

Changing Policies but Keeping Voters? British Parties, the British Public and the EU

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The paper examines the connections between changes in party positions and changes in views of the EU within the British electorate since 1983. We explore whether voters take their cues from party elites or form their opinions independently from party identification. Our findings are only suggestive. But we find evidence for both forms of opinion identification. The 1980s witnessed a sharp increase in support for closer EU ties among Labour supporters following such a shift among the leadership. We see similar, although less dramatic, changes among Conservatives in the 1990s. As the Conservative leadership became more skeptical of EU membership, a similar shift is noted among the supporters. Yet we also find new supporters of the Labour Party who had warmer attitudes toward the EC before they became Labour identifiers in the 1990s. Thus our results are mixed, but we find more evidence for elite persuasion.

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Introduction

How do national political parties respond to European level influences? This question has received growing attention in recent research (Buller 2000; Berends 2000, Marks and Wilson 2000; Holden 1999, Baker and Seawright 1998, van der Eijk and Franklin, eds. 1996). It is part of a broader movement away from treating the European Union as a dependent variable shaped by national politics and priorities to recognizing the EU's impact on government and politics in its member states (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse, eds, 2001; Goetz and Hix, eds, 2000). Party responses have sometimes included radical changes of position on European integration, as in the cases of the two major British political parties.

Students of electoral behavior have found that Europe is becoming an issue of significance for a growing number of voters. For example, BBC News Online for May 3, 2001 reported that the British public ranked Europe (17%) second only to the health care system (21%) as the issue of greatest importance for the forthcoming general election campaign. Public attitudes about Europe also appear to have become increasingly well structured (Evans 1999b).

This paper examines the connections between changes in party positions and changes in views of the EU within the British electorate since 1983. The core hypothesis is that EU attitudes are a function of partisanship for most citizens. Changes in the Conservative and Labour parties' basic positions on the EU, which occurred during this period, should be followed by changes in support for EU institutions and policies in the

views of those parties' supporters. This hypothesis suggests that voters' positions on unfamiliar subjects continue to be derivative of their party identification.¹ It is consistent with the notion that EU politics remains very much a second order affair, where public attitudes and behavior are shaped by national partisan rather than European level considerations. The counter to this hypothesis holds that people are forming their attitudes toward Europe independently, with the result that they are increasingly likely to change parties as European issues become important to them.

The significance of this research resides in whether British parties will continue to be able to manage how European issues are treated. If attitudes toward Europe develop independently of party for more and more voters, and the salience of European issues increases, then either of two conditions may become more likely. First, parties may be forced to alter their positions in order to retain voters. Or, second, a significant re-alignment may occur as voters switch parties primarily on the basis of their positions on Europe.

We analyze the relationship between partisanship and attitudes toward European institutions and policies over time using British Election Studies and Eurobarometer data. We limit our analysis to the cases of the Conservative and Labour parties. We do this for several reasons: 1) these are the dominant parties, 2) both have been perceived to change their views on Europe during the past two decades (Britain's third party, the Liberal Democrats, has been consistently pro-Europe), and 3) national surveys do not contain enough cases of minor party supporters to permit meaningful analysis. We use a variety of analytical techniques to consider the impact of changing trends in party support and

the strength of partisanship to help us assess how attitudes toward Europe are related to party support and electoral behavior.

Trends in Public Opinion and Party Positions on Europe

The vicissitudes of the British public's views of the EU are suggested in Table I.

Table I about here.

These results reflect a pattern of volatility evident since the earliest years of British membership (Flickinger 1995). Thirty-one percent thought EC membership was a good thing in 1973. Two years later 50% thought so, but only 21% did in 1980. Favorable opinion then climbed gradually to an all-time high of 57% in 1991 before beginning a decade long slide to the current low level.

The major parties' views of Europe have been almost as volatile. From a bi-partisan rejection of Europe in the 1950s to grudging consensus on the need to join in the 1960s, the Conservative and Labour parties have moved in different directions (Craig 1975 and 1990). Labour grew increasingly critical of EC membership in the 1970s while the Conservative leadership defended membership albeit with persistent calls for reforming aspects of the Community. Lines were drawn clearly between the Labour and Conservative positions by 1983. Labour promised an orderly withdrawal from the EEC within the life of the next parliament on the grounds that leaving the Community would provide the flexibility to pursue radical, socialist reform of the British economy. The Conservative election manifesto observed, "Withdrawal would be a disaster for the country"(Craig 1990 p. 343). Labour's position then changed markedly in 1987. No more talk of withdrawal; rather, Labour promised to "work constructively with our EEC partners to promote economic expansion and combat unemployment" (Craig 1990, p.

