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Irreconcilable differences: Domestic factors in Britain creating an awkward partnership with Europe

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Irreconcilable differences: Domestic factors in Britain creating an awkward partnership with Europe

Nicholas G. Howenstein
James Madison University

Irreconcilable Differences: Domestic Factors in Britain

Creating an Awkward Partnership with Europe

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate College of

Arts and Letters

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

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by

Nicholas G. Howenstein

2002

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Political Science, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

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Faculty Project Advisor

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Acknowledgements

Many generations feel as though they are on the brink of greatness. Mine is one of them. Just as those in the past, my peers at James Madison University and I live in a time of technological breakthroughs, increasing wealth in some places, increasing poverty in others. We have seen the images of war, and we have felt the rumbles of violence. However, most of us have done so from the sidelines. While this is fortunate in some cases, in others it is unsatisfactory for me. We have no great world war to fight except for our own marginalization. As we witness the foundations of a truly ambitious project in the unification of Europe, I strive to become a part of it. I make no claims to it feeling like footsteps on a battlefield or navigating the map of the human genome, but it will nonetheless shape the future of the international community. I look at in as a chance to clean up from the past and events that many in the world still experience today. Therefore, we can all learn from it in some respects, and I choose to do so in hopes of one day shaping it. Torn by centuries of war and tense national rivalries, Europe has attempted to put down its swords, its guns, and silence its tanks in the name of peace and security. While the following sections of this paper examine some faults with this union, especially from a British perspective, it does so without ignoring that any of these faults are simply a byproduct of enormous success.

There are several points from which my interest in European integration began, but regardless of this I find it interesting that I encountered them all within the short span

of my third year at JMU. Studying in London in the Spring of 2001 helped me to get a perspective that the classroom could never grant. This allowed me to look at European integration and Britain, and try to fit them together as best as I could as an American. Therefore, I would like to thank the various patrons of Bloomsbury, Covent Garden and Soho pubs in London willing to offer their opinions. In my mind, it is always a refreshing reminder of why I enjoy political science and international affairs when an outlook for the future is not simply rest in the rhetoric of the elite.

However, it would be foolish of me to assume that this was more than a leisurely activity that simply allowed me to apply my interest and knowledge outside of an academic setting. Therefore, true appreciation must be given to the faculty of the Department of Political Science at James Madison University. To start on general terms, I must commend the department for luring me away from the Art Department (my initial major) by building a foundation in my first semesters that made me strive to learn more. Within the Political Science faculty, I must of course thank my three advisors, first and foremost for agreeing to help me with this project on such short notice and under inconvenient circumstances. Dr. David Jones came to JMU at roughly the same time I did, so I have therefore considered him a bit of a mentor throughout my four years. I have tried to look to him for guidance on whatever subject, whether I was in his classes or not. Secondly, Dr. Kay Knickrehm receives my gratitude not only for her advice as my committee chairman but also as my sole destination for frequent unannounced visits for guidance. It took me awhile to figure out her office schedule, but after that I soon found her to always be open to questions. I must further acknowledge the third member

of my committee, Dr. Jessica Adolino as the greatest source of my passion for international affairs and the European Community. It is her superior knowledge on the subject that both humbled me into knowing that I am far from learning even a fraction of the knowledge on the subject.

And last but not least, Dr. Scott Hammond was not on my reading committee but he deserves my utmost gratitude for showing me that there are a million ways to think but only a few make you a better person.

And last but certainly not least, a better person is what I have always sought to be based on the examples at home. Therefore, not only this paper but my success throughout life is due to them.

European Integration and British Skepticism

Out of the ashes of history, Europe has risen from the austere nationalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and from the horrors of the twentieth century to forge new ground as an increasingly integrated continent. Gone are the once fervent attempts at hegemony and domination, which have been almost completely replaced by a call for vastly cooperative efforts. However, contrary to the considerable progress of the continent, which will come to a head with the agreement on the common currency by twelve of the fifteen European Union members Britain has remained a stubborn partner. What has proven to be one of the most ambitious economic projects in history, the use of the euro in all transactions in the twelve member states, will be a milestone for the "ever closer union." However, in Britain it simply serves as the gateway to deeper doubts about European integration, doubts determined by key historical, economic and political factors recognized by both political elite and the British public. Very strong attitudes of national identity and sovereignty have developed from Britain's history of world influence, along with a more recent political trend towards the superiority of neoliberal policy, a trend that strongly opposes the European model in many respects. These attitudes are manifest in the form of widespread media and public opinion opposing the initiatives, thus further perpetuating British diffidence as a whole. Therefore, there is an important distinction to be made between Britain and the continent that can help to better explain the British reluctance to assume a more solidified role in the European Union. If

one looks at specific conditions that exist in Britain, it is evident that there are many obstacles causing such a contentious view of the continent.

As the smoke cleared from the devastation of World War II, the leaders of Europe, namely France in new cooperation with Germany, began to undertake a process of rebuilding that proved to offer the first stepping stones for a continent-wide union that after its fifth decade has made seemingly irrevocable progress. And, the individual nation-states that dominated the European landscape since the Peace of Westphalia, 1648, now believe that the benefits are substantial in "pooling" more of their sovereignty into the increasingly supranational entities of the European Union and Economic and Monetary Union.[1] It is this economic integration that appears to be the driving force behind the European Union, but it has instead served as a pragmatic, visible assessment of Europe's progress towards more political cohesion. By many accounts, the European Union and its institutional predecessors have largely had an economic scope in practice, but a political scope in theory. While the original alliance following the Second World War, the European Coal and Steel Community, afforded France and Benelux the opportunity to prosper from rich German coal and steel reserves, it also kept the large German war machine under watchful eye. Therefore, the process leading up to the common currency has taken a dual role of economic and political unionization. Even as the agreement has evolved into EMU, it has never been a secret that political harmonization has been the goal of European leaders, using EMU pillar of Maastricht as a benchmark from which to begin common defense, judicial and home affairs. The founding father of the European Union, Jean Monnet, held the view that the ultimate end

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[1] Pond, Elizabeth. 1998. *The Rebirth of Europe.* (Washington, DC: Brooking Institute) p4

should be ever deepening political union. And, Helmut Kohl, the former German chancellor and one of integration's most outspoken proponents, believed that the consensus among his colleagues was a "United States of Europe."[2]

Whether or not this can be interpreted as the desire for a European federation, it is no less disconcerting to Britain. It is this call for further integration, and the reaching of the EMU benchmark that has Britain playing the role of the antagonist in the European arena. While current Prime Minister Tony Blair has acted upon his commitments to facilitate less hostile relations with the continent, namely by enacting the Social Clause of the Maastricht into British law and using decidedly warmer rhetoric with European leaders, he has preceded with noticeable caution on the issue. One of his first displays of this caution came shortly after his Labour Party's landslide victory in the 1997 parliamentary elections. Ostensibly, Blair imposed five economic tests to determine Britain's fitness for joining the euro. Below the surface, however, these tests were imposed to silence the debate on the issue for the duration of the parliament.[3] It appears that while Blair has pledged to end fifty years of half-hearted ambivalence towards Europe, it remains a reality that even if certain economic tests are passed, there are deeper reservations for Britain concerning Europe.

British apprehension over further pooling of sovereignty and the abandonment of British policy models also continues despite Tony Blair's commitment to put Britain in the driver's seat of the European Union. Early in 2001, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin stated that while so many of Europe Union's efforts have concentrated on developing the single market, it was now time to focus on building a more "social

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[2] Quoted in the Report from the Federal Republic of Germany, November 27, 1990

Europe." This would put closer links between labor unions and employers, increasing the obligation for European business to inform and consult employees. To British firms this was a red flag warning that Europe has plans to infringe more and more on an employer's ability to manage, and the Confederation of British Industry pronounced itself "deeply disappointed" at this intrusion on business' rights.[4] Blair sought to reconcile this at the 2000 Lisbon conference, calling for more flexible labor markets in Europe. He believed that this could perhaps be the first step in helping Britain direct the initiatives of the union. However, Blair soon found himself, along with the British model itself, as an outsider with the other fourteen members forming a majority against the proposal.[5] Thus, despite the Prime Minister's best efforts to ameliorate many years of tension between Britain and the rest of the European Union, especially following the Conservative wildly anti-European Conservative parliaments. He does so seeking to inject British style politics into the continent. However, if the 2000 summit in Nice was any indication of the future to come, Blair will find that this will not be easy without concessions that he or other leaders in Britain are reluctant to make. Blair exhibited concern over the future of Qualified Majority Voting, as the six founder members of the European Union had the weight of their votes increased from 48 percent to 51 percent. Even though Britain signed up for a "flexibility" clause, which allows some governments to move ahead with integration so long as the core issues (like the single market) remain intact, there is still the possibility for a strong majority to move on issues that could be damaging to Britain.[6] It is this exact effort that lies at the heart of British angst towards integration. There are

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[3] "Maybe say the money men." *The Economist (US)*. June 9, 2001:p3
[4] *Ibid*
[5] *Ibid*
[6] Baker, David. 2001. "Britain and Europe: The Argument Continues." *Parliamentary Affairs*. 54:p287

simply too many deeply embedded factors in Britain's history and political methodology to foster strong Europhilia in both the elite and public spheres.

Former United States Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, provided one of the most telling commentaries of the uncertain role of Britain in modern Europe and the world, which greatly contrasts the influence and power that it held historically. He remarked that Britain's dilemma lies in the fact that it has lost an empire without assuming, or even defining, its new role.[7] In the past Britain held power as the leader of the Industrial Revolution and as the center of an empire on which the sun never set. However, memories of the empire have faded and Britain has had to reconcile its influence as only the fifth largest economy in the world.

Therefore, while it geographically sits isolated from the continent, Britain has a deeply entrenched and peculiar sense of national identity that arises largely from historical factors. Throughout its history at the helm of world political and economic power a distinct national identity emerged, one that weighs heavily in the minds of citizens, the media and political elites. Unlike the leading nations on the continent, namely the Franco-German alliance, Britain has burdened the cost of two world wars without any recent experiences of defeat or occupation. National identity and simple historical consideration puts British skepticism of Europe in perspective. For at least the past three hundred years, Britain has held a firm foreign policy commitment to the suppression of any one dominant European power. Whether it has been alliances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contain France or balance of power diplomacy

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[7] Rachman, Gideon. 1998. "Britain's European Dilemma." *The Washington Quarterly.* v21, n3: p175

with Germany, Britain has either through war or policy largely achieved this goal.[8]

However, it is these two nations and the close relationship that they share within the

European Union that has put British elites on guard. They believe an increasingly

supranational body that is steered in large part by a Franco-German alliance that contends

with Britain's attempts to lead Europe in a direction that parallels its own much closer.

This direction has been developed by confidence in its national identity that

measures liberty and concepts of "Britishness" in the symbolic form of parliamentary

sovereignty.[9] This confidence is a sentiment that differs greatly from the diffidence held

on the continent, which appeared more prevalent in the nascent years of the European

Community but has nonetheless perpetuated the importance of the union from the

continent's worldview. The question of sovereignty is one of the most hostile disputes

that Britain has concerning further involvement in the European Union. The "pooling" of

sovereignty that has been championed by so many European leaders throughout is more

often viewed as a zero sum game in terms of British sovereignty. And, many of the

strategic decisions made and attitudes held were developed "by events that occurred

largely during the period of Britain's unrivalled power in the global political economy."[10]

With this notion of parliamentary sovereignty, further European integration

carries consequences that many view as compromising to British policy and economic

preferences. Moreover, Europe as a political and economic entity is not afforded the

same legitimacy in relation to the established British institutions.[11] There remain strong

cleavages within Britain's political climate that have already left the Conservative Party

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[8] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p175
[9] Baker, David. 2001:p277
[10] Baker, David and David Seawright, Eds. 1998. "Introduction." *Britain for and Against Europe*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press):p3

in shambles after the 1997 elections, with Europhiles and Euroskeptics battling over whether the European Union will be able to preserve a liberal ideology. Aside from this, there is a wide majority on both sides of the spectrum that nonetheless regard the British model as superior.[12]

This belief in the preeminence of British preferences has been the stance of many previous parliaments. The traditional lines of debate over Europe seemed to be drawn between Labour and Conservatives, but even the New Labour and Blair's Third Way have proven to harbor Euroskepticism. While the sovereignty issue has been the primary cause of severe cleavages in the Conservative party, Europe has also traditionally held the power to create fault lines in the Labour party as it fluctuates between desire and disdain for increased relations.[13] Labour has tried to forge a new European leadership role for Britain, with many in the Europhile camp believing it an opportunity to mesh the best of Britain with the continent. However, even the pro-Europeans realize that many aspects of the political economy in Britain conflict greatly with the direction. Blair has embraced Thatcherite policy and sought to transplant it to the continent—such as a push for labor market flexibility and the easing of regulations on hiring and firing practices, which is a dissenting option from the German corporate model that seems to be shaping policy in the union.

