

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

**Fakulta filozofická**

**Bakalářská práce**

**Analysis of British relations with the European Union  
during the last four decades:  
Is Britain becoming increasingly eurosceptic? Will Britain  
pull out of the European Union eventually?**

**Irina Kruhmalova**

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## **List of abbreviations**

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

EC – European Community

ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community

EEAC – European External Action Service

EMU – Economic and Monetary Union

EP – European Parliament

ERM – European Rate Mechanism

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

LibDem – Liberal Democrat

MP – Member of Parliament

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NRC – National Referendum Campaign

PM – Prime Minister

SEA – Single European Act

UK – United Kingdom

UKIP – United Kingdom Independence Party

U.S. – United States

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WEU – Western European Union

# 1. Introduction

This bachelor thesis deals with the British political mood towards European Union called Euroscepticism. It is focused on the historical development and changes of this idea in different governmental bodies in Great Britain and the central objective is to discover whether there has been an increase in euroscepticism and to define the stages of the development of this idea. The additional purpose of this work is to discover whether there is the possibility of a referendum about Britain's continued membership of the EU.

Euroscepticism is a widely known political phenomenon, which is characterized by an opposition towards the European integration process. Eurosceptic positions and definitions range from criticism of particular aspects of the EU but still remaining sympathetic to the idea of European integration (soft version) to the outright rejection of membership (hard version) (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 6). This political movement is widespread in different European countries and among different governments, but its roots stem from British political life.

The first part of this work examines the variety of definitions of euroscepticism given by different authors. The thesis attempts to define what euroscepticism means, how it emerged, how this process can be operationalized and possible implications on the British political arena. However, it should be stated that there is no agreement on definition and so one definition, that of Taggart and Szczerbiak, has been chosen as the central argument for understanding euroscepticism in this work.

In the second chapter readers can explore the eurosceptic movement in particular governments from the 1970s to the present day. This chapter provides an analysis of the critical course, based on the operationalization of this term and examines the notions of different executive bodies towards European integration. The consideration of this information will help to achieve the main goal of the thesis – to delineate euroscepticism and discover whether there has been a linear or non-linear growth of this movement. The thesis provides basic arguments such as who the eurosceptics are and how they have affected Britain's relationship with the EU. Also it should be noted that the second chapter deals with British euroscepticism from the 1970s, when the question about quitting the EC was first opened, and when even a referendum was held. It is quite important to understand what the position of the government was, who blocked them and

how the political elite softened this process. The thesis subsequently discusses M. Thatcher's first and second terms of office, and explores the reasons for the PM's transformation into a eurosceptical politician. The next thing mentioned in the chapter is the period during which the Conservative government, led by John Major, was in power. This time can be labelled as a time when there was a boom of euroscepticism in the British political arena. Despite Major's attempts to overcome this crisis and to establish a new agenda for Europe, the opposition in Parliament and even in the Conservative party itself made it impossible and ultimately led to the downfall of his government.

The next section introduces an attempt to reassert Great Britain as a European hegemonic country. The Prime Minister T. Blair, and later his successor G. Brown tried to create this political framework and to initiate the building of huge coalitions, including both the West and the East as a form of opposition towards deeper integration. Labour's main goal was to construct Anglo-European hegemony with a special relationship with then the U.S. However, this policy mainly concentrated on US-British relations, which led to the collapse of the idea of Anglo-European hegemony (Gifford 2008: 139–140).

In the subchapter that follows this, the contemporary government is discussed. This government, led by David Cameron, is described as a eurosceptical governmental body, based on opposition to particular European policies. Cameron, since his earliest speeches, has been marked as a eurosceptical person. Indeed, he was always the one who opposed Labour's decisions and the common security, social, judiciary and foreign policies of the EU. When he came to power, he described himself as a eurosceptic albeit a practical and sensible one at the same time (Lee and Beech, eds., 2011: 220–222). Cameron's speech in 2013, during which he discussed his agenda for Europe and gave a pledge for referendum, played a big part in this assertion.

The final chapter considers the question about the possibility of a second membership referendum, but not before dealing with factors related to the active presence of euroscepticism in contemporary Britain. Of course, the most important factor, which this thesis highlights, is the growing voter's support for right-wing populist parties; a fact seen by Taggart and Szczerbiak as a source of opposition not only to integration, but to the government as a whole.



The final subchapter represents an attempt to predict the possibility of a referendum on membership and deals with the efforts of eurosceptics to see their project for a referendum and a new Britain through to the end. This subchapter aims to achieve the additional purpose of this thesis and to sum up the success of the eurosceptic movement in the British political arena.

This bachelor thesis is written using different study designs. Chapters 2 and 3 are based on a case study design. According to Petr Drulak a case study design is a detailed analysis of the case, which was chosen as a subject of research. Its goal is to provide a deep understanding or causal explanation of selected case (Drulak 2008: 33). However, case studies have a lot of branches and, as such, this thesis operates using both across and single-case studies. Single-case study provides further background information and helps us to understand the logic of the process and its development. The instrumental use of this study design brings the theoretical richness in the chapter 2, when it researches few definitions and different approaches towards euroscepticism.

Across-case study design is used in the Chapter 3, when eurosceptic phenomenon is divided into six periods and they are described as a contrast of context. This type of case study is based on the method of “fuzzy set membership”, in which subjects of research are ranged between two figures (Drulak 2008: 72). The first figure can be marked as a eurosceptic, the second as a euroenthusiast. Thanks to this method could be achieved the main goal of this thesis – to delineate the Eurosceptic movement in particular governmental bodies.

Chapter 4 is based on the “analysis of metaphors”. This study design operates with different methods, however the biggest part plays the discourse analysis. Analysis of metaphors examines several actors and creates a time limiting, in which it pays much attention on speeches and language of main actors (Drulak 2008: 125). Chapter 4 eliminates Prime Minister, political elites and society as actors and operates with their stances and speeches during last two years, which could help to achieve thesis’ secondary goal.

As this work illustrates the concept of euroscepticism, it could appeal to the general public, the academic community of social scientists or students - especially those who are interested in the political life of Britain. Thesis based on case study design is a kind of

qualitative research, that is why this work does not operate with numbers, instead of this it uses actor's rhetoric and classifications. It should be noted that this thesis is based on a dichotomy of Euroscepticism, called hard vs. soft Euroscepticism, which will be described in the first chapter.

To summarise, the main goal of this thesis is to delineate the development of euroscepticism during the last four decades and to clarify the possibility of a referendum.

## 2. Eurosceptic concept

The phenomenon of euroscepticism crept into the mainstream in the 1990s. Historically, it had appeared in Britain as early as the 1970s, when a discussion about the referendum, concerning membership of the European Community, was started in 1975. It was connected with the position of so called ‘anti-marketers’ who were opposed to British participation in the European integration project (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 151).

There are a number of definitions of euroscepticism which vary greatly according to their authors. This thesis argues that the concept is more multidimensional and thus wishes to explore different types of scepticism, which are prominent in British executive bodies today. One can even argue that euroscepticism has become a kind of 'buzzword' used by the media, the political elite and the academic world with a lot of different meanings and connotations.

### 2.1 Definition of euroscepticism and its operationalization

To begin with, this thesis uses Anthony Forster's definition of euroscepticism, which focuses on two interrelated processes – economic and political integration within Europe. This term is used to describe opponents of European integration concerning both opportunity and principles (Forster 2002: 7). R. Katz describes euroscepticism as a “*relatively new term, although the general attitudes to which it refers – opposition to, or doubts about, the progress of the European project are as old as the project itself*” (Katz in Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 151). Across the European Union there has been a prominent and increasingly highlighted rise in critical attitudes towards integration. While criticism of European integration has always existed to varying extents in different states, the two decades since the debates surrounding the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty have witnessed a more widespread and vocal scepticism about the benefits of the European Union. This scepticism was evident in the 2005 referendums in France and the Netherlands that saw the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty and in the 2008 Irish referendum rejection of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Torreblanca, Jose Ignacio – Leonard, Mark, eds (2013). The Continent-Wide Rise of Euroscepticism. *ECFR* [online]. May 2013 [cit. 12. 03. 2014]. Available from [http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79\\_EUROSCEPTICISM\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79_EUROSCEPTICISM_BRIEF_AW.pdf).

These processes can be divided by Taggart and Szczerbiak's classification of Euroscepticism – soft vs. hard. Hard Euroscepticism means opposition towards everything about EU integration, supports a complete withdrawal from membership and the development of a strong national policy. The soft version of this phenomenon is against some specific aspects of integration into the policies of the EU, policy outcomes or institutional features and seeks to reform the EU rather than abolish the entire project; it can be referred to as 'a defence of national interest' (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 2).

Szczerbiak and Taggart also discuss two main features of Euroscepticism. The first one is an extension of new policies resulting in a new populism or neo-fascism. (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 12–13). In connection with this, Mair talks about modern politics and new policies, which are introduced by different points of view and represent popular democracy. Those steps are struggling with a constitutional one. While constitutional democracy needs institutional requirements for good governance, popular democracy depends only on the will of the people. This process causes the decline of party politics; parties became more dependent on different organisations and agencies, and afterwards are transformed into populist units thanks to national appeal (Mair in Gifford 2008: 8-9). The second feature lies in the position and structure of political parties and the party system. An example of this is the situation in which certain members of the party are against the EU, but in general the party is not (Gifford 2008: 6).

In one study by Taggart and Szczerbiak, the findings were that Euroscepticism is frequently most likely to be adopted by protest-based parties that stand at the fringes of the existing party system and which are outside of government. In this view, Euroscepticism is part of a more general opposition to existing political systems and leadership structures and may be adopted by these protest-parties or populist-parties in order to secure electoral support. Taggart further argues that these parties are structures, which adopted the EU issue as a secondary appropriative issue to strengthen their position among the political core (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008: 256-258).

Another effort to define the entire range of Eurosceptic possibilities is built on the distinction between European integration as an ideal, and the European Union as an existing set of institutions. Kopecky and Mudde describe Euroscepticism as one of four ideal types produced by intersecting orientations towards the European Union (EU optimism/pessimism) with orientations towards the idea of European integration

(Europhilia /Europhobia.) This produces four ideal types; “*Eurorejects*” who oppose the ideal of integration and the reality of the EU, “*Euroenthusiasts*” who support both the EU and the ideal of ever closer union, “*Europragmatists*” who do not support integration, but view the EU as useful, and “*Eurosceptics*” who support the idea of integration, but not its realization through the current EU. While this conceptualization has the theoretical appeal of separating out Europe from the actual EU, this distinction often appears in actual political debate (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 301–303).

The next author, who studied the phenomenon of euroscepticism was Agnes Alexandre-Collier. He sees: “*a Eurosceptic is someone who doubts the utility and viability of Economic and Political Union*” (Agnes Alexandre-Collier in Forster 2002: 2). She defines three important parts of Euroscepticism. First, it supposes that the critique is related to two interconnected processes – economic and political integration. Secondly, it links this critique to the transformation of the EC into the EU in 1993. Finally, it implies that Eurosceptics can be found only in the Conservative Party. Unfortunately, nowadays it is evident that this definition and its variables fail (Agnes Alexandre-Collier in Forster 2002: 2).

Recent research conducted by Anthony Forster argues that Euroscepticism has a multifaceted nature, which is a key to longevity. It can be seen through different contexts, such as the questioning of involvement in European integration projects, doubts about membership of the EU community, the competence of some governmental bodies of the EC/the EU, disengagement and withdrawal. This study clearly shows that there is a strong division among sceptics (Forster 2002: 2).