473). The 1992 manifestos highlighted clear differences. The Tories promised to resist expanding EC competence into new areas (Conservative Party 1992). Labour promised to “promote Britain out of the European second division into which our country has been relegated by the Tories” and to “end the Tories opt-out of the Social Chapter” [a clear preference for expanding or “deepening” the competence of the EU] (Labour Party 1992, p. 27). Labour became enthusiastically European following its 1989 policy review (Tindale 1992). In 1997’s manifestos, Conservatives called for a Europe of nation states with flexibility, permanent opt-outs and opposition to the expansion of qualified majority voting (QMV) in the EU (Conservative Party 1997). Labour called for Britain to be a leader in the EU, rapid completion of the single market, adoption of the Social Chapter and limited expansion of QMV (Labour Party 1997). Although both manifestos were cautious about European Monetary Union and the single currency, Labour’s overall tone clearly was more positive about Europe.

The picture of party positions drawn from an analysis of election manifestos is corroborated by the findings of an expert survey (Ray 1999). Ray asked groups of country specialists for each EU member state to locate parties on a 7-point scale (1=strongly opposed to integration, 7=strongly in favor) at four different times: 1984, 1988, 1992 and 1996. Labour’s estimated position moved from 4.5 (neutral) in 1984 to 6.0 (in favor) in 1992 and 1996. The Conservative position generally was rated slightly opposed or neutral across the years, ranging from 3.38 in 1984 to 3.88 in 1992 and 3.50 in 1988 and 1996. Ray’s experts also judged the EU an increasingly important issue for both the major British parties. On a 5-point scale (1=issue of no importance, 5=the most important issue), Labour moved from a score of 2.75 in 1984 to 3.50 in 1996 (all scores

were within Ray's "an important issue" category). The Conservatives' importance score moved from 3.0 to 4.0, changing from an important to "one of the most important issues" for the party. Additionally, Ray's experts believed dissent over Europe was significant and had increased steadily within the Conservative party, but had decreased within Labour from a significant to a minor dissent (Ray 1999, p.305).

These days Tony Blair is characterized as "the most instinctively pro-European Prime Minister since Edward Heath" (Stephens 2001). He leads a party whose official views of Europe are a long way from those of Michael Foot in the early 1980s. The Conservatives, by contrast, have been divided over Europe for the past decade. The issue of Britain's relationship with Europe contributed to the downfall of Margaret Thatcher and plagued John Major and William Hague. How have these changes in position, importance and level of dissent been absorbed and reflected in the British public's views of Europe? Have party identifiers own views of Europe been affected? Have people changed parties because of their European policies?

Europe and Electoral Behavior

British parties' positions on Europe now receive frequent attention from political analysts. Much of this effort assays the attitudes of leaders and analyzes the motives for party position changes (Baker and Seawright 1998, Buller 2000, Daniels 1998, Heffernan 2001, Holden 1999, Kelly 2001, Stephens 2001). Some have begun to explore the connections between party positions on the EU and the behavior of the British electorate (Evans 1998 1999a 1999b, Webb and Farrell 1999). Their work is of particular interest for us here, as is that of those who have comparatively examined party and voter response

to integration across Europe (Berends 2000, Gabel 2000, Mair 2000 and Marks and Wilson 2000).

There are mixed messages in this literature. Peter Mair claims that Europe has had little impact on national party systems (Mair 2000). One of his standards is the emergence of new parties who make Europe a centerpiece of their policy. The flurry caused by the short-lived Referendum Party in the 1997 election, and the founding of the UK Independence Party in 1993 (contesting 300 seats in the 2001 general election after winning three seats in the 1999 European Parliament elections) suggest that Britain may be an exception. His second standard is that there is a pro-Europe consensus among major parties in most European states. Here he recognizes that Britain is “singular in offering voters the potential to take Europe as a cue in choosing between governing alternatives” and that “anti-Europeanness is a theme that increasingly comes to define the Conservative identity...”(Mair 2000, p. 36).

Webb and Farrell (1999) find that Conservative Party members became more skeptical of EU membership between 1987 and 1997 while Labour members experienced a change of nearly equal magnitude, but in the opposite direction. In both years the differences in the respective members position are statistically significant.

