (strengthened by Labour’s belief in a planned national economy), her contempt for continental
weakness and ‘impracticality’, and the idea that Britain could remain a world power, aided by America and the Commonwealth. In 1950, such thinking was inevitable: Britain, the victor of 1945, was psychologically incapable of surrendering her independence. [Emphasis added] (Burgess 1995, 152)

This psychology of distrust, at this point in time of British history, could not be attributed specifically to either leftist or rightist political ideology; both conservative figures like Churchill and liberal socialists like Clement Attlee equally displayed distrust in the emerging European system. What this psychological disposition did not create, however, was the desire to oppose moves towards European integration under the Schumann Plan outright. While British lack of involvement might have the effect of leaving Europe’s strongest nation out of the loop in European affairs, Britain would never go so far as to hinder other states from forming associations of one type or another in a manner that would violate their national sovereignty. The “heavy political responsibility” of preventing the formation of a European association of states left the UK Foreign Office in a position of Britain “[associating] itself with whatever bodies or organizations” would emerge from the early process of European integration (Lord 1996, 123). Following this philosophy of “laissez-faire” involvement with Western Europe and its decision to group together, the Labour government of Attlee (1951-1955) decided to withdraw from the negotiations that would lead to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952.

Britain found itself in “the awkward position of having to consider a text [the Treaty] without having taken part in any of the discussion and bargaining leading up to it,” violating the sense that Britain should have say in every aspect of its political future (Lord 1996, 139-140). Britain’s failure to enter the EC at its outset stemmed from a fear of supranationalism, a belief that integration “was idealistic rather than practical and that it would inevitably fail,” and a refusal to acknowledge that obstacles to entering the European Community would be immense (Geddes 2004, 59). Yet this was only one withdrawal that left the other European states negotiating a community feeling slighted. Harold Macmillan’s Conservative, after terms as Prime Minister by Winston Churchill (1951-1955) and Anthony Eden (1955-1957), withdrew again only five years after Britain’s first withdrawal from another set of negotiations, this time those for the Treaty of Rome (1957). The Macmillan government claimed that this treaty, which established the European Economic Community, threatened Britain’s “continuing global
responsibilities” (Gamble 2003, 115). Ties to the Commonwealth and the government’s fear that the customs union being called for by the other states in the negotiations would lead to increased external regulation led to, in effect, Britain’s complete exclusion from the initial formation of a European Community. These two withdrawals were pivotal in establishing a stunted relationship between Britain and the EC, as even Macmillan’s personal preferences towards a united Europe with Britain in a leading role crumbled in the face of Europhobia from the opposition and even within his own party.

At this point a word about the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is in order. Seven nations (Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal) began meetings in Oslo in 1955 to create a loosely structured industrial free trade area. Confusion about the EFTA’s exact purpose quickly ensued, since Britain (the largest member) saw “few economic advantages” from membership, and in fact created greater competition for itself (Young 2000, 63). Nevertheless, the lack of regulation and prominent leadership role seemed to suit the Macmillan government, even though Britain’s trade with “the Six” EC members increased to a larger degree than trade with its EFTA partners. Labour abstained from the ratification of EFTA membership when a vote was finally taken in 1959, the Liberals continued to insist that Britain should associate with the EC instead, and the members of the EC treated the EFTA “as a virtual irrelevancy” (Young 2000, 64). The most extreme Euroskeptics in Britain claimed that even the looser structure of the EFTA represented a “tight economic and political union” that “irretrievably eroded” British sovereignty (Burgess 1995, 155). EFTA, to some, represented a rival for the EC, though a smaller, weaker and less dynamic organization. The ultimate effect of British membership in the EFTA was increased difficulty in attaining EC membership (due to reluctance of “the Six” to the EFTA in general), as well as a reaffirmation of Britain’s peripheral position in relation to the EC. EFTA members, and especially Britain, had seen the organization as a “useful bridge” to the EC, but saw this value diminish as the EC rose in prominence (Kaiser 1996, 106). It is telling that the EFTA members hesitantly entered the EC after it became clear that EFTA could not compete, nor that Britain, Sweden and Denmark (the three largest EFTA members who later entered the EC) remain to this day the most Euroskeptic members of the EC/EU. EFTA’s members would all eventually succeed or attempt to earn membership in the EC, and the leadership in EFTA which Britain sought to achieve neither aided
it in its relationship with the EC nor created a opposing trade union with a chance of competing against the purportedly more intrusive EC.

While the decision for self-exclusion surprised very few either inside or outside of Britain, Britain would nevertheless put forward its first application for EC membership in 1961, still under the Macmillan government. A remarkable set of circumstance developed since Britain’s withdrawal from negotiations earlier in Macmillan’s term, and historical events had since the mid-1950s had, in effect, shown British weaknesses in the international system and led to a change in opinion. The British defeat at Suez in 1956 that unseated Eden, and the lack of assistance for Britain from the United States, showed the Conservative government the need for allies and the futility of acting alone in matters of international politics. A postwar slump in trade with the Commonwealth, especially at the hands of increased American trade success, also brought on the desire to increase Britain’s number of trading partners. The change in Britain’s economic situation allowed for a “cost-benefit” debate on membership to be undertaken in Parliament. While many of the earlier fears in both major parties lingered, an acknowledgement of the “Paris-Bonn Axis” and its ever-increasing place in British interests on the continent allowed the government to have a case in Parliamentary debate (Burgess 1995, 152-153). Also, the withdrawal of Britain from its Empire eliminated a long-held Conservative symbol of strength and created within Macmillan’s party a sentiment that increased ties with Europe could fill an ever-growing void in relations with the Empire. Nevertheless, there were those who felt that such a substitution would further weaken Britain, though at this point they were a minority in the Conservative government. Hugh Gaitskell’s Labour Party also cited “sovereignty” as a reason for opposition; aside from the traditional national character argument, the possible repercussions on socialism (i.e. the welfare state, worker’s and union rights, and nationalized public entities) in Britain in the midst of a capitalist Common Market bothered the Labour opposition. The most vehement protests came from a small group of Labour backbenchers, and the debates on European integration began to catch the notice of the press and public during this time. While Gaitskell was more interested in exploiting the mistakes of the party in power for domestic political gain for his party (he initially did not even make his stance on the EC known publicly), it was the “anti-marketeer” factions of the Labour Party and even those in the Conservative Party placed the prospects for Macmillan’s success into question (Young 2000, 69).
These debates, more than anything else, brought to the forefront questions of Macmillan’s intentions and the “phobia of federalism” inherent in Britain at the time (Burgess 1995, 156). The idea of a federal European state had somehow become “un-British,” but Macmillan and others still held that involvement was critical for Britain’s future economic success. The balancing act that was necessary to maintain ties with (and benefit from possible economic successes in) Europe, while appeasing both those in the governing Conservative Party who wanted a deeper relationship and those fearing loss of national sovereignty, has led one commentator to label the government’s mixed behaviors at this time “schizophrenia” (Wilkes 1997, 8). In fact, the decision to apply for membership by Macmillan in 1961 remains a debated topic, claimed by some to be a “revolution” in British European policy, and by others to simply be a “change in tactics” designed to bring about traditional British nationalist policies (Wilkes 1997, 11). In the midst of this decision lies a great variance on opinion on how to proceed by all parties in British politics; the turn to Europe was a leap of faith which left Britain vulnerable to the decision of the European Coal and Steel Community’s six member states and Macmillan and his government vulnerable to claims that he had presented threats to British interests while simultaneously seeking to further them.

Ironically enough, resistance present on both ideological side of the political spectrum based of threats to Britain’s strength as a nation did not match opposition by some EC members, and most notably Charles De Gaulle’s France. De Gaulle believed that Britain’s prioritization of its relationships with the Commonwealth and the United States over that with Europe countered the direction that the Community should follow. (In truth, De Gaulle’s vision for Europe was a conglomeration of nation-states, but with France in the defining leadership role; aside from the leadership role, Britain held a similar desire for the operation of the EC.) In 1962, De Gaulle went so far as to state “in the Six as they existed France had some weight and could say no even against the Germans. France could stop policies with which she disagreed because in the Six she had a very strong position. Once the United Kingdom…had entered the organization things would be different” (Gowland and Turner 2000a, 106). The nationalist sentiment once cited by Britain as a reason for avoiding membership and negotiations was now being the main reason for another nation, France, to deny them the membership they now sought under Macmillan.