Therefore, it is quite important for every researcher to operationalize the concept of euroscepticism. The purpose of this process is to go into more depth with the concept of euroscepticism and deduce the nature or sources of various eurosceptical ideas. According to Katz, euroscepticism can be operationalized in absolute or relative terms. During studies designed to categorise people, respondents answer questions to identify their position on a eurosceptic scale. Scores from such studies divide respondents into categories such as Hard Eurosceptics, Soft Eurosceptics and Europhiles (Katz in Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008: 156–160). However, the most important part during the process of operationalization plays putting the right question and defining the ideological dimension, to which this question belongs. Different authors examine a few theories

looking for the ideological dimension of euroscepticism. This thesis defines three main dimensions - economic or utilitarian approach, the question of democratic deficit and sovereignty dimension, one of which or even more will be substantial for the Eurosceptic movement in particular periods.

According to Gabel, the calculation of expected social and economic gains and losses through membership exists. He calls this dimension a utilitarian approach<sup>2</sup>. The main argument is that the EU is driven primarily through an economic agenda and consequently the public evaluates it according to its achievements. Market liberalization provides different benefits for the EU public depending on their physical proximity to other EU markets and their financial and human capital (income, education etc.). These benefits are positively correlated with support or scepticism towards European integration. The investigation concludes with Gabel finding empirical evidence of utilitarianism as being a powerful and central aspect in explaining public opinion towards European integration (Gabel 1998: 336–337, 348).

Two other authors, who discussed the support or dislike of the economic aspect of European integration, were Easton and Haas. Both authors argue that public concerns about the EU and economic benefits are connected to the efficiency of the EU system and whether it carries out its policies effectively as well as the effectiveness of its bureaucratic set-up. Naturally, this approach is not accepted by all authors, however it is clear that it is one of the most long-standing arguments related to public opinion (Hansen 2008: 33–34).

The next important appropriate aspect is the idea of democratic deficit. Like euroscepticism, definitions of democratic deficit are varied and a consensus or a clear-cut understanding of the concept does not exist. McCormick defines democratic deficit as “... *the gap between the powers of the European institutions and the ability of European citizens to influence their work and decisions*”.<sup>3</sup> However, several authors have criticized the notion of democratic deficit. According to Moravcsik, the EU is effective and

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<sup>2</sup> Gabel in his work tests the explanatory power of five different theories of public support for the EU i.e. cognitive mobilisation, political values, class partisanship, government support and utilitarian approach. He explains the role of every theory and finds that near utilitarian theory class partisanship and government support offers the explanation for the public support (Gabel 1998: 351).

<sup>3</sup> Torreblanca, Jose Ignacio and Leonard, Mark, eds (2013). *The Continent-Wide Rise of Euroscepticism*. ECFR [online]. May 2013. [cit. 12.3.2014]. Available from [http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79\\_EUROSCEPTICISM\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79_EUROSCEPTICISM_BRIEF_AW.pdf), page 1.

successful in large part thanks to the practice of the system of constitutional check and balances<sup>4</sup>. He believes that this system introduces itself as a democratic feature (Moravcsik 2002: 609–610).

A related view is that euroscepticism is frequently based on a misunderstanding of developments within the European Union. In a study of the 2008 Irish referendum, for example, John O’Brennan highlighted Irish citizens’ ignorance of the Lisbon Treaty’s contents as being a significant cause of their rejection of the treaty (O’Brennan, 2009: 270). He argues that “*although the Irish remain among the most enthusiastic about EU membership, there remains a significant knowledge vacuum, with a large majority of citizens professing to know little or nothing about how decisions are made at the EU level and how the EU institutions function*” (O’Brennan, 2009: 270). According to this analysis, the lack of popular understanding of the European Union and European integration may leave space for political groups and parties to gain support by misrepresenting the development of integration.

A different approach to the operationalization of the concept of euroscepticism is concerned with sovereignty. In contemporary academic literature a lot of theories exist, which combine the eurosceptic movement with scepticism towards further integration or pessimism towards future reflections of European ideas. The increase in EU competency possibly weakens the nation state and leads to the loss of sovereignty. According to Anthony Coughlan, who argues that national sovereignty is undermined by EU institutions, “*... [i]n practice countries and peoples that surrender their sovereignty to the EU become ever more subject to laws and policies that serve the interests of the others and in particular the bigger EU States... The nation that gives up its sovereignty or is deprived of it, ceases to be an independent subject of international politics. It becomes more like a province than a nation...*” (Coughlan 2004: 40).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The system of constitutional check and balances notably includes “*the separation of powers, a multi-level structure of decision-making and a plural executive*” (Moravcsik 2002: 609).

<sup>5</sup> However, in the academic literature exists another point of view, which supports intergovernmental and supranational cooperation and seeks to explain this form of govern as an effective one. They argue, that sovereignty lies with the people even though the institutions that the people elected to represent their interests normally exercise the sovereign power. This circumscription of the sovereign state, through international norms and supranational institutions, finds a parallel in contemporary philosophers who attack the notion of absolute sovereignty (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010).

The contemporary ability of eurosceptics to create and afterward successfully use resources and ideological dimensions has been a major factor in mounting an effective public campaign against governments. Modern twenty-first century technology provides easy access to a range of resources and helps people to challenge pro-European groups more effectively. Euroscepticism has become a campaigning force, not only a view. Opposition groups have begun to study all proposed EU decisions based on an analysis of policy-making, decisions and Treaty outcomes. All of these mean that euroscepticism has developed into a political trend with an enormous research base (Forster 2002: 8).

In conclusion, it should be said, that there is no clear-cut definition of this phenomenon and that there is a large diversity in its characteristics. Furthermore, different approaches are being used to explain and map out the eurosceptic movement. This thesis, however, will centre around the concept of hard and soft euroscepticism, which is the most appropriate idea for further analysis. Of course, it is also important to factor in the practical part played by operationalized dimensions to better understand governmental opposition toward European integration. The purpose of using these theoretical concepts lies in finding reasons for the increase or decrease of the eurosceptical trend and also in drawing conclusions.

## **2.2. Euroscepticism in Britain**

British Euroscepticism founded this phenomenon. Many authors conducted their research and tried to give a definition, date its formation and explain its popularity and rise, but there is still no agreement between them. This is because it is a challenge to describe a phenomenon, which grows fast and spreads even faster. This thesis operates with the most prevalent current view whilst still acknowledging others. One of the goals of this thesis is to highlight periods of euroscepticism in Britain, showing its growth and decline on a governmental level during the last four decades.

Mark Corner argues that the birth of British Euroscepticism can be traced back to the end of World War Two, when the European community was still feeling the impact of such a brutal and unforgiving conflict. The question for Europe was how to contain Germany and let it grow strong again without growing dangerous. The best solution was to allow it to recover the European auspices. Nowhere did this have as strong an impact as in



Britain. The defeat of Nazi Germany for British people had been seen as a single-handed effort with (eventually) help from the USSR and the US, plus of course considerable contingents from the Empire/Commonwealth. There is no doubt that this perception still lives on in the British psyche. (Corner 2007: 466-468). What followed can be called a 'first period', which emerged in Macmillan's government, when the UK first applied to join the EC in 1961. This period ended with a referendum in 1975 (Forster 2002: 3). Hall, for example, argues that post-imperial crisis was one of the reasons, why Euroscepticism emerged during that period. It was characterized by the declining legitimacy of the elite, de-alignment, electoral volatility and the enormous rise of factionalism within the main political parties. It was seen as a crisis of hegemony within Britain (Hall 1979: 15–16).

However, the overwhelming majority of scientists see the rise of this phenomenon as taking off in the 1980s, especially after Margaret Thatcher's Bruges Speech, which brought the European issue back to the forefront. This second period, around which the thesis will focus, was marked by her speech and continued opposition to the Maastricht Treaty (Forster 2002: 3).

Most recently, a contemporary period began with Cameron-Clegg's government. After years of Blair's attempt to reassert Britain as a bridge between Europe and the US, Britain found itself lost. The economic crisis in 2008 showed that European Union countries' economics were underestimated. David Cameron is now trying to gain public support and that is why he uses this hot question in his agenda (Lee and Beech, eds. 2011: 218). The discussions about a possible referendum about contemporary British attitudes towards the EU are the second focus of this work.

In spite of this classification, scepticism has had important indirect effects on British policy. Sceptics, with their strong voices, have been challenging, shaping and constructing the character of the British debate on Europe. They have effectively destabilized the political parties, effectively leading to sizeable factions in the two major parties – Conservatives and Labour, causing serious issues for both parties. Euroscepticism, with its own policy-making body, has introduced to Britain a new form of shadow government, which is now very strong and which has a strong influence on the domestic political arena (Forster 2002: 8).

Moreover, a close relationship with Europe and membership of the EU has had an impact on British business and government. It has forced them to over-concentrate on the EU, causing them to neglect relationships with other, potentially significant parts of the world. Also it has become apparent that the British government's energy was concentrated on converging European neighbor economies, rather than on national interest in other faster growing countries (Baimbridge, Burkitt and Whyman 2006: 411).

Ultimately, it should be said, that whilst euroscepticism is a complex phenomenon, it has British roots. There are a lot of classifications, which provide some important arguments about eurosceptics and also describe the reasons for its growth and the effects of this political route. The most visible effect of euroscepticism is the changing nature of British national and foreign policy. Each government has, unfortunately, been unable to create strong opposition to this movement, because of the changing nature of the eurosceptic movement and the vast amount of resources at its disposal.

### **3. Euroscepticism in particular executive bodies in Britain**

The term "euroscepticism" is applicable to many EU member countries, however it has a rich and long history in Great Britain. Opponents of European integration have existed in Britain since the early stages of this process. They had different arguments and had different names, but their agenda was almost the same – to oppose close British engagement in the Franco-German project. This opposition was clearly established within British political elites and parties, and has also taken its place in particular executive bodies.

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate euroscepticism in British governments since the 1970s, to define the eurosceptic arguments in terms of theory and to examine the results of the movement. According to different authors, such as Anthony Forster, John. W. Young or Chris Gifford, the eurosceptic movement has strongly occupied British political debates in each of the last five decades, in one form or another. The chapter begins in the 1970s, because it was during this time that Britain became a member of the EC, and the first huge debate about opposition towards the EC, later the EU, was held in a referendum in 1975.

Moreover, the country had tried to join the Community since the first half of the 1960s and finally finished negotiations over membership in 1972<sup>6</sup>, when Edward Heath signed the accession treaty in Brussels and the treaty was followed by parliamentary ratification in July that year (Forster 2002: 33). This decision was made because of the British economic recession, problems with industrial modernization and the deterioration of relations with the USA. However, the government policy of building a coalition with Europe was opposed by political mobilisation against Europe in defence of the superiority of British institutions (Gifford 2008: 15). This movement still remains in the contemporary coalition government, however the source of it and its nature have changed.

Therefore, this thesis outlines the six periods of euroscepticism namely 1970 – 1975, a period of activity among Anti-Marketeters and the Heath-Wilson strategy towards Europe; 1975 – 1989, a period of inactivity among the sceptics and Thatcher's approach; 1989 – 1997, the effective activities developed by the eurosceptic movement at the executive level; 1997 – 2003, Labour's welcoming strategy towards the EU; 2003 – 2009, the crisis and disillusionment with the EU; 2009 – nowadays, the pinnacle of contemporary euroscepticism. The thesis now starts with an analysis of euroscepticism in particular executive bodies.