Evans (1998) found that the public was becoming more Euroskeptic as the 1990s progressed and also perceived the parties to offer different, and changing, positions on Europe during this time. His analysis of British Election Panel Study data revealed that the Conservatives consistently were rated as the most Euroskeptic party, though not so Euroskeptic as respondents rated themselves; Labour was rated increasingly pro-integration, so much so that by 1996 their rating was more pro-integration than that of the

Liberal Democrats. However, Evans believes that the Conservatives sent mixed messages to the public and thus were unable to attract as many Euroskeptics as they might have otherwise. By 1996, 40% of panel respondents thought the Conservative Party anti-integration, but another 40% thought them pro-integration; the comparable figures for Labour were 62% pro, 19% anti, and for Liberal Democrats 55% pro and 14% anti-integration.

In subsequent work, Evans (1999b) maintains Europe is a subject that increasingly meets the requirements for issue voting in Britain because it is salient, divisive and party polarized. He concludes that the decline in class voting noted in 1997 compared to 1992 is at least partially attributable to party realignment on Europe, and that a European dimension may be emerging in British politics, which cross-cuts the dominant left-right cleavage organizing much of British political life. Evans' research indicates that class differences in attitudes toward the EU have changed little over time; the working class has remained more opposed to Europe than have managerial and professional folks. He uses this to argue against the notion that partisans simply follow their party when it adopts new positions. Rather, he concludes that attitudes toward Europe became a new ideological dimension, which cuts across traditional left-right issues. However, relying on the link between social class and attitudes toward Europe only imperfectly captures the link between partisanship and EU attitudes because large number of working class and middle class Britons deviate from class cues in their choice of partisan identification. Using different methods of analysis Gabel (2000) concluded that, although attitude toward European integration exercised an influence on party

preference independent of left-right ideological position in almost all EU member states, it did not do so in Britain.

How can we account for the fact that parties' positions on European integration may be at odds with the views of most of their traditional supporters? Is it because parties offer mixed messages to the public? Conservative leaders are divided between nationalists and neo-liberals (Marks and Wilson 2000); voters may get quite different messages depending on to whom they listen. Parties may also vary in their degree of unity across European issues. For example, British Tories give a strong message in opposition to the euro, which voters may receive clearly. But they are much less clear on the overall merits of membership. Is some confusion engendered when parties seek short-term tactical advantage? Mair (2000) believes the Conservatives have changed position for tactical reasons. However, Labour's position change in the late 1980's is seen as the product of genuine policy reasons (Heffernan 2001). In so doing Labour was in keeping with the stands of social democratic parties in long-standing EU member states who "came to the conclusion that the European Community was 'the only game in town', and adjusted their policies accordingly" (Marks and Wilson 2000, p. 446). Perhaps confusion arises when leaders fail to engage the public on European issues, as Tony Blair is alleged to have done, offering his most pro-Europe statements when he is out of Britain (Stephens 2001). Berends argues that parties generally have a difficult time dealing with European issues because "...parties struggle to aggregate the European interests citizens may have, since party ideology does not correspond with views on European integration...(Berends 2000, p. 16). Thus there may be inherent or manufactured contradictions, which sow confusion among party members and voters

alike. An additional possibility is that Europe remains a low salience issue for many voters; they simply pay little attention to their and other parties' positions on Europe.

Despite this, there are strong reasons for believing people look to political parties, among other domestic sources, for guidance on unfamiliar matters. The authors of *The American Voter* posed the classic argument (Campbell *et al.* 1960). More recently, a version of this argument has been fruitfully applied to the case of the EU (Anderson 1998). Eurobarometer surveys indicate that approximately two-thirds of Europeans regard themselves as uninformed about EU matters, nor do the vast majority perform well on EU knowledge quizzes. In such conditions, party identification may serve as an efficient short cut when citizens take positions on European issues. The reasoning here is analogous to that employed by analysts of public opinion and foreign policy who have found that the public tends to adopt positions on unfamiliar issues on the basis of elite cues (Holsti 1996, Zaller 1994).