This too is evident on the economic policy side of the argument, an important one considering the critical emphasis placed on the success of the euro by the EU. Again, the framework of British economic policy has little in common with "social Europe," with

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[11] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p175
[12] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p177
[13] Baker, David and David Seawright, Eds. 1998:p5

widespread belief that it more closely mimics the free-market, loosely regulated capitalism of the United States.[14] Even the Labour government has shown little willingness to move to the model of increasing social welfare at the cost of higher taxation. Thus, the simple core issue remains that there is much to be done by way of breaking strong ties to a neoliberal policy. While there is a general consensus that crosses party lines over the superiority of a more open British-style neoliberalism, there is also the consideration under this model Britain's economy has done relatively well compared to the continent. In fact, in the mid-1990s it grew at a rate faster then those in either France, whose economy Britain has recently closed in on to become the fourth largest in the world, and Germany, whose economy is viewed as the casting mold for the European Central Bank. Lower levels of taxation on businesses leave them free to prosper, a factor that proved to be crucial throughout the 1990s when British firms attracted about 40 percent of foreign investments in Europe. More over, the more liberal tendencies of the British economy, the relative ease with which employers can hire and fire have kept Britain's unemployment hovering around 5 percent, which is less than half of Germany's 11.5 percent and France's 12.1 percent.[15]

These are issues that still weigh heavy on Tony Blair's mind as he ponders Britain's next steps concerning Europe. On the eve of the Asia-Europe summit in Seoul Blair emphasized his position that choices concerning the euro were strictly based on national economic interests and the protection of them rather than simply using monetary union to expedite political integration. He eluded to Britain's interests when he said, "Investors see us as leading the way in putting economic reform at the center of the

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[14] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p176

European agenda, helping to build a strong Europe based on open markets, competition and economic reform; a superpower not a super-state."[16]

It is true that Blair would rather transform the European Union more in the favor of Britain, and many Europhiles believe the only way to do this is through full inclusion in the proceedings. However, Blair's "five economic tests" exhibit his hesitation in making concrete decisions, knowing that these will delay such choices perhaps indefinitely. This is the current parliament taking the empirical consequences of Euroskeptics into consideration. At the present, Britain can set its own interest rates to suit its own economic conditions, which despite recent growth are still problematic. In order to suit these conditions, Britain now has interest rates that hover around twice the German rates, thus heightening the risk of inflation. However, the European Central Bank adheres to strict inflation restrictions and in economic and monetary union interest rates converge to figures that could be dangerous to Britain.[17] Therefore, regardless of the attachment to a more free market brand of capitalism there is also the possibility for economic downturn should Britain choose entrance into the common currency. Regardless of the attachment to a more free market brand of capitalism there also exists the possibility for economic downturn should Britain choose entrance into the common currency.

British skepticism over the European Union and further integration is not limited to elite opinions. The public in Britain often tends to view integration as a zero sum game, with more involvement with the continent spelling damage to sovereignty and

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[15] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p176
[16] quoted in Baker, David. 2001:p283
[17] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p177

national interest. Recent Eurobarometer polls have shown that British public support for

European Union initiatives is well below the European average.[18] Over the last decade, it

has varied from "lukewarm to positively hostile," generally holding at 10 percent below

public support among other member nations.[19] While governments have tried to foster

better relations with the continent, they have for the most part seemed reticent to

challenge public opinion, viewing populace backlash as a dangerous slippery slope. Even

the most pro-European leaders have been aware of public skepticism, something that will

only continue with election-conscious officials such as Tony Blair in office. This will

also continue if the 1999 European elections were any indication to the ambitious Labour

government, which only received 28 percent of the vote. European opponents formed a

coalition of anti-European voters and used the election as a referendum on continued EU

membership, which seemed to strengthen Euroskeptics and weaken supporters.[20]

Moreover, the Labour party seems hesitant to deter such negative rhetoric because it

would appear as a full backing of the continent, risking further public backlash.

However, even if the government did decide to change its position, or at least lean

a little more aggressively towards Britain in Europe, it would have to compete with a

much more vocal lot of opponents than it might be willing or able to deal with. This is

due in large part to a large Euroskeptic sentiment in the media. This contingency of the

media has kept pressure on the government over the preservation of the pound, the

dangers of Europe's bureaucratic and undemocratic web, and it has in some cases chosen

to attack the Franco-German core of Europe.[21] One consolation for European supporters

[18] Eurobarometer 55, Spring 2001
[19] Baker, David. 2001:p278
[20] Baker, David. 2001:p279
[21] Baker, David. 2001:p278

seems to be the fact that more quality and credible news sources, such as the *Financial Times, Guardian* and *Observer* have a decidedly more continent friendly spin. However, relative to the Euroskeptic press these sources do not have nearly the readership, helping to continue the tide of public distrust and doubt over the European Union. Despite the tide of the media however, we will see that the public holds very deep-seated hostility towards European integration. This translates into hesitancy in the leadership, which also poses a problem in terms of leadership competency. Therefore, to an ambitious Europhile such as Blair, public opinion becomes a double-edged sword. If he is to take a hard line on joining the continent in more initiatives, he runs the risk of the public viewing him as careless with British national interests. On the other hand, he could meet the same fate as the Conservatives of the last decade. If he is to falter in forming a coherent, unified attitude on European issues, he then compromises confidence in his leadership ability.

When considering these key factors, it is not hard to imagine why Britain still views Europe from the perspective of foreign policy rather than as a domestic issue. The European question already has many answers in the form of British domestic policy, national identity and public sentiment. And as the continent continues to grow more integrated, especially through the use of ambitious and uncertain economic projects like the euro, the public and elite become more hesitant to submerge Britain in such initiatives. A very delicate notion of Britishness and national identity, which largely rests in the idea of parliamentary sovereignty, hampers their full commitment to the union. Whereas many on the continent are beginning to view sovereignty as a multi-layered structure, held by both national and European leaders, the British hold on to the enduring

belief that sovereignty is indivisible.[22] This identity is shaped duly by Britain's memories of global influence and imperial triumph and by the loss of this position without really regaining a definite role. This runs as deep as the belief in the superiority of British models of economics and politics that conflict greatly with those utilized by the EU. Britain has always held the peace and stability of the continent in its best interests. However, now that it does not consider this from the same position that it did in the past, the European Union seems a dangerous alternative. Europhiles would suggest that the union is the best opportunity for the continent to achieve success and lasting peace. Euroskeptics see otherwise in much the same doubt and pessimism that has plagued British governments and public opinion for the past five decades. The continent has never been given the benefit of the doubt in Britain, being viewed as a very real threat to British interests. Moreover, even in periods at which the support for further integration within the union has seemed at its highest, Britain has remained unconvinced about the losses and gains involved. And even with a Labour government that is eager to end fifty years of half-hearted ambivalence, the answers come between a rock and a hard place. At the first sign of any concessions made to Europe or concurrently, of any weakness towards the continent, Blair and Europhiles alike will find themselves even more under attack from an array of opposition groups and the public.[23] In Britain, all of the perceived benefits that can come from a strong European Union have always been matched by the very real possibility of equally detrimental drawbacks.

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[22] Baker, David and David Seawright, Eds:p8
[23] Baker, David. 2001:p285

Literature Review

In order to examine the question of Britain's relative ambivalence and hostility towards European integration, we can first look towards past considerations of integration. The primary precursor for any integration across national boundaries, whether it be political or economic or both in the case of the European Union, is a careful cost-benefit analysis on the national level. However, in the interest of the questions presented in this paper, it is beneficial to look at the factors included in these cost-benefit analyses and on what level they occur. For Mathieu Deflem and Fred C. Pampel, international unification with special attention to Europe creates an unprecedented challenge for citizens and scholars, meaning elite and coalition attitudes are taken into mind along with public support. Both of these groups have to first make sense of integration efforts amongst nation-states that were geographically, economically and politically similar but nonetheless independent.[1] For Britain, this is especially pertinent considering its long held traditions as a politically and economically strong state, an attitude that has fostered a nonabrasive yet deeply entrenched nationalist sentiment.[2] This is to say, that nations first assess the extent to which engaging in international integration affects certain aspects of sovereignty, which has the potential to conflict with any possible gains from forming a union.

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[1] Deflem, Mathieu and Fred C. Pampel. 1996. "The Myth of Postnational Identity: Popular Support for European Integration." *Social Forces*. v75 n1:p119
[2] *Ibid*:p123

Some authors have chosen to look at the broader motivations and impacts of international integration by exploring factors outside of the political or economic realms. To this extent, national identity and other cultural explanations have been given for a nation's decision on whether or not to engage in any sort of integration. Stephen Shulman has given national identity and nationalist sentiments the dual role of either being a positive or negative determinant in the decision. In Shulman's case, nationalism refers to the "collective self-determination" of a nation in the effort to reduce extra-national influence and allow for autonomous control over its own destiny.[1] This means that any sort of nationalist tendency confronts a complex set of factors, and according to Shulman this does not necessarily discredit the merits of joining into an international union. By using case studies of nationalists in Quebec, India and the Ukraine he argues that nationalism has the possibility of even encouraging international integration.[2] The incentive for international integration is more apt to come from involvement with foreign countries that are close in historical and cultural ties, which would alleviate some of the pressures of foreign influence. In the three cases Shulman found that advancing the core goals of autonomy, unity and identity actually encouraged nationalists to support international integration, pushing for policies of free trade, foreign investment and globalization.[3]

This is perhaps explained by an assumption made by James Mayall who states that the idea of closing off the state for fear of influence from other nations or from the supranational level is similar to the liberal ideal of completely free and open ties across

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[1] Shulman, Stephen. 2000. "Nationalist Sources of International Economic Integration." *International Studies Quarterly*. 44:p369
[2] *Ibid*:p366
[3] *Ibid*:p386

borders. Shulman furthers this point by also citing Leonard Tivey's belief that protectionists and liberal market proponents both have the well-being of the state in mind, but that they both choose to disagree on tactics.[4] In rapid globalization the preservation of identity and autonomy is often manifested through economic clout in the world, and thus the paradox in Shulman's cases arises. However, some have referred to the "psychic income" involved, by which the satisfaction of autonomy neutralizes any monetary loss. Thus, the cultural diffusion brought on by the influence of actors outside the nation-state can perhaps become a larger cost than desired, thereby placing high priority on the deterrence of this pressure.[5]

However, regardless of the perceived and empirical effects that international integration will have on efforts to strengthen national identity, culture and prestige in the world, the fact is that nationalism plays a significant role in the motivations of political actors. The influence of a core culture and identity remain a major consideration when weighing the benefits and costs of opening a nation-state to an international union. Matters of political and economic importance have strong historical roots in the idea of the nation-state as a construction of unique historical traditions and events that inevitably shape an autonomous identity. According to Deflem and Pampel, the conception of the nation-state as the primary actor in the international system has roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that even the present conditions of globalization and interdependence have failed to significantly alter this.[6]

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[4] James Mayall and Leonard Tivey both cited in Shulman, Stephen. 2000.
[5] Shulman, Stephen. 2000:p369
[6] Deflem, Mathieu and Fred C. Pampel. 1996:p120

Agreeing with Antonio Menendez-Alarcon, a prominent author on Spanish national identity in the face of European integration, Deflem and Pampel also believe that this persistence of the nation-state as also fostered the persistence of national identity as a basis upon which countries favor or disfavor supranational participation.[7] To show this, they conducted a study across thirteen European Union nations that sought to explain support for integration while controlling for factors such as sociodemographic and ideological composition of the countries. Their results found that support for European unification was stronger among groups such as white-collar workers and citizens with higher degrees of education. However, they also found that country differences in support proved stronger than did any sociodemographic variables, confirming that the social composition of countries does not play a significant role in affecting support.[8] They did the same for ideological factors such as support for a nation's system of government, and found that this type of support is closely related to the conception of national identity. The democratic deficit that exists in Brussels has provided confusion and concern over the sources of authority across borders. Therefore, the answers to politically relevant questions are still sought from familiar identities of authority and legitimacy that are held by national and regional actors. However, Deflem and Pampel noticed that these ideological considerations still do not sufficiently dictate support for unification based on the assumptions made by authors like Shulman. Countries may still favor integration, but do so under the auspices of strengthening their own identity. Thus, we can see that European unification still has little to do with establishing a "postnational" ethos that will associate citizens under a larger umbrella.

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[7] *Ibid.*p121

Rather, the support of a particular nation has more to do with ideas of a national ethos uniting with others. As we will see later, with authors like Christopher Anderson, issues taken into consideration by public opinion are shaped within the framework of national issues. Therefore, the idea of the nation-state over a postnational regime is perpetuated, and integration relies more on a plurality of particular national identities.[9]

When we find that the concept of identity and association still falls under the framework of the nation-state model, we can also extend this idea to political and economic preferences when exploring what factors affect a nation's willingness to integrate with other nations. This is to say that preferences for one particular model of policymaking seem to be as deeply embedded as those pertaining to national identity. Whereas countries will choose to integrate with those that hold similar cultural and historical backgrounds, it is also true that a major restructuring of political and economic systems seems too much of a strain as well.