### **3.1. 1970s – the period of entrance to the Community and the period of British discontent**

Britain first applied to join the EC in 1961, when Macmillan's Conservative government decided to secure fundamental geopolitical objectives in the face of imperial decline. It was a step towards a kind of nation-state building amid the disintegration of the British Empire. Previous governments had tried to reestablish a strong alliance with Commonwealth countries and to restore Britain's imperial influence. However, this strategy was wrong and Britain went into deep economic crisis, while the six countries of

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<sup>6</sup> However, officially Britain became a full member of the EC since 1st January 1973 along with Ireland and Denmark (Forster 2002: 33).

the EC were doing well. The key event, which led directly to the application to the EC, was the 1956 Suez crisis<sup>7</sup> (Gifford 2008: 38).

The United States saw British membership in the EC as a vital source of Western Unity. President Kennedy was sure that outside of Europe, Britain would be “*a force for division rather than cohesion since she is a giant lodestar drawing with unequal degrees of force on each member state*” (Evans in Gifford 2008: 42). Britain was forced to apply to the community, since it had had to consolidate its special relationship with the USA, which wanted Britain to be a member for security and economic reasons (Gifford 2008: 42). The membership was no longer seen as a threat by the government, even in the economic sphere; indeed it was believed that entry into the EC would reinvigorate the British economy and end its excessive support of the Commonwealth (Gowland and Turner 2000: 121).

By the early 1970s, the European integration process had become an instrument of crisis management, which Britain had actively used according to the situation in the country. The decline of the British economy was due to the lack of modernisation and also emerged in the context of the crisis in American hegemony and the global economic downturn. Membership of the EC was seen only as a source of better industrial competitiveness and of foreign investments. However, the problem of political integration was not opened at this time, which later led, in the 1990s, to political elites being convinced to re-debate membership terms (Gifford 2008: 52).

After de Gaulle’s resignation in 1969 and the return of the Conservative Party under Heath’s leadership into power in 1970, membership seemed a very real possibility. Edward Heath outlined his British-European vision – to secure Britain’s place as a leading European capitalist-nation state. Britain’s membership appeared to be a mandatory goal to be achieved at almost any price, which is why some eurosceptics argue that Heath’s government failed to institutionalise a coherent British European project (Gifford 2008: 54–55).

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<sup>7</sup> The Suez Crisis is connected with British invasion to Egypt in a reaction to Nasser’s nationalization of Suez canal. The grounds for this action were that Nasser wanted to block oil reaching Europe and wanted to invade Israel. However, the attack on Egypt failed and this led to an immediate sterling crisis in Britain, and American government committed the support for economic stabilization, only if Britain removed her troops. The Suez Crisis split Conservative government and party in general (Turner 2000: 50 – 51).

Heathite strategy about Europe was based on two opportunities. The first applied to the British foreign policy, in which European integration appeared to be at the centre whilst the second was a pragmatic one, related to the European contribution to economic renewal. He believed that the exposure of the British economy to European competition would keep down inflation, producing an influx of foreign capital, which would help to reduce the balance deficits and to finance new investments (Lord 1993: 23, 39).

The negotiations on British membership lasted for eighteen months and concerned the position of sterling as an international reserve currency, Commonwealth trade, agriculture and the British budgetary contribution. Britain accepted the Common Agricultural Policy and negotiated special arrangements for Commonwealth trade. The position of sterling was not discussed during official negotiations of entry and thus the issue remained open. However, the British were forced to make concessions on their budgetary contribution (Gifford 2008: 56).

Britain finally gained membership in 1972 after Edward Heath signed the accession treaty and after following parliamentary ratification of the Act. During the negotiations, the government briefly flirted with the idea of a referendum, but Heath took the view that Parliament was most likely to deliver a supportive vote in the form of the European Communities Act (Butler and Kitzinger 1976: 11).

At this point a key question must be addressed: who were the eurosceptics and what arguments did they have? The eurosceptic movement in the 1970s was almost entirely represented by anti-Marketeters, who flirted with issues relating to commerce and trading. This group promoted the Commonwealth as the alternative to the EC, because it was believed that food prices would rise and that initially there would be a negative impact on the British balance of payment. Anti-Marketeters also used arguments against European bureaucracy in favour of their policy and one such group actively tried to contain British pro-European policy and to undermine the government position, creating a “shadow” Cabinet (Forster 2002: 39). Their cause operated with a utilitarian dimension that was evident even from their first designation connected with the market. Their arguments were based on the concept of democratic deficit, which was not as developed during this period. It should be also noted that pro-European forces acknowledged eurosceptic arguments and tried to create their own counterarguments, based on economic prosperity

and principles of “good governance”. However, the entry to the Community left many unresolved issues, especially the issue of the entry’s legitimacy.

### **3.1.1. ‘No’ vs. ‘Yes’ Vote referendum – Harold Wilson and Labour’s attitude**

Harold Wilson returned to the Prime Minister’s post in February 1974 and gave an opportunity for anti-Marketeters to raise the question of the entry’s legitimacy. The opposition had two main trump cards. The first was the fact that, in 1972, Wilson committed himself to a re-negotiation of the terms of the entry to the EC<sup>8</sup> (Forster 2002: 48). The second trump card was Wilson’s commitment to a consultative referendum on membership. Anti-Marketeters used these points to open their *No vote* campaign to resist membership of the EC and to undermine the PM’s attempt to support the organization fellowship. Wilson appointed himself as a pro-European politician and refused to join the anti-membership campaign, regardless of the decision of his party (King 1977: 53, 58).

The Prime Minister tried to form his government on the basis of renegotiating membership terms. Wilson took steps to ensure that his Cabinet did not consist of anti-Marketeters and made sure that its members were roughly split into three groups: those who supported membership; those who opposed it; those who were uncommitted, but loyal to the PM (King 1977: 81). It should be also noted that Wilson and his Foreign Secretary, who would later become the Prime Minister of Great Britain, James Callaghan, were the only ones involved in the renegotiation of membership terms; the Cabinet was excluded from these discussions. This practice worked well which is why, when the issue was put to the vote, they voted in favour (Forster 2002: 57).

The opposition group was made up of different political parties and groups. The National Referendum Campaign, the leaders of which were Neil Marten, Douglas Jay, Christopher Smith and Richard Body, represented the ‘*No Vote*’ campaign. Its basic aims were to

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<sup>8</sup> This renegotiation included seven areas: “a zero VAT rating on basic items; protection of Britain’s balance of payments by limiting capital movements with the EC; criticism of Economic and Monetary Union; reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; assistance to Commonwealth exporters; freedom of manoeuvre for Britain’s regional and industrial policies; reduction of British budgetary contribution” (Forster 2002: 49).

restore to Parliament the exclusive right to pass laws and raise taxes, to renew the freedom of trade between Britain and the rest of the world, and to function as a coordinating body for member groups. However, in some aspects this group looked more like an anti-political body, because of the inclusion in its ranks of the Get Britain Out group, which preferred an anti-establishment tone for their campaign. Loyal MPs opposed this idea, which is why the NRC had no single message and no common motivation (Butler and Kitzinger 1976: 98–99, 110). This group used popular arguments connected with material aspects<sup>9</sup>, which they believed had not materialized. Prices were already high at the time and thus it seemed that their arguments were valid. However, it was more of a speculation than a real danger, partially due to the fact that the 1970s was a time of deep economic crisis in the whole world (Forster 2002: 54). The NRC Campaign worked very badly in that they had no clear alternative to offer and fell back on the argument that the EC was less important than other cooperative organizations (Butler and Kitzinger 1976: 183).

The next set of arguments, put forward by the NRC, focused on the nature of integration and its impact on Britain. As Anthony Forster argues, these arguments were really important for Labour anti-Marketeters and created a partisan critique of the EC. This process later influenced the shape and direction of the Labour Party, especially in terms of its socialist agenda which became an important part of the party's programme. These arguments also included the sovereignty question, which was mostly discussed by the Conservative, Enoch Powell. It was once stated that the EC would mean an end to the long and famous history of the British nation. Membership was seen as the final act of a self-governing nation and a democratically elected Parliament as a supreme-law body (Forster 2002: 56, 63). According to the thesis' dimensions of operationalization, anti-Marketeters used all three dimensions, however their arguments were weak and sometimes seemed unbelievable for general public. Populist approaches, which were the part of NRC campaign, did not attract wider groups of society and influenced only political elites inside the political system.

However, pro-European forces with the Prime Minister's support had a few advantages over their rivals. The first lay in the fact that it was the Prime Minister who decided about the wording of the questions and the time of the possible referendum and could also unite

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<sup>9</sup> This kind of arguments belongs to the utilitarian dimension of operationalization of euroscepticism.

governmental and party resources in support of any decision which the Cabinet took. The second, but equally important, advantage was the role of money in the campaign. The 'Yes' *Vote* campaign gained nearly one and half billion pounds, the largest sum ever accumulated for an electoral campaign. Meanwhile, the *No Vote* campaign was run on only 250 000 pounds (Forster 2002: 59).

The 'Yes' campaign included different figures from business, politics, the media and even from the church. It placed emphasis on economic prosperity, which Britain could gain from membership in the EC, and also paid attention to the effects of a possible withdrawal. The Pro-European group saw their position as pragmatic and underlined the control of national governments over European decision-making. They saw membership as fruitful and believed that "*there was no engagement with the project of European integration as representing a fundamental transformation of the British state*" (Gifford 2008: 62).

Shortly thereafter, it was agreed that a membership referendum would be held in June 1975. The timing of the referendum played a big role in results, because Wilson tried to hold it as quickly as possible once he realised the amount of supporters who would come out in favour of membership. In fact, he did just that in April 1975, when he saw that the number of voters opposing membership was twice as low (Forster 2002: 59).

The result was predictable, nearly 2 in every 3 respondents voted for continued membership. A post referendum analysis suggested that "*voters followed their parties' lead with the most divided voters being Labour supporters, of whom over half had endorsed continued membership*" (Forster 2002: 60). The result influenced the image of sceptics and showed their weaknesses. Anti-Marketeters lost confidence among the British public and politicians. However, this group became responsible for a rise in the eurosceptic movement and established populist approaches towards European integration across political parties and cultures, and even influencing certain executive bodies.

With the small exception of the 1979 European Parliament general elections and the budget reduction in 1984, the European issue did not figure prominently among the general public and was not widely criticized in the political sphere, especially at the executive level (Forster 2002: 50). Significant changes were to come after Margaret



Thatcher's Bruges speech in 1989 and eurosceptics were forced to broaden their agenda in order to influence the executive political stance.

In conclusion, it should be stated that while euroscepticism grew in the 1970s, support from among the general public was low. Furthermore, euroscepticism was divided among different political groups and significant politicians and thus the movement lacked unity. In order to be successful, the movement needed to gain additional financial support and an appropriate academic background.

### **3.2. The transformation of M. Thatcher**

The governing Conservative Party, with a strong and innovative leader in Margaret Thatcher, defined the 1980s in Britain. Her political ideas were based on “... *a clear ideological, economic and political break with the Keynesian-Beveridge settlement that had placed the extension of the welfare state, full employment and state intervention at the centre of British politics*” (Gifford 2008: 84). It was a new and creative policy which was developed to change the economic instability and to reanimate British growth and power. It was also a reaction against the Fordism initiatives that had failed to resolve the post-imperial crisis (Gifford 2008: 84, 86).

The tenure of M. Thatcher in connection with the EC and its policies can be divided into two periods. The first period was the period of European policy engagement, the most notable point of which was the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) in February 1986 and the Fontainebleau rebate for the UK on its contribution to the EU budget in 1984.

During discussions about creating of the single currency and strong political union, Prime Minister Thatcher changed her opinion and moved to a sceptical position towards the European Community. She introduced her eurosceptical arguments in the Bruges speech on 20 September 1988 (Forster 2002: 63–64). Next subchapter pays a close attention to this speech, analyses the main points and describes its results.