Ideally, to establish partisanship's impact on policy attitudes, one would have to show: (1) that party elites took substantially different positions on an issue; (2) elite differences were communicated to mass publics; and (3) that adherents of different parties came to hold attitudes aligned with those of party elites. One would also have to show that grass roots partisans' attitudes cannot be attributed to coincidental factors that might affect political feelings, such as socio-economic status. We have seen from the preceding discussion that the first condition has been established. Whether the second condition has been met is less clear. If we consider party manifestos, the answer is yes, but if we look at the behavior of leaders there is room for doubt. Nevertheless, it appears that the party members may have changed their attitudes toward Europe on the basis of

their partisanship (Webb and Farrell 1999). Party members are, however, a very small and declining share of the British electorate. Party identifiers, on the other hand, are a substantially larger group. But degrees of party identification are recognized in most survey instruments employing the concept. We expect that those who consistently strongly identify with a party will be those most likely to learn their party's position on an issue. In this case, if the top-down model of attitude formation on unfamiliar issues applies, these are the people most likely to change their position on the EU. It is to this group that we turn to evaluate the evidence for condition three.

Analysis

We proceed initially by using cross-sectional data from British election surveys and Eurobarometers to establish how partisanship and attitudes toward the EU have changed. In so doing we must also take note of trends in partisan identification and in the strength of identification. We then turn to data from the British Election Studies 1987-1992 and 1992-1997 panels for a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between partisan identification and attitudes toward the European Union. We expect to find that strong partisans will stick with their party over time. Whether their attitudes toward the EU change is less certain.

The vast majority of British citizens (ca. 90%) continue to identify with a political party, but BES data suggest some falling away in the share who are strong partisans (from 25% in 1983 to about 20% in subsequent general elections). The parties' electoral fortunes changed significantly as Labour climbed from the depths of its 1983 debacle to end 18 years of Conservative governments in 1997. Have changes in attitudes toward the

EU mirrored the parties' changing fortunes? Table I suggests little connection as public opinion of the EU varied widely regardless of which party is in power. However, a different picture begins to emerge when we consider partisans' views of the EU.

Eurobarometers provide the classic question about the EU; that is "Do you consider your country's membership of the EU a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?" We use this item as well as two questions from the British Election Studies series to help us understand what British partisans think of the EU. Tables II and III offer some insights into the connection between partisanship and EU attitudes.

Table II about here.

The first lesson from Table II is the partisan gap in EU attitudes in 1983; it is significant between party voters but quite substantial between those who closely identify with the Conservative and Labour parties. This is the biggest difference we see at any point in our data series. Perhaps it is no surprise given the leftist posture of Michael Foot's Labour Party and assertive Conservatism of the post-Falklands war Margaret Thatcher. But those positions either were not recognized or not accepted by average voters. Only those who were strong identifiers mirrored elite cues. The gap began to close in the late 1980s as Labour supporters became less opposed to the EU and the majority of Conservative voters and strong identifiers continued to view EU membership positively. Furthermore, perhaps the increasing salience of this issue diminished differences between strong identifiers and average voters.

A second striking feature of Table II is the great change in Labour voters and partisans attitudes from 1988 to 1989. This change coincided with Labour's 1989 policy review whereby it officially adopted EU membership as a good thing for Britain. Note

that the attitude swing was most pronounced among those who said they were 'very close' to the Labour Party. Given the timing and the magnitude of the change, this is at least circumstantial evidence that both strong and weak partisans are likely to take their policy cues from party leaders, although to varying degrees.

Our final observation from Table II is the steady turning away from Europe among Conservative voters in the 1990s. This is less evident among Labour voters but their 1998-99 decline and other signs of growing Labourite uncertainty about Europe may bespeak a shared trend.²

Table III about here.

Table III helps fill the gap on links between partisan feelings and EU attitudes. There is substantial cross-party consensus on the basic question of whether Britain should remain a member of the EU in both 1992 and 1997, but note the movement within identifier categories. Conservative voters, identifiers and strong identifiers all show declining support for membership. This trend extends to Labour voters, but Labour identifiers support for membership increases.

The question of long term British response to the EU yields several interesting trends. Support for leaving the EU increases across all Conservative categories. Labour shows little change here except among strong identifiers where support for leaving declines sharply.³ All categories of respondents show a substantially increased interest in reducing the powers of the EU. On the other hand, support for the status quo, increasing EU power or forming a single European government all decline. Given Labour's positions of twenty years ago, it is interesting to see that the limited Euro-enthusiasm of 1997 resides almost completely within the Labour Party.

Ideally, we would have wished for panel data to help us assess the changes that occurred in Labour members' attitudes toward the EU in the 1980s. However, panel data from 1992-1997 do enable us to understand better the more recent dynamics of the relationship.