Less than five years later, this time under the direction of Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson (1964-1970), another attempt was mounted to obtain EC membership. The beginning of
the new round of debates on European integration in 1966-7 marked a change in the traditional “go-it-alone” attitude of the British Labour Party, and Wilson claimed that the benefits of political influence in European affairs even if economic benefits “proved to be no more than evenly balanced” (Gowland and Turner 2000a, 120). “Go-it-alone” would mean, in effect, continued economic and political decline for Britain. In spite of the benefits Wilson claimed would come from membership, in reality the best explanation for Wilson’s change in policy was more domestic that international. Wilson “wanted to outflank [Edward] Heath and the Conservatives, who continuously advocated EEC entry” (Young 2000, 89). Wilson also asserted that the potential to shape the direction of European policy, especially once Charles De Gaulle died or stepped down from his leadership position in France. Opposition to membership during this round of debates focused primarily on negative economic consequences of membership; payments to the Community were already seen as detrimental to nations like France and Germany, and critics held that an annual growth of 3 percent of GNP would be necessary to offset the costs of membership, and that this level of growth was in no way guaranteed (Gowland and Turner 2000a, 121). The outcome of this attempt at obtaining membership closely resembled the first attempt. The Ambassador to Paris, Patrick Reilly, claimed that De Gaulle remained “extremely skeptical” about British entry and ready to discourage the British application again (Young 2000, 91). Wilson went so far as to threaten to adjust British military commitments on the continent, but the need to devalue the pound sterling in November 1967 provided the excuse De Gaulle needed to cast a veto on British membership without provoking a major crisis for the EC (Young 2000, 95). Even though Wilson had succeeded in converting the opinions of his traditionally Euroskeptic Labour Party to favor membership, De Gaulle again ceased all chances for a successful application process.

The time between De Gaulle’s second veto and Britain’s eventual successful entry into the EC in 1973 proved to be critical to British identity and British opinion towards Europe. Not only had Britain been twice rebuffed in its attempts to gain membership, but their role as a world superpower continued to dwindle as former colonies continued to gain independence (most notably Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe), the United States under Lyndon Johnson refused to treat Wilson as an equal, and Britain’s economic situation necessitated their abandonment of a large number of bases and seaports “East of Suez” (Young 2000, 96). Regardless of previous failures, which created bitterness both in the government and opposition (especially for Wilson, who was
forced to continue fighting for membership in the midst of declining public esteem for his failure), the practical need for membership continued to become clearer and clearer. In 1969, De Gaulle was forced to resign due to domestic strife in France, most notably the strikes and student riots of May-June 1968. With De Gaulle out of the picture, Wilson decided that the time had arrived to come to new terms of entry into the EC. 1970’s defeat of Wilson to the Conservatives under Edward Heath meant that the strongest proponent to entry into a wider Europe now sat as Prime Minister. Heath nevertheless faced the fact that a majority of his party’s voting supporters remained hostile to integration; the new Prime Minister was forced to carefully choose his new cabinet to be pro-EC. The methods used by Heath in this new round of negotiations would also change drastically from the previous two failed attempts. For example, Heath was more willing to accept membership without demanding changes to the structure of the Community as it stood. He nevertheless retained a rhetorical balance, by stating that the “full-hearted consent of Parliament and people” would be necessary to maintain any type of permanent membership (Young 2000, 101). While Wilson had succeeded in re-entering negotiations, it was Heath who began to negotiate the terms themselves. The specific terms agreed upon before the 1973 entry of Britain into the EC show a marked difference from earlier applications, as Britain now found itself entering into an established organization which differed greatly in its mechanisms from those that Britain was used to politically. Now desperate to enter the EC, Heath accepted terms that were criticized as too sacrificial to British interests by the Labour opposition. From the starting day of negotiation on June 30, 1970 to accession to membership the first day of 1973, Britain was placed on a fast track for entry. Back home, however, the Commons saw an increase in opposition from Wilson and Labour (which had done an about-face on the issue of entry after their surprise electoral defeat), as well as from approximately sixty right-wing Conservative Party members led by Enoch Powell (Young 2000, 106). The sting from 1967’s failure to enter under Labour’s rule had left the party embittered about Heath’s success in establishing membership, and those Conservatives remaining in opposition in spite of their party’s success were the true Europhobes of their party. In fact, one author characterized the referendum period of 1970 to 1975 as “one of the most divisive times in British Labour Party history” (Geyer 1997, 21). In spite of internal party divisions, a free vote on joining the EC in the House of Commons gave approval to accession with a mixed-support margin of 356 to 244 votes.
Having voted on and obtained membership, Britain now faced the need for a public referendum in order to approve the steps of Heath’s government. Heath’s preference for European affairs over American or Commonwealth was unique for a postwar British Prime Minister. The Labour opposition seized upon this fact, and began efforts to convince the public that Heath had sacrificed too much sovereignty and emerged victorious from the February 1974 general election. Even some of Enoch Powell’s followers in the Commons turned to Europhobes in their voting constituencies and urged them to vote Labour in the election. This election marked a new development in British politics, where European involvement became a pivotal issue in the election and led to the downfall of a standing government. Wilson’s first action after the election was a call for renegotiation of terms of entry. In order to do so, however, Wilson would again have to flip on the issue, and members of his party who themselves remained firm against European integration, such as Industry Minister Tony Benn, began to question Wilson. The renegotiation, aside from three points that were not truly obstructed or banned by membership, centered on altering EC agricultural policies to favor cheaper prices and Commonwealth exports, maintaining rights over regional and industrial policies, and changing the financial requirements agreed at during the membership negotiations, and specifically contributions to the EC budget (King 1977, 75-76; Young 2000, 113). Benn led the calls for a referendum on the new terms, gained surprisingly easily during a period of leadership changes for both France and Germany. The cabinet finally agreed to a referendum in January 1975 (16 voted to 7), the split in the Labour Party led to a call by Wilson on “agreeing to differ” (King 1977, 80), and decided on a June 5, 1975 date for the vote. Anti-EC forces continued to frame their opposition in terms of lost “sovereignty,” in a way showing that the terms of debate had changed little since Macmillan’s first attempts at entry into the EC in 1961 (King 1977, 114). Pro-European campaigns, on the other hand, stressed both the economic potential of membership and the opportunity, once firmly in, to lead on its own terms in Europe. The referendum yielded a 67.2 percent “yes” vote, with 64.5 percent of the voting population turning out; polls conducted prior to the debate revealed that the pro-business and pro-farmer message used to gather support had the greatest resonance with Conservative Party supporters in rural areas and of the upper and upper-middle classes (King 1977, 133). The most noteworthy effect of the referendum, rather than a solidified show of opinion on Europe or guarantee of support for Europe in the future, was an absolute connection of Britain to an organized European association. From this point
forward, withdrawal from the EC would not be the option for anti-Europe forces that it was prior to this vote.

The passage of the referendum ushered in a new period of Euroskepticism, and Euroskeptics were forced to change tactics and rhetoric. While some continued to insist that withdrawal was still possible and in the best interest for Britain (with Conservative MP Enoch Powell among the most vehement), Eurosceptic rhetoric and behavior generally began to change in its acceptance of membership as a given. James Callaghan, who succeeded Wilson as Prime Minister in 1976, was plagued by preparations for Britain’s first European elections, and especially debate over whether proportional representation (supported by Callaghan) or the traditional British “first-past-the-post” system should be used in the election (Young 2000, 122). In addition, the first calls for currency union entered the European debate from Germany and France. Callaghan earned the reputation of being indecisive and “lukewarm” on whether to enter this currency union (as well as on Europe as a whole, a product of attempting to maintain a unified party), though finally deciding to do so reluctantly in 1978. The 1979 election brought to the Prime Minister position a woman calling for a “determined but positive” attitude towards the European Community, Margaret Thatcher. This electoral promise would not be the entire truth other the matter; Thatcher soon showed that her policy to Europe would be strongly nationalist and dedicated to returning to traditional British foreign policy featuring “suspicion of European commitments, a strong defense and a close alliance with America” (Young 2000, 126-127). Economic depression at the outset of Thatcher’s first term meant limited growth (as was previously promised) from membership with continued commitments being called for in the form of budget contributions to the EC. Certain events in the early 1980s also hardened Britain’s position. The first calls for institutional strengthening (an actual “union”) came about during Italy’s presidency of the EC in 1983. Greece’s entry into the EC and calls for membership by Spain and Portugal meant that British Euroskeptics would have more reasons for skepticism: Britain might very well receive fewer EC development funds, have a lessened say in decision-making, and not have the opportunity to reform the EC in a manner it sound suitable. Thatcher’s government met criticism from the Labour Party (which had begun shifts back towards extreme left-wing socialism following its 1979 electoral defeat), as well as some Conservatives who held that Thatcher’s “insistence on national sovereignty was unreal” (Young 2000, 138-139).
Though the Danes and Greeks held similar sentiments against deeper integration and an increased role for the EC, Britain saw both the Conservatives and Labour in a limited and reluctant period of acceptance of Britain’s membership. Labour’s turnabout on the issue of Europe mimicked socialist party positions in other European states, who accepted the fact that the socialist agenda might only be able to come about in concert with other nations (Young 2000, 122). Even the trade unions, traditionally one of the most Europhobic segments of the Labour Party, acknowledged they problems they faced as workers were also seen in other EC member states (Young 2000, 145). In 1988, Jacques Delors (President of the EC Commission) spoke to the Trade Unions Congress and suggested that the EC’s attempts to enact a social agenda would aid the cause of workers throughout Europe, causing the TUC’s leadership to admit that it had been incorrect in its past reluctance to support British membership and deepening integration into the EC. Furthermore, the majority of Conservatives continued to maintain support of the EC status quo, so long as changes that might threaten sacred “British sovereignty” did not take place.

Thatcher, in effect, became isolated from her own party and the opposition, with her strongest stance on the issue of Europe being taken in Bruges in September 1988. She claimed that Britain had not “rolled back the frontiers of the state on to see them re-imposed...[by] a European super-state” (Young 2000, 144). Furthermore, Thatcher warned of the “folly” of reducing British identity to “some sort of identikit European personality” (Geddes 2004, 196). Thatcher’s fear of what she recognized as a socialist intrusion into British government and the erosion of British traditions led to the creation of a “new Right” in Britain, a new group characterized by extreme Europhobia in the face of increasing European integration. This “new Right” European policy simply did not correspond to the Conservatives claims (made for decades) that they represented the “party of Europe” in the British system, and would be a major factor in Thatcher’s fall from power in 1990. Stephen George, while quick to point out Thatcher’s abrasiveness to the European Community, nevertheless feels that her early policies made Britain “a normal and skillful actor in the Community game” (1994, 206). Thus, Thatcher’s early policies, which favored European integration in a manner that mimicked growing favor by the British public towards integration, eventually gave way to rhetoric heavy in patriotic sentiment and threats of lost sovereignty. Thatcher’s legacy on Europe was a type of
Euroskepticism readily adopted by members of her own party as well as parties that would develop in the future opposed to further European integration.

Thatcher’s resignation brought John Major into the post of Prime Minister, and his decidedly more accepting sentiment towards European integration coincided with the majority of Conservative Party MPs. He immediately faced the prospect of a European Monetary Union (EMU), led by a newly-unified Germany, and began attempts to forestall moves that would place Britain into a secondary policymaking position and threaten the replacement of the British pound (both fodder for the “new Right” and their Euroskeptic mindset). The momentum towards EMU amongst member states was definitely present in the EC, and the Conservative Party divided between Europhobes, Euroskeptics, and Euroenthusiasts. Major’s support lay primarily with the center and right of the Conservative Party, which consisted mostly of Euroskeptics and Europhobes (Cowley 1999, 2). Nevertheless, Major found himself in a position where his supporters expected him to be more reluctant towards Europe than the general trends in Europe would allow him to be. The April 1992 general election brought in a great number of Euroskeptics while simultaneously retiring or removing Conservative Europhiles from the pre-1970 period (Cowley 1999, 6).

Major’s government, greatly divided, had to oversee the process of creating European Union begun at Maastricht. In fact, eleven different subgroups of the Conservative Party developed as a result of Maastricht, with the “Bruges Group” including Margaret Thatcher as the most conservative on the European issue. These groups had a positive correlation between the degree of Euroskepticism and the right-leaning ideology held by group members (Turner 2000, 26). These groups had the effect of forcing Major to attempt to please all segments of his party at Maastricht; He would have to maintain membership in the EU, which was becoming more involved in a number of matters of social and economic decision-making and governance, while holding firm on Britain’s “national” rights in other areas to appease the Euroskeptic wing of his party. The British negotiations under Major had a mixed record at Maastricht; In order to get certain concessions, the British were forced to downplay the concessions as parliamentary debate on deepening union began (Blair 1999, 75). Because Euroskeptics in the Conservative Party lacked unity, Major was able to increase Britain’s involvement in the EU. Although backbenchers were becoming more vocal in their opposition to Major, Thatcher herself intervened and called for acceptance of Major’s negotiation tactics in order to keep the
Conservative Party together to some degree (Blair 1999, 105-107). Britain held a “trump card” in the Union’s necessity to include Britain in any type of successful common foreign or economic policies, and as a result Major was able to accomplish more interference in integration than he would have otherwise (Blair 1999, 140-141). One success Major was able to gain for Euroskeptics was an “opt-out” clause which allowed Britain to absent itself from certain requirements of the social chapter of Maastricht, the possibility of a future common currency, and other European initiatives (Dorey 1999, 232; Turner 2000, 151). Still, the most extreme Euroskeptics saw their fears about an intrusive Europe (formed in the 1970s and 1980s) coming to fruition in Maastricht. Rebellions ensued in votes on approval for the Maastricht Treaty, and two failed votes occurred before the Treaty on European Union was finally ratified on 2 August 1993. Major, watching his party crumble and meeting heavy criticism for selling out to Europe, became the target of blame by his own party. The 1992 general election saw a downplaying of the European issue by both major parties, but Conservative divisions had led to a reduction of the party’s majority to 21 MPs in the Commons. Major would subsequently be subjected to a number of political crises that crippled him as Prime Minister and his party in government. The most poignant example of Major’s difficulties came on 16 September 1992, later to be known as “Black Wednesday.” Cuts in European interest rates through the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) led to a devaluation of the British pound, and Major made the decision to withdraw from ERM. This had the effect of crippling the pound for the party known for its sound economic outlook, and brought about a rapid decrease in Major’s popularity. Tax increases that followed also drew public ire (the Conservative Party’s 1992 manifesto promised not to raise taxes during its tenure in office), and backbenchers and their constituents looked to Major’s decisions to join the ERM as the reason for Britain’s economic woes (Young 2000, 163).

By 1995, Major resigned to avoid an impending mutiny in his party; because the European issue had split the Conservative Party into so many competing factions, Major was re-elected to the party leadership again in spite of his resignation (Wincott, Buller and Hay 1999, 106). While Major maintained power, his party was nevertheless heavily divided and vulnerable to an organized and unified opposition. As Young points out, “a combination of revels and opposition parties was a potential danger and over time the government majority was likely to be trimmed still further through by-election defeats” (Young 2000, 159). Major was forced to keep both Europhiles and Euroskeptics in his cabinet, but attempts at reconciliation still seemed
impossible; Jim Buller states that the European issue created so many subgroups with differing degrees of (and reasons for) Euroskepticism that no one specific set of answers could solve the Conservative Party’s problems (Buller 2000, 141).

After Maastricht, Labour began to shift to the political center more than it had at any point in the party’s history. Furthermore, with Tony Blair at the helm of this “New Labour” movement, calls to reverse the Labour Party’s anti-EC position (held since Labour’s extreme socialist shift in 1983) led to a unified position in the party that coincided with the trends towards integration brought about at Maastricht (Coates and Lawler 2000, 3). While the Conservatives under Major fell prey to their own divisions, Labour rallied and gained strength until securing enough support to handedly defeat the Conservatives in the 1997 general election. The issue that remained most prevalent for British-EU relations at this time was the prospect of a common currency, the Euro. Major had appeased Euroenthusiasts in his party with the possibility that Britain would keep the option of joining the common currency on the table. Labour itself still contained some opponents for a currency union, but it seemed a far less divisive issue than in the Conservative Party. Tony Blair put forward a commitment to reduce the British reputation for being the obstructionist state of the EU (Coates and Lawler 2000, 242-243). Labour’s 1997 victory was therefore greeted with acclaim in Europe, and Blair placed pro-European MPs into key cabinet posts. Swift passage of European treaties, such as the Amsterdam Treaty (which reduced Britain’s chances to use an “opt-out” for points in the Social Chapter of the EU Treaty), came about as a result of a huge parliamentary majority and a (comparatively) united party front on the issue of Europe. Blair’s government took steps that would put Britain on track to inclusion in the EMU (while simultaneously avoiding specific commitments), but like the Conservatives continued to use “national interest” as the key factor in deciding whether to deepen involvement in Europe. The Labour government established a five-point test to determine the time that it would be open to full membership in a common currency; Britain would need the guarantees of sustainable convergence between itself and the other EU member states, flexibility to cope with domestic economic change, positive effects on investment, positive impact on the financial services industry, and positive effects on employment (Coates and Lawler 2000, 246). These requirements, while showing that there was a chance to deepen membership in a way that would please Europhiles, also set high standards that would satisfy Euroskeptic fears over ties to Europe increasing too quickly. Britain’s opportunity to hold the
The presidency of the EU during the first half of 1998 gave Labour the chance to show Britain’s commitment to the EU and preside over the decision-making process on a common currency and eastward enlargement. While claiming a leadership position in the EU, Britain still remained peripheral in the Union as a result of its decision to remain outside of a common currency. Absence from the single currency, a middle-of-the-road status in policymaking in areas which would have been considered the exclusive realm of the nation-state by Labour less than two decades prior, and a general “fresh start” on European policy has led to Labour being characterized as pro-Europe. While Labour showed more openness than its Conservative predecessors had the luxury of doing, a degree of modesty was kept in order to maintain centrism between Euroskeptics and Euroenthusiasts in the party and in the British public.