#### **3.2.1. Thatcher's first government**

Margaret Thatcher first came to office in 1979 and inherited the British state in a deep economic crisis. She created a strong leadership and depicted herself in public as a person who took a tough stance on European affairs. As Prime Minister she pursued a European policy of engagement, which took power away from backbenchers<sup>10</sup> and developed a majority in the parliamentary arena (Forster 2002: 63).

The position of the first Thatcher administration towards the EC was therefore closer to that of the previous Labour government than that of the Heath era. The Conservatives believed that the EC did not play a fundamental role in its policy proposals for a British recovery. Europe was to be imagined as a flexible international arena for the pursuit of national interest. A key feature of Thatcher's approach was to resist the constraints imposed by the EC and to begin to create a distinctive approach to the Community and cooperation in general, e.g. the budget dispute and the Westland affair (Gifford 2008: 90).

Her policy was based on the principle of public scepticism, but, behind close doors, the Prime Minister made a series of compromises and concessions to secure key objectives. According to Conservative minister of Foreign Affairs Douglas Hurd, *“Thatcher thus used the vocabulary of skeptics but ultimately acquiesced in, and at times added momentum to, further European integration. It was Thatcher's approach to Europe and the old-Marketeters' own lack of personal standing within the party which effectively prevented any serious resistance to a series of policies which took Britain more deeply into an 'ever closing union' during this period”* (Forster 2002: 63).

The first milestone in Thatcherite European policy was the issue of the budget dispute, which started with initial renegotiations by Wilson but did not produce any tangible financial results. By 1979 the transitional period of Britain into the EC came to an end, so Britain would have to pay all contributions. Thatcher understood that the amount of payment was disproportionate to the UK economy and reopened the issue in December 1979 during the Dublin Conference. During that time she announced her famous intention “to get our money back”. However, the question had been resolved during the Fontainebleau meeting in 1984 when Britain received a refund on its contributions and an annual rebate (Forster 2002: 91). The main reason for the rebate was that a high

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<sup>10</sup> Backbencher is a Member of Parliament in the Westminster system, who does not hold governmental office. He serves in relative anonymity and votes when and how their leader tells them to (Malcolmson and Myers 2012: 126).

proportion of the EC budget (at that time 80%, now approximately 41%) is spent on the CAP, which benefits the UK much less than other countries as it has a relatively small farming sector as a proportion of its GDP. The second reason lay in the fact that, at the time, the UK was the second poorest member of the ten European Economic Community members (Cooper 2012: 1194– 1195).

Significantly, this issue also showed an underlying scepticism about the European project. Skidelsky goes even further and argues that Thatcher questioned not only the economic issue, but the very legitimacy of the Community, because she believed that the main function of the budget was ‘purely’ political – to provide an income for a European state (Skidelsky 1993: 358). According to the operationalization of euroscepticism it could be said that the question of a rebate had some roots in the economic dimension of this term. Discussions revolved around a high budget and real scepticism about its formation testified to the existence of soft Euroscepticism even in the early stages of M. Thatcher's tenure.

Insofar as Thatcher was pro-European, she saw the EC as an organization, which could promote economic liberalism in the industrial and service sectors. Therefore the second milestone in Thatcher's European policy was the parliamentary ratification of the Single European Act.<sup>11</sup> This policy was far removed from scepticism and introduced the conservative government's priority – to change the direction of the discussion towards the practical achievement of a free internal market and away from institutional reform. The British government was to oppose the French position and to stop the expansion of the powers of the European parliament. With the focus primarily on economic integration and with few concessions to those who had a more federalist agenda, the eventual outcome of the negotiations over the SEA was viewed as a British victory (Forster 2002: 67).

Britain's position towards the SEA was strict and very different to the position of other members. The country opposed strengthening monetary coordination, political and

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<sup>11</sup> The Single European Act was approved by European heads of government in 1986, and has linked liberalization of the European market with procedural reform. The first part, called White Paper, aimed to create an area without internal frontiers and to include free movement of people, goods, services and capital. The second half of it consisted of procedural reforms designed to streamline decision making in the Council of Ministers of the EC from qualified majority voting about vital interests to qualified majority voting on matters about the internal market (Moravcsik 1991: 19–20).

defence cooperation, advocated the facilitation of more majority voting and supported the liberalization of the market after the budget issue was resolved. The Thatcher government was cautious of attempts to strengthen the European Commission and the European Parliament and to expand EC competence in areas not directly connected with trade, indirect taxation and social legislation. The Prime Minister felt that a common monetary policy would undermine British sovereignty, and when Britain and Germany refused to participate in complete liberalization of capital markets, other countries also did so. Thus a compromise was made, with no concrete steps beyond its existing policies (Moravcsik 1991: 28, 32, 42).

After the successful ratification of this Treaty it was stated that euroscepticism had declined in the British political arena. Margaret Thatcher became a symbol of a possible adjustment in the relationship between the EC and Britain. Her role in the reform of the Community was ambivalent, but worked well.

However, the situation quickly changed. Further discussions about the future of the EC had been worrying the conservative government for some time and Thatcher brought up these worries in Bruges in 1989.

### **3.2.2. Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech – the active phase of scepticism**

The Bruges speech was given by Margaret Thatcher at the College of Europe in September 1988. This speech started a new phase of Conservative attitude towards the EC, characterised by the move from an instrumental and pragmatic position on European integration to an ideological one. She moved from an incidental position of membership to perceiving it as a threat. During this period the first key steps were taken in the movement of the opponents of European integration from an anti-market position to a Eurosceptical one. Before the Bruges speech, opponents of integration focused their attention on an anti-market position. Afterwards, however, the critics' position transformed into criticism of the Political and Economic Union. It was the dawning of a new era of Euroscepticism (Forster 2002: 63–65).

In Bruges, Margaret Thatcher argued that *“willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states is the best way to build a successful European*

*Community*”.<sup>12</sup> She saw this process as dependent on governments and their judgment as to the value of current and future agreements. This point of view was not anti-European, but saw the process as dependent on the individual assessment by each government involved in the process (Forster 2002: 76).

However, this speech presented three main critical points toward the European Community. The first point discussed the structure of the EC which had opened negotiations about closer integration. Thatcher saw the single voice of the Community as suppressing nationalism and concentrating power in one centre. She claimed that this was a highly damaging phenomenon, which would destroy all previously achieved goals. She believed that cooperation should exist, but should be dispersed among nation states in order to gain success. The next structural problem for the British Conservatives was the possible creation of a Political Union and EMU. Thatcher told the public that there was no need to create new regulations, which would raise the cost of employment and make Europe’s labour market less flexible and less competitive with foreign suppliers.<sup>13</sup>

This critical point can be connected with the sovereignty dimension of operationalization. Thatcher openly labelled increasing EC competencies, such as the creation of a strong Political Union and the EMU, as a loss of sovereignty. She believed that close political integration was unnecessary and, in some ways, dangerous. Also, this criticism can be connected to the utilitarian dimension, because of the possibility of a forfeit in the labour market, of growing unemployment and of a decline in manufacturing. Even though economic cooperation was perceived as a good thing, its foundation had to be built upon other, reformed principles, which are discussed below.

The second critical point was based on the current policy problems, faced by the Community. The former Prime Minister stated that “ *[i]f we cannot reform those Community policies which are patently wrong or ineffective and which are rightly causing public disquiet, than we shall not get the public support for the Community’s future development*”.<sup>14</sup> She believed that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)<sup>15</sup> was

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<sup>12</sup> Thatcher, Margaret (1988). The Bruges Speech. *The Telegraph* [online]. September 1988. [cit. 18. 3. 2014]. Available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3562258/Full-text-of-Margaret-Thatchers-speech-to-the-College-of-Europe-The-Bruges-Speech.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

far from complete, because of over-production and limited costs. The challenge facing the Community was to show political courage and create a stable and effective farming industry. Also, Thatcher emphasized the need to avoid protectionism and to encourage enterprise (Forster 2002: 77).

The third critical feature of the speech was what the EC might become. Thatcher did not accept the vision of Europe as a federation like the United States. The most fundamental and critical issue related to this vision was the creation of a Western European Union as an alternative to NATO. According to Thatcher's opinion, the WEU "... *should be developed... as a means of strengthening Europe's contribution to the common defense of the West*".<sup>16</sup>

The growing consolidation surrounding Thatcher's agenda marked a shift away from the domination of the anti-market Labour left to a rightist Eurosceptical movement. This movement attracted academic sphere, which began to debate and to create analytical framework. This led to a broader support network outside Parliament, sparked an intellectual debate and created an environment in which to advance the Eurosceptical cause on a multidimensional front (Forster 2002: 72; Baker and Seawright 1998: 193–195).

To summarise, the Bruges speech united different groups of sceptics and established an intellectual agenda for opposing European integration. Thatcher became a symbol of the new movement, which is still influential in the British domestic arena. By applying Taggart's and Szczerbiak's definition, it could be said that the Conservative Party and her leader supported the soft version of Euroscepticism in British policy at the end of the decade and discussed the issue of further integration more seriously in the 1990s.

The end of the 1980s can be marked as a period of slow growth of euroscepticism, although the beginning of the decade was very much in the spirit of "hidden" support for

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<sup>15</sup> Common Agricultural Policy – one of the oldest policies of the European Union, is strongly rooted in the European integration project. The CAP aimed at encouraging better productivity in the food chain, ensuring fair standard of living to the agricultural community, market stabilization and ensuring the availability of food supplies to EU consumers at reasonable price. It has been developing through all the history of EC/EU (European Commission 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Thatcher, Margaret (1988). The Bruges Speech. *The Telegraph* [online]. September 1988. [cit. 18. 3. 2014]. Available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3562258/Full-text-of-Margaret-Thatchers-speech-to-the-College-of-Europe-The-Bruges-Speech.html>.

European integration. Thus, a strong belief in better economic cooperation existed and political elites saw the industrial recovery as being strongly based on this process.

### **3.3. John Major's government – debates before Maastricht Treaty**

John Major was elected in 1990 as the leader of the Conservative party and the man to resolve the crisis created by Thatcherism. This crisis was “*evidenced by an economic recession, growing electoral unpopularity for the Conservatives and the unease within a party over European integration*” (Gifford 2008: 111). A key feature of his administration was a commitment to protect and improve public service provision and this accounted for increases in public taxes. Some of his ministers, for example Patten and Willets, tried to present the modern conservative attitude as a combination of Thatcher's free trade radicalism and a belief in community, which was rooted in the long tradition of conservative state building (ibid: 111).

His main political slogan appealing to European integration was based on the idea of placing Britain at the “heart of Europe”. A key feature of this approach was to rebuild relations and secure alliances with the European governing elite and governments, which had been alienated by Mrs. Thatcher. His advisors and Foreign Secretary actively used the strategy that was built on the idea to place British Conservatives in the mainstream of European politics (Forster 1998: 352, 357). They made close contacts with German political parties, such as the Christian Democrats, and also with parties in the European parliament. Major believed that close cooperation with Germany would stop French attempts to create a monetary union. Major's economic strategy was based on continued membership of the ERM, the goal of which was to attempt to revise the Thatcher settlement (Smith 1992: 155).

Moreover, J. Major routinely met with sceptical MPs to briefly inform them on developments and the major stumbling blocks, and to outline the government's position on the key issues. He frequently reassured them personally that he would not sign the treaty, which would undermine national sovereignty. Furthermore, the Prime Minister tried to win over the most critical politicians with the promise of posts in his government. Shortly after his personal approach and his policy designed to achieve the compromise

failed, he gave the government seats to some Eurosceptics and bound them by the associated responsibility (Forster 2002: 97).