The panel study from 1992 to 1997 allows us a unique opportunity to track political partisans and their attitudes. We first look at the changes exhibited by our 1992 Conservative and Labour identifiers. We track their partisanship and attitude change by 1997. Then we study the 1997 Conservative and Labour identifiers in order to determine who is joining the parties.

We first focus on the Conservatives in 1992. We have a total of 722 Conservatives in 1992 who are re-interviewed in 1997. Consistent with their party fortunes, many of the 1992 Conservatives no longer identify as such in 1997. Only 72% still classify themselves as Conservatives five years later. About 12% of the 1992 Conservatives later classify themselves as Labour supporters and 10% as Liberal Democrat supporters. The small remainder selects none or one of the smaller parties.

When we compare these shifts in relation to attitudes toward the EC, we find that the 1992 Conservatives become less supportive of the EC over time. In 1992, 78.7% of the Conservatives answer that Britain should continue to be a member of the EC. In 1997 among those same Conservatives, only 67.3% support continued membership, a drop of a little over eleven percentage points. We see this drop most markedly among those who remain Conservative identifiers. Among those who remain, their support for continuing EC membership drops from 78.7% in 1992 to 65.8% in 1997. Thus some portion of

those supporters may be following the elite cues in the party, although perhaps not as much as might be expected.

When we look at those Conservatives who later became Labour or Liberal Democrats by 1997, we see a smaller decline in support for EC membership. We are, of course, talking about a small number of people. So we hesitate to draw sweeping conclusions from these results. Among those who will shift parties, we find a warmer position than average for the EC in 1992. About 84% of eventual Liberal Democrats and 80% of eventual Labour identifiers support continued membership in 1992. Those levels cool slightly to 74% and 75% in 1997 respectively. Thus support for EC begins higher then declines slightly for party shifters, but not as much as the decline in support among steadfast Conservatives.

Labour has much more success in retaining its 1992 base, perhaps because of its smaller size. We have a total of 531 Labour supporters who are reinterviewed in 1997. An incredible 93% still identify as Labour members five years later. About 2.3% switch to the Liberal Democrats and 1.5% move to Conservatives. The small remainder select none or one of the smaller parties.

When we compare partisanship to EC attitudes, we see only a slight shift among Labour members. In 1992, 73.6% of Labour supporters favor continued membership in the EC. Among those same people, the number drops only to 72.5%, which is virtually indistinguishable from the 1992 levels. Among the large portion of respondents who remain Labour supporters, their support for the EC remains steady at 73.6% in 1992 and 73% in 1997. We do not compare the movement among later Liberal Democrats and Conservatives because we have a total of only 20 respondents in these two categories.

Now we turn our attention to partisans in the 1997 survey. The purpose here is to better understand the face of the parties. We see above that Conservatives retain only 72% of their identifiers between 1992 and 1997. This would not be a problem, however, if they attract many new members from other parties. Yet the panel data do not support such a conclusion. Among 1997 Conservatives, almost 95% are Conservative in 1992. Therefore, the Conservative Party does not effectively draw away support from other parties.

Given the small number of party converters, we can look only at the Conservatives and their attitudes toward the EC. Among the 1997 Conservatives, we see a decline in support for continued membership in the EC. Among those partisans, in 1992 78.7% supported continued membership, whereas by 1997 support among that same group declines to 65.8%. Either due to external cues or party leadership cues, support for continued EC membership declines among those who remain Conservative between 1992 and 1997.

In contrast, Labour has more success in attracting support from other quarters. A total of 707 Labour identifiers in 1997 have been interviewed in 1992. Among those 1997 Labour identifiers, 70% are Labour identifiers in 1992. Fully twelve percent of their supporters identify themselves as Conservatives in 1992 and a little over nine percent identify themselves with the Liberal Democrats in 1992.

Labour supporters also show consistent support for continued EC membership. Among the 1997 Labour identifiers, 74.5% in 1992 and 73% in 1997 support continued membership in the EC. Those Labour stalwarts who maintain their partisanship over this period offer consistent support for membership at about 73%. Other partisans who

convert to Labour membership are even more effusive. Conservatives and Liberal Democrats support continued EC membership by 80% and 75.8% respectively in 1992 and 75.3% and 78.8% in 1997. Thus the converted are consistent with the Labour position on the EC even before they convert.

In summary, we find somewhat more variability among Conservatives than Labour supporters between 1992 and 1997. During this period Conservatives become less supportive of EC membership. One might argue that Conservatives are becoming a smaller and more homogeneous party, shedding those who are inconsistent on the EC position, for example. This may be true given some of the evidence above on the partisan converters. But using our panel data, we can conclude that a portion of the Conservative base changes its position on membership, too.

