

History and Influence of Eurocepticism on British Politics*

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I. Introduction

On January 23, 2013, current UK Prime Minister David Cameron made a significant speech with the potential to change the relationship between the UK and the European Union (EU) fundamentally.¹⁾ This speech, prepared carefully during the previous months, was not an extemporaneous political event to gain popularity or improve the situation for Mr Cameron's Conservative party. Instead, the speech was an attempt to solve several problems the government faces, which include pressure from Conservative MPs and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) regarding the power conflict

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1) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21013771?print=true> (검색일 2013. 6.1)

between the UK and EU governments. He defined his standpoint of putting the matter of the UK's EU membership to a referendum after the 2015 general election, in an effort to return powers currently held by the EU to the UK government.

In the speech, Mr Cameron did not rule out the option of leaving the EU, due to the need to reconsider the Eurozone at a fundamental level given today's economic crisis. The speech sparked intense criticism from France and Germany, while opposition leader Ed Miliband also demonstrated deep disapproval, claiming it was pure party politics by the Conservatives and that a referendum would only cause chaos and uncertainty in British politics.²⁾ However, there is great doubt over whether Mr Cameron can deliver these anti-EU actions. First, the Conservatives would have to win the 2015 general election before holding a referendum, and even with a positive vote, there would be many obstacles to tackle before the UK could leave the EU.

Despite the fact that a referendum may not take place, we cannot underestimate the background of these series of political actions: specifically, the *Euroscepticism* in British politics. Euroscepticism has a long tradition and strong support in the UK, and has had a particular influence on British politics in recent years. In addition, this Euroscepticism has threatened to evolve into xenophobia or prompt a rise in the popularity of right-wing parties, including UKIP, and harm the UK's social cohesion as a result.

Therefore, in this article, I consider the origins and history of Euroscepticism. Furthermore, we must ask ourselves several questions. In British politics, is Euroscepticism a useful tool to win votes? Is the British Isles' destiny really based on a traditional hatred and mistrust of continental counterparts? Is Euroscepticism a real danger to future

2) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21164912?print=true> (검색일 2013. 6.1)

European integration? I will also consider the influence of Euroscepticism, and the direction it may potentially take in the near future. In Chapter II, I present a literature review based on Euroscepticism domestically and internationally, followed in Chapter III by a focus on its origins and history. In Chapter IV, I consider how politicians actually use Euroscepticism and analyse its influence, and finally in Chapter V, the conclusion, I address the future of Euroscepticism in British politics. The fundamental premise of this article is not fully approachable using social science methodologies, while the basis does not lie in analysis of the usual historical primary sources. However, I will utilise political parties' manifestos and election results as important references in this interdisciplinary research that incorporates both history and politics.

II. Literature Review

British politics has a strong historic tradition of Euroscepticism, with some researchers seeking its origin in medieval times, such as the non-intervention policies placed upon the European continent by the British monarchy. However, Korean and Japanese researchers have lacked interest in this particular phenomenon. For example, only one Korean journal article has focused on Euroscepticism, and this considered the role of David Cameron in Euroscepticism within the UK Conservative Party (Kim 2010). This trend is mirrored in Japan, with only one study of British environmental policy and the EU that mentioned Euroscepticism (Asano 2010), and an article on a French extreme right party that propagated Euroscepticism as a kind of racism (Oshima 2010).

In contrast, there has been widespread investigation of the subject in the UK, including research on Euroscepticism's traditions (Aspinwall 2000;

Gifford 2010), evolution (Forster 2002) and manifestation in electoral politics (Evans 1998, 1999). Since the 2009 European elections, at which UKIP rose to become a prominent factor in British politics, there have been various discussions on Euroscepticism. Researchers have considered English nationalism (Aughey 2010; Wellings 2010), neoliberal nationalism (Harmes 2012), UKIP (Lynch, Whitaker & Loomes 2012; Ford, Goodwin & Cutts 2012; Sutcliffe 2012), the British media's handling of Europe (Daddow 2006; Statham & Koopman 2009) and the relationship between the UK and Europe (Gifford 2010). In this article, I consider the possibility of the referendum outlined by Mr Cameron. Therefore, I must mention the article on this subject by Laycock (2012).