However, the ideological dominance of Thatcherism left little room for a creative political agenda. Gifford argues that this increasingly crystallized once “*the Major government became preoccupied with party unity and abandoned attempts to construct an intellectual coherent project along the lines Patten and others had envisaged*” (Gifford: 112). As mentioned earlier, opposition against the government's European policy strengthened and created a complex network of arguments and players, which effectively put Major’s position under increasing pressure and proved to be a disaster that created a divide among the Conservatives, ultimately destroying the credibility of the government.

The application of the Maastricht Treaty had one more important purpose for the Community – creating a political union, which would unite member states and create common foreign and security policy. However, for British Eurosceptics this meant the loss of sovereignty and national identity. As Mrs. Thatcher said in her speech: “*We do not want the United States of Europe*”.<sup>17</sup> It was a common opinion among both Conservative and Labour politicians.

The main focus of the political opposition was the situation, in which the range and power ceded to a central authority. The scrapping of national currencies led to the creation of the European Union in political terms, with common security and foreign policies, the possibility of defense capability and justice and home affairs responsibilities, whereas the traditional British agenda was only based on the implementation of the Common Market. Sceptics, who argued that the lesson from the SEA was not learned, strongly blamed Major’s government. They saw expansive Treaty language as a weapon for European federalists. Also, the Eurosceptics critique was focused on the government’s lack of attention to detail. The attack regarded the fact that the British opt-outs were not as easy as the government had suggested (Forster 2002: 93–94).

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<sup>17</sup> Thatcher, Margaret (1988). The Bruges Speech. *The Telegraph* [online]. September 1988. [cit. 18. 3. 2014]. Available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3562258/Full-text-of-Margaret-Thatchers-speech-to-the-College-of-Europe-The-Bruges-Speech.html>.



One more factor, which British Eurosceptics of the Political Union wanted to reduce, was the social policy in Europe. Thatcher began this argument in her speech and gave an explanation of the effects of its implementation, namely that it was an attack on the principles of free trade.<sup>18</sup> This argument was used once more by Cash, who argued that the original free market agenda was replaced by the will of political integration; “*they want ... to create one country*” (Gifford 2008: 133).

Those arguments belong to the sovereignty dimension of operationalization and describe the opposition against a political union during the duration of John Major’s government. MPs and some cabinet ministers, who supported Thatcher, saw the Maastricht Treaty as a weapon against state sovereignty and tried to go against the grain, but their hard line was rejected.

The debate surrounding the EMU forced Major’s members of the Cabinet to resist negative goals and objectives such as the acceptance of the single currency, common foreign and security policy and common social policy. Despite Patten and his assistants wanting Britain to be a part of an extensive European Policy, British politics prevented the country from going in that direction (Gifford 2008: 117). Major’s government underestimated the role of the ERM in the state economy and opted out. These opt outs enabled the Prime Minister to avoid the political ramifications of the EMU and the Social Chapter without having to veto the whole Maastricht Treaty (Forster 1998: 361–363).

Such skepticism can be associated both with the utilitarian dimension and the question of the democratic deficit of operationalization, because the single currency and common policies, connected with defence and foreign affairs, undermine the external trade of the country and give the power to make decisions to the intergovernmental bodies, which are seen as a source of democratic deficit. Among the most popular economic arguments was a belief that the EC/EU had not delivered the economic benefits, which were claimed, and that single currency would not profit as well. However, between political arguments can be named new predictions that EMU would lead to the creation of Political Union, in which would not exist independent policies of welfare improvement, employment and wealth creation.

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<sup>18</sup> Thatcher, Margaret (1988). The Bruges Speech. *The Telegraph* [online]. September 1988. [cit. 18. 3. 2014]. Available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3562258/Full-text-of-Margaret-Thatchers-speech-to-the-College-of-Europe-The-Bruges-Speech.html>.

Major's position on Europe was ambiguous because his main objective was to unite the party and represent both the right and the left. He reflected the policy at the heart of Europe, sometimes compromising it with a Eurosceptical position. The adoption of an obstructivist, neo-Thatcherite approach to the EC, later to become the EU, left the government marginalized and damaged. After the withdrawal from the ERM, John Major adopted a new position, which claimed that the steps being taken by the French were wrong and that Europe was exactly what Thatcher said it was in her Bruges speech – different nation states united by active cooperation and a free trade base (Gifford 2008: 135).

At the beginning of the 1990s the trend of euroscepticism's growth was seen in many spheres, especially in the sphere of political elites. To sum up, John Major was trying to create his own policy which welcomed European policy, but the fragmentation of the party and strong voice of eurosceptics, who included supporters of Thatcher and other units, undermined his government and made his policy ineffective. The side effect of this was a feeling of unease and worry among the general public and a huge amount of sceptical articles were published in popular newspapers.

### **3.4. Labour government: Anglo-Europe and Euroscepticism**

In 1997 the Conservative party comprehensively lost the election and ceded control of the UK political arena to the Labour Party. Its leader Tony Blair came to power with a programme committed not only to fundamental constitutional change in the UK but also to the institutions of transnational governance. The Labour Party spelled out its policy as a co-operative pro-European policy, which placed "social Europe" at the centre of a modernised platform (Gifford 2008: 139). Blair's leadership, along with that of his successor Gordon Brown, emphasised "*the promotion of labour market flexibility and economic reform in order to ensure the competitiveness of the European economy in an era of globalisation*" (Fella 2006: 388). Through this policy they wanted to promote strong European political structures, which would ensure that corporations and transnational companies could not cause damage to the common man. They sought to prevent Europe and its small entrepreneurs from becoming global commercial forces (ibid: 392).

The major domestic task regarding the EU was to put Britain back into the center of the European debate. However, foreign policy had not played a big role in the Labour campaign and its key idea was that “[i]t shall be a government, too, that gives this country strength and confidence in leadership both at home and abroad, particularly in respect of Europe”.<sup>19</sup>

Both Blair and Brown tried to change public attitude towards the European Union. They decided to use the discourse method and challenged British “otherness”, which was based on a number of factors, such as history and geography, wars, and its electoral and parliamentary system etc. Both Prime Ministers were well aware of the national story they were attempting to rewrite (Daddow 2011: 133 –134).

However, Blair’s and later Brown’s policy did not succeed in changing general British attitudes towards the EU. The general public, academics and politicians in all parties (even in Labour) remained sceptical about some of the implementations of the new European Union’s agreements. It replaced British exceptionalism in terms of political economy and political identity and actively pursued an Anglo-European project that attempted to move the direction of the European Union in a British direction rather than vice versa (Gifford 2008: 139).

The first subchapter describes the Labour party’s attempt to reassert the policy of Europeanism in its government, as well as giving explanations about how they decided to approach the achievement of this goal and what the results were. In the second part of this chapter, readers can find criticisms of both Blair and Brown’s governments and also a description of their key mistakes in European strategy.

### **3.4.1. Labour’s attempt to reassert Anglo-Europeanism**

The Labour Party, after taking office in 1997, challenged the British way of thinking about Europe. Thatcher and later Brown created a strong division of European sceptics in political arena, public and academic spectrum. The Blair government attempted to undermine Franco-German dominance and construct an Anglo-conservative leadership

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<sup>19</sup> Blair, Tony (1997). Blair's speech at 10 Downing Street. *CNN*. 2.05.1997 [cit. 03.04.2014]. Available from <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9705/02/blair.speech/>.

based on security and economic de-regulation. Such economic strategy was built on widespread public ownership and heavy state intervention, in which EU membership would no longer be an obstacle to the implementation of party policy (Gifford 2008: 139-140). This was visible from New Labour's attempts to create coalitions with right wing governments and conservative leaders such as Berlusconi and Aznar. In addition, the strategy of building coalitions both in the East and West with a principled opposition to deeper integration was warmly welcomed (Fella 2006: 391). Blair thought that the European Union should concentrate on questions such as economic policy, immigration and environment, rather than creating strong governmental bodies. Curiously, by taking this position, he was actually very close to Major's attempt to see Britain in Europe on economic matters, but not as a threat to national sovereignty (Daddow 2011: 1). For example, the Labour government resisted making the European Chapter of Fundamental Rights legally binding for the UK much to the frustration of the British trade union movement as British workers would then be excluded from its social and employment rights (Fella 2006: 395).

One of Blair's immediate concerns before he took office, as regards EU policy, was the immediacy of a further IGC to review the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty. His advisors and party politicians created a programme, which was called *The Future of the European Union*, and agreed that there was a need to bolster the EU's social democratic content, to significantly extend the European Parliament, and to support strong social dimension and economic coordination in order to create employment and a European Recovery Fund for better distribution of the wealth created by a single market. However, after Blair came to power, this strategy changed. The emphasis of Labour's EU policy switched from promoting employment rights to avoiding costs to businesses and maximizing the flexibility of the labour market (Fella 2006: 392-393).

The New Labour government created a strategy, which they thought would well work even with the level of Euroscepticism in Britain. In language terms, they tried to achieve a theory of 'norm entrepreneurship'. Wodak and a collection of other authors describes this theory as discourse, which would change "*social actors constitute knowledge, situations, social role as well as identities and interpersonal relations between various interacting social groups and those who interact with them*" (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999: 157). Blair and Brown were well aware, or were made well aware by their

advisors, of this discourse and used it as a weapon against the sceptics. They identified that British people were being kept in a permanent state of discursive war with the continent, in which the Eurosceptical position limited people's thoughts and actions towards Europe (Daddow 2001: 65). The first step was *"to reframe Britain's debates about Europe and the EU through a systematic revisioning of the language, imagery and points of historical references around which Britain's Europe debates occurred in the political, public and media worlds"* (ibid: 67). Also it was necessary to create an organizational platform on which to build a consensus about new norms. Blair and Brown used existing NGOs, and made speeches at universities, business organizations, think tanks and institutions of the EU to spread their messages. However, Labour politicians did not deliver upon their strategy of discourse. This defeat was determined by influential political leaders such as M. Thatcher, who did not give up and continued to fight against active European policies, but also by critical media, which delivered their Eurosceptical message to a huge number of readers (ibid: 67).

In looking at the arguments, which were used to deliver new points of view towards the EU at the end of the 1990s and before 9/11, economical and influential benefits and security framework were at the forefront. The economic benefits were named as a main resource of New Labour policy as regards the transformation of Britain into a Euro-friendly country. Both former Prime Ministers thought that through prioritized economic possibilities arising from British industrial openness to the European technological cooperation, the country would grow economically more quickly and would become dominant among EU countries. The government supported the EU's employment rate, which was created by the single market and cost 3.5 million jobs. In his speech to the business community, Brown also used the history of growing interconnectedness with the continent as an indicator of positive European influence over Britain. However, the 'five tests' of G. Brown, which will be described in the next subchapter, and the disagreement between Blair and Brown on the question of the single currency would not deliver the predicted transformation of public opinion (Daddow 2011: 91–95).

Labour's discourse on the question of British influence in Europe had three main points. The first is that Britain would be affected by developments in Europe whether the state is in or out of the EU. Secondly, they believed that it would make it easier for Britain to reform the EU from the centre of the community rather than from the periphery. Finally,

Blair thought that Britain would be in a much stronger position to take its global leadership role from an EU platform, than if they stayed outside such a potentially powerful block (Daddow 2011: 97; Williams 2009: 233–235).

The question about the European security framework was fundamental for British New Labour until 9/11. Blair represented the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), later to develop into the EC and then the EU, as a clear way forward for countries with a totalitarian and central planning past, a promoter of democracy and a servant of good values in the wider world. He declared that this structure prevented wars between old rivals and created an atmosphere of peace and prosperity. However, after 9/11, the Labour Party changed its stance and the free movement of people and goods and services was seen as a potential threat to national security, because of the EU's inability to act quickly and effectively (Daddow 2011: 103–106).

The Labour Party was well informed about the Eurosceptic movement and actively used descriptions about rivals of the EU to their own advantage. Blair in his speeches portrayed the sceptics as ideological opponents to the principle of supranational integration. He saw their objective as an intellectually sound, but outdated, rejection of shared sovereignty and commonly accepted rules such as majority voting. The most sceptical of them, he suggested, wanted to withdraw from the EU itself.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted, that Labour discourse appealed to the main dimensions of operationalization. At first, Blair tried to attack the utilitarian dimension and to describe the EU as an organization, which would help Britain to recover from industrial, social and economic crises. The Labour Prime Ministers (Blair and Brown) also adapted their strategy in terms of two other dimensions. They decided to use the globalization process as a focal point when attacking the question of democratic deficit and sovereignty dimensions, arguing that, in the new world of technology and capital interdependence, it is important to create a strong intergovernmental body for effective governance.

Blair's cabinet effectively fought with the eurosceptic movement which benefited the prime minister's commitments and discourse. During the first Labour government, the attitude of both the public and the elite towards the EU was more neutral than pro-

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<sup>20</sup> Blair, Tony (2006). Speech on Europe. *Harvard.edu*. [cit. 04. 04. 2014]. Available from [http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic162932.files/Tony\\_Blair\\_Oxford\\_Speech\\_on\\_europe.htm](http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic162932.files/Tony_Blair_Oxford_Speech_on_europe.htm).

European but in general the trend still existed in the British political arena and influenced the British public. A few years later, with the discussions about the Nice Treaty, euroscepticism gained real power once again and all the mistakes made by Labour in their pro-European policy were shown up.

### **3.4.2. Labour's defeat in European policy**

The distinctive Labour approach towards the EU in terms of globalization had an impact on business, trade and the life of the people. Blair tried to accept European centrality to Britain's economic interests, but did not want to fully integrate without benefits for his own country. However, understanding the driving forces of the UK produces a counterargument, which describes the British economy as a mechanism dependent on financial and trading activities rather than manufacturing and production. According to this, it seems ineffective to take the British financial system deeper into European legislative and control apparatus, which would restrict the flow of money and relationships with global capital trade (Gifford 2008: 142).

Why did not this situation change? What were the problems of Labour policy related to Europe? First of all, the Labour party picked up the 'no strategy' view that Europe was mistreated by Blair and Downing Street on the one hand and Brown and the Treasury on the other. For Blair the top priorities were domestic issues, and the question of European policy was highly problematic. His personal attitude was focused on personal diplomacy with the US, and it was Brown's responsibility to negotiate with the EU. Secondly, there was a failure of leadership on the part of the Prime Minister to hold a referendum on the single currency<sup>21</sup>, which were an attempt to de-politicize the issue through a rule-based approach by reducing its electoral salience. The results of the Treasury report showed that British businesses and economy in general were prepared to accept the single currency, but the problem lay in creating a flexibility between, and sufficient convergence with, European economics. Thus, the absence of a referendum from Blair's side, later ended his effective premiership (Daddow 2011: 29).

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<sup>21</sup> These tests included questions about convergence of British economy with EU, flexibility of business and workforce, possible investment into country's economy, results of Eurozone on financial services and employment (Sowemimo 1999: 357 – 359).

New Labour's discourses on leadership were representing the shift in the political landscape of Britain. However, this landscape did not meld with public attitudes and the mixed political messages being delivered highlighted the problem, which combined progressive and traditionalist takes on the British role in the world (Daddow 2011: 221).

As regards the European political arena, there was also a problem in understanding British "otherness". Member states of the EU, especially France, started to challenge the British agenda of making special exceptions in order to influence the European budget. They wanted to end the British debate, while the British agenda was to change the economic structure of the EU, particularly the reshaping of the CAP and the funds allocated to it. Brown went further in his beliefs that economic reform in the EU needed to become a precondition for UK membership of the Euro. However, the majority of European politicians didn't have such changes in mind and therefore made it impossible for the British government to implement activities of this sort (Fella 2006: 389–390).

The biggest critic of the Labour government's European policy, Robin Cook, used a powerful rhetoric against Blair-Brown's line on Europe. He suggested that the EU's unpopularity lay in its apparent alignment with the negative impulses of globalization such as the erosion of job security and the effect on quality of life. Furthermore, the UK government did not help itself by blocking progressive and popular measures that would improve the lot of workers in both Britain and the EU. Moreover, Cook opposed the tendency of Blair's government to pass nationalist rhetoric when dealing with the EU in order to gain cheap popularity at home. He saw those steps as extremely ineffective and argued that this was only "*a good press game at home*" (ibid: 396–397).

All of Labour's critics created a strong counterargument in regard to the economic dimension of eurosceptic operationalization. They criticised both Prime Ministers' rhetoric, saying that the meaning of those words showed negative character. Also, the huge role the opposition played in the question of democratic deficit, who highlighted the disharmony between the European and British political elite, was seen as a major source of the problem.

Eurobarometer, an opinion poll team and journal published annually since 1973, has published opinion polls about different countries' attitude to European affairs. During Blair's period in office, Britain was shown as one of the most sceptical members of the



EU and according to both regional polling and analyses, it was a pattern created many years ago. Openly critical attitudes towards the EU were more than twice as high in Britain compared with the average of the other 27 member states. This showed that, despite Blair's best efforts, there was no real improvement in the relations between UK and European Union (Daddow 2011: 18–19).

All of this led to a broad disillusionment with Labour policy, which effectively ended its short, but successful popularity and support among the people of Britain. This led to a risk of turning the public once again against the European project. The Labour Party left a big hole in the question about Europe and thus the trend of euroscepticism became a hot topic for the incoming government in terms of future relations.

### **3.5. Coalitional government - Cameron-Clegg's strategy toward the EU**

The contemporary government was formed in 2010 after the General Election, in which the Conservative Party won first place with more than 35%, which was not enough to take control of the House of Commons in a majority. The third party with 23% was the Liberal Democrats, who agreed to form a coalition government with the Conservatives. The hottest question facing the Coalition was to create a united vision regarding the European Union. Therefore, to encourage better governance, a leadership discussion began and a common manifesto was created, in which both parties tempered their enthusiasm and reached common ground to allow them to lead the government (Lynch 2011: 218, 221).

The Conservative party, especially its leader David Cameron, gave a pledge to a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. If Lisbon had not been ratified by all Member States when the Conservatives entered office, they would have withdrawn their ratification, held a referendum on the treaty and led the campaign for a 'No' vote. On the subject of ratification, the Conservatives promised to change this policy. It was a promise for action in the domestic arena and in the EU to prevent the further strengthening of the Union and address concerns about Lisbon (Lynch 2011: 219-220). Their agenda was directed to a referendum lock, a full opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and greater protection against EU invasion into the UK's criminal justice system. The party

believed that the exemptions negotiated by Labour were insufficient, and the repatriation of social and employment policy has been a long-standing demand of the Conservatives (Charter 2012: 70–71).

On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats had a different view and agenda towards the EU, because they saw themselves as a much more pro-European party. The party believed that it was in Britain's long-term interest to join the single currency, subject to approval in a referendum. In the final leadership debate about the economic situation in Greece, Clegg denied that the LibDems advocated entry to the Euro. However, they committed themselves to a 2005 manifesto related to an "in-out" referendum the next time Britain negotiates its relationship with the EU. This stance has changed since the Lisbon Treaty, when the party lacked consistency and argued that a referendum is not required (Lynch 2011: 220).

In victory, however, both parties required repatriation pledges during the negotiations which would help to create a single policy towards the EU. The Coalition *Programme for Government* developed the right balance between constructive engagement with the EU to deal with issues, which are affecting the society and national sovereignty and the familiar stance that Britain should play a leading role in an enlarged Union (Charter 2012: 71).

The Coalition program rules out participation in a European Public Prosecutor system, but other legislation on criminal justice would be based on a case-by-case basis with a view to maximizing the country's security, protecting Britain's civil liberties and preserving the integrity of the criminal justice system. This program in general is not different from recent governments, as it still wants to play the role of defender of national interest, supporter of the Single Market and further enlargement, and interrogator of the reform of CAP and EU budget. It also wants to discuss EU social policy, criminal justice and defence proposals (Lynch 2011: 221).

In looking at the hottest questions about new policy changes, which were brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) as a diplomatic service of the EU, should be discussed. The Conservatives had opposed the creation of the EEAS but now accepted it as a fact. The contemporary government wants to shape the development of this structure, and therefore respects the competence

of EU member states in constructing foreign policy and works in cooperation with their diplomatic services. However it continues to provide a strong voice in areas where the EU has an agreed common position. For example, Cameron's support for Turkish membership in the EU shows the opposition to the common view of other EU members, which is against the country's acceptance (Lynch 2011: 223).

Now it is quite important to analyze D. Cameron's speech on membership in the EU, which has opened a debate about possibly quitting and started a countrywide agenda for withdrawal. In this pronouncement he set out an agenda for EU reform and if those reforms do not start, the British government will be supportive of a withdrawal. In his speech, the Prime Minister mentioned three current challenges presented by the EU. Firstly, there are problems in the Eurozone, which are driving fundamental changes in the EU. Countries who currently use the Euro have challenged the crisis of the new currency and created a strong policy, which would help to fix it. However, countries outside the Eurozone, such as Britain, feel that this policy does not protect their interests and require certain safeguards to ensure that their access to funds or the single market is not compromised (Cameron 2013: 89, 92).

Secondly, there is a crisis related to European competitiveness with the rest of the global market as its world output is projected to fall by almost a third in the next two decades. Complex rules restricting the labour markets, brought about by this prediction, are not occurring as a natural phenomenon. Therefore, this presents the huge challenge for European leaders to overcome; the creation of a market, which will work for prosperity (ibid: 89).

Finally, there is a *“gap between the EU and its citizens, which has grown dramatically in recent years. And which represents a lack of democratic accountability and consent that is ... felt particularly acutely in Britain”* (ibid: 89). People are frustrated that decisions taken at the EU level are away from everyday concerns such as living standards or taxes. This disagreement can be seen during the mass demonstrations and strikes against some reforms produced by the EU (ibid: 89).

However, Cameron said that he personally believes that the EU is a good thing, which will be more effective for people after reforms based on five key principles. The first principle is competitiveness, which will be based on a single market which must become

less bureaucratic, helping its members to compete. The second principle concerns flexibility, which would respect the diversity of member countries (Cameron 2013: 89–90). It should be “*a flexible union of free member states who share treaties and institutions and pursue together the ideal of co-operation*” (ibid 2013: 90). The third guideline is that power must be in the hands of each individual national government, and thus shared sovereignty is the wrong principle for cooperation. A united structure, he claims, cannot unite different countries with different priorities and cultures. The fourth principle is democratic accountability, which will allow national parliaments to play a more significant role. It will be their priority to look after the interests of their own country and do business between themselves. Finally, the fifth principle for reform is fairness. The EU should create the kind of policies, which do not punish some of its members and therefore do not spread discord (ibid: 90–91).