In contrast, Labour supporters maintain a consistent and slightly warmer position toward the EC over this five-year period. We find less variability among supporters. Among those people who join Labour during this period, those supporters have warmer positions toward the EC before they identify themselves as Labour identifiers.

Conclusion

One of the tests we posed for ourselves in undertaking this research was whether we find evidence that adherents of different parties came to hold attitudes aligned with those of party elites. We expected to find old partisans with new attitudes and, furthermore, that strong partisans would be more likely than other adherents to show such shifts. However, partisanship was less stable than we anticipated. There was a very sharp decline in Conservatives during the 1990s, even among strong identifiers (not shown). This casts some doubt on the rest of our enterprise and raises again the question

of whether party identification in Britain is really enough different from vote choice to be useful analytically. We also must be cautious in interpreting our findings because of the small size of the 1997 panel.

That said, we do find evidence that party identifiers follow elite cues when it comes to European Union policy preferences. No underlying socio-economic factors could have changed rapidly enough to account for the position shift of Labour identifiers (especially strong ones) in the late 1980s. Following the leadership is a more compelling answer. The same may be said for Conservatives in the 1990s. Although their leaders' messages may be equivocal, there is little evidence that the Party attracted many new adherents during the 1990s. The attitudes of existing members simply moved against the EU. In the case of Labour, new recruits may account for some of the policy preference change. But the panel data suggest that they were not numerous enough to account for the party's more pro-European attitudes, especially since most of the attitude change occurred before the influx of new identifiers and voters in the '90s. Here we may be seeing some new partisans with old attitudes. Certainly Evans is correct in claiming that some of this is occurring as a consequence of the Labour party attracting more higher status adherents. But we find stable attitudes among Labour stalwarts, too, at least in the 1990s. We have not investigated the possibility that the British population's declining support for Europe in the most recent years is the product of the anti-EU perspective of much of the British media. But when looking over the longer time period, we do see party elite influence.

We conclude that there are mixed messages in our results. We are inclined to believe that the "top down" model still does a better job of accounting for the content of

EU attitudes than does a “bottom up” model. However, movement into the Labour party in the 1990s looks less like persuasion. Moreover, the recent turning away from Europe by the public seems to be independent of party. “Euroskepticism” extends well beyond Conservative precincts as many more people express it than a willingness to vote Conservative.

Thus far, evidence from the 2001 campaign does not suggest that the Conservatives strongly anti-Euro position is winning them much new support as the polls find the gap in voter preferences to remain virtually unchanged after three weeks of campaigning. Perhaps the key is that, despite much publicity, Europe remains a low salience issue compared with others before the British electorate. If so, analysts could again conclude that the direct impact of European issues on British voting behavior is limited. However, in a land where 70% of respondents say they are either ‘not well’ ‘or not at all informed’ about such a high profile issue as the Euro, and where Britons’ self-perceived knowledge of the EU is well below the average for EU citizens, great potential for both opinion shifts and electoral volatility remain.

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Table I: EU Membership Good or Bad? UK*

	F73	F75	F76	F79	S83	Su83	F83	F87	F91
Good Thing	31	50	33	24	28	43	36	46	57
Bad Thing	34	24	37	54	36	30	28	24	16
Neither (mixed)	22	18	19	17	29	22	30	25	21
Don't Know	13	8	11	5	7	5	6	5	6
	S92	F92	S97	F97	S98	F98	F99	F00	
Good Thing	54	43	36	36	41	37	29	28	
Bad Thing	13	25	26	23	19	22	24	23	
Neither (mixed)	25	24	27	29	30	29	28	29	
Don't Know	8	8	12	13	11	12	19	20	

*Perceptions of whether membership was good or bad have varied. Positive in early to mid-70s, turning negative in 1977 and reached there most negative (21-28% good) throughout Margaret Thatcher's first term. After a sudden burst of positivism in 1983, opinions bobbed around until a more positive trend set in in 1986. Thereafter good ratings climbed to a peak of 57% in 1991. A downward trend set in again in 1992. The years since 1997 have been marked by growing ambivalence; those who see the EU as good have fallen while those with mixed reviews or, especially, uncertainty have increased. Source: *Eurobarometer Trends, 1974-1994*. 1995. Brussels: European Commission, DