From the margins to the mainstream: The evolution of the debate surrounding UK membership of the EU
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CRONEM
July 2013
The focus of the presentation

- UK Euroscepticism: from the margins to the mainstream – an intro to the debate
- UK Euroscepticism: The historical perspective
- The mainstreaming of UK Euroscepticism: the UK “troika” – public opinion, parties and media
- The mainstreaming of UK Euroscepticism: some concluding thoughts
UK Euroscepticism: from the margins to the mainstream – an intro to the debate
“Britain's departure from the EU grows ever more likely. David Cameron, the prime minister, wants Britain to stay in. But he seems set on a path that could lead to an exit. British withdrawal requires two conditions to be satisfied. First, the government of the day must call a referendum on whether to leave the EU. Second, a majority of voters must want to quit. The first condition seems likely to be met, and the second is, for now, fulfilled”

Grant, C. (2012) ‘How Britain could leave the EU?’, Centre for European Reform Essay
UK Euroscepticism: The historical perspective
UK Euroscepticism: The historical perspective

• ‘Euroscepticism initially appeared as a distinctively English phenomenon....’

UK Euroscepticism: The historical perspective

Why is the UK sceptical of the EU? Some common held historical interpretations

• 1) The English channel as a physical and psychological barrier
• 2) The language barrier
• 3) The Special Relationship with the USA
• 4) A history of empire and commonwealth
• 5) Britain's Second World War experience
• 6) Britain historically a world power

For clear account of historical perspective of UK euroscepticism see: Grant, C. (2007) ‘Why is Britain Eurosceptic?, Centre for European Reform Essay

The mainstreaming of UK Euroscepticism: the UK “troika” – public opinion, parties and media
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: Public Opinion (EB78: 2013)

QA20a.11. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (OUR COUNTRY) could better face the future outside the EU

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<th>Country</th>
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The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: Public Opinion (EB78: 2013)

QA18.1. What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.

A European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of parties

- "we must address perhaps the most perplexing aspect of British Euroscepticism. How are we to account both for the persistently high levels of Euroscepticism in the British party system and the oscillating commitments of the two major political parties to Euroscepticism?"

The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of parties (The Conservative Party)

• Amongst the Conservative parliamentary rump as of 2010 – an estimated 100 or so ‘withdrawalists’

• Europhilia: "the love that dare not speak its name” on Conservative backbenches (Boffey 2013)

• Conservative party’s decision to leave the European People’s Party in the EP and to initiate the European Conservatives and Reformists group in 2009
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1992 (Maastricht Treaty)</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>2011 (Motion to grant referendum on EU Membership)</td>
<td>81</td>
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<td>2013 (Motion to “regret” EU ref not part of Queen’s speech)</td>
<td>114</td>
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The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of parties (Labour and Liberal Democrats)

• The Labour party uncertain about how to respond to the ‘referendum trap’
• ‘Even Liberal parties like the UK Liberal Democrats…….have in recent years been forced to rein in their euro-enthusiasm when faced with the realities of coalition government and the need to juggle a range of disparate public opinion’

Source: Usherwood & Startin (2013:13)
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP

Re: the 2013 May local elections:

‘Biggest surge by a fourth party in England since the second world war, UKIP averaged 25% of the vote in council wards where it stood’

http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/may/03/nigel-farage-ukip-change-british-politics
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP

- 'A Bunch Of Fruitcakes, Loonies And Closet Racists‘ (David Cameron 2006 LBC breakfast show)
- ‘A collection of clowns... indignant, angry people’ (Ken Clarke, April 2013)
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP

• ‘Nigel Farage is a rather engaging geezer’ (Boris Johnson, April 2013)

• 'Tories must dump Clegg and get into bed with UKIP’ (Nadine Dorries, May 2013)
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP

- European Elections 2014? - 27% according to Open Europe/Com Res survey (May 2013)

- General Election 2015? - 20% according to Open Europe/Com Res survey (May 2013)
UKIP at the ballot box in by-elections
(Source: Channel 4.com)
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The rise of UKIP

Some key short term triggers:

• The UKIP adoption scandal in Rotherham (Nov 2012)
• The announcement of a referendum on EU membership by Cameron (Jan 2013)
• Farage and Murdoch’s meeting (March 2013)
• Proposed Cypriot raid on personal bank accounts to pay for austerity (March 2013)
• Farage: ministers ‘picking a war with middle England’ following MPs vote to legalise same sex marriage (May 2013)
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media

‘The current *modus operandi* of much of the London-based Eurosceptic press is a serious problem for UK democracy for which no effective voluntary or compulsory regulatory solution seems seriously to be on the table as far as policy makers are concerned’

The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media
Euroscepticism in the UK: The Media

- 373,000 petition leads to parliamentary vote in the House of Commons in October 2011

http://www.haveyoursay.eu/register.html

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-15425256
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media

• Progress at the ballot box for ‘populist niche’ parties like UKIP is more likely with the combination of a national media:
  • 1) where the issues that the party espouses are covered extensively
  • 2) which provides positive exposure of the leader in question and thus legitimises this leader
The mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK: The role of the media

‘The lack of a ‘level playing-field’ in terms of EU coverage amongst the British press has left the UK open to accusations that its citizens are unable to weigh up the ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ of membership of the Union in a rational and informed fashion’


See EU site ‘Myths and Rumours de-bunked’: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/take_part/myths_en.htm
EU 'In/Out' Referendum

Mainstreaming of Euroscepticism

EU ‘In/Out’ Referendum

UK exit EU?
The mainstreaming of UK Euroscepticism: some concluding thoughts

- "The ratchet-effect of Euroscepticism has now gone so far that the Conservative leadership is in effect running scared of its own backbenchers, let alone Ukip, having allowed deep anti-Europeanism to infect the very soul of the party” (Geoffrey Howe 2013)

- “The risk now is that, if it loses the next general election – a far from negligible possibility – the Conservative party will move to a position of simply opposing Britain's continued membership, with or without a referendum” (Geoffrey Howe 2013)
### The mainstreaming of UK Euroscepticism: some concluding thoughts (Yougov May 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. Thinking about Britain's relationship with the European Union, do you think the following are putting forward their policies mainly because they feel strongly about the issue, or mainly because they are making a tactical calculation about what to say?</th>
<th>Feel strongly</th>
<th>Tactical calculation</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative ministers such as Kenneth Clarke who say they would vote for Britain to stay in the EU if a referendum were held now</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative ministers such as Michael Gove who say they would vote for Britain to leave the EU if a referendum were held now</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed Miliband, Labour Party leader</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>David Cameron, the Prime Minister</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>64</td>
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</table>
Bibliography


• Boffey, D (2013) ‘Out, out, out! Can anybody stem the Eurosceptic tide?’ http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/may/18/eurosceptic-conservative