For Christoph Knill, the very structure of the European Union seems to allow such preferences to be voiced, and thus making individual national policy the very building blocks of such unification. The existing traditions that nations practice are increasingly embedded in core rather than peripheral issues, and the degree to which they are rooted in ideological "paradigms" is increasing as well.[10] The fact that much of the significant policy decisions for the EU are made in the Council of Ministers, the dependence on the cooperation of member states is becoming a major shaping factor for the union. Knill believes that this increasing reliance on national officials has increased

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[8] *Ibid*:p130
[9] *Ibid*:p136
[10] Knill, Christoph. 1998. "European Policies: The Impact of National Administrative Traditions." *Journal of Public Policy.* v18 n1:p5

the influence of national traditions and preferences, and is potentially divisive considering how much they might differ from country to country.[11] Therefore, the willingness of nations to accommodate for integration is also widely correlated to the ability for administrative reform in a specific country.

Knill starts from the assumption that if nations are to participate in this adaptation to supranationalist alliances, they do so following the "logic of appropriateness," which is to say that these adaptations are assessed with consideration to existing rules and procedures.[12] States are much more willing to act within the "logic of appropriateness" in the sense that engaging in international integration would simply be a change *within* institutional traditions rather than a change *of* these traditions. Any threat to the stability of the institutional base is likely to provoke intense opposition. Furthermore, the ability to engage in this reform depends largely on the number of institutional veto points that political actors can utilize in policy decisions. The amount of these veto points is affected by the political system, such as party system, centralization and the access that non-governmental actors have to the system. This is also based on the legal and formal procedures that are required to enact reform, and therefore the process is open to debate and participation where available so as to deter swift, single-handed changes "from above."[13] Knill goes on to designate three degrees of adaptation pressure, which is to say the tension created between proposed and necessary reforms for integration and already well established institutional paradigms. A country with high adaptive pressure is one in which integration policies would strongly oppose core preferences, and the strongly

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[11] *Ibid*:p1
[12] *Ibid*:p3
[13] *Ibid*:p7

embedded core could not adapt easily, if at all, to exogenous influences. Moderate

pressure exists in a country in which reforms would have to be made *within* traditions but

not *of* these core elements, while low pressure would indicate some preexisting harmony

with integration policy.[14]

To be sure of his hypotheses about core institutional structures determining

participation in integration, Knill looks at the implementation of European environmental

policy. Surprisingly, Knill found Germany (the leader in European unification efforts) to

be the least compliant with EU policy "from above." Only with the Environmental

Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) could adaptation and implementation be

observed. According to Knill, the explanation for the rejection of other EU policy lies in

Germany's tradition of *Rechsstaat*, which involves a deeply rooted legalism and a

superior role for the state. Therefore, any policies that sought to alter this tradition were

viewed as having a delegitimizing effect on the state, and did not fall within the "logic of

appropriateness." Furthermore, Germany's acceptance of the EMAS also had basis in

tradition: that of Germany's corporatist scheme. Since the EMAS sought to establish

independent organizations as the verifiers for industrial environmental management, it fit

in well with the German tradition of using intermediary organizations to perform these

sorts of checks.[15]

To further the influence of national traditions on international integration, James

I. Walsh also chooses to utilize a domestic politics approach. This contends the idea

diffusion theory of integration, which believes national policies to converge on each other

with one country proposing the model with which all other integrating countries would

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[14] *Ibid*:p8

conform. Many have determined Germany to be this leading country in European integration, especially in economic areas. However, Walsh believes idea diffusion to have less of an effect on a country's willingness to integrate than do domestic trends.[16] Walsh's discussion focuses on national preferences in monetary integration, but he states that these preferences have wider implications as to the shared commitment of sovereign nations to unite.[17] He looks at the establishment of monetary policy and the underlying structure of monetary integration in Europe over the course of the last three decades in order to show that this was not so much a convergence as it was a battle of national policy models.

Throughout economic and monetary union, Germany has held steadfastly to what Walsh deems a technocratic program, which favors establishing structural conditions to keep inflation low and to allow for a central bank that was outside the influence of political pressure. However, Walsh states that the French and Italian preferences reflected a more politicized model, which allowed for active fiscal policies and would call for political institutions to coordinate and control these, preferences which came largely from the economic conditions in both countries at the time. Therefore these conflicting national preferences hampered the formation of new monetary institutions until the early 1990s and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which came about due to falling inflation in France and Italy and a greater ability to shift towards the German technocratic model.[18] Until the conditions begin to converge and allow for smoother integration, a tension will remain in the process if the trends of the respective countries

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[15] *Ibid*:p13
[16] Walsh, James I. 2001. "National Preferences and International Institutions: Evidence from European Monetary Integration." *International Studies*. 45:p60
[17] *Ibid*:p62

differ along significant lines. For example, the high inflation countries in this case did

not want to tighten policy that would curb inflation but sacrifice growth and employment.

In the same light, Germany's low inflation preference would conflict with any loosening

of monetary policy that would drive prices higher. Therefore, a country of a certain

economic condition would want the other state(s) with which it is integrating to bear the

burden of coordinating policy.[19] We could expect then that any substantial difference in

the policy models already in place in a particular nation are another key factor in

determining its willingness to engage in international integration.

There is literature that also suggests that the attitudes and trends of the elite and

political institutions are not the only factors affecting participation in international

integration. In fact, some would say that electoral politics perhaps makes public opinion

an even better litmus test for integration. We have seen that integration proceedings are

often determined in the meetings of national representatives in the efforts to both voice

and protect specific national concerns. Furthermore, we could then expect public opinion

and key voters to have a significant impact on the attitudes of these national

representatives, considering their political legitimacy is granted by the electoral process.[20]

Following the logic of the aforementioned importance of domestic politics, Matthew

Gabel believes that European elections, that is those in which EU citizens elect members

to the European Parliament, are simply second-order elections that largely reflect public

opinion on domestic issues. The importance of public support for integration is thus

heightened by the very nature of these elections. If these elections simply are second-

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[18] *Ibid*:p65
[19] *Ibid*:p65
[20] Gabel, Matthew. 2000. "European Integration, Voters and National Politics." *West European Politics*. v23 n4:p52

order, then they would in fact serve as important indicators or markers to national officials and voters thus sway the focus and dynamics of later national elections.[21]

Gabel found that the degree to which public opinion influences national officials is not only obviously related to the time until the next domestic elections, but also to the relative distance between European and domestic elections. Using the European elections as markers, elected officials will pay significant mind to the results of European elections. Christopher Anderson looks at the extent to which citizens will transfer attitudes concerning European integration to support for domestic issues and actors. Both Gabel and Anderson both write under the assumption that public opinion on integration issues does not follow traditional party lines to the extent that it does within the national context. Furthermore, we have seen public opinion causing severe party cleavage in the case of Britain's Conservative Party, which would follow the theses that the public uses European elections and referenda as outlets for protesting certain policies, and that they also use national issues as proxies for wider integration questions.

Therefore, Anderson believes that European publics have the ability to stall or halt any unification efforts regardless of support for the current government in the sense that there is no traditional party separation.[22] Anderson also uses the aforementioned argument that the very nature of decision making bodies at the supranational level keeps further integration efforts in the context of domestic opinions. Opinion among the public in the respective nations is a crucial ingredient in the process because it imposes constraints upon the national representatives in the process. Previous research has sought

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[21] *Ibid*:p53
[22] Anderson, Christopher. 1998. "When in Doubt, Use Proxies: Attitudes Toward Domestic Politics and Support for European Integration." *Comparative Political Studies*. v31 n5:p569

to show public opinion waxing and waning in relation to the business cycle or broader cost-benefit analyses in the event of economic integration. However, Anderson suggests that the public does not look to such broad outcomes of integration, instead forming attitudes based upon domestic issues that serve as proxies for larger integration questions.[23] Anderson looked at public satisfaction at the domestic level in relation to support for integration efforts in Europe, in hopes of drawing a larger consensus about what sways public opinion. Expecting the intergovernmental nature of the European power structure to allow for a positive relationship between support for the domestic government and wider European institutions, he found the contrary. In results that seem more along the lines of the aforementioned research, Anderson found no relation between support for domestic government and satisfaction with wider continental initiatives.[24]

Therefore, not only does public opinion affect a nation's foreign policy in the sense that it constrains officials, it does so with special consideration to the domestic political context. Furthermore, the domestic context is a crucial consideration across the public and elite spheres, even going as broad as national identity. This is to say that international integration is perhaps based on different factors than previously believed. It is true that countries engage in cost-benefit analyses when deciding to form some sort of supranational unification; however, they seem to do so from the bottom up. Countries act within a "logic of appropriateness" that looks deeper than simple monetary wealth and administrative efficiency. This is due to the fact that this logic is determined by attitudes that run deeper than these superficial considerations and that span the political elite and the public. Thus, any challenge of core domestic attitudes and beliefs, whether it be a

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[23] *Ibid*:p572

threat to sovereignty or to administrative power structures, will be one of the primary

deterrents to a nation's willingness to participate in international unification.

[24] *Ibid*:p582

British National Identity: No Need for Europe

National identity is perhaps one of the most widely overlooked factors used to
assess both the domestic and international proceedings of a particular state. This is not to
say that it has no bearing on the means and outcomes because it is a deeply embedded
factor that involves tradition and the basis for ideologies. However, it is this deep
embeddedness that perhaps makes the idea of national identity such a latent variable. Its
effects may be taken for granted as preferences that tend to surface in other, more
practical terms such as the establishment of a welfare state or rooting on English football.
In the past, the idea of "Britain" and "Britishness" seemed to be regarded in much the
same way. The stigma of moral superiority and dignity, of regal elegance and London
chic attached itself to these ideas, but the fact is that it remained unconsidered in a sort of
casual humbleness that also seems to pervade cool Britannia. In other words, many saw
it and felt it, but it was often alluded to in vague, proud claims such as Cecil Rhodes'
declaration that to be British was "to have won first prize in the lottery of life."[1]

However, towards the end of 2000, the Labour government no longer seemed
content with this, continuing a recent trend that has pushed national introspection to the
forefront of discourse. For the Labour government this was manifest in Prime Minister
Tony Blair's special assignment for MP Michael Wills, in which he was asked to
encourage all members of parliament to pay respect to British national identity in

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[1] Quoted in "Nation-Gazing: British Greats." *The Economist (US)*. October 28, 2000

speeches and in policy decisions.[1] This was probably no change in standard procedure

for Conservatives, who have had a long history of protecting national identity and

sovereignty above much else. However, with the recent devolution of some power to

both a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly, the prime minister certainly must now

define what is meant by national identity. Should, therefore, Mr. Blair pepper his

speeches before Parliament or other European leaders with sentiments towards the

northeast and Sedgefield? Certainly the prime minister would forego such rhetoric in

favor of a more unifying identity of the United Kingdom, or at least a greater Britain.

However, this is precisely the identity crisis that now seems to grip the UK, and one that

has been rapidly assimilated into the debates arising from further European integration.

The notion of British national identity, which along cultural and historical lines

gives birth to the idea of parliamentary sovereignty, has always been in conflict with the

process of European unification, mainly at the hands of the Tory governments that have

ruled Parliament for much of the European community's existence. Currently, however,

even the Labour Party cannot seem to shake considerations of national identity, in spite

of their verbal claims to end British ambivalence towards Europe. Thus, it was a similar

case for Prime Minister Thatcher as well as Labour governments, in that Britain's "head

is in Europe but its heart is elsewhere."[2] What this seems to suggest is that because the

concept of Britishness is so deeply rooted, an identity crisis would also mean deeply

embedded confusion. This is a confusion that runs deeper than Dean Acheson's remark

that Britain has lost an empire without finding a new role in the world. While this

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[1] Hattersley, Roy. "Definitions of a National Identity: Tony Blair Wants Our Nationality to be Celebrated. But What is It?" *The Guardian*. November 13, 2000
[2] Wallace, William. 1991. "Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom." *International Affairs*. v67 n1:p68

particular aspect of the identity crisis does play a major role in Britain's relations in the international sphere, especially in Brussels, it is not the only tension to arise over identity in recent decades. While the debate was seemingly triggered by the loss of empire (and subsequent loss of global influence) and by the encroachment of European integration, it has also been further fueled by the recent devolution of power to Scotland and Wales.[3] Britain first wants to use its national identity to define itself within the global network of power and influence, and then in the context of Europe. It uses this national identity to define a framework for British interests in order to protect them from supranational pressure. During an era of imperialism, Britain was easily able to define itself under the Crown. However, as the United Kingdom slowly begins to see with devolution the reemergence of four nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) in one, it has also found that what was once thought of as "British" could more aptly be characterized as a hegemonic Englishness. With this said, the assertion of Scottish or Welsh sentiments might seem to transfer to a federal agreement with Europe. However, what history has told both about the empire and more so the British Isles is that regardless of Englishness being synonymous with Britishness, the goal of Westminster has always been to keep Britain together and strong. Thus, even in an increasingly diverse Britain with a more European friendly Labour government, we could be witness to the nascent reassertion of this Englishness as Britishness in an attempt to reassert Britain in the world.