In discussing the traditions of Euroscepticism, Gifford claims that, "At the heart of contemporary Conservative Euroscepticism is a defence of the popular sovereignty of the British people against the incursions of Brussels and against the drive for further integration. An important component of this narrative is the threat posed by the European Union to Britishness. It is the Conservative's role to defend the British people" (Gifford 2010: 332). It is easy to connect this stance to English nationalism, as the "EU was itself a symbol of decline and could therefore be blamed for anything wrong with Britain, from bureaucratic waste to unregulated immigration" (Wellings 2010: 501). As for the progress of UKIP in UK politics, Sutcliffe states that the party "has developed out of the long-standing opposition to European integration that is evident at both the popular and elite levels within the British polity and its activities and rhetoric helps to sustain the opposition" (Sutcliffe 2012: 122). Furthermore, Ford, Goodwin and Cutts (2012: 227) claim UKIP and Euroscepticism can no longer be ignored in UK politics, as "UKIP is likely to retain a core domestic support base of loyalists who are probably too deeply disaffected with mainstream politics and angry about immigration and the social changes they associate

with it to be won over by shifts in policy or a change of government”.

What can we actually learn from previous studies? First, in the UK, unlike Korea and Japan, Euroscepticism is an extremely dynamic research topic. Second, Euroscepticism is not limited to one field, as its influence is felt across modern British society, not only in politics or by politicians. Finally, we learn that it is not a temporary trend or momentary event; therefore, we must approach Euroscepticism as a historical research topic, meaning it is worthwhile to trace its origins and understand how it has changed over time. Therefore, I present a view on its origins and history in the following chapter, with a focus on British political history.

III. Origin and History of Euroscepticism

When did Euroscepticism originate? Indeed, “what exactly is Euroscepticism?” is perhaps a more fundamental question to ask. Some researchers and historians claim Euroscepticism has its roots in the medieval era, during which time Britain attempted to avoid involvement in continental matters. It went even further after the establishment of the Church of England, essentially isolating Britain politically and religiously from the continent. However, this view is extremely difficult to prove academically, and it is arguably not worthwhile to do so. Therefore, in this article, as with many previous studies, I consider Euroscepticism in the years after World War II.

Originally, Britain wanted to participate in the European single market and developed a huge interest in it, but subsequent governments have come to resent the EU’s interference in their financial affairs and money market (Kim 2012: 263). They regarded this as an infringement of sovereignty, particularly given that, during the recent European economic crisis, the Conservative government had to use British funds to bail out EU

member countries in a monetary system with which they have no direct involvement. In the 1960s, when Britain made initial moves to participate in the then European Economic Community (EEC, later the European Community (EC) and now the EU), they were not sympathetic to European ideals but instead interested in the idea of a European single market. However, they arguably underestimated the future ‘side effects’ of joining a single market, such as eventually having to follow EU environmental rules (Drewry 2007). Initially, it was a rational economic choice to join the European single market rather than rely on the dwindling British Commonwealth, and it is sensible to estimate this point as the start of modern Euroscepticism.

Today, the widely held view is that of Euroscepticism as a Conservative policy, and at present, a significant proportion of Conservatives are hostile to the EU. However, it was the Conservative Party that took the UK into the EEC. Interestingly, much of the opposition to Britain’s membership initially came from Labour politicians and trade unionists, as they feared bloc membership would impede socialist policies; however, that view never became Labour Party policy. The UK was not a founding member of the EEC, and there were several conflicts between France and the UK regarding membership. For example, in 1961, French president Charles de Gaulle famously argued that the UK was closer to the US than European countries.³⁾ Under these kinds of circumstances, the Labour Party spoke out against the EEC, with party leader Hugh Gaitskell declaring that joining it would mean “the end of a thousand years of history”.⁴⁾ This tendency continued into the 1970s and early 1980s, after the UK had signed up to the EEC in 1973, with the 1979 Labour Party manifesto declaring that a Labour government would “oppose any move towards turning the

3) http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2001/uk_and_europe/1958_1969.stm
(검색일 2013. 6. 4)

4) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/the_daily_politics/6967366.stm (검색일 2013. 6. 4)

Community into a federation” (1979 Labour Manifesto), and the party continued to favour British withdrawal from the EEC (1983 Labour Manifesto: *The Process of Withdrawal*). However, Labour’s anti-Europe policies waned under Thatcher’s Conservative government because of the EU’s advocacy of a ‘Social Europe’, which was attractive to many Labour MPs. In late October 1990, just before her premiership ended, Margaret Thatcher made her famous speech against EU plans for a single currency in the House of Commons.⁵⁾ This represented an important milestone in the history of Euroscepticism, and was a symbolic moment that saw the two major parties in UK politics alter their stance towards Europe.