Regarding the opposition to the EEAS and the fact that it is one of Cameron’s guiding reformatory principles, it should be stated that Conservative rhetoric operates within the sovereignty dimension. It was Margaret Thatcher, who first discussed this question, and currently it is David Cameron, who is trying to fight against the strengthening of the EU in the security and foreign affairs’ spheres. Furthermore, the Prime Minister is using the dimension of democratic deficit in his speeches in the hope that national governments will eventually have more power over the decision making process in the implementation of state interests. The utilitarian dimension has also been used in his speeches and has its foundation in his two guiding principles: the abolishment of bureaucratic structures and the flexibility of the market, which would profit all members. Analyzing Cameron’s guiding principles, the politician can be labelled a eurosceptic. Using Taggart and Szczerbiak’s classification his commitments belong to the soft version of euroscepticism, because they reject the idea of withdrawal, but offer changes in some policy aspects.

In conclusion, Cameron, by introducing his promise to hold a referendum, energized the UKIP and Conservative hard eurosceptics, whilst at the same time challenging cabinet proponents, who are pro-European and for whom a commitment to a referendum appears as a threat to them. His commitment activated the agenda for a referendum about membership, which is now going to be discussed.

#### **4. Contemporary British euroscepticism**

The contemporary British political arena, especially the groups in it, is discussing the EU issue on a regular basis and it is at the forefront of British contemporary politics. Media outlets, academics and, in some ways, the government pay a great deal of attention to the possible in-out referendum and the rising popularity of extremist parties. The populist, single issue party UKIP is now playing a big role in the public domain and defines changes in attitude towards the EU. The growing scepticism in parliament and the changing stance of the government show the impact that this political party has had. However, the electoral system and the lack of financial resources has hindered UKIP's attempts to gain seats in the House of Commons and thus directly influence Britain's European policy.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that the contemporary government is composed of two different parties, which, as a result of their coalition, have been forced to change their stances. The Conservative Party seems to be a soft Eurosceptic body, the leader of which describes himself as a pragmatic and sensible Eurosceptic. He emphasized his attitude in a speech, which discussed the challenges Britain faces as regards Europe and appealed to the EU about the need for reforms (Lynch 2011: 222). On the other hand, their partners, the Liberal Democrats, have constantly been pro-European and oppose discussions about reforms, especially the possibility of a referendum about membership.<sup>22</sup>

The British Conservative Party today is more likely to be Eurosceptical. This is directly related to how they see Britain's foreign policy and its place in the world. Given their lack of sympathy for the EU, they are compelled to steer Britain into the American sphere of influence. This is why their emphasis lies in NATO as the main defence structure of the EU and their "special relationship" or "Atlanticism" has played too key a part in British diplomatic history, to the detriment of maintaining a close engagement in European matters. However, the US and other significant players in the world game want to see Britain as a part of the EU. This controversial situation appeals to the

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<sup>22</sup> Watt, Nicolas (2013). David Cameron challenges Nick Clegg over EU referendum. *The Guardian*. 30. 06. 2013 [cit. 10. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jun/30/david-cameron-nick-clegg-eu-referendum>.

contemporary government and complicates its policy and attitude towards the European Union (Beech 2011: 353).

#### **4.1. Factors related to the active presence of this phenomenon on the British political arena**

Euroscepticism in Britain has existed throughout the whole membership period, however the purpose of this subchapter is to describe factors related to its presence in the contemporary political arena and to suggest the possibility of holding a membership referendum.

The first factor of contemporary euroscepticism is the presence and active influence of the populist parties, such as the Scottish National Party, UKIP, and the British National Party. The most influential party regarding the European issue is the United Kingdom Independence Party, which represents the right wing populist movement and was created in 1992 and founded in 1993 as a reaction to Europe's federalist project of creating an even closer political and economic union made possible by the Maastricht Treaty<sup>23</sup>. However, the party roots can be dated back to the Bruges speech, which led to the creation of the Bruges group and a highly diffused opposition to European integration. From the outset, the party was a part of the Anti-federalist League, but their leader, Alan Sked, and his small group of followers launched a new structure with new policies, a new logo and new aims. The main aim was "*to put pressure on the British government of the day by not taking up any European Parliament seats it might win*" (Usherwood 2010: 5–6).

During the 1990s and the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, UKIP performed badly during the elections to the European and British Parliaments. However, the first change was seen in the 2004 EP elections, when the party began to contest local elections on the basis of environment and libertarian values. Furthermore, it began to invest more effort into developing policy beyond EU withdrawal. This was shown in the development of an immigration and asylum policy (see Appendix 1) (Usherwood 2010: 9-10). Nigel Farage

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<sup>23</sup> PressTV (2013). *UK Independence Party & policies; an overview*. 08. 05. 2013. [cit. 08. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/05/08/302487/ukip/>.

gained even more success in the 2009 EP election, when the party won 13 seats and came second to the Conservatives in terms of votes won.<sup>24</sup> (see Appendix 1)

In May 2014, the European Parliament election was held, in which UKIP came in first place and won 24 seats ahead of the Conservatives and Labour on 18 seats each.<sup>25</sup> For this election, UKIP published two version of its *Manifesto 2014*, which is representing party's electoral campaign both for EP and local elections. Their European program, also called *Manifesto 2014*, has a slightly different nature. In this document, the main emphasis lies in the prediction that if voters choose UKIP, the party would actively and effectively negotiate an immediate withdrawal from the EU. Their arguments challenge the policies and arguments of traditional and influential British parties<sup>26</sup> who have stated that UK withdrawal from the EU will cost Britain too much. The manifesto calls for a re-imagination of the real economic and trade situation with the EU, which only damages Britain and takes jobs and money from the state. UKIP also argues that the fuel and energy economic sector of Britain is under threat from European laws and restrictions. According to this document, independence will bring many positive effects and make the country wealthier and stronger both economically and nationally.<sup>27</sup> The change in voting preferences shows a public concern about the European Union, which has not delivered upon the predicted potential economic growth. People want to have jobs, high wages and new houses whilst also taking social benefits from the state in the form of better free education and health care. However, EU bodies and UK governing parties could not deliver these goods for people. In such situations, voters turn to populist parties, which sometimes appear more effective than traditional ones.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> PressTV (2013). *UK Independence Party & policies; an overview*. 08. 05. 2013. [cit. 08. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/05/08/302487/ukip/>.

<sup>25</sup> Osborn, Andrew – Falconbridge, Guy (2014). UK's Eurosceptic UKIP party storms to victory in Europe vote. *Reuters*. 26.05.2014 [cit. 11.07.2014]. Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/26/us-eu-elections-britain-idUSBREA400EM20140526>.

<sup>26</sup> Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Labour Party

<sup>27</sup> UKIP (2014). *Manifesto 2014: Create an earthquake* [cit. 08. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/themes/5308a93901925b5b09000002/attachments/original/1398167812/EuroManifestoMarch.pdf?1398167812>.

<sup>28</sup> Kellner, Peter (2014). European elections: UKIP closes in on first place. *University of Cambridge*. 16. 01. 2014 [cit. 08. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://cambridge.yougov.com/news/2014/01/16/european-elections-ukip-closes-first-place/>.

The second factor of the active eurosceptic movement is the speech made by D.Cameron, which was described in the previous subchapter, and the eurosceptic part of the Conservative party. After UKIP's victory, Conservative eurosceptic lawmakers are now likely to increase their calls for Cameron to bring forward his promised EU referendum by a year. In addition, Cameron's Conservatives have promised new measures to curb immigration from the European Union in an effort to appease UKIP voters after losing hundreds of seats in local polls.<sup>29</sup>

These factors have led to the possibility of a referendum about membership, which was first mentioned by David Cameron in 2013 and is now the hottest issue in British foreign policy.

#### **4.2. The possibility of a referendum on membership of the EU**

The question of a referendum was raised in January 2013 by David Cameron, when the Prime Minister promised that one would be held if the Conservative Party wins an outright majority in the next general election. The reaction from Parliament and MPs was immediate. Cameron's promise created a visible satisfaction among the most Conservative members, who had been split on the issue.<sup>30</sup> The Conservatives published a bill aimed at reassuring the party's MPs by outlining plans for a referendum by the end of 2017. The bill states that voters would be asked the question "Do you think that the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union?" in a referendum to be held no later than 31 December 2017. However, other parties have not expressed great support for this step and this is visible from the fact that neither the Liberal Democrats, nor Labour have proposed similar bills. Both leaders (Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg) reminded political parties that David Cameron and the Conservatives are wrong in both their speeches and the bill's proposals, and that it was a big mistake to pledge support in the past. They believe that the United Kingdom should remain in the EU and make an attempt to reform it, rather than leave.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Osborn, Andrew – Faulconbridge, Guy (2014). UK's Eurosceptic UKIP party storms to victory in Europe vote. *Reuters*. 26.05.2014 [cit. 11.07.2014]. Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/26/us-eu-elections-britain-idUSBREA4O0EM20140526>.

<sup>30</sup> RTE News (2013). *David Cameron pledges EU referendum if Conservatives win next elections*. 24. 01. 2013 [cit. 22. 07. 2014]. Available from <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/0123/364037-david-cameron-eu/>.

<sup>31</sup> BBC (2013). *David Cameron: EU referendum bill shows only Tories listen*. 14. 05. 2013 [cit. 22. 07. 2014]. Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-22530655>.



Moreover, Conservative eurosceptics have tried to push through an early referendum. The amendment's proposal was brought by Conservative backbencher Adam Afriyie, who believes that "[a] 2014 vote was the only way to guarantee that the British people would get their say on our relations with the EU and show that as Conservatives, we were listening to the public".<sup>32</sup> However, the attempt failed and the Commons voted against it.

The very existence of this bill could foreshadow the possibility of a referendum, but there is a question as to how MPs would vote in 2016 and whether the Conservatives will win a majority in the Commons during the next general election.

Still, there are two other factors existing within the British political arena and public life, which can influence political actions regarding a membership referendum. Firstly, newspapers and opinion polls, during their research into people's opinions on membership of the EU, are discovering that society is divided into two groups as regards the European question. Near half of the respondents believe that withdrawal from the European Union will benefit Britain, and the other half believes that this step will bring only disadvantages. However, it is also important to note that nearly 20% of respondents do not know how to react and vote<sup>33</sup> (see Appendix 2). From Appendix 2 it is also evident that Britain has persisted in its contemporary situation for a long time. From the thesis' arguments, the conclusion can also be drawn that the trend of scepticism towards the EU has existed among the British public since the early 1990s, but that no governing parties have been able to overcome this crisis, making their policies ineffective.

According to the definition of democracy, members of a society may be directly involved in deciding on the laws and policies of that society or they can select representatives to make the decisions. However, the elected power should act in accordance with the will of the people and should take note of and respond to all of the society's concerns.<sup>34</sup> In situations when the public has not agreed with the political elite, they have turned to

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<sup>32</sup> Mason, Rowena (2013). MPs reject early EU referendum. *The Guardian*. 22. 10. 2013 [cit. 11. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/22/mps-rejects-early-europe-referendum>.

<sup>33</sup> YouGov (2014). *EU referendum* [cit. 22. 07. 2014]. Available from [http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/uxyleagym8/YG-Archives-Pol-Trackers-Europe-Referendum-210714.pdf](http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/uxyleagym8/YG-Archives-Pol-Trackers-Europe-Referendum-210714.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2006). *Democracy*. 27. 07. 2006 [cit. 22. 07. 2014]. Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democracy/#DemDef>.

populist parties such as UKIP or the Scottish Independence Party in Britain in the hope that their needs will be met (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008: 256).