In the past, any considerations of British national identity have always had the undertone of a British exceptionalism in relation to the rest of the world, including

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[3] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000. "Defining British National Identity." *The Political Quarterly*. n1:p4

continental Europe. This has both been borne from a history of imperial global influence and the longevity of British sovereignty and democracy. It is without a doubt deeply ideological, evoking images of the Magna Carta, parliamentary traditions and sovereignty, and simple references to its geography as an island that stands alone.[4] With traditions and the past in mind, both political elite and citizens have found it difficult to confront the growing interdependence of a world in which Britain is no longer the leading influence of political, economic or social power. This difficulty also arises when Britain uses 700 years of political freedom to shape an identity when trying to work within an historically "unfree" Europe.[5] This is especially true of past Conservative governments, which have tried to conjure deeply rooted imagery. In a speech before the House of Commons in May 1990, Prime Minister Thatcher when she referred to a national identity and "ancient traditions and heritage" based in liberty, law and sovereignty, "which have done so much for the world."[6] This seems to suggest that despite decades of muddling through without a definite role on the international stage, Britons still believe that their historical exceptionalism is relevant. Even as German industrial strength began to dominate and centralize the continent around this power, the sense of "Splendid Isolation" became even more concerned the moral authority and free institutions of the Anglo-Saxon people. As the German power engulfed Europe and then became entangled in a game of checks and balances in the European Coal and Steel Community after defeat, smug feelings of separation from the continent were reinforced in Britain.[7] Therefore, while French and German national identities had been soiled by crushing

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[4] Wallace, William. 1991:p69
[5] *Ibid*:p69
[6] quoted in Wallace, William. 1991:p70
[7] Wallace, William. 1991:p72

defeats in the Second World War, Britain emerged victorious and unoccupied by foreign powers, strengthening its assertions of special character.

This rise in sentiments of moral authority and military victory also corresponded with a strong national identity connected to its status as a leading industrial power and its advancements in technology, which both had been prevalent throughout history with the Industrial Revolution occurring in Britain's backyard. It was also home to the ports of one of the strongest merchant navies, the target of heavy foreign and domestic investment and still the bastion of liberalism.[8] This, therefore, forged even further a long historical attitude of superiority in the world, and further turned Britain's heads towards the open oceans and away from the continent.

However, while Britain's eyes looked to reach out across the open seas that surrounded it, the latter half of the twentieth century brought a deflated vigor and the sun had finally set on the dismantled empire. While claims of democratic virtue still underscore British attitudes, they do so with a weakened voice. The economic, industrial and imperial strength that once gave national identity a sturdy soapbox on which to stand were one by one surpassed as global interdependence grew and the Commonwealth shrank. In order to redefine the parameters in which Britain can operate in the word *sans* the global influence of empire it has been forced to answer once unconsidered questions of its "Europeaness" as well as of Britishness. These questions were supposed to be answered when the Macmillan government made its initial application for membership in the European Common Market in 1961. With the first application, what was supposed to be a reassessment of Britain's world and the birth of a new role in Europe was denied by

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[8] *Ibid*:p73

France's Charles de Gaulle because he felt that Britain was not sufficiently European. This was perhaps a correct assessment considering that Britain had never until this point thought of itself as significantly European. National sentiments about this were still evident in the debates that surrounded the referenda on membership when Britain's application was finally accepted by the continent in the early 1970s. Also, following membership, there was the rise of a new view on national identity alongside that of an imperialist national. This was the ethnic nationalism championed by MP Enoch Powell, which assessed Britishness along the lines of ethnicity and thus fervently opposed European encroachment, among other immigration and citizenship issues.[9] Although this did not receive majority support in Parliament, it did force new issues in the consideration of national identity and what threats Britain's new role in Europe and around the globe made against it.

The loss of empire undoubtedly left a scar on Britain's national self-esteem, and this would suggest that Acheson's chide is carried into current national identity crisis as an open wound. However, it also seems to have caused a rift in conceptions of national identity, one of which is based upon traditional appeals to history, heritage and ethnicity, and another that has tried to compensate for the rapidly internationalizing and multi-ethnic Britain.[10] The former has been cultivated over the history of the United Kingdom, in the sense that it bases Britishness in terms of English rule. This is to say that while the UK is comprised of four distinct nations, it has been in the interest of those in power to define Britain from the perspective of Westminster. However, what this does not imply

[9] Gamble, Andrew. 1998. "The European Issue in British Politics." *Britain For and Against Europe*. Eds. David Baker and David Seawright (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press):p17-8
[10] Kearney, Hugh. 2000. "The importance of Being British." *The Political Quarterly*. n1:p23

is a desire for cultural hegemony. This has often been used as a national character along which Britain has defined political terms and preferences, and therefore, it has been in the best interest of this national identity to keep the United Kingdom together.[11]

This type of national sentiment took root in the expansion of the union of the English and Scottish Crowns in 1603, the Act of Union, linking the English and Scottish parliaments in 1707, and with the formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1800. While this left intact notions of "Scottishness" and "Irishness," given that Gaellic-speaking Catholics came under the rule of English-speaking Protestants, it did so alongside the rise of a new conception of Britishness. What this did was bring the Celtic fringe under the umbrella of an English constitution and identity.[12] Therefore, the United Kingdom was a multi-national entity, but the gains of the empire in the centuries to follow served to unify Britain in the terms of England. This was an "imagined community" based on the expansion of English nationalism, which bonded the UK together with strong ties.[13] While "imagined community" was often assumed to be an English identity rather than one of the united lands of the UK, it nonetheless did so under the belief that the success through an empire and two world wars sparked a common Britishness. Thus, Britishness demanded a pragmatic loyalty to the civic institutions that the four nations shared and in Britain's highly prized parliamentary sovereignty.[14] The people of the United Kingdom are bonded together under the civic commonality of Parliament, and perhaps more importantly, the freedom of this institution has become synonymous with the freedom of the British people. Therefore, it has been intolerable to

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[11] Crick, Bernard. 1991. "The English and the British." *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*. Ed. Bernard Crick (Cambridge, UK; Oxford, UK: Blackwell):p92
[12] Kearney, Hugh. 2000:p16
[13] *Ibid*:p18

have any sense of identity compromise this sovereignty; and, moreover, basing loyalties on a cohesive English identity became key to insuring the sovereignty of Parliament.[15]

A dual sense of identity emerged as the English cultural umbrella and civic loyalty offered differing conceptions of Britishness. The English cultural umbrella, or new right, seems more rooted in imperialism, with Britain projecting a moral authority and superior traditions across the Commonwealth and the world. Civic identity however was favored more by Labour because it emerged as the idea of rallying a diverse populace behind a common sense of duty. Thus, a new crisis of identity has emerged between new right and New Labour views of national identity. Both seem to lie in historical considerations of unity under empire and in times of pressing foreign policy issues, as well as from the United Kingdom's composition of four distinct nations under one body.[16] With this, the new right position, which was first articulated by Enoch Powell, mimics the attitudes of Tories during the establishment of the unions of England with Scotland and Ireland. This is to say that pre-political unity was deeply embedded in British national identity based on the country's history and geography. Therefore, it is the belief of the new right position that British national identity has remained singular and unattached to any larger entity. And, it is not simply because of geography that such a sentiment has evolved from a faith put forth in British political institutions. This means that the importance of parliamentary sovereignty has held as a central tenet to national identity: first as a cohesive authority under which four nations united, then as a sovereign that concentrated the United Kingdom's expansions abroad. Even with the fall of empire,

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[14] Crick, Bernard. 1991:p97
[15] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000:p9
[16] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000:p9

this notion is till prevalent in British national sentiment, with more recent Conservative leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and William Hague appealing to parliamentary sovereignty. Moreover, as this view has had to reexamine the influence that Britain is now to assume on the global stage, it has seemed to subsequently reassert the importance of cultural cohesion.[17] In other words, a reemergence of Britain in the world would also have to correspond with a reemergence of a unified character, which new Conservative leaders have taken to mean the assimilation of cultural pluralism into a British way of life. However, the Britishness that this proposal reflects follows an historical tendency to mean and empathetically English sense of identity.[18]

On the other side of the spectrum, this new right way of life would seem to come into direct conflict with the more civic sense of national identity that the recent Labour governments would like to assume. One of the largest efforts to put forth a more civic identity has been the recent devolution of powers to a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly. In the preface to the White Paper *Scotland's parliament*, Prime Minister Blair stressed that this has been a long awaited modernization of British politics by way of opening government and freeing up more individual liberties based on more localized representation.[19] Therefore, there has been an effort to redefine the terms of Britishness along lines that seem more concerned with a simple common citizenship that would leave traditional conceptions of English, Scottish or Welsh intact. However, one critique of such a view is that New Labour has chosen an almost adamant anti-tradition attitude towards national identity, perhaps giving too much consideration to the four nations in

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[17] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000:p10
[18] Robbins, Keith. 1998. "Britain and Europe: Devolution and Foreign Policy." *International Affairs*. v74 n1:p106
[19] Robbins, Keith. 1998:p111

one theme of Britain.[20] From an historical perspective, we can see that it has always benefited British interests to form an overarching character that affords a concentrated, united effort, especially during times of external pressure such as the two world wars. It was no coincidence that the term "British" was more agreeable in a time of war, a time in which Welsh, Scottish and English defended a common liberty. Therefore, it is perhaps not an illogical conclusion that the United Kingdom can properly and assertively assume a leadership role both around the world and on the continent.

It has been suggested that the new right perhaps has given too much merit to old world imperial glory, making crass assumptions about the superiority of a decidedly English identity. But, the emphatic denial of this tradition by the New Labour definition will make it difficult to project any strong identity abroad. Some posited questions have asked about the consequences of devolution by way of cleavages between decision-making bodies and their effects on identity. If, for example, a Scottish parliament is now able to decide local issues, what will be the reaction if Westminster as a whole is able to answer "English" questions.[21] This could possibly lead to a strong reassertion of Englishness (most likely from the Conservative side) as the predominant indicator of British identity if it sees this being diluted by the devolution of power. The goal of institutions in the United Kingdom has always been to hold the state together in a reflection of common ties that are singular, sovereign and derived from a moral authority, which has often translated into a strong attachment to parliamentary sovereignty. This has even been the goal of Labour governments and the press for national (i.e. British)

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[20] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000:p13
[21] Robbins, Keith. 1998:p113

welfare provisions and the relief of disparities.[22] Therefore, devolution and a move

towards an identity that is loosely based on mere citizenship have been designed to

modernize Britain to accommodate diversity. And, while this does by no means imply a

desire to compromise the unity of Britain, which is perhaps the last thing on the mind of

Tony Blair as he tries to built British credibility in Europe, it certainly has the

consequence of upsetting delicate sovereignty issues within the UK.

Britian's national identity crisis would be less pronounced, if it would even an

issue at all, if concepts of national association simply referred to legal matters of

citizenship and civic institutions. However, the peculiar situation that Prime Minister

Blair and all of Britain now find themselves in is one in which exceptionalism exists on

more than one level. Beneath the moral authority that Britain established for itself as a

whole are the differing notions of Scottish, English, Irish, and Welsh.[23] And learning

from past consolidations of Britishness in pressing foreign policy matters (certainly

qualifying European integration) an attempt to patch any internal separations may

certainly be the next likely step after devolution.

From this, there is the possibility that national identity could negatively shape

future relations with the continent. This negative effect would come from the reassertion

of a more centralized, ethnically-charged identity in order to consolidate a collective

attitude towards Europe and elsewhere abroad. This has certainly been the trend over the

past 300 years, and it has since sought to suppress, in the sense that it wants to bring them

under one umbrella identity, any separatist notions of identity in the four nations.[24] If this

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[22] *Ibid*:p110
[23] Heath, Anthony et al. 1999. "British National Sentiment." *British Journal of Political Science.* v29:p157
[24] *Ibid*:p157

is to be the case, this would allow the same psychological separations and hostilities that were prevalent during the Empire and following the second World War to resurface, especially in more Conservative-minded people. This would first bring obvious cleavages like simple geographical separation as well as linguistic and cultural division to the fore in the British considerations of Europe. With notions of identity being so deeply rooted in history, it is important that a part of this history has included Britain paying more costs with the blood of its own and receiving little benefit from the continent. To Britain, the integration of Europe is the erasure of the sovereignty that it did pay so highly for, which in turn would ignore these important historical factors.[25] For Britain, a consideration of history would deem that any separation from Europe is simply an added sense of security.

If national identity is to assume this form, the most fundamental problem that European integration poses is the threat to the parliamentary sovereignty. Because this sovereignty is a byproduct of Britain's unwritten constitution, the attachment to Westminster as the one true sovereign entity is much more psychologically engrained for the sake of posterity. Because of this unique nature of the British constitution and the deeply embedded concept of parliamentary sovereignty, decisions by the Council of Ministers or European law passed down by the European Court of Justice are not so damaging to the sense of sovereignty in other European Union members.[26] If Whitehall is forced to either conform future laws to fit European approval or if it has to repeal past laws in an assimilation to EU law, it is construed as an attack on sovereignty and as an

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[25] Fitzgerald, Garret. 1991. "The British and the Irish in the Context of Europe." *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*. Ed. Bernard Crick. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell):p9
[26] *Ibid*:p19

attack on a crucial caveat of British national identity. And, British courts have not typically served under the same terms of checks and balances as does the Supreme Court in this country, but European Courts have said that not only its decisions but also those of British courts applying European law can over-turn decisions from Westminster.[27] Therefore, the British courts are positioned to assume a role over Parliament in some instances, and this is in large part the psychological problem that is presented to Britain with the expansion of European influence within member borders.

This appeal to a more traditional sense of national identity is perhaps a testament to the confusion and crisis of national sentiment that Britain is still wrestling with after losing its status in the world. While on the surface, it might seem as though this mentality is only embraced by xenophobic Conservatives, but it does appeal to the sense of history that the New Labour definition ignores and could therefore be deemed as a more substantive national identity. Tony Blair with his more civic approach to identity might seem as though it is an attempt to modernize Britain and align its thinking to be less hostile towards Europe. In this approach seems to reshape British national identity to become a largely superficial celebration of the countries inventiveness in looking to the future.[28] However, what it seems to also do is court London chic rather than a united historical or cultural element. To give Prime Minister Blair the benefit of the doubt, his efforts to grant Scotland and Wales their own elected assemblies do come with the possibility of winnowing away the forced assimilation into the more English sense of identity that has marked past sentiments and truly find a common identity. However, as we have seen already, the past attempts to consolidate identity were simply put in place to

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[27] *Ibid*:p19

keep the United Kingdom together as a projection abroad, not an attempt at the hegemony of one nation over the other three. It can also be granted to the New Labour approach to national identity has a lot of ammunition to work with if it is to look to British inventiveness in a sentimental manner. Britain recently passed France's economy for the first time in thirty years to become the second largest economy in Europe still using a currency independent of the continent. More over, because of the long-awaited prosperity the new vigor of Britain has been widely noticed.[29]

However, it could be pointed out that this renewed vitality could call for a reemergence of feelings of moral authority and the superiority of Britishness. It is important that this approach to national identity chooses to look at characteristics such as inventiveness and vitality in the modern world as indicators of a new, more civic minded attitude because it inevitably affects attitudes of foreign relations. Tony Blair and his New Labour attempt to use Britain's prosperity as a display to the world, and more importantly the European Union, that it has modernized its thinking and is willing to end ambivalence and hostility towards the continent. It is perhaps a bit ironic, however, that as these superficial appeals to prosperity make the advantages of joining a currently less successful Europe the considerations of actual identity (based on historical and cultural detail) tend to become more crucial to Britain's European decisions.[30] Therefore, this standpoint seems self-defeating in actually reshaping British identity along lines that are common and deeply seated. More over, the devolution of power is not the only way in which separation of national sentiments is likely to occur in the United Kingdom. So far

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[28] Parekh, Bhiku. 2000:p13
[29] Walker, Martin. 2001. "Blair's Britain." *The Wilson Quarterly*. Autumn. v25 n4:p16
[30] Fitzgerald, Garret. 1991:p11

as this "modernized" approach tends to define British attitudes abroad, it also alienates much of the country as well. In other words, much of the prosperity that has occurred in Britain has come from London. Therefore, it is self-defeating in its efforts to show a more benevolent feeling towards Europe in another way as well. New Labour would like to shift national identity to cosmopolitan characteristics that exist within Ealing and East Ham, Finchley and Brixton. This has further alienated those outside of London, where they must burn their contaminated livestock and wait for "modernity" to assault traditions such as fox hunting.[31] This has the possibility to cause a divisive reassertion of traditional associations in order to protect them, which as we know turn eyes away from the continent.

Thus, while there is obvious contention with European encroachment in the more traditional associations of national identity, there is also the underlying albeit real possibility of internal separations in the more civic minded alignment. With separation would come domestic tension that allows more nationalistic and more Euroskeptic mentalities to arise. If this is to affect the foreign policy orientation of these nations it will do so negatively in relation to Europe, both along historical lines of exceptionalism and with respect to sovereignty and curbing any threat to it.[32]

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[31] Walker, Martin. 2001:p16
[32] Heath, Anthony et al. 1999:p157

Domestic Political Trends and Incompatibility with the EU

Examining the sense of national identity that is present in Britain provides us with a general, abstracted framework that provides the origins of Britain's incompatibility with European integration. From this framework, we are given some idea of the half-century of half-heartedness and ambivalence that Britain has shown towards the continent. Also, it allows us to move from this more abstracted view into an exploration of how this national identity has been transferred into Britain's domestic political framework. Primarily, we have seen that a sense of exceptionalism has been present in Britain because of its former imperial status, and its sense of moral and social superiority, especially in relation to the continent. Moreover, differing cultural and historical experiences from those on the continent have historically turned British attention and interest away from the continent and more towards its Atlantic alliance and a more open seas policy in general. With regards to the domestic political institutions and attitudes, this exceptionalism overtly displays itself in Britain's growing neo-liberal trend, which is in many ways directly at odds with the more "social" conception that European integration is pursuing.

Before comparative consideration is given to the overall political and economic models of Britain and Europe, we could anticipate such an incompatibility with consideration of Westminster's role as the sole law-making body in Britain. Therefore, sovereignty and subsequently political legitimacy has traditionally been bestowed upon

the Crown Parliament, making it difficult for a supranational authority such as Brussels to affect smoothly its decision making in Britain. This incompatibility has been debated for decades not only between the Conservatives and Labour, but also within them, which recently has corresponded with a drastic weakening of the Tories. However, these confrontations across the Commons floor and within party headquarters are not at the root of British skepticism towards European Union initiatives. Both Euroskepticism and Europhilia agree with the superiority of the British model, which inevitably leads the arguments back to question of to what extent does the further European encroachment pose a threat to British self-government and its ultimate survival as a nation-state.[1]

However, this is precisely where British skepticism over further European integration takes root. The initial assumption that the British political and economic models are still the most desirable for Britain to utilize will have obvious consequences for parliamentary sovereignty and policy formulation. Recently, Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Labour government have sought to rectify this by vowing to make Britain a leader on the continent rather than playing the game of catch-up in which it has frequently been engaged. To Blair this means turning eyes more towards Europe in an effort to end the half-hearted ambivalence that was so prevalent under the Conservative governments of the past, especially in the Thatcher and Major governments. However, this might not be the easiest task for Blair. Both Margaret Thatcher and John Major came to power at the beginning of their respective terms in office vowing the same assertion of British values upon the continent, Thatcher even going so far as to fully support the signing of the 1986 Single European Act. However, the question then arises of how such

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[1] Rachman, Gideon. 1998. "Britain's European Dilemma." *The Washington Quarterly*. v21 n3:p175

ambitious leaders were able to acquiesce into Europeanization only to then shift to become some of the continent's most adamant opponents.[2]

Britain's first application for membership into the European Economic Community (EEC) came as early as 1961 under Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, so while Britain has disputed the continent for several decades, it still has a reputation for leaders trying to move towards the continent in order to shape it in the British image. However, this seems to have been more a product of contemporary considerations and less to do with a desire to conform to European standards, perhaps even going so far as to be a preservation tool for British liberalism and parliamentary sovereignty. The aforementioned contrast between the experiences of the continent and Britain during the post-war period led Britain to adopt an important "special relationship" with the United States.[3] Losing this relationship, or at least seeing it weaken in the face of a further integrating Europe is perhaps the primary reason for British application to join in the integration efforts at all, fearing that if Europe became too successful it would surpass Britain as the United State's primary partner. Thus, the only way in which Britain could preserve this Atlantic relationship and the "special relationship" was to join the EEC.[4] However, the feelings on the continent at that point had developed from a perceived failure of national governments and an obsolescence of the concept of nation-states. Thus, when the continental nations began integration as what they felt to be a necessary security measure, they also seemed aware of Britain's deep-seated differences in the

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[2] Buller, Jim. 2000. "Understanding Contemporary Conservative Euro-Skepticism: Statecraft and the Problem of Governing Autonomy." *Political Quarterly*:p319
[3] Hearl, Derek. 1994. "British Government and Politics Since 1945: Changes in Perspective." *Parliamentary Affairs*. v47 n4:p515
[4] *Ibid*:p517

matter. Upon the first application, French President Charles de Gaulle announced a resounding veto to British membership for reasons aptly hinting at characteristics that would place tension between Europe and Britain even decades later. He claimed that Britain was not European enough, and he even went so far as to mimic the claims made by more conservative Britons, which claimed that Britain was an insular country bound by "her trade, her markets, her suppliers, to countries that are very diverse and often very far away." Therefore, according to de Gaulle, how could Britain "as she lives, as she produces, as she trades, be incorporated into the Common Market?"[5]

While this was early in Britain's bid to become a member of the European Community, with its eventual accession to membership at the beginning of 1973 and then legitimized by a June 1975 referendum, it was perhaps a more accurate foreshadowing of the relations between the Community and Britain. Macmillan's concerns over the loss of the special relationship with his cross-Atlantic ally was more a fear of losing a partner in a more neo-liberal, capitalist club than could be afforded by the continent. Furthermore, these same sentiments have followed Britain into later relations with the EU, particularly those of Thatcher's terms as Prime Minister. Whereas earlier British PMs wanted to preserve Britain's ties to a country more in tune with their own, Thatcher also wanted to preserve parliamentary sovereignty by insulating Parliament's ability to govern from wider societal constraints by tying certain policy (namely economic) to the continent.[6] This initial statecraft strategy was thought to free up certain concerns of the government in an attempt to stabilize these policy concerns. However, what Thatcher and the

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[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Buller, Jim. 2000:p319

Conservatives soon found were the problems that remained at the roots of British policymaking, which became evident as her successor, John Major was eventually led to drop out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and then opt-out of the common currency caveat of the Maastricht Treaty. What these opt-outs and drop outs conferred was that any attempt to sign up for the Maastricht Treaty's dramatic step forward in integration, meaning common currency, the Social Chapter, a common foreign policy and more, was also the surrender of any future efforts at the more American-style policies to which Britain is accustomed.[7]

Many would believe that Thatcher and Major (as well as current Tories) were simply adopting chauvinistic tendencies towards British superiority. However, if this were the case, then the recent Labour government, now in its second term, would be able to easily erase all hostility with the continent.[8] Tony Blair would like to have people think that he is doing just that; and, he has in fact made an effort to turn at least one of Britain's eyes towards Europe, namely by adopting the Social Chapter of Maastricht. However, for all of the rhetoric that Blair would like to adopt about conducting friendlier relations with the European Union, it is possible that he will soon encounter the same obstacles that Thatcher began to encounter after coming to office as pro-European.[9] With the EU embarking on perhaps its most ambitious project to date, the euro, Britain has still opted-out of this pillar of integration. Moreover, Blair himself seems to realize the fundamental problems of policy harmonization with the continent, evidenced by his "wait and see" attitude. On the surface, Blair seems to be avoiding the sensitive political issues

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[7] Baker, David. 2001. "Britain and Europe: The Argument Continues." *Parliamentary Affairs*. v54:p280
[8] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p175
[9] *Ibid.*

involved in such harmonization. In an attempt to present a more economic approach to
the situation, Blair has presented five economic "tests" that are to be passed before
putting further integration questions such as the common currency to referendum.
However, when it comes down to assessing whether or not these criteria have been met, it
seems to be more a matter of judgement. Whether or not further economic integration
will be beneficial for employment, or investment, or other financial aspects in the end
amounts to a matter of judgement.[10] In simple terms these would seem to extend
Britain's foot forward on perhaps becoming a full, more cooperative member of the EU
by showing that it is in fact giving the idea serious thought. However, if the terms of
membership are still viewed as politically dubious, these matters of judgement can be
swayed just as quickly as they attempt to avoid the underlying questions of Britain's
compatibility with the continent.

Prime Minister Blair might be trying to erase the atmosphere of tension that has
marked Britain's relations with the continent, especially the Euroskepticism of his
Conservative predecessors. However, Europhilia and Euroskepticism are more attitudes
on how to approach further relations across the English Channel. It is beyond these
preliminary attitudes that even the most pro-European leaders are bound to run into the
underlying dissimilarities between British and European conditions and policy
preferences. This is especially true if we consider that Blair is trying to make Britain a
leader on the continent in an attempt to export the British model. More and more it
appears that Blair has perpetuated Thatcher-like preferences for labor flexibility and a

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[10] "Smothering the Euro Debate." *The Economist*. September 25, 1999:p68

more liberal agenda in general.[11] Thus, regardless of how Blair spins future

considerations about joining in future European integration, there are underlying

differences that have and will continue to arise. If Blair continues to choose economic as

an indicator of British compatibility then he will see discrepancies between a "social"

Europe and Britain, especially in employment and growth which are two of the economic

tests. Once these considerations are combined with the traditional concerns over national

and parliamentary sovereignty, it becomes more apparent that domestic conditions direct

British awkward partnership with Europe.

As mentioned above, if Prime Minister Blair and other European proponents are

going to structure criteria for further integration around quasi-economic tests, then some

feel that this approach will expose the difficult constraints that European policy will place

upon Britain.[12] Perhaps because of the "special relationship" that it developed with the

United States in the last half of the twentieth century, or because of the more "open seas"

policy adopted during its imperial days, Britain has developed an economic model that

differs in many important ways from the continent.

In a 1988 speech to the Trade Union Congress, then socialist President of the

European Commission expressed plans to develop a more "Social Europe" that could

guarantee better rights than could the individual member states.[13] Such claims to a more

socially based Europe referred to higher rates of public spending and also to practices

reflective of the corporatist German model that has seeped into European policy.

However, this fundamental economic structure on the continent seems to pose the

[11] Baker, David. 2001:p280
[12] Whyman, Philip; Burkitt, Brian: Baimbridge, Mark. 2000. "Economic Policy Outside EMU: Strategies for a Global Britain." *The Political Quarterly*:p451

greatest problems with Britain. Many, even some on the continent who are continuing de Gaulle's line of thinking, have adopted the contention that Britain's economy mirrors a more laissez-faire capitalism that is characterized by looser regulations and lower taxation like the United States rather than the "social" Europe. According to Philip Whyman et al., Britain's economy has been found by empirical studies to react differently than those of other economic monetary union (EMU) members 87 percent of the time. Even more so, if the European Central Bank (ECB) is going to adopt policy formulation based on Germany's Bundesbank then it becomes an important factor that Britain and Germany have only exhibited a 54 percent compatibility.[14] As we saw earlier, Britain first signed up for the EEC because of fears of falling behind the rest of Europe and thus jeopordizing its relationship with America. However, now that Britain has recently become Europe's second largest economy, it currently seems to be doing so well that even the Labour party has shown reluctance in the face of discrepancies between the two models.[15]

With these discrepancies, the problem of one centralized economic authority ruling over disparate economic environments arises. This problem has been expressed as a concern for the inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries upon EU expansion, but so too does it affect the decisions for Britain. Inside EMU, it is very likely that countries will experience vastly asymmetrical shocks, making it difficult for a centralized authority to react in a manner conducive to success in all countries. Again using the example of Whyman et al., countries such as the United Kingdom are largely

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[13] Hearl, Derek. 1994:p515
[14] Whyman, Philip et al. 2000:p452
[15] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p180

sufficient in energy resources, whereas the majority of European countries are not. If, for example, oil prices were to rise and benefit the UK but harm the majority of members, then the ECB would be apt to correct the harm to the majority in a manner that is not beneficial to Britain.[16] Moreover, as a result of a centralized European authority, member countries are required to keep budget deficits within 3 percent of their GDP. For the United Kingdom, past cycles have proven this to be difficult in times of an economic downturn. In the past twenty years, Britain's economy has gone from deficits as low as 8 percent to a surplus of 3 percent at certain times. What constituted an 8 percent variation in the 1980s has recently risen close to 10 percent, meaning that the UK must run at least a 6 to 7.5 percent surplus if it is to stay within the 3 percent requirement in EMU, which is double the surpluses it has had in the recent past.[17] Therefore, it is fundamental disparities between Britain and the continent that could prove negatively beneficial in the incongruent policies and limitations of a centralized authority.

Britain's economy has recently grown at faster rates than those of both Germany and France, and if leaders such as Blair are going to continue to embrace more loosely regulated policies, then this seems to have afforded Britain certain advantages with regards to some of the economic "tests." Privatization and lower levels of taxation have made it apparent that Britain is a far more liberal economy than the continent. As a result of this, it has managed to become the target for approximately 40 percent of the foreign direct investments coming into Europe, and overall it is the third most popular target in the world.[18] This appeal has much to do with the relative freedom that businesses have in

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[16] Whyman, Philip et al. 2000:p452
[17] *Ibid*:p453
[18] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p180

Britain's more liberal model than in the more constrained corporate model of Germany. This difference is especially prevalent in the hiring and firing freedoms that firms enjoy, which contributes nicely to Britain's concerns about employment and economic growth. At around 5 percent, Britain's unemployment rate is only half of those on the continent, which total is near 20 million people and ranges from 11 to 12 percent in countries like Germany and France.[19] Therefore, it is evident that the British economic model has different market-oriented, neo-liberal goals from the austere anti-inflationary model that the ECB has chosen to adopt. This was evident during their stint in the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), from which Britain chose to exit after unemployment hit double-digit rates.[20] Also, British interest rates tend to run close to double those in Europe because of the increased risk of inflation. This would seem to dampen the hopes of even the most heartened Europhile, who believes Britain must further EMU in order to shape it in its own image. However, because Britain is reacting to its own economic conditions, its rates would have little influence over the continent's conditions as they converge.[21]

It cannot be doubted that the establishment of a common market of free trade and mobility in Europe champions liberal economics to some extent. However, to what extent is exactly where conflict with Britain comes into play. Many can cite the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), which compromises a large piece of the European Union's budget, as the apparent signs of continued "social" practices. In addition, there have also been recent efforts to harmonize certain areas of welfare and taxation, including a withholding tax on savings income. This initiative would seem to compromise the

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[19] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p176
[20] Whyman, Philip et al. 2000:p451
[21] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p185

British trend of lower taxation by raising them to European levels, but tensions have been eased to some extent after the EU held out on the harmonization. However, then British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, commented that it was "not necessary nor advisable to harmonize tax rates," reflecting that his country is still choosing to hold on to its commitment to lower taxation and is still aware of the pressure that harmonization and European economic policy puts on a differing British system.[22]

The harmonization debate on the EMU aspects of further integration seems to reflect a larger contention that Britain has with the continent. From the nascent forms of the European agreements up to the present structure of the European Union, an increasingly federal decisionmaking scheme has arisen. One reason for this is the strong leadership role that Germany has played throughout the history of integration. However, when we consider the German federal structure, characterized by Lander governments practicing "substantive harmonization of policies and highly developed procedural uniformity," we find that Britain holds a vastly differing power structure that is perhaps at the root of its skepticism.[23] Therefore, the extent to which a federal government can integrate into a larger federal system can simply be viewed as a further diffusion of power. However, a unitary system marked by an ultimate authority vested in Parliament, this integration is not only more difficult but also completely incompatible.

It has been no secret that the original core leadership of the European Economic Community right up to the European Union has wanted an "ever closer" political union. Jean Monnet, the father of the European Union, made it known that his ultimate goal was

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[22] "Britain and EU Tax: For Now the Sovereignty Battle is Won." *United Press International Bulletin.* November 27, 2000

a political union; and, in 1990, then German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, stated the great goal of integration was a United States of Europe. However, while Kohl's Christian Democratic Party was trying to convince French officials to abandon the "empty shell" of the nation-state, British skepticism grew.[24] Britain's initial disenchantment with the more consensual, bureaucratic administration of Brussels was the first sign that this conflicted with traditional confrontational politics that is custom in Westminster. What Britain fears is the distinct possibility that Parliament will have to cede its ultimate authority to supranational authority. Alongside his colleagues, Jacques Delors has also suggested that power eventually come from Brussels, predicting that well over three-quarters of social legislation will come from a wider European authority in the future.

As early as 1994, the British ministry of trade and industry found one-third of all British law originated from the continent, which included three-quarters of the laws that affected their businesses.[25] Such a consensual style of politics as is in the European Union becomes a problem for Britain when directives become the result of a compromise between fifteen (and perhaps soon to be twenty to twenty-five) members. Wildly different domestic conditions affecting this consensual system present the problem of not considering national interests to the extent of their importance. While this is a possible concern for all member states in their "pooling of sovereignty," it presents a more troublesome situation for Britain. It does this by altering the traditional balance of power,

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[23] Schmidt, Vivien A. 1999. "European 'Federalism' and its Encroachments on National Institutions." *Publius*. v29 n1:p19

[24] Rachman, Gideon. 1998:p185

[25] *Ibid*

usurping parliamentary sovereignty and the overall power structure in Britain's more unitary government.[26]

Contrary to this unitary system, the European Union seems to suffer through a confusion of powers. Many have expressed concern over the democratic deficit that exists on the continent, considering that the only directly elected body, the European Parliament, still carries little influence. Also, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission now decide some issues that were traditionally within the scope of national parliaments, especially in Britain. The Council of Ministers holds the role final approval of legislation, while the Commission conducts policy initiation and elaboration.

Thus, the European Union has taken power away from Westminster without providing a similarly elected authority in Brussels. The traditional role of Parliament as the highest sovereign power in Britain has never attempted to erode its attitudes of accountability and elected legitimacy. However, now the democratic deficit extends even deeper considering the secretive nature of these Council of Minister deliberations. National parliaments in general remain largely uninformed about their proceedings because of secrecy rules that do not permit even minutes from being recorded at these meetings.[27] Therefore, Parliament rarely has the time or the means to formulate a cohesive opposition to any policy it deems threatening to national interests or sovereignty, compromising an important confrontational role to which MPs are accustomed. Furthermore, a structure in which a group of indirectly elected member-state representatives holds the legislative role damages the legitimacy of these national

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[26] Schmidt, Vivien A. 1999:p19
[27] *Ibid*:p22

executives because they are not fully accountable for the initiatives that they must now implement.[28]

Recently, there has been a trend in Britain moving more of the power into the hands of the executive, especially with Prime Minister Blair taking a hardline stance against any dissention and thus controlling any majority in Parliament. Therefore, some might be willing to say that the power that is granted to the Prime Minister and the Ministers are already such that it would not be improper for this to extend to Brussels. However, talks at the Nice 2000 Summit might have stirred up some concern that even a more centralized power structure could not avoid encroachment from Europe. As many important policy issues in Europe require a unanimous decision by member states, albeit allowing countries such as Britain to exercise an opt-out, it might not be immediately apparent that further integration would necessarily compromise national interest. If current or future Ministers do not agree with legislation, they may simply use their veto power. However, the Nice European Summit began talks aimed at making the EU legislative process more efficient by way of extending Qualified Majority Voting to policies on taxation and common foreign and defense matters. The fears for Britain then become more pronounced as it would eventually have to cede sovereignty on these issues by losing its power to reject and reshape them. Moreover, any sovereignty that is lost could also pose threatening to national interests of Britain since the result of another product of the Nice summit gave the six founding member states of the European Community 51 percent of the vote in the Council of Ministers.[29]

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[28] *Ibid*:p20
[29] Baker, David. 2001:p287

If such a formidable alliance is formed, it could pose huge problems for Britain's efforts to retain national sovereignty and stave off a federalist structure. Even now, as we saw with the 1994 report by the trade and industry department, Britain has already been inundated with European initiatives. It has also been forced to make some concessions to another institution that has not held the same power in Britain that it does on the continent, which is to say the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In an instance such as the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British law, we have an opportunity to see the ways in which European initiatives have taken absolute sovereignty away from Parliament by way of establishing a decidedly law-based objective restricting legislative activity. In order to avoid certain concerns over the complete erosion of parliamentary sovereignty, the Human Rights Act of 1998 does not grant national courts the power to strike down primary legislation. However, with the power to declare an incompatibility with the ECHR, courts have now applied pressure for not just formal legislation but also all policies and executive actions to be "human rights proofed." Moving this advisory authority from a more detached role on the continent into the national courts will force Parliament to play a more cautious role when ensuring that laws comply. It is the primary reaction that the ECHR sets off is another structural stress point that Britain holds with wider European institutions because it serves to bring the courts into the political arena.[30]

Thus, it is this further erosion of parliamentary sovereignty that lies at the heart of British concerns that its national balance of power and tradition are being attacked from

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[30] Hazell, Robert and David Sinclair. 1999. "The British Constitution in 1997-98: Labour's Constitutional Revolution." *Parliamentary Affairs*. v52 n2:p170

several angles. From the amount of European legislation that has already made its way into the British system we can further conclude that the ECJ has assumed an oversight role that has either directly interceded with British law or has placed psychological constraints on lawmakers and the executive. It is in this situation that Europe seems to be adhering more to an American model by allowing its highest court to exercise a *supreme court* authority. Thus, the important distinction that has yet to be rectified by Britain is the decidedly legal nature of European integration. The idea of "subsidiarity," whereby the European Union grants decisionmaking power to the member states in areas in which it is deemed more suitable in doing so (i.e. more country specific matters), was incorporated into the Maastricht agreement, it was done so under dubious terms according to British leaders. Whereas this distinction of proper authorities would seem to clear up any fears over excessive European encroachment, it makes the claim to doing so without drawing tangible boundaries between the two jurisdictions.[31]

It is important to introduce this point about subsidiarity because it also uncovers Europe's hesitation about granting too much local authority back to the member states. This is the precise function of the ECJ about which Britain may have the most to fear. The ECJ has already set a precedent by taking an interpretive stance on decisions, stating that the member nations had already agreed to a new legal system in their joining the Union.[32] By doing this, it has already overturned the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1988[33] on the grounds that it violated provisions granting the freedom of services. Also, the Court has also sided with the Commission in areas concerning the British veto of

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[31] Buller, Jim. 2000:p325
[32] *Ibid*:p323

legislation. The working time directive sought to establish a maximum workweek of 48 hours for all EU employees in a manner that was highly controversial to British leaders in the sense that it tried to ignore British opposition by attaching it as a rider to legislation that would only require a qualified majority vote.[34] In situations such as this British leaders have struggled to retain influence over further integration by way of preventing qualified majority voting from seeping into the broader issues, the common market being one. However, when Britain took the Commission to court over this attempt to circumvent its authority, the ECJ still ruled in favor of the Commission.

Therefore, for as long as terms such as subsidiarity carry ambiguity and for as long as the ECJ is able to increase its checking power on Parliament, the more Britain has to worry over. National courts continue to receive more power from the continent to act independently and even over Parliament to the point that Westminster has seen its autonomy diminished. And, the extent that the European structure has tried to replace the traditional concepts of legitimacy and autonomy has not been able to rectify British concerns. While other member states might be under the protection of specific constitutional provisions to ensure rights, Britain does not carry such safeguards except under the authority of Westminster. When this safeguard is compromised by higher institutional enforcement or judicial review, then this system becomes threatened. The secretive and undemocratic practices of the European hierarchy is dangerous ground that leaders in Britain are fearful of treading. It is perhaps an incorrect assumption that the confusion of powers in Europe can be legitimized in any way under parliamentary

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[33] A law requiring 75 percent of the directors and shareholders of firms operating off the British coast to be of British nationality
[34] Buller, Jim. 2000:p323

sovereignty. But also, it may even be incorrect to assume that Britain can exist within a European system that serves to damage the legitimacy of Parliament and the traditional sources of power.

Public Opposition to Europe: A Double-Edged Sword

From the standpoint that the hierarchical unitary system of Britain offers a

structural incompatibility with a quasi-federal Europe also offers insight into the problem

of public opinion for British leaders. With the efforts of the current Labour government

to diffuse power to elected assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there

have been mentions of the abilities for participation that this affords subnational groups.[1]

However, we have seen that in the face of pressing foreign relations questions, there

tends to be a consolidated effort by the British government by way of reasserting the

absolute authority of Westminster. This alongside the recent strengthening of the

executive within Parliament presents a situation in which devolution is certainly

occurring but is nonetheless still secondary to an overall unitary structure.

With this said, the role of public opinion in Britain assumes a crucial role for

further British involvement with Europe, both as a result of integration issues and as a

determinant. The subnational actors have been granted steps towards further

participation in British governance, but this is still very much in the nascent stages. With

unions and similar organizations less entrenched in the political process and with the

British political style differing from the more corporatist model of core European leaders

such as Germany, channels of participation are thus limited. However, the limited

channels in Britain also presuppose a larger impact of the voter in both referenda and

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[1] See Bomberg, Elizabeth and John Peterson. 1998. "European Union Decision Making: the Role of Sub-national Actors." *Political Studies*. XLVI:p219-235

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elections. The degree to which Prime Minister Blair has resorted to American-style "spin" and rhetoric is far from an academic testament to this, but it has been obvious enough for London theater to pick up on. All satirical jabbing aside however, public opinion in relation to an array of issues, a large contingency being European, "has brought an element of uncertainty to British electoral politics."[1] The degree to which it ousted a disjointed Conservative government, no matter how closely its Euroscepticism mirrored the public's own, has even the European-enthusiast Blair walking the tightrope of Europe.

This is largely seen in Blair's willingness to extend an open-hand to his colleagues on the continent alongside an inability to fully sell further British cooperation domestically.[2] Blair has focused on overall structural issues in the European Union, such as flexibility and extended qualified voting, but he has largely tried to make headway by imposing economic tests with concern to joining the euro. As we have seen however, the Prime Minister nonetheless encounters overarching political questions in doing so, and thus becomes more at the mercy of the British public. In other words, by creating the paradox between proposing seemingly tangible criteria that can only be satisfied in subjective terms, he has expressed an important concern: the hesitancy of British leaders to reach beyond their elected grasp, even with the largest of parliamentary majorities. Fueled by a Eurosceptical press that has in recent history experienced European opposition with Thatcher and Major, the public has voiced its own opposition, which could be compounded by any sort of hesitation in the leadership.[3] Past and current polls

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[1] Evans, Geoffery. 1998. "Euroscepticism and Conservative Electoral Support: How an Asset Became a Liability." *British Journal of Political Science.* v28:p573
[2] Stephens, Philip. 2001. "The Blair Government and Europe." *The Political Quarterly.* v72 n1:p67
[3] Stephens, Philip. 2001:p67

show lethargic support for the common currency and the benefits of membership in the European Union as a whole. While the leadership elite in Britain has always tended to be more opposed to more threatening questions of Europe as a superstate, the public has seemed to remain adamant in their hostility towards Europe in any respect. Eurobarometer polls have always shown the British public support to fall about 10 percent short of any other member-state.[4] Therefore, the wavering of even pro-European leaders has been cognizant of such opposition, and therefore had its arguments stifled. Therefore, public opinion becomes a double-edged sword. As the Tories discovered in the 1980s and early 1990s, an inability of leaders to coordinate decisions concerning Europe is detrimental to public perceptions of confidence, which is perhaps a product of leaders' unwillingness to test the documented public opposition to the European project.

Even with all of the recent fluctuation of elite sentiments towards Europe, it seems as though the British public has rarely been so ambiguous on the matter. Social scholars have recognized that the sense of exceptionalism and skepticism that marked traditional British imperialism has certainly made some degree of transition into modern attitudes. Even at the beginning of 2002, after the introduction of the euro to the European public, Professor John Curtice from Strathclyde has even gone so far as to say that Britons still retain an "us versus them" attitude when it comes to the continent. He went further to say that "very few people in Britain think of themselves as Europeans."[5] This was an important observation so early in the introduction of the hard common currency because several key government officials have hoped that a tangible common currency might quell the fears of the public. By the end of 2001, a poll conducted by *The*

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[4] Baker, David. 2001:p278

Guardian showed that British public support for the euro rose slightly to 31 percent, with 58 percent still opposed.[6] Some Cabinet Ministers, such as Foreign Secretary Jack Straw immediately jumped on these results to show enthusiasm for the opposition gap falling to within 27 percentage points. However, such a shift (even as minute as it may seem) has not been uncommon in Britain. Just before the euro was introduced at the initial phases in 1999, support rose to 30 percent, cutting the discrepancy to within 24 percentage points. However, if this initial period of increased support brings any excitement to government Europhiles, they should also consider that by the end of 1999 British support fell back to hostile levels; and moreover, straightforward opposition has risen by several points since.[7]

Therefore, any shift in support has served to raise the hopes of pro-European ministers, and then have them dashed by a recession to steady opposition. This would seem to reflect the public's consideration of issues previously discussed in this paper. Therefore, while it has been perceived in the past that the public would generally follow a well-coordinated leadership, in the past couple of decades it has seemed as though this was perhaps too optimistically assumed. Previous considerations for British tensions with the continent have rested upon deep-seated factors, yet both parties have straddled the line between support and opposition by changing positions on the issue over the years. As recently as 1983, the currently Euro-enthusiastic Labour Party supported unconditional withdraw from the European Community. Also, was it not Margaret Thatcher, now the epitome of Euroscepticism, that greatly backed the Single European

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[5] Smith, David. "Is Britain Falling for Europe's Charms?" *The Sunday Times (London)*. January 13, 2002
[6] Hanes, Tim. "The Single Currency Will Not Convert Many." *The Times (London)*. December 20, 2001
[7] *Ibid*

Act at the onset of her tenure as Prime Minister? Therefore, the underlying factors have not changed, but it seems as though the public has a better grasp of this over their wise leaders.

The Conservatives found this out perhaps after it was too late to salvage their hopes for regaining public trust. Building up to the Maastricht Treaty at the end of 1991, there was a rise in support for British membership in the European Community, which more recent numbers would tell us was the result of this now emerging trend following a perceived increase in relations with the continent. In other words, the context of this increase in support was perhaps due to both the anticipation of Maastricht and involvement in the ERM. However, the ERM crisis and Britain's eventual ejection from it proved detrimental to confidence in the Conservatives as well as support for further involvement with the continent.[8] Using British Election Panel Studies from 1992 to 1996 we can see that while the number of proponents of integration stayed at roughly the same lower levels, support for an increased protection of national sovereignty and diminished relationship with Europe rose significantly. By 1996, the mean self-placement of respondents on the scale ranging from complete unification with Europe and absolute protection of independence had shifted significantly towards the withdraw end.[9] It should also be noted that the public's perceptions of how the parties stood on the issues stayed roughly the same for Conservatives and shifted more to the integrationist end of the spectrum for the Labour Party. This is an interesting fact from which we can uncover that even among supporters of Labour, the more pro-European of the parties, the

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[8] Evans, Geoffery. 1998:p574
[9] *Ibid*:p578

tendency was towards opposition to Europe.[10] Therefore, we can see that public opinion played a major role in this period, much of which rested on the ERM crisis and further integration by way of Maastricht. Whereas the Tories had what could be termed an electoral asset in the form of vast public opposition to integration and public perception that it was the more anti-European of the parties, it was squandered as divisions in the party deepened and confidence levels fell. Furthermore, the divisions in the party that allowed in-fighting to stifle a coordinated position on Europe one way or the other, kept public perception of the Tories position on integration much the same. This is all while the public's own attitudes became more adversarial, so even Conservatives became alienated from actual public sentiments.

The impact that European integration had on the public's perception of Conservative competency cannot be underestimated. The failure of Britain's attempt to join the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) resulting in its embarrassing forced exit in 1992 exacerbated existing divisions within the party. Furthermore, public opinion played the role of a double-edged sword by also reflecting a lack of confidence in their ability to govern. Therefore, even as far back as Black Wednesday, the Tories were in trouble by way of public opinion, which simply got the ball rolling towards their enormous defeat in the 1997 election.[11] Taking this into consideration, even with all of his Europhilia, Tony Blair perhaps has his predecessors' fate on his mind. It is now apparent that the public as expressed wide majority opposition to European integration, and at the same time made an embarrassing example of a Conservative Party that was unable to coordinate even a

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[10] Evans, Geoffery. 1998:p579
[11] *Ibid*:p590

strongly-backed Euroscepticism. Thus, the double-edged sword of public opinion will now burdens the Labour government, perhaps more so than it did the Conservatives.[12]

This is becoming more apparent as Prime Minister Blair tries to clean up the tarnished reputation of Britain in Europe. While he is driven to end British ambivalence towards the continent, the ambivalence seems to have turned to uncertainty at home. With the state of domestic affairs such as health care and education in their current decrepit states, and with a row emerging between Prime Minister Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, an uncoordinated effort might not serve Europhiles well. If the competency of Tories was seen as faltering during the ERM debacle, then any neglect of domestic issues could affect the public's perception of Labour, despite large electoral victories.

The results from the European Commission's Continuous Tracking Survey (CTS) have shown that British opposition to the European project (the full integration proceedings) does not merely rest on the success of EMU or on perceived victories at the most recent intergovernmental conference.[13] This is to be expected considering the aforementioned tendency for support to wax in minute, short-lived bursts only to then ultimately wane. Thus, the public has assumed the critical role of shaping policy stances on Europe, considering its ability through opinion polls and elections to change the tide of both parties. Christopher Anderson, in one of his studies on public opinion towards European integration, found that a lack of education about the EU typically fostered opposition to the integration proceedings.[14] However, from a Continuous Tracking

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[12] Evans, Geoffery. 1998:p590
[13] Conducted by the European Commission's Public Opinion Surveys and Research Unit
[14] Anderson, Christopher. "When in Doubt, Use Proxies:

Survey conducted at the end of 1997, found that Britons' feelings about their knowledge

of the European Union were above the EU average.[15] While the number of Britons that

felt this was only at 40 percent, this must be taken alongside the fact that only Germany

and Luxembourg had a majority of the population, albeit slim majorities of 59 and 51

percent respectively, feel as though they were well-educated about the EU.[16] Therefore,

opposition in the British case cannot be fully attributed to the lack of education on the EU

and its institution. In fact, a general apathy towards the institutions of Europe seems to

exist alongside even a heightened education. If Anderson's findings were completely

accurate, the opposite would be true, and Britain would tend to exhibit greater support.

Surprisingly however, the CTS given at the end of 1997 found that some of the

lowest levels of interest in the functions of the European Union exist in Britain.

Generally, only about 50 percent of Britons expressed interest in learning more about

European institutions, treaties, the common currency or the aims and objectives of the

integration project as a whole.[17] Therefore, public opinion seems to reflect an interesting

paradox in that their knowledge is above European-wide levels, but interest in the

continent seems to run at about 20 percent below other member-states. This paradox has

been a large obstacle for leaders to negotiate because on this matter it seems has become

increasingly apparent that the public now takes a directive role on these issues.[18] Also, it

seems as though the public has set this paradox on an interesting balance by way of

obtaining just enough education to know that it does not support European integration nor

does it find interest in it. Recent Eurobarometer numbers find that only 33 percent of

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[15] *Europinion*, special report of Continuous Tracking Survey results following the Amsterdam IGC, 1997
[16] *Europinion*, 1997
[17] *Europinion*, Number 13, November 1997
[18] Evans, Geoffery. 1998:p574

Britons believe membership in the EU to be a "good thing," and 36 percent see benefit in membership.

With this said, it seems as though it is the British public that must now occupy Blair's attention if he is going to change their minds on Europe. However, because of the importance of public opinion and because of the directive mode that it now seems to serve, Blair seems to be avoiding the issue domestically. One telltale sign of this reticence by Blair to commit fully is that of more than half a dozen key speeches on the integration process only one has been done within Britain.[19] He is obviously considering the daunting and perhaps detrimental task that comes with selling an idea that has for so long sparked adamant opposition in Britain. But, Blair must also consider that convincing the continent of Britain's willingness to cooperate is not nearly as much a factor as convincing Britain of Europe's benefits. In the campaign preceding Blair's second term in 2001, the Labour Party adopted slogans such as "The Work Goes On," which seem to imply broad idyllic goals and promises.[20]

The Prime Minister has to be careful with such rhetoric though. If it is confidence in the government that will ultimately decide electoral fates, then Blair might be able to win elections with such grandeur but that is perhaps where this rhetoric ceases to satisfy the British public. Just as with the five economic "tests," which are Blair's pragmatic steps towards Europe, such talk of a better Britain remains politically subjective considering the crumbling state of Britain's healthcare, education and transportation systems. Britain still spends the least amount on healthcare than any other industrialized

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[19] Stephens, Philip. 2001:p74
[20] "The End of the Beginning? Tony Blair Wants Labour to Rule Britain for a Generation. Winning the Election is the Least of His Problems." *Time International*. June 11, 2001:p34

nation; and, railways and roads are in deplorable conditions, even after billions of pounds worth of repairs. This is all aside from the fact that the future does not look promising for the British as its 16 to 25 year-old demographic remains behind every Western European country (except Ireland) in reading ability.[21]

With all of this facing the British domestic scene, Blair would seem to be treading on dangerous ground if he continues to turn attention towards the continent. Perhaps due to these internal woes, a recent NOP survey commissioned by the pro-integration Britain in Europe group showed that 67 percent of the public wants a referendum on the euro before the next general election. In this same poll, a strong opposition at 49 percent was even shown to exist for joining the common currency in the event of passing the economic tests.[22] First and foremost, this is a telling sign that want much of the European issue to be solved as quickly as possible, believing that joining the common currency is the most tangible indicator of British attitudes. However, the 49 percent that would oppose joining the euro even if these criteria were met is reflective of the overall British tendency towards opposition. Furthermore, what it shows Tony Blair is that there is still a large contingent in Britain that refuses to be convinced by broad promises and spin artist-like rhetoric that it will take to convince the public on the government's subjective decisions on these tests. It would seem that rather than taking a positive stand on entrance into EMU, the government is still holding onto the question of "if" Britain is

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[21] "The End of the Beginning?..." *Time International.* June 11, 2001:p35
[22] "67 % of Public Want Euro Poll." *Guardian Unlimited.* February 27, 2002.
http://politics.guardian.co.uk/polls/story

able to join. Thus, it appears to be shouting about Britain forging new bonds with the continent while at the same time staying relatively quiet in its actions.[23]

This is perhaps the point from which the current Labour government has the possibility of pursuing much the same fate as the Tories. First and foremost, Britain has had some very deep-seated problems in these aforementioned domestic areas, including the economy that could become troublesome for the current government. As was mentioned in previous sections, Blair has tried to project a Britain with unemployment, inflation and interest rates all at striking lows. However, the fact of the matter still remains that the British infrastructure is crumbling in concerning proportions.[24] Therefore, if he fails to look at these issues before he tries to include his healthy image of Britain into the continent, he could be overlooking crucial issues that could prove detrimental not only to the public's confidence levels, but also to Britain's current strengths. In other words, what the public most likely realizes is that Britain may stand at a high point in relation to the continent now, but such fundamental domestic issues could facilitate the downfall of this.

What Conservatives discovered was that holding the same line as the public on the European issues could not silence discontent if their own competency was perceived as waning. Thus, while Blair might have a currently healthy Britain on his side, this will not simply change the precedence of Euroscepticism. If he continues to project a strong London to his European colleagues while not dealing with domestic problems and selling integration at home, he will perhaps be subject to an even further distancing than that experienced by Conservatives. Also, divisions that have previously emerged in the

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[23] Stephens, Philip. 2001:p74

Labour strategy towards Europe could prove to be similar as well. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown made it apparent in a statement even as early as October 1997 that he intended the current decisions about EMU to rest solely on national interest. Therefore, the answers to the "tests" still remain subjective but Brown has made it clear that he will probably view it more passively on economic terms and exercise a veto in any policy proposals. However, an enthusiastic Blair would still like to make Britain's case in an active manner. Thus, the line between making the issue either political or economic is a blurry one. A tension within the Labour Party causing a disjointed policy strategy towards Europe. Conservatives found a disconnected party to be fatal to public confidence levels, and the Labour Party could run into the same troubles. To place this tension atop an underlying public hostility towards the continent, the current Labour government might have to initiate a referendum on EMU as a final vote of confidence.

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[24] "The End of the Beginning?..." *Time International.* June 11, 2001:p34

Conclusion

Few would doubt that the efforts of European nations to "pool" their interests together in the sake of a lasting peace and security have been widely successful thus far. The simple fact that mid-twentieth century European leaders saw it necessary to make steps towards some sort of alliance rather than falling back into the cleavages that had caused so much bloodshed and distrust in the past was a crucial sign that a European community could prosper. However, the deep-seated urgency that the continent felt after the Second World War was not shared by all of the current members of the modern European Union, so we can assume that the project of deeper and wider integration has evolved over the last five decades into a body that is not only precautionary but also assertive in building an influential role on the global stage. This is largely due to the underlying political scope of integration, which seems to bother Britain the most.

This may seem more like paranoia on the part of Euroskeptics because with the European Coal and Steel Community and moving right up into the current Economic and Monetary Union project, European integration has generally looked more economic in practice. On the other hand, leaders from the Franco-German core of Europe have numerous times expressed their desires for a closer political union, with both Jean Monnet, the father of the modern European Union, and the once adamantly pro-European German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, both striving for the "ever closer Union." And, while Britain's neo-liberal

economic model and a more "social Europe" now at conflicting points in the business cycle, so too is a unitary system incongruous with a quasi-federal European structure. It is apparent that more federal models of certain member-states have and will continue to assimilate European authority over their own national governments in some areas. Some might argue that even a unitary state such as France was able to not only assimilate the European power structure but also shape it in many instances. However, Britain uses its power structure in a more complex manner combining with it the ultimate authority of Parliament, which France does not have.

With appeals to protecting a national identity that has both a prominence of the notions of sovereignty as well as historical aversions to Europe, some Europhiles have claimed that Britain is simply grasping on to largely antiquated attitudes. What with the fall of the empire and the failure to find a new role, it seems as though it would be time for the British to take the steps towards a "modernized" conception of Britishness. Europhiles make a good case for this in the face of growing integration across many sectors, not just in Europe.

However, the current efforts to modernize of Tony Blair and the new Labour, which are largely based on devolution and a shiny, new cool Britannia, seem superficial at best. History has shown that when confronted with pressing foreign policy pressures Britain seems to consolidate national identity under a broader umbrella. The power structure in Britain affords Parliament absolute sovereignty in political matters, and furthermore it has been in the best interest of Westminster to keep the United Kingdom as a whole together. Thus, devolution in this case is perhaps a modernizing element to the

Third Way reconsideration of representation, but it hardly upends the overall unitary

character of Britain and the notion of parliamentary sovereignty.

Instead, what we have seen is that should the opportunity arise for the four nations

of the United Kingdom (Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) to assert

independent identities themselves, it is not entirely unlikely for a shift of identity

projections, especially abroad, to occur back to the center. In other words, the

importance that parliamentary sovereignty plays in British national identity has also

created an historical assertion of English traditions. While this English occupation of

national sentiments has not required a hegemonic dilution of what it means to be Welsh,

Scottish or Irish, it has been a primary factor in overall British feelings abroad. It is from

this that we arrive at the feelings of moral authority, of ex-empire, and of hostilities

towards the rest of Europe.

However, if the British incompatibility with European integration was to lie in

these defining national characteristics, then Prime Minister Blair's wishes for British

Europhilia might not be far off. The tendency for Britain to shun or even despise the

continent and turn its attention to an open seas policy would be a relic of the past. If

Britain comes to the conclusion that it is no longer an imperial power with the luxury of

averting its attention from potential allies, then a simple change in rhetoric would bridge

the gap of ambivalence. The interconnectedness of parliamentary sovereignty and ties to

democratic governance go deeper than a change of positions from the Prime Minister's

office. There is a distinct democratic deficit that remains in the European Union that is

going to be hard for even the most pro-European leader to reconcile with the British

public. Subsequently, the projections of a friendlier Britain abroad has not been able to

quell Prime Minister Blair's fears of a wide scale public backlash. Public opinion towards the common currency and towards the European Union as a whole remains vastly unsympathetic to integration. Leaders then run into the problem of negotiating a public that is both vehemently skeptical of integration and unforgiving of a leadership unable to establish a coherent stance. The Conservatives found that Europe has the power to divide across traditional left-right distinctions, preventing them from establishing even a united Euroskepticism and making them appear incompetent to govern.

Therefore, public opinion may be one of the most critical domestic factors in Britain's hostility towards European integration, and Tony Blair is currently finding this out. He has made headway with his five "tests" for participation in the euro, but the answers to them remain subjective. However, the single currency is simply one of the current highly publicized issues and does not encompass deeper questions. There is also the question of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) that will soon come to the forefront as European Union enlargement talks increase. With this issue, Britain has another fork in the road ahead of it. If it is to retain a high degree of autonomy it has to consider whether or not it wants to retain the right of the national veto in the Council of Ministers or whether it wants to opt for more QMV based in the assumption that this will further its ability to opt-out of several controversial initiatives.[1] Regardless of what British leaders opt to do however will not rectify the fundamental aversions to integration, it will simply serve to expose them with either a veto or an opt-out.

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[1] "Britain and Europe: Escalating Hostilities." *The Economist (US)*. October 23, 1999:p64

This does not bode well for a current Prime Minister that would like to put Britain at the helm of further European Union development. It seems as though Blair would like to avoid these fundamental questions by appealing to the need for Britain to parallel the rest of Europe for fear of falling further behind. He would like to incorporate the ideas of the "inevitability" of further integration and shun terms such as the "isolation" of Britain. However, Blair seems to be confused in the realities of Britain's necessity to harmonize and shape the continent. Europhiles will say that Britain is going to be shaped by the European Union, whether it is a leader or an awkward partner. If this is to be the case, then Britain might as well do all in its power to lead this influence. However, in the current global political and economic climate, Britain is shaped by the world around it, not just Europe. In cases such as the economic pressures of the European Central Bank it is perhaps even more of an exaggerated outlook to think that Britain will be under the complete control of a supranational body, even as a dissenting party.[2] These arguments seem to confuse the idea of sovereignty with complete autonomy, which no modern state possesses.[3]

Prime Minister Blair wants to project Britain's current economic highs as evidence of the superiority of British models and of Britain's new modern identity. However, on the issues of "isolation" and "inevitability" he will run into obstacles based on the current success. The longer that Britain chooses to contend integration efforts, the less weight that inevitability carries. Furthermore, with Britain thriving as an outsider in some key European projects the danger of isolation becomes diluted. Because of this, he will ultimately be forced to turn all of his positive spins on Europe into the same political

[2] Rachman, Gideon. 1998. "Britain' European Dilemma." *The Washington Quarterly.* v21 n3:p175

questions that remain below the surface. He has chosen to promote British appeals to liberal economics and closing the democratic deficit in Europe. He has chosen to promote Britain in Europe in an effort to allow Britain to lead the next generation of integration. However, he is having an easier time selling this to his European colleagues. The troubles in doing this at home still remain because even the most pro-European "wait and see" policy will not solve the underlying incompatibilities between Britain and the European Union.

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[3] "The Economy Outside the Euro." *The Economist (US)*. January 9, 1999:p51

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