Although Euroscepticism has a long history, as proven by the numerous incidents mentioned above, many researchers believe Euroscepticism became a more important issue in British politics after the 2001 general election, when the Conservatives were defeated for the second consecutive time. The issue of Euroscepticism was important in the subsequent contest to elect a new party leader, and Iain Duncan Smith, who won the party’s election, was arguably the first modern Conservative politician to use Euroscepticism as a public vote-winning tactic. As opposition leader, Mr Duncan Smith attempted to disaffiliate the British Conservative Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the federalist European People’s Party (EPP) group. As MEPs must participate in a transnational alliance to retain parliamentary privileges, Mr Duncan Smith sought the merger of Conservative MEPs with the Eurosceptic Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN) group. However, Conservative MEPs vetoed this move because of the presence within the UEN of representatives of neo-fascist parties that did not share similar domestic politics. In 2004, Mr Duncan Smith’s successor, Michael Howard, emphasised that Conservative MEPs would remain in the EPP group to maintain influence in the European Parliament.

5) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=110915>
(검색일 2013. 6. 4)

However, Mr Howard's successor, current Prime Minister David Cameron, displays more anti-EU colour, as borne out by the speech referenced in the introduction.

Euroscepticism became a more pertinent issue in British politics after the 2004 European elections, at which UKIP received 16% of the vote and gained 12 MEPs (the party's results proved even more spectacular at the 2009 European elections, when it came second in the UK, beating the incumbent Labour Party). These results proved Euroscepticism to be a strong and useful tool for winning votes, which provides Mr Cameron's stance with some justification. When the Lisbon Treaty took effect, Mr Cameron showed his hand clearly, and expressed disappointment that the treaty had been ratified without the British people having a say in the referendum promised to them. He outlined a way to deal with the situation going forward, and promised to deliver three key specific guaranteed powers within the UK-EU relationship:

1. A full opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR). Tony Blair told us that he had obtained an opt-out from the CFR, but he did not. As Ministers have subsequently admitted, he only obtained a 'clarification' as to how it would apply. We want to upgrade this to a full opt-out so that the CFR, which for instance would interfere with our trade union legislation, cannot be made to apply in Britain.

2. Greater protection against EU encroachment into the UK's Criminal Justice System. Lisbon provides us with an 'opt-in' over criminal justice matters but we want broader protection provided by an additional protocol. This would protect against EU judges extending their control over our Criminal Justice System, and we also want to ensure that only British authorities can initiate criminal investigations in Britain.

3. Restoration of national control over social and employment legislation. Lastly, we want to restore national control over those parts of social and

employment legislation which have proved most damaging to the British economy. For instance, we would seek guarantees over the application of the Working Time Directive in our public services, such as the fire service and the NHS.⁶⁾

He went on to claim that British people wanted some “straight talk and plain speaking” from their politicians on the issue of Europe. “People are fed up with the endless lies and spin, they just want to know what we can achieve and how,” he said. “What I am promising today is doable, credible and deliverable. That’s what this is all about. Giving the British people a policy on Europe that they can actually believe in”⁷⁾

The above series of statements from David Cameron confirm that he and his Conservative Party use Euroscepticism as a tool to demonstrate party policy differentiation from the Labour Party, and because, as we can see from the 2004 and 2009 elections, Britons either accepted or supported the concept of Euroscepticism (anti-EU behaviour). Because of Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ policy, it is difficult to identify clear differences between Conservative and Labour manifestos, other than in their EU policy. Therefore, David Cameron will continue to use Euroscepticism as a differentiation strategy in British politics, particularly because the Conservatives have recently experienced difficulty in finding other, better, vote-winning tactics.

6) http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2009/11/David_Cameron_outlines_approach_to_Europe.aspx (검색일 2013. 6. 7)

7) Ibid

IV. Influence and Consequences of Eurocepticism in British Politics

In Chapter III, we traced the origins and history of Eurocepticism in British politics, so now we must ask, what exactly is Eurocepticism? If we regard it as anti-EU behaviour, then why does it have a significant meaning in British politics? Other European countries also have some degree of Eurocepticism in their cultures, especially recent EU members, such as east European countries, but this is incomparable to the consequences of the concept in British domestic politics. Therefore, in this chapter, I look at the influence and effect of Eurocepticism in British politics.

First, what is Eurocepticism?

Several previous studies indicate that the “permissive consensus” representing widespread, if not deeply felt, popular support for the development of integration in Europe has declined over the past two decades, and been replaced by a more prominent and vocal opposition to the EU (Hix 2008; Milner 2000; Taggart 1998). What is also apparent is the great diversity within this criticism and opposition (Harmsen & Spiering 2004; Mair 2007; Forster 2002; Spiering 2004).

This diversity is evident when we consider that opposition to European integration comes from political forces on both the right and the left, even within the same country. The focus of the opposition also varies, and depends in part on the country in which the criticism is voiced. In some cases, critics advocate the abolition of the integration project or their country’s withdrawal from the project (Sutcliff 2012). Taggart and Szczerbiak label this type of criticism as “Hard Eurocepticism” (2008b), which they identify as “principled opposition to the EU and European integration [which] can be seen in parties who think that their countries

should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived” (2008b: 7).

Other critics direct their opposition against specific EU policies, policy outcomes or institutional features, and seek to reform the EU rather than abolish the entire project. Taggart and Szczerbiak label this as “Soft Euroscepticism” (2008b). Today’s Conservatives, including David Cameron’s government, are positioned somewhere between Hard Euroscepticism and Soft Euroscepticism, because they noted the success of UKIP in European elections but also witnessed its failure in domestic general elections.

It is arguable that Euroscepticism is not only a UK phenomenon, and instead occurs all over Europe. However, opposition to the EU is particularly strong in the UK, as highlighted in public opinion polls that reveal the majority of the UK public believe EU membership provides nothing good for their country (Hix 2008). This form of public reaction gives rise to political parties adopting Eurosceptic policies. The rise of UKIP in several elections is a typical demonstration of this public belief, and it is important to consider UKIP’s election pledges and policies from a Euroscepticism perspective.

There is a preconceived idea that UKIP is a single-issue party, but it actually has policies on a wide range of issues, such as taxation, health care, defence and transportation (UKIP National Manifesto 2010). Nevertheless, its most important policy is the belief that by leaving the EU, Britain will regain three essential freedoms (UKIP National Manifesto 2010: 3):

- Withdraw from the political EU Super-state, and maintain a trade-based relationship with our European neighbours using a Swiss-style free trade agreement as the EU’s largest single trading partner. This is the deal

the British people signed up to in the 1970s. We do not want or need to become a province in a European Super-state but instead want friendly and mutually beneficial trade and cultural cooperation with our EU neighbours.

- Stimulate the British economy by leaving the EU. Europhile propagandists say 60% of our trade and three million British jobs depend on our EU membership. This is untrue. European companies sell us more than we sell them; we are their largest client. So our trade and jobs would continue if we left the EU, and we would benefit by escaping from its crippling overregulation. Leaving creates jobs.

- Regain Britain's dormant seat at the World Trade Organisation. From here, a UKIP government will be free to pursue Britain's national interests. The current situation leaves Britain unable directly to negotiate its own trade deals because vital national interests are subsumed in a common EU position that frequently reflects the interests of France and Germany.

These policies confirm that UKIP regards EU membership as a threat to British democracy and identity, and the party advocates a slate of policies that it claims are aimed at “restoring Britishness” (Sutcliff 2012). Indeed, the very existence of UKIP is proof of Euroscepticism at work in modern British society. The question is, to what extent has UKIP been, or will be, successful in influencing the British political system? The two most recent Conservative leaders, Michael Howard and David Cameron, have both downplayed the significance of UKIP, while at the same time suggesting it represents a “lunatic fringe” of British politics (Sutcliff 2012). However, while there are mixed reactions to the importance and significance of UKIP in British party politics, considerable evidence suggests the party remains on the fringes of party politics and the political system; UKIP has been unable to achieve a major breakthrough in national elections, has not won a seat in the House of Commons to date and only has three members in the House of Lords. In the 2010 general election, the party polled 3.1% of

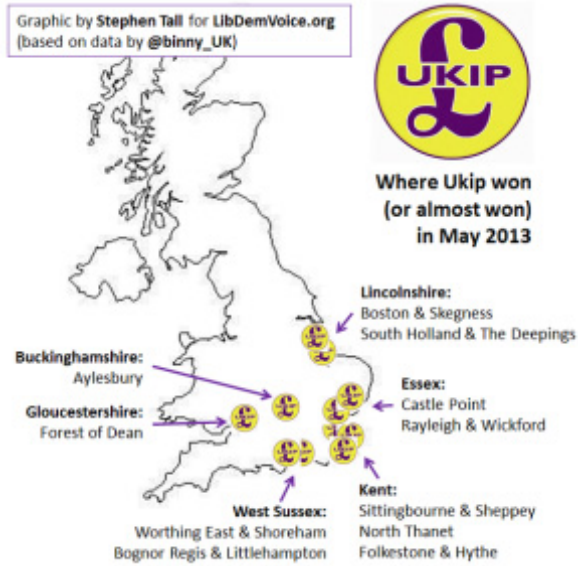
the vote, an increase of 0.9% from 2005. However, the trend was different in the 2011 local elections, where UKIP took control of Ramsey Town Council and maintained its 19 councillors across England⁸⁾ and one in Northern Ireland.⁹⁾ In the 2013 English county council elections, UKIP achieved its best-ever local government result, polling an average of 23% in the wards in which it stood and returning 147 elected councillors.¹⁰⁾ The party also made significant gains in Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Kent, taking 15, 16 and 17 seats respectively, and its overall performance was described as the best result for a party outside the big three in British politics since the Second World War.¹¹⁾ Therefore, these recent successful results in local-level elections perhaps prove the tendency for Euroscepticism in Britain is gaining strength. Although UKIP symbolises the paradoxes in modern British society, in reality it remains a fringe party (a small party of opposition), and its ultimate goal of UK withdrawal from the EU continues to look unrealistic. However, their support based on Euroscepticism is an emerging phenomenon. The current EU economic crisis, and the lack of clarity regarding the future of European integration, provides political space for a party like UKIP, and strong support for the political rhetoric of Euroscepticism in the future. Figure 1 demonstrates how UKIP progressed in the 2013 local elections.

8) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13342481> (검색일 2013. 6. 7)

9) <http://www.ukip.org/content/latest-news/2288-henry-holds-seat-with-landslide-vote> (검색일 2013. 6. 9)

10) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/10036463/Local-elections-2013-Nigel-Farages-Ukip-surges-to-best-ever-showing-winning-150-seats.html> (검색일 2013 .8 .28)

11) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2013/may/03/nigel-farage-ukip-change-british-politics> (검색일 2013. 8. 28)



<Figure 1. Where UKIP won (or almost won) in 2013>¹²⁾

V. Conclusion

I have examined the concept of Euroscepticism, including how it has affected British politics in the past and how it might continue to influence the British political scene in the future. Euroscepticism is not a temporary phenomenon; it has a long history and strong fundamental support within the British political culture. In modern British politics, the Labour Party originally brought about Euroscepticism, but from the Thatcher era onwards, the Conservatives have utilised Euroscepticism during general elections and party leader elections. Although originally used by

12) <http://www.libdemvoice.org/where-ukip-won-or-almost-won-on-2nd-may-2013-34503.html>
(검색일 2013. 8. 28)

Conservatives to demonstrate their opposition to Tony Blair's 'New Labour', in recent times it has had closer associations with xenophobia, social cohesion and European integration. The best example of a substantive political form of Euroscepticism is UKIP, a symbol of the paradoxes of Euroscepticism in British public life. Despite enjoying success in recent local council elections, it remains unclear whether the party can make progress in a UK general election. The Conservatives' and UKIP's Euroscepticism results in anti-EU feeling and a call for the restoration of the relationship with the Commonwealth, but this option lacks real and practical benefits. Among the main reasons for the rise of Euroscepticism was the Eurozone economic crisis that began in the early 2000s; therefore, it was not purely politically motivated, and instead was underpinned by economic concerns. However, while the economic benefits of membership of the EU 'common market' remain unclear, it is neither rational nor worthwhile to choose the Commonwealth over Europe in the near future; in the past, Britain chose the EU over the Commonwealth for the purely economic reason of it being beneficial to the British economy. Choosing to champion Euroscepticism in future elections could backfire on the Conservative government, because the Labour Party has gained in popularity in recent opinion polls and the people of the UK are focusing on social stability and social benefits more than ever before. The anti-EU stance may also jeopardise the future British-European relationship and damage the British economy in the long term.

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Abstract

History and Influence of Euroscepticism on British Politics

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Euroscepticism is a long-standing trend in British history that has exerted an influence on British political life. This study examines the reasons why David Cameron, Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, has recently pursued an avowed form of Eurosceptic foreign policy. Existing research on the attitudes of the British towards Europe espouses various positions, but reaches a consensus that Euroscepticism is widespread in British politics. Political resistance to European integration in the UK laid important ideological foundations for contemporary English nationalism and nationalistic parties such as the UK Independence Party. The party's roots lie in the general popular and elite antipathy towards the European Union, and it has proved capable of attracting considerable electoral support in European Parliament and local elections. It has the potential to influence the policies of the major political parties, and could prove a potential danger to the future British-EU relationship.

Key Words: Euroscepticism, Nationalism, Britishness, David Cameron, Sovereignty, UKIP

유럽회의주의, 민족주의, 영국다움, 데이비드 카메론, 영국 독립당

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