The United Kingdom Independence party's victory in the EP elections has raised a few questions around the European issue and has confirmed this theory. In their manifesto for the European Parliament elections, UKIP promised voters an immediate withdrawal, which would be achieved by putting pressure on the government, pushing through a referendum and negotiating with the EU's decision-making bodies.<sup>35</sup> This triumph forced eurosceptic Conservative lawmakers into action resulting in them now being likely to increase their calls for Cameron to bring forward his promised EU referendum by a year. The party also promised new measures to curb immigration from the European Union, which appears to be the main reason for their growing support. This was done in an effort to appease the populist party's voters after losing hundreds of seats in local polls.<sup>36</sup>

Should the referendum indeed happen, each of these factors could be held partly responsible. However, it is impossible to accurately predict any decision made in the Commons or the results of actions taken by the political elite. In Britain's case, it is most likely that the political elite will soften this process as they did it in the 1970s and again in the 1990s. With the possibility of a referendum still high, the timing of it could once again play a big role. Wilson's approach from the 1970s may be copied, which is why the referendum will not be held until the data from opinion polls and surveys about leaving the EU remains so high.

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<sup>35</sup> UKIP (2014). *Manifesto 2014: Create an earthquake* [cit. 08. 04. 2014]. Available from <http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/themes/5308a93901925b5b09000002/attachments/original/1398167812/EuroManifestoMarch.pdf?1398167812>.

<sup>36</sup> Osborn, Andrew – Falconbridge, Guy (2014). UK's Eurosceptic UKIP party storms to victory in Europe vote. *Reuters*. 26.05.2014 [cit. 11.07.2014]. Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/26/us-eu-elections-britain-idUSBREA4O0EM20140526>.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyze British relations with the European Union during the last four decades, particularly as regards euroscepticism within specific governments. The main research question was intended to discover whether there has been a linear or non-linear growth of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the thesis attempts to identify the periods of growth in euroscepticism. An additional research question contained within this thesis addresses a possible British referendum on EU membership.

Firstly, it was necessary to get relevant resources for the theoretical part, which includes descriptions of euroscepticism given by different authors, and then to choose one appropriate definition to apply to a study of recent British governments. The chosen definition of euroscepticism, used by this thesis, is based on the dichotomy created by famous researchers: Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, in which they divided this movement into two groups. The first group is made up of opponents of particular EU policies, while the second one is focused on withdrawal from the EU. Different governments were classified as eurosceptic bodies in accordance with this definition. Moreover, the thesis develops the concept of operationalization, which helps to examine, whether particular executive governments were eurosceptic, or not. In addition, there is one more important feature of this thesis. In light of the absence of euroscepticism on an executive level, the work examines the opponents of European integration and describes their influence on British foreign policy.

By drawing conclusions based on the thesis' analysis, it is clear that the eurosceptic trend has a nonlinear growth. The first indicator that some people were critical of membership of the EC, later to become the EU, came to light soon after the country joined the Community. Eurosceptical politicians became a part of both Parliament and the Cabinet, and they openly expressed and fought for their ideas. It was a period, when the Prime Minister and his assistants felt the need to close the question of membership legitimacy. The cornerstone of this fight was a referendum in 1975, when the British public decided to remain in the Community and supported the decision taken by Parliament. The second half of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s demonstrated a decline in euroscepticism at the executive level. The voices of the sceptics were quiet after the defeat in the 1975 referendum and shortly thereafter the biggest group of them, known as

the soft eurosceptics, began to believe in Margaret Thatcher's ability to move Britain in the direction of European integration for the purposes of British prosperity. However, concerns began to grow during the negotiations upon the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in the 1990s. Miscellaneous sceptical groups influenced John Major's government by making him unable to act or to make any significant decisions. The Prime Minister was confronted by the strong voices of eurosceptics, who wanted a UK withdrawal from the European Union. Later, in 1997, Major's government seemed to be a "lame duck"<sup>37</sup>, and his successor, Tony Blair, attempted to go against the grain. As a result, the Labour government at the time can be described as a non-eurosceptical executive body, because they tried to create a strategy which was more in favour of integration into the European Union by using discursive methods. The Labour Party used eurosceptic arguments, but turned them in favor of European integration and this method was effective during the early years of its tenure. However, the situation did not change greatly as opposition in the Commons still existed and was quite active. Blair and later Brown failed to disable the euroscepticism movement and to deliver an integrationist policy. One of the important factors in this failure was the disagreement between Britain and the European Union member countries during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, when Blair's government failed to reach a consensus with the European Union. The second critical point was the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, which has led to an active phase of euroscepticism. The eurosceptic movement is now reaching its peak with David Cameron's speech on Europe, growing electorate support for right-wing populist parties and proposals about a referendum.

Therefore, this thesis outlines the six periods of euroscepticism namely 1970 – 1975, a period of activity among Anti-Marketeters and the Heath-Wilson strategy towards Europe; 1975 – 1989, a period of inactivity among the sceptics and Thatcher's approach; 1989 – 1997, the effective activities developed by the eurosceptic movement at the executive level; 1997 – 2003, Labour's welcoming strategy towards the EU; 2003 – 2009, the crisis and disillusionment with the EU; 2009 – nowadays, the pinnacle of contemporary euroscepticism.

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<sup>37</sup> "Lame duck" – in politics this term means an elected official who is approaching the end of his tenure, especially one whose successor has already been elected (The Free Dictionary 2014).

The secondary goal of this thesis was to predict the possibility of a referendum about EU membership, which may be held in the next three years. This goal was not fully achieved, because it is impossible to predict with complete certainty something which has not yet happened. However, this work tries to find reasons why the referendum should be held and, based on these facts, supposes the possibility of the referendum.

There are three factors, which may lead the government to announce a referendum about continued membership. The first of these is the growing electoral support of right wing populist parties, which could lead to a government crisis and the crisis of the Westminster system in general. Secondly, high public concerns about the EU related to the principles of the democracy should be addressed. From the data gathered in opinion polls, it has become clear that British society has problems with European integration and that there is a need for a new approach towards Europe, which would deal with these worries. The third and final factor is the eurosceptic nature of the Conservative Party, which has been developing since Margaret Thatcher first term of office, and is now manifesting itself in its leader's speeches, bill proposals and party commitments to membership terms.

Relations between the United Kingdom and the European Community, now called the European Union, has always been affected by eurosceptic concerns. Unfortunately, British executive bodies have never created a satisfactory strategy, which would both satisfy social worries and drastically change the British attitude towards European integration. It is a challenge for future governments to learn from the mistakes made by their predecessors and to develop the next British policy regarding the EU.

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## **7. Abstract**

The subject of this bachelor thesis is the Analysis of British relations with the European Union during the last four decades. The main question posed by this work concerns whether Britain is becoming increasingly Eurosceptical and if it will eventually be the referendum on membership of the Union.

The first part explains the key terms and gives general information about the phenomenon, and moreover discusses the British version of Euroscepticism in scientific terms. The practical part of the work considers different government attitudes towards the EU and tries to pinpoint the reason for the increasing popularity of Euroscepticism over the last four decades. This thesis works with six periods of euroscepticism namely 1970 – 1975, a period of activity among Anti-Marketeters and the Heath-Wilson strategy towards Europe; 1975 – 1989, a period of inactivity among the sceptics and Thatcher's approach; 1989 – 1997, the effective activities developed by the eurosceptic movement at the executive level; 1997 – 2003, Labour's welcoming strategy towards the EU; 2003 – 2009, the crisis and disillusionment with the EU; 2009 – nowadays, the pinnacle of contemporary euroscepticism.

The main goal of this thesis is to provide analysis of Britain's contemporary policy towards the EU, discover how this phenomenon has developed and become so popular today, and of course discuss a membership referendum if one is indeed held in the future.

## 8. Resumé

Tématem této bakalářské práce je „Analýza britských vztahů s Evropskou unií během posledních čtyř desetiletí“, kde centrální otázkou je, jestli se Velká Británie stává stále více euroskeptickou a zda se bude konat referendum o členství v Evropské unii.

První část práce vysvětluje základní pojmy a přináší obecné informace o zkoumaném jevu, kromě toho se zabývá britskou verzí euroskepticismu s ohledem na vědeckou teorii. Praktická část práce se dívá na postoj různých vlád vůči Evropské unii a snaží se vystihnout popularitu euroskeptického směru v průběhu posledních čtyř desetiletí. Táto práce se zabývá šesti periody euroskepticismu, které jsou pojmenované jako 1970 – 1975, období aktivit odpůrců společného trhu a Heathová-Wilsonová strategie vůči Evropě; 1975 – 1989, období klidu mezi skeptiky a přístup Thatcherové; 1989 – 1997, úspěch euroskeptického hnutí na vládní úrovni; 1997 – 2003, Labouristická strategie vítání vůči Evropě; 2003 – 2009, krize a zklamání s EU; 2009 – dodnes, vrchol soudobého euroskepticismu.

Hlavním cílem práce je poskytnout analýzu současné britské politiky vůči EU, zjistit, jak soudobý euroskepticismus vznikl, a co vedlo k jeho popularitě, a diskutovat možnost konání referenda o členství v EU.

## 9. Appendices

### Appendix 1.

#### UKIP's Electoral preferences

<b>Election</b>	<b>Percent of Vote</b>	<b>Number of Seats</b>
1997 General Election	0.3 (105, 722)	0
1999 EP Election	6.9 (696, 057)	3
2001 General Election	1.5 (390, 563)	0
2004 EP Election	16.1 (2, 660, 768)	12
2005 General Election	2.2 (603, 298)	0
2009 EP Election	16.5 (2, 498, 226)	13

Resource: White, Michael 2013.

## Appendix 2.

YouGov opinion polls about EU referendum

**If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, how would you vote?**

	Remain in EU	Leave EU	Wouldn't vote	Don't know
<b>2014</b>	%	%	%	%
July 17-18	38	39	6	17
July 13-14	41	38	5	16
June 29-30	40	39	5	16
June 26-27	39	37	6	18
June 19-20	39	39	6	15
June 15-16	44	36	5	15
May 29-30	41	39	5	15
May 20-21	42	37	5	16
May 18-19	43	37	4	16
April 24-25	40	37	5	18
April 21-22	40	38	6	17
April 3-4	42	37	5	16
March 27-28	42	36	5	16
March 23-24	42	36	5	17
March 9-10	41	39	5	15
February 9-10	36	39	7	18
January 12-13	33	43	5	19
<b>2013</b>				
December 1-9	37	43	4	16
November 10-	39	39	5	17

11				
October 13-14	37	42	5	15
September 15-16	39	42	4	16
August 18-19	34	46	5	15
August 4-5	35	43	5	17
July 22-23	35	45	6	15
July 7-8	36	43	5	16
June 23-24	31	45	6	18
June 9-10	35	43	5	17
May 28-29	35	43	5	17
May 12-13	34	44	4	17
May 9-10	30	47	4	19
May 7	35	46	4	16
April 21-22	35	43	5	17
April 7-8	36	43	7	14
March 25-26	33	44	5	19
February 17-18	38	41	5	15
January 24-25	37	39	5	19
January 23-24	38	40	4	18
January 20-21	37	40	6	18
January 17-18	40	34	5	20
January 10-11	36	42	4	17
January 2-3	31	46	6	16
<b>2012</b>				

November 27-28	30	51	5	14
October 22-23	28	49	5	17
September 25-26	33	47	7	14
August 28-29	32	47	7	15
July 23-24	30	49	7	14
July 5-6	31	48	4	17
June 26-27	33	47	6	14
May 17-18	28	51	6	15
April 16-17	32	48	6	13
March 25-26	34	44	5	18
February 13-14	30	48	6	17
January 24-26	34	44	5	18
<b>2011</b>				
December 15-16	41	41	5	14
December 11-12	36	43	4	17
December 8-9	35	44	5	15
October 23-24	32	51	4	13
August 7-8	30	52	4	15
<b>2010</b>				
September 8-9	33	47	5	14

Resource: YouGov 2014.