The prospect of a common currency and deeper involvement in Europe also sparked the creation of a United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), founded by university professor and former Bruges group member Alan Sked. UKIP’s formation lost the Conservatives (and to a lesser degree, Labour) marginal votes at the parties’ ideological fringes (Young 2000, 170). While Labour has moved to a position favoring European integration (albeit with a modicum of hesitancy required to keep his party as unified as possible), an opposite pull has occurred both within the Conservative Party and, more notably, in nationalist parties like UKIP.

Since 2000, the European issue has reshaped the political party landscape of Britain drastically in comparison to how they existed coming out of the Second World War. First, it has become the primary issue deciding how parties cleave ideologically. In harmony to the results in Chapter One, Euroskepticism has continued to move ideologically to the right in the last three decades and parties have formed to capture politicians and voters whose views on Europe were too extreme for the necessarily center-seeking major parties in Britain. Even within the major parties, divisions have persisted on the issue of Europe that constantly act as a possible obstacle to electoral success and parliamentary unity. A second trend in post-WWII British-European relations is a balanced policy between seeking ties to the European “sphere” once talked about by Churchill and the desire to maintain national sovereignty where possible. Nationalism plays into this trend strongly, but there is also a tendency for parties in governmental power to be more amenable to Europe than they would be out of power. Even Euroskeptics like Thatcher and, at various periods, the Labour Party adopted a friendlier approach to Europe when in power, both to appease Europhiles in their respective parties and to maintain positive interaction in trade and
diplomacy with Europe. A final trend present in postwar British relations with Europe is the maintenance of recalcitrant rhetoric towards Europe even by parties pursuing positive policies to Europe. This “cautiously ahead” approach becomes clearer in an examination of manifestos, undertaken below. While Britain has been slower than other member states in enacting some policies, such as the social charter of the EU, the common currency, and other common policies for security, defense and immigration, Britain has still progressively adopted these policies with only a few instances of slipping back into strictly nationalistic policy. The language used by politicians, however, has never wavered in using terminology guaranteeing the public that Britain’s national interests would come before all other things.

**Party Positions and British Euroskepticism: Change and Continuity Viewed through Manifestos**

Within the manifestos, patterns of language emerge that indicate sentiments towards the European Union unique to the British case. Regardless of individual party positions, certain common factors exist with all British political parties in regards to how they present positions on the European Union. Parties tend to acknowledge a certain degree of Euroskepticism present in the British public. As the party’s ultimate role is to gain votes for candidates at election time, catering to (or, more cynically, at least appearing to cater to) public sentiment is critical. Resultantly, parties adopt stances that address the fears and hesitancy some constituent voters have towards Europe. Euroskeptic sentiment, though seen at various points in time throughout these manifestos, does not remain consistent for each party over time. Party positions on Europe, with the exception of the Liberal Democrats (who have generally been Europhilic in both their rhetoric and political behavior) and the United Kingdom Independence Party (who, though very recent, appear staunchly anti-Europe and unwilling to alter their stance on the issue), vary over time. This temporal variation deserves further attention, especially as Euroskepticism appears now to be much more firmly attached to parties of the right than at any time since Britain’s first attempts at membership in the EC during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Even though this variation in policy towards Europe exists in the two major political parties, it coexists with a constant thread of nationalist rhetoric, forged over centuries and solidified after WWII, which also presents itself in the manifestos.
It is worth noting that Parliament and the parties within it, to a much greater degree than the broader public, has been the key arena for debate on Europe. As Andrew Geddes points out, the general British public, until very recently, has viewed European integration as a peripheral issue (2004, 183). While having its effect on public attitudes, parties have played the greatest role in catalyzing and shaping public attitudes on Europe. More than any other reason, this is why political parties, their ideological leanings, and their positions on Europe provide the best areas of study when determining the character of British attitudes towards Europe. As such, manifests are critical in studying the image parties hope to portray to the public as well as the policies they advocate. By analyzing manifests, one has the greatest chance of coming to broader conclusions about British Euroskepticism.

**Conservative Party**

The UK Conservative Party has labeled itself as the “party of Europe” for more years than any other active party in the British political system today. This stems from the party’s early support of European integration, specifically on the basis of the EC’s potential to increase Britain’s trade partnerships with Europe. This notion of support for Europe by the Conservatives is more of a historical suggestion propagated by the party itself than an absolute fact. British enthusiasm about Europe based on its short-term economic potential did not run deep; the influence of Euroskeptics has had a great influence on the party throughout the party’s history. Since the Thatcher era of the 1980s, the role as the party of Europe in Britain has been called into question by a hijacking of the party by Euroskeptics. While today’s Conservative Party has been overwhelmed by Euroskeptic sentiment, the Party has been in power during many of the occurrences of Britain deepening ties with the EC/EU. As mentioned above, this has not occurred without internal competition as well as external. The Conservatives have also found themselves in competition with a growing number of third parties, representing the extreme positions of the EU membership debate, and with Labour for voter support. Throughout their history, however, the label of “party of Europe” has been juxtaposed with strongly patriotic (nationalist) rhetoric and insistence that all actions taken by the party center primarily on furthering (a fairly vaguely defined) notion of British interests.

The first mention of a proposed European Community, indirectly, came in the 1964 general election manifesto. Prior to this point, postwar Conservative manifestos concentrated its
discussion of foreign affairs on the welfare of the Commonwealth and curbing the possible spread of Communism. The European Coal and Steel Community, the organization which would eventually become the European Community and later the European Union, eluded any detailed mention in the 1951, 1955 and 1959 manifestos. This is surprising, considering the facts that the Conservatives held government throughout this period, and Harold Macmillan’s government led Britain’s first attempt to enter the European Community in the first years of the 1960s. 1959’s manifesto only gives a vague promise of remaining “an industrial free market embracing all of Western Europe,” but fails to lay out a mechanism for joining a European association (Dale 2000a, 131). The Conservatives seemed unwilling to bring any specifics into their discussion of British integration into Europe, arguably because they themselves may not have known exactly what was required of them at this point. 1964’s manifesto stated that while Britain was able to maintain membership in a European Free Trade Area (EFTA), “entry into the European Economic Community is not open to us in existing circumstances, and no question of fresh negotiations can arise at present.” Furthermore, any cooperation with European states must remain “consistent with our Commonwealth ties” (Dale 2000a, 145). This marks a reversal in the Conservative’s pro-European sentiment so often bragged about by later governments (i.e. their “party of Europe” rhetoric), and this change stemmed from the failure in negotiating membership.

The rise of Edward Heath to the post of Conservative leadership and the 1966 election manifesto which followed took a step back from the rhetoric of protecting the Commonwealth relationship at the expense of a possible relationship with Europe. Labour had been in government under Harold Wilson since 1964, the Conservatives having lost the previous election in 1964 by only seven-tenths of one percent of the vote. The Conservatives sought to make use of the new European issue for electoral gain. This manifesto also reveals a trend that would be seen in the future for both the Conservative and Labour Parties, namely that each party would wait until they were out of government before putting forward more specific strategies for dealing with the EC. In this manifesto, Heath and the Conservatives promise to “work energetically for entry into the European Common Market at the first favourable opportunity,” through “relating the development of our own policies to those of the Common Market, where appropriate.” The Conservatives furthermore called for “joint projects which need not await our membership of the Common Market: particularly where large-scale scientific and technological...
resources are called for” (Dale 2000a, 168). This call to action actually played a role in Labour Prime Minister’s change in position from denial of support to reluctant support for the EC. In other words, domestic politics and attempts by parties to “one-up” the other with their issues at election time (with successful entry to the EC on positive terms providing the chance at future political bragging rights) helped greatly to push Britain along in its process to gain EC membership.

The 1970 manifesto, again coming from a party in opposition, called for a strengthened Britain that could “negotiate with the European Community confident in the knowledge that we can stand on our own if the price is too high” (Dale 2000a, 181). Seizing upon a period of nationalist sentiment in the British public (a reaction to Britain’s economy showing signs of what would be a significant slump over most of the following decade), the Conservatives called for EC membership as a way to make “a stronger Britain in the world,” where “economic growth and a higher standard of living would result from having a larger market” (Dale 2000a, 196). Following a second French veto, this manifesto is almost insistent on Britain’s entry into the EC. This insistence, greatly fostered by party leader Heath, would come to fruition in Britain’s entry into the EC in 1973. For now, the label of “party of Europe” for the Conservatives had the support of their success in obtaining membership, and according to the Conservatives under terms that were in Britain’s best interest. Thus, the February 1974 manifesto cited the “benefit for British membership for…export trade.” Addressing claims by the opposition Labour Party that the Conservative government, in their haste to enter the EC, had done so on terms detrimental to Britain, the manifesto attempted damage control by stating that it was “far too soon to attempt a complete assessment of the implications for Britain” and that while “we have made it clear that we are not satisfied with every aspect of Community arrangements, [we] have sought – and will continue to seek – changes where they are desirable” (Dale 2000a, 223-224). In spite of these promises, the Conservatives lost the February 1974 election to Labour.

Labour’s minority status forced an election only eight months later, in October 1974. As EC membership efforts by the Conservatives had obviously not been enough to guarantee electoral success, this election marked a back-pedaling on the issue of Europe by the Conservatives. Again saying that the decision by past Conservative governments was a positive one whose benefits could be claimed by their actions, the manifesto nevertheless attempts to deflect blame by stating that “all recent governments…have concluded that membership of the
community is essential,” and “the terms secured by the last Conservative government were supported by those members of the Labour government most qualified to judge them” (Dale 2000a, 260).

Margaret Thatcher’s entry to party leadership and her 1979 manifesto continued the trend to take credit for the positive aspects of membership while insisting on change and blaming Labour for “[preventing Britain] from taking advantage of the opportunities which membership offers.” At this point, even though Thatcher insisted on a “common-sense Community which resists excessive bureaucracy,” she still maintained that negotiation and change was possible while maintaining full, active membership in the EC (Dale 2000a, 181). The 1983 and 1987 manifestos under Thatcher continued to equivocate on the behaviors of the Community, going so far as to criticize “petty acts of Brussels’ bureaucracy” (Dale 2000a, 308). In comparison to the damaging withdrawal proposals of Labour in 1983 and their attempts at recovering from the damage caused by this position in 1987 (discussed further below), even the increasingly hostile criticisms leveled towards the EC failed to bring the Conservatives into a “Euroskeptic” status. Throughout Thatcher’s term as Prime Minister, “British interests” and “bargaining power” remained central goals (Dale 2000a, 281; 308; 349).

With Thatcher’s removal from the post of Prime Minister and John Major’s rise to the post, coincided with the opening of negotiations to create a European Union. Dealing with divisions in the Conservative Party (many perpetuated by Euroskeptic and Europhobic Thatcherites), the 1992 manifesto states that a monetary union “will only come about by 1997” (Dale 2000a, 363). In hindsight, this prediction proved false (the Union initial functions began at Maastricht) and cautious in a manner that showed an attempt by Major to appease his party’s Euroskeptics. The manifesto denied automatic commitments to the union without making “our own unfettered decision on whether to join” (Dale 2000a, 363). Even in bragging about Britain’s entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), Major cautions that it is “not a magic wand” and does not necessitate deeper involvement. The self-imposed label of “Party of Europe in Britain” forced equivocation on the Conservatives once Euroskeptics in the party began to increase in both vigor and number.

The most recent manifestos show a Conservative Party in continued retreat from its position as the “Party of Europe.” In competition with Tony Blair’s “New Labour” Party in 1997, the Conservative manifesto called for a “free-market Europe of sovereign nation states”
and focused on British accomplishments and how Britain surpassed other EU member states on a number of fronts (Dale 2000a, 422; 449-450). The nationalist elements of the Party had obviously had its effect on the party’s platform; In an section of the 1997 manifesto titled “A Confident, United and Sovereign Nation,” the Conservatives call for moves to make the EU “do less, but do it better,” for retaining Britain’s veto and for opposing “more powers being given to the European Parliament at the expense of national parliaments” (Dale 2000a, 454-455). Confident in its role in the EU, the manifesto even states that all of Europe would “delay any introduction of a single currency” until the British public had an opportunity to vote in a referendum on abandoning the pound (Dale 2000a, 455-456). Though Britain was the strongest economy in the EU at the time, the Conservatives ultimately fell victim to their assumption that Europe would not move forward with common currency measure without the British in agreement. Having lost the 1997 election and witnessed Europe forging ahead with a deepening of the EU without total British involvement, the 2001 Conservative manifesto written under the leadership of Euroskeptic William Hague shows a return to the isolationist sentiments of Churchill during the 1950s: “The guiding principle of Conservative policy towards the European Union is to be in Europe, but not run by Europe.” Discussion seen in the past about a multi-state community are replaced with terms such as “reserved powers,” “flexibility,” and threats of “a fully integrated superstate with nation states and the national veto disappearing” (UK Conservative Party 2001, 23). The equivocation seen under Major gave way to full-blown Euroskepticism and Europhobia in 2001’s election, a movement of the Conservative Party to the nationalistic and ideological right-wing (comparable to Labour’s swing to the nationalistic and ideological left-wing after election losses in 1979), and the fulfillment of rightward shifts suggested in Chapter One of this thesis. As Margaret Thatcher herself writes in her memoirs, the Conservative Party has witnessed the European issue take on an “increasingly troublesome shape” that has, for the time being, crippled the electoral chances of the Conservative Party (Williams 2000, 184).

Labour Party

The UK Labour Party has witnessed a great number of reincarnations, reformations and policy direction shifts since Britain first began debating the issue of EC membership in the 1950s and 1960s. The socialist roots of the party, including its relationship with the British union
movement, have led to Euroskepticism from the party and its members at various times in the party’s history. Much like the Conservative Party, and perhaps even to a greater extent, Labour’s sentiments about the EC/EU have been a story of ebb and flow; while today’s “New Labour” under Tony Blair is popularly classified as comprised of either Euroenthusiasts or Europhiles, a few back-benchers continue to hold the old party position that the EU fails to represent the interest of British workers and therefore warrants skepticism. They have, in recent times, become the minority within the party.

Labour, by necessity, follows the trends of the Conservative Party in its topics of discussion undertaken in manifestos. For example, postwar manifestos mention Europe minimally and instead concentrate on the welfare of Commonwealth nations. Much like the Conservative manifesto of 1959, the Labour manifesto neglects to mention the newly-formed European Coal and Steel Community. In 1964, Labour criticized the Conservatives for having “lost its nerve” by “[preparing] to accept humiliating terms for entry into the European Common Market” (Dale 2000b, 106-107). Labour insisted that the Conservatives’ haste in seeking entry would have devastated Commonwealth relations, a claim that specifically struck at Conservative claims that it played the greatest role in Commonwealth development (Dale 2000a, 145-146). Labour capitalized on the Conservative failure to obtain membership in the EC through the 1964 manifesto, a factor in their electoral success.

Ironically, the Labour government under Harold Wilson immediately took on the task of applying for EC membership once in power. By the time of the 1966 manifesto for the general election, Labour claimed that past Conservative governments, with “motives of prestige and nostalgia,” had refused to modernize British institutional involvement (Dale 2000b, 130). In contrast, the Labour Party promised to consolidate the European Community with the European Free Trade Area, making efforts to join the EC “provided essential British and Commonwealth interests are safeguarded” (Dale 2000b, 150). While mimicking the Conservatives in their concern with British interests, Labour reversed its 1964 skepticism towards the EC and took a more moderated and accepting position. By 1970, another failure at entering the Union (this time under Labour government and again at the hand of Charles De Gaulle) had again altered Labour’s position. Discussion of the European Community moved to the final pages of the manifesto, in the form of a promise that Britain had “applied for membership of the European Economic Community.” Stating that this time Britain “unlike 1961-63…will be negotiating
from a position of economic strength,” the 1970 manifesto cited the initial failure to enter the EC while (conveniently) forgetting about their own failed attempt during the preceding term in government (Dale 2000b, 179). Much like the Conservative manifesto after their failure to enter the EC, equivocation caused by the uncertainty over membership led to mixed messages in the manifesto. Labour’s attempts to succeed at entering were described as “pressed with determination,” yet still insisted that that “Britain will be able to stand on her own feet outside the Community” (Dale 2000b, 179). Labour’s uncertainty on Europe became a key factor in their defeat in the 1970 election.

Following Britain’s entry in the EC under terms negotiated by the Conservatives, Labour again found itself on the offensive in 1974. The February 1974 manifesto posited the need for renegotiations, and set out a multi-point plan on altering Britain’s relationship with Europe asking for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy, a fairer Community Budget, opposing Economic and Monetary Union, calling for the British Parliament to retain economic sovereignty, and repealing efforts at harmonizing value added taxes. Furthermore, Labour insisted that the issue of membership be put to the public in the form of referendum, addressing a major criticism Labour leveled against the Conservative government since its membership in the EC began in 1973. The final point raised in the manifesto on EC membership showed that Europhobia still existed in the Labour Party, in spite of its reluctant acceptance of Europe: “If renegotiations do not succeed, we shall not regard the Treaty obligations as binding upon us. We shall then put to the British people the reasons why we find the new terms unacceptable, and consult them on the advisability of negotiating our withdrawal from the Communities [emphasis added]” (Dale 2000b, 187). Clearly, Labour sought to turn the Conservative’s success in obtaining membership against them; their victory in the election shows that they were successful in their tactics. Also, the trend of detailed plans towards Union while not in government can again be observed. Because of their slim parliamentary majority, however, an election called for October 1974 saw a Labour manifesto that continued to call for referendum while bragging that the renegotiations called for eight months earlier were underway but “too early” to be judged (Dale 2000b, 211).

In government until 1979, the manifesto for that year reverted back to a minimal handling of the issue of Europe. While it continued to call for reforms discussed in previous manifestos, the manifesto shied away from detailed plans seen when they were attempting to regain
government control (Dale 2000b, 234). Labour found itself in a precarious position for a number of reasons. First, the referendum passed in 1975 bound Britain to the EC. Regardless of continuing issues over the operation of the Community, Labour could no longer (legitimately) threaten to withdraw from the organization while in power. Second, Labour’s past trend towards insisting on reforms, continued in this manifesto, left them susceptible to the criticism that they were unable to enact these changes in spite of being in government for five years. Finally, failure to secure changes favoring British interests left them open to the same criticism they had leveled in the past against the Conservatives, namely that they had been taken advantage of in negotiating membership terms with the EC. Labour’s loss to Thatcher’s Conservatives marked the need for policy change, but what would develop in Labour’s radical shift to the left (and the lengthy manifesto that would come out under the leadership of Michael Foot in 1983) could not have been expected by anyone.

The 1983 manifesto claims that membership in the EC “weakened our ability to achieve the objectives of Labour’s international policy” and that “the next Labour government…is bound to find continued membership a most serious obstacle to the fulfillment of those policies.” In the most Europhobic policy proposed since the Second World War, Labour advocated a full withdrawal from the EC without “withdrawing from Europe” (Dale 2000b, 280-281). By calling for such drastic measures as the repeal of the 1972 European Communities Act, Labour alienated voters who had less than a decade earlier approved membership 2 to 1 by referendum, and set itself up for the lowest electoral percentage since WWII. The lesson of 1983’s manifesto, in hindsight, is that even the “Euroskeptic” British voters no longer approved in large numbers of removing itself from the European Community. The policy reversal of 1987, returning to the policy of “work[ing] constructively” within the EC while “stand[ing] up for British interests,” returned to the balanced position seen so frequently in both major parties of the past (Dale 2000b, 309). Labour had been almost silenced on the European issue, however, as only one paragraph of the 1987 manifesto even makes mention of British-European relations.

A number of factors between the 1987 and 1992 elections altered Labour’s stance towards Europe. Foremost was the 1988 Jacques Delors speech to the Trade Unions Congress, which was pivotal in convincing former hard-line, Euroskeptic labor and union leaders that the European Community presented an excellent forum to solve problems of the working class. Furthermore, as the Community approached negotiations about converting to the European
Union, increased influence in social aspects of member states (including employment) were embraced by a Labour Party who had traditionally warned against incursions on British sovereignty. Neil Kinnock’s introduction to the 1992 manifesto claims the Labour was “determined that Britain will be a leader in the New Europe, setting higher standards and not surrendering influence by opting out” (Dale 2000b, 317). Specifically, Labour in 1992 called for pulling Britain “out of the European second division into which our country has been relegated by the Tories,” by allowing “European safeguards” promised in the Social Chapter, making “the widening of the Community a priority,” and playing “an active part in negotiations on Economic and Monetary Union” (Dale 2000b, 341). The change in Labour’s stance towards European Union in less than a decade is astounding; Labour’s enthusiasm approached the position of the Europhilic Liberal Democrats, and the party’s unity on the issue relative to the Conservatives under Major increased the Labour’s totals in the election to the highest level since they lost governmental control in 1979. The wrangling over the issue of Europe in electoral debate seemed to shift in Labour’s favor.

“New Labour” under Tony Blair carried it enthusiasm about Europe into the elections of 1997 and 2001. The 1997 manifesto called for reforms (a necessity in light of the Conservatives’ mixed sentiments on Europe since Thatcher’s exit as Prime Minister), but specifically through being “involved, to be constructive, to be capable of getting our own way” (Dale 2000b, 348). The 1997 manifesto continued to oppose a “European federal superstate,” but claimed that increasing sentiment in the Conservative Party to “come out” of the European Union, “overtly or covertly,” would be “disastrous for Britain” (Dale 2000b, 379). The new approach suggested by Labour to be enacted during Britain’s 1998 control over the EU presidency called for Britain to lead the completion of the single European market (without mention of the Commonwealth’s interest but those of British firms), enlargement of the Union into Eastern and Central Europe, reform of the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies to ones more suitable to British interests, and signing onto the Social Chapter that had changed Labour’s stance on Europe since the late 1980s. The only slide back from the Europhilic 1992 manifesto was a call for retaining a veto “over key matters of national interest, such as taxation, defense and security, immigration, decisions over the budget and treaty changes” (Dale 2000b, 379). As to the single currency, a topic which remained controversial both in the public and within the political parties (according to Labour it was one issue that left the Conservative Party “riven by faction”), Labour agreed to
join a common currency only by approval of the Cabinet, Parliament and the public through referendum (Dale 2000b, 380).

The electoral strength of Labour’s more acceptant position towards Europe proven, the party again took the opportunity in their 2001 manifesto to characterize Europe as “an opportunity not a threat” (UK Labour Party 2001, 36). While the familiar theme of British interests and maintaining Britain as a nation-state persisted in the 2001 manifesto, more mention of European Union affairs is given in 2001 than any previous Labour manifesto. Labour again called for policy alterations to remove Britain from the “margins” of Europe, a deepening and widening of membership and a leadership role for Britain in the EU (UK Labour Party 2001, 38). The effect of Labour’s shift towards support for EU integration, and specifically the “positive tones of voice and of imagery” suggested by Helen Wallace (1999, 111), have played a role in easing the concerns of a hesitant public and moves towards Britain’s reputation with other EU members and domestically as a Euroskeptic nation.

“Third” and “Nationalist” Parties

The traditional “two-party” system that has characterized British politics since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (if not before) is in a state of flux. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Labour and Conservative Parties combined earned, on average, eighty-five to ninety percent of the vote in general elections; more recent elections has seen that average level of support slip to approximately seventy-five percent (Redwood 2001, 31). Electoral support has seeped over time to regional parties such as the Welsh Nationalists (Plaid Cymru), Scottish Nationalist Party, and third parties such as the Liberal Democrats and, more recently, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Issues of national and international identity, foreign policy and Britain’s relationship with Europe have joined the central issues of the past, specifically economics, employment and the welfare state in recent years. The status and future of Britain, be it federal, unified or integrated into a larger supranational body, has been the primary concern of Britain’s more successful parties outside of the “big two” parties in recent years.

Especially important to this piece’s focus on ideology is the finding by Hooghe, Marks and Wilson that “radical right and right-populist parties...are, without exception, highly Euroskeptical and their relative electoral weight within their national party systems has grown considerably over the past two decades” (2004, 133). In Britain, the entry of UKIP into the
political mainstream and steady increases in electoral support reveal both a move to more extreme (non-mainstream) parties by voters as well as a move to the ideological right by Euroskeptics. UKIP, of all parties currently active in the British, supports the hypotheses suggested in the previous chapter in the context of the British example (namely, ideology is important in determining Euroskepticism, and rightist ideology has specifically, in recent times, been the most critical predictor of this attitude in both parties and their supporters). Nationalist parties such as UKIP, in effect, have created a new cleavage in British political party politics. This cleavage has carried over into the internal operations of the two major parties, and pro- and anti-European factions have become the norm within both the Labour and Conservative Parties in recent years. Unlike the two larger parties, however, nationalist and other “third” parties remain consistent in their positions on European Community/Union over time.

Since WWII, today’s Liberal Democrats have experienced reincarnations from being the Liberal Party (pre-WWII to 1981), to a Social Democrat Party/Liberal Alliance (1981 to 1988), and finally to the Liberal Democrat Party of today. Regardless of the party’s official title, it has always been supportive of deeper integration in Europe. Even as early as 1955, the Liberals under Clement Davies promised to use its small but vocal Parliamentary presence to “be critical of the timidity and hesitation which both the Labour and Conservative Governments have shown about associating [Britain] intimately with the movement to secure some measure of European unification” and “continue to goad the Government when they feel that it is reluctant to play its proper role in the evolution” of the Community (Dale 2000c, 90). The Liberals in 1964 (the first year where the two major parties gave prominent mention to the European Community) accused past governments of having “dragged their feet” and missing an opportunity for EC involvement (Dale 2000c, 114). The theme of criticizing Labour and the Conservatives carry throughout the entirety of Liberal manifestos.

The 1966 manifesto struck out against the very national sentiment held so dearly by Britons; the Liberals expressed their desire to immediately resume negotiations for entry into the EC and stated that “illusions of military and economic grandeur must be dropped” (Dale 2000c, 121). The Liberals, as the third-strongest party in the British political system and without the prospect of controlling government, had the luxury of questioning the fundamental areas of strength relied on in the rhetoric of Labour and Conservative governments. While the Liberals still discussed British interests, they forwarded a notion that this could be done in the context of a
A supranational political entity where states “agreed to share some of their sovereignty” (Dale 2000c, 132). 1970’s manifesto deviated little from this same line of thought, bemoaning the fact that Britain did not enter the EC when first suggested by the Liberals and therefore forcing Britain to negotiate in much more difficult financial circumstances (Dale 2000c, 142).

After Britain’s entry in 1973 and in the elections of February and October 1974, the Liberals pushed for further involvement. The Liberals specifically criticized Labour for their decision to absent themselves from debate in the European Parliament. The Liberals’ emphasis on European Parliament, not seen in either the Labour or Conservative Parties, comes from their domestic political position. Because the Liberals had less than fifteen MPs in Parliament, their call for “real power exercised by an elected European Parliament” (Dale 2000c, 166) stemmed from the Liberals’ position of relative impotence in British government.

The 1979 manifesto called for specific reforms, some of which would (eventually) be taken up by Labour in the 1990s. Britain’s retention of the “first-past-the-post” voting system for European elections, the only member state to do so, led to calls by the Liberals for a “fair voting system” (Dale 2000c, 189). The Liberals again benefited from the advantage of being a third party that could criticize the British political status quo, this time attacking the long-held majoritarian voting system which favors the maintenance of a two-party political system both at Westminster and in the European Parliament. Domestic food, agricultural, economic and environmental concerns, according to the Liberals, should be handled in cooperation with the EC. “Nationalist solutions,” the manifesto states, are “as irrelevant as they are dangerous,” and the Liberal Party continued to support away from what they considered the “nostalgic illusion of independent power” (Dale 2000c, 200). The new Liberal/SDP Alliance maintained its call for increased inclusion, becoming especially irritated by the extreme position of Labour in 1983 and calling their position for withdrawal “highly destructive” (Dale 2000c, 231). Very little, however, changed in the sentiment or rhetoric of the party in the elections of the 1980s.

In 1992, Britain’s participation in negotiations to maintain membership in what would become the European Union gave the Liberal Democrats an opportunity to capitalize upon a generally more positive public perception of the Union. With the Conservative government directing the process of negotiating the British role in the EU when the 1992 Liberal manifesto was distributed, the Liberal Democrats called for maximizing the British presidency in 1992 to withdraw the British opt-out clause, as well as bring about cooperation on environmental,
scientific, agricultural and social issues (Dale 2000c, 311). Furthermore, they insisted upon increased democratization and accountability for EU institutions, with the British accepting the Maastricht Treaty provisions in the same way as the other member states (Dale 2000c, 312). Increases in electoral support in prior elections led to a particularly interesting change in the most recent Liberal Democrat manifests. In 1997, the party began to emphasize “pursuing Britain’s interests in Europe,” as well as calling for giving “the House of Commons a more effective role in scrutinizing European policy” (Dale 2000c, 352-353). These topics mimic some of the same lines of thought on British relations with Europe seen in Labour and Conservative manifestos for decades, and may reveal how the Liberal Democrats, having maximized their vote potential with Europhiles, sought to bring less adamant Euroskeptics into their party. More and more, the Liberal Democrat and Labour political platforms on Europe seem to merge as Labour adopts some of the policies formerly advocated only by the Liberals. The 2001 Liberal Democrat manifesto held identical points as Labour’s: Eastern and Central European enlargement, reform in a manner beneficial to Britain, constitutional settlements to define and limit EU powers negotiated by Britain (in a leadership position) and the other member states, and retention of a veto on crucial matters of national interest (UK Liberal Democrats 2001, 52-54).

On their reputation as a pro-European party, Labour has been able to stand alone as Britain’s advocate for European integration. New Labour has gone so far as to adopt (or co-opt) a number of Liberal Democrat policy positions, made clear in the similarities of the parties’ manifestos since 1997. While Labour has made these recent moves, the Liberal Democrats stand apart from Britain’s other political parties in their criticism of nationalist and traditionalist rhetoric when discussing Europe.

Insofar as parties of the ideological left have shifted towards enthusiasm for Europe, the parties of the right have gravitated to the opposite extreme of Europhobia. The United Kingdom Independence Party, or UKIP, stands out as the most important (and electorally successful) of this handful of parties. Unlike short-lived and smaller parties like the UK Referendum Party, UKIP has succeeded both in Westminster and European elections since the party’s inception in 1993. Much like the Liberal Democrats (though for a shorter amount of time and with the opposite attitude on Europe), UKIP’s manifests remain consistent. In their 2001 election manifesto, preceding a Westminster election where the party took votes away from extremists who might have formerly supported Labour or the Conservatives, UKIP claims to have grown
steadily “as more people see through the European ‘project’” (UKIP 2001). The party utilizes nationalist threats to a much higher degree than even the most Euroskeptic rhetoric of the main parties:

Not only is our currency under threat, but our entire legal system, our British nationality, our right to free speech and freedom of association, our police, our armed forces, our own agricultural policy, our right to trade freely and the parliamentary system that underpins British liberty. (UKIP 2001)

In terms of policy positions on Europe, UKIP is specifically committed to withdrawal, and claims to do so as a moderate, mainstream party:

The UKIP will repeal the European Communities Act (1972) that binds Britain into the European Union, and enter into trade agreements with our former ‘partners’. Whatever their claims, the leading members of the Tory, Labour and Liberal-Democrat parties all remain committed to continued EU membership. These professional politicians don't want us to run our own country or control our own lives. The UKIP, by contrast, is a moderate, mainstream party which believes in the British people and can offer them a life outside the Euro-state. (UKIP 2001).

UKIP specifically falls into the category of parties suggested in Chapter One. Right-wing, nationalist and (to a great degree) isolationist rhetoric pervades UKIP’s manifesto. Unlike the major parties of Britain, UKIP’s manifesto reads more as a single-issue tirade than an actual manifesto. Nevertheless, in 2001 the party was able to attract votes away from more established parties’ Euroskeptic wings and earn approximately 1.5 percent of the vote and in the Westminster Parliamentary elections. UKIP has had greater success in European Parliament elections, earning seven percent of the vote and three seats in 1999, and a noteworthy 16.17 percent of the vote (and 12 MEPs) in 2004 (European Parliament UK Office 2004). While far from overtaking any of the better-established parties in Britain, UKIP nevertheless shows that the most Europhobic element of the British population has turned to far-right, single-issue parties for European elections and, to a lesser but nevertheless notable degree, Westminster elections. UKIP’s existence as a political party reveals the presence of a more extreme side of British nationalism than any of the major parties have shown historically.
Conclusions

Internal political dynamics provide the defining context for Euroskepticism in Britain. Coupled with the psychological and “cultural” mindset which has developed historically and have come to characterized the British socially, political parties play an instrumental role in determining the policies on Europe which will be undertaken by government, translating public enthusiasm or skepticism to matters of integration and interaction into specific behaviors and furnishing the rhetorical debate on the issue of Europe. In a study of ideology, parties also provide the specific benchmarks by which a measurement can be taken. It is because of this fact that Kim and Fording (1998; 2000) use political parties in order to determine the ideological placement of nations as a whole in their studies, and the reason why an examination of Euroskepticism and ideology must focus on political parties. Increasing attention to the European issue in British politics, revealed in additional discussion of Europe over time in party manifestos, has become obvious. While it cannot be assumed the attitudes towards Europe provide the major priority of voters for supporting one party or another, the salience of the European issue has undeniably played a critical role in political party success (or failure) and provided a major factor in the decisions of voters.

In Britain, the landscape of political parties can be divided into “major” and “minor” political parties (which, though a clumsy division, acknowledges the persistence of the two-party system in Britain and the dominance of the Conservative and Labour Parties through time). The dynamics of domestic politics, and specifically the debates which occurs during each election cycle, create an environment where party attitudes to international politics can be expressed, compared to other parties and potentially measured. For the “major” parties, governed by the realistic chance of ascending to power in government, a balance is sought between obtaining voter support by suggesting policies which appeal to the greatest array of the public, and implementing policies which best suits the parties’ constituents and promoted their own goals. As such, manifestos of the two major parties have, in large part, mixed messages on the issue of Europe. While times of extraordinary positive or negative sentiment towards European integration are present, manifestos in both parties cater to both the “European” identity of Britain and the nationalist sentiment so pervasive in the British public over the nation’s history.

Labour’s move away from the extreme ideological left, coinciding with the Conservative Party’s shifts to the ideological right under Thatcher and Major, have for the moment placed
Labour into a comparatively Europhilic policy position. Furthermore, Labour’s ability to maintain a relatively unified front on the issue of Europe has boded well for them electorally. The crucial implication of studying the manifestos of the two major parties is that the British public (on average) are not as Europhobic as they have earned a reputation for being. Political success has generally come to parties that call for a positive working relationship with the EC/EU, but insist that national interests remain paramount in the government’s decision-making process on Europe. Certain psychological dispositions towards the strength and maintained identity of Britain remain present, even as the public has shifted towards acceptance of Europe (with short historical periods of anti-European sentiment during times when British attempts to enter the EC had failed). Extreme positions on European Union, either positive or negative, remain at the margins of the British political spectrum and less politically successful than the more balanced positions of the Labour and Conservative Parties. Extreme positions by the “major” parties have been unsuccessful politically, and the true definition of Euroskepticism suggested by Kettle (1994) – a skeptical yet positive approach to Europe – has been the most successful for Labour and the Conservatives. Regardless of this success, the characterization can be made that both Labour’s and the Conservatives’ policies have been at best nervous and cautious and at worst terribly inconsistent.

Europhobes and Europhiles in the British system (the two more extreme positions on Europe) have in recent times retreated from the two major parties and turned to the “minor” parties of the British political system. The minor parties represent fragmentations in political allegiance and loyalty, specifically the issues of “national and international identity, foreign policy, and [Britain’s] relationship with Europe” (Redwood 2001, 31). Unlike the “major” parties, these have the advantage of providing policy ideas without the “burden” of forming a government. This facilitates the taking of more extreme positions by these parties, and their success in recent years reveal that the number of British voters prioritizing the Europe issue and holding more extreme positions than the mixed “Euroskepticism” of the major parties is increasing. Europhiles have turned to the party now called the Liberal Democrats as the satisfactory party for their attitudes on the EU. While this party has existed for decades in the central ideological position between Labour and the Conservatives, it seems to have adopted the label as “Party of Europe” since the Conservatives has reverted to more Europhobic attitudes and leadership. They hold the notion of Britain as a preeminent nation-state as outdated, and have
gradually increased the number of seats they hold in Parliament as some segments of the British public have embraced their “European” identity as Britons. Rather than an irony, as suggested by Andrew Geddes (2004, 181), the Liberal Democrats have benefited not in the face of increased Euroskepticism but rather a slow and gradual trend towards the British public accepting a mixed British and European identity.

On the other side of the cleavage on the European issue stands the UK Independence Party, whose primary interest rests in removing Britain from the EU. Unlike either of the “major” parties or the Liberal Democrats, UKIP’s primary issue is Europe, with all other issues taking a secondary role to that one. UKIP’s success, like that of the Liberal Democrats, stems from reduced public reluctance to accept European integration. Rather than catering to those transcending above solely nationalist identity, UKIP instead provides an alternative for those frustrated by British trends towards integration and involvement. The Conservatives’ requirement to shield its Europhobic element to some degree in order to maintain its status as a viable second party in Britain has led voters seeking a more outspoken party (more nationalistic and right-wing) to support electorally. UKIP’s fortunes in the last two elections (in conjunction with the Conservatives’ decline) stems from the ideological character on European discourse that has taken hold in modern British politics. Even in the traditionally two-party dominate British system, ideological cleavages on the issue of European integration have become salient enough to allow for third parties like UKIP to develop and gain support. The presence of these parties reveals a number of greater truths about the British political party system. First, the “move to the center” and Euro-enthusiasm of the Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties and continued Conservative attempts at remaining the rhetorical “party of Europe” have left a void for Euroskeptics in the British electoral system. New parties on the extreme nationalist right have filled this void. Also, the European integration issue has gained a great deal of acceptance with the British public, benefiting some, detracting votes from others, and allowing for political support for parties that rely solely on that one issue.

One thing that must be noted, however, is that these nationalist parties are not as powerful as one would express in a country suggested to be overrun by Euroskeptic sentiment. While strong threads of nationalism and traditionalism remain intact in modern Britain, the majority of the British public seems “Euroskeptic” in the sense that they accept membership and involvement with Europe but remain reluctant about altering certain “British” institutions. The
“conservatism” of Britain is a long-established nationalist form of conservatism. While certain political parties have recently altered their message to capitalize on this sentiment, and others balance catering to public conservatism with policies designed to integrate Britain further into European Union, ultimately there is not firm proof that national pride or identification necessarily translates into Europhobic sentiment. “British Euroskepticism” in parties reveals itself in mixed manifesto rhetoric, and the “Euroskeptic” British public goes with the party whose image and reputation best suit their own attitudes. While not a myth, the notion of Euroskepticism is a far cry from the Europhobia seen in smaller segments of the British public and the parties seeking the public’s support.
CONCLUSIONS

So what can be said of the phenomenon generally labeled “Euroskepticism”? This thesis set out to determine characteristics of this phenomenon, and a number of findings can be put forward to better define what remains a fairly abstract concept. First, ideology plays a crucial role in how a nation, political party or individual will react and form attitudes towards the European Union. The traditional “left-right” political spectrum affects attitudes towards Europe to a significant degree, with right-leaning ideology (broadly defined) having the greatest tendency to foster reluctance to European integration. Historically both political extremes have exhibited Euroskepticism, but recent trends in nations like Great Britain show that Euroskepticism has become the province of right-wing political parties and their constituents. Second, Euroskeptic attitudes take shape in the context of political parties. The interchange of influence between voters and parties remains a debated topic in political science (i.e. which influences the other), but the British example shows that the general public takes its cues from the political party which best suits their interests based on political rhetoric and debate made public through manifesto data. Third, “Euroskepticism” can be defined yet remains difficult to explain because it develops out of a number of different motives. In different member states and even over different periods of time in the same member state, “Euroskepticism” stems from different segments of the population and ideologically differing parties. In Britain, for example, Euroskepticism seems to be primarily determined by a sense of nationalism inherent in the belief systems of parties and citizens. While nationalism is the primary factor in creating Euroskepticism, the feared loss of “sovereignty” can stem from, depending on the historical time period and the party expressing Euroskepticism, economics, political preferences or psychological and cultural uniqueness. The reason why Euroskepticism remains difficult to explain in a manner that captures the phenomenon in all member states is that it encompasses a number of phenomena (varied in degrees of severity and areas of concentration). Finally, “Euroskepticism” in a national sense (as studied in Chapter One) only comes about from the actions of governments put into place by elections. Electoral politics provides the opportunity for parties to express their attitudes to the publics, who in turn choose a party to govern which best aligns with their own attitudes and beliefs (the process underlying the manifests examined.
in Chapter Two). National, political party, and public attitudes of Euroskepticism are in a state of constant interaction and (over time) flux. The claim that a nation like Britain is, or always will be, Euroskeptic due to some underlying “cultural” characteristic is a gross oversimplification that ignores the tendency for attitudes to change. “Europhile” and “Euroskeptic” member states of the EU can and do alter their positions over time, governments and political parties change, and as a result shifts in either direction on European attitude are possible in any EU member-state.

The British case provides a unique example within the European Union. Because of Britain’s late entry into the Community and long history of wrangling with the issue of relinquishing power to another political entity, its variety of Euroskepticism stands out in comparison to Euroskepticism in other European member states (though it maintains some of the trends revealed in Chapter One). Most importantly, nationalism remains a critical source of Euroskepticism in Britain, though in other member states nationalism is not interrelated with this phenomenon. An overview of Labour manifestos, compared with those of the Conservative Party, reveals that the trends found in Chapter One are limited in a couple of ways for the British case. First, the relationship of ideological ties and Euroskepticism proven in the wider EU context does not hold true over all periods of time in Britain. For the two major parties, shifts occur which make them either more or less Euroskeptical. Historical and political circumstances, and the opportunity to benefit electorally from holding a certain position on Europe, have led to an ebb-and-flow effect on British Euroskepticism. Second, while ideology remains an important predictor of Euroskepticism, Britain does not show a direct correlation of leftist ideology with favor towards Europe. There have been periods, in fact, where Labour represented the most Euroskeptic party in the country. The suggestion by Hooghe and Marks (2001) that over time parties on either ideological extreme display greater Euroskepticism than those in the ideological center, while requiring more specific testing to prove its validity, is supported by the British political parties over time. Finally, the activities taken by the British to consciously remain “with but not of Europe” (i.e. half-hearted attempts at negotiation into the European Coal and Steel Community in the early 1950s, participation in the European Free Trade Association in order to spite “the Six,” and maintenance of the opt-out clause while the other member states made strides towards greater integration) differentiate it from the other member states, and especially those claiming a leadership position in the EU.
In recent years, those covered in the time period of data presented in Chapter One, the Conservative and Labour Parties have become more aligned with parties in other EU member-states, specifically in the ideological basis of positions on Europe. The “conservative” British public retains crucial elements of Euroskepticism (especially in the realm of nationalist sentiment), and the public and parties have acted on each other (specifically, through elections) to create increases or decreases in party Euroskepticism. While an abandonment of British national pride developed historically by parties and the public seems unlikely, the nationalist “conservatism” so often attributed to the British does not mean that they will always remain on the periphery of European affairs. To the contrary, parties like Labour and the Liberal Democrats have, especially since the last two parliamentary elections, balanced the “British interest” with a genuine desire to increase British involvement and leadership in the EU. While the Conservatives and, to an extreme degree, UKIP have taken their Euroskeptic sentiment to an extreme level, the political history of Britain has shown that these positions are not set in stone. It remains to be seen whether British Euroskepticism will continue at levels seen historically, or if the call for increased integration and participation called for by the current Labour government under Tony Blair will be successful in spite of past Euroskepticism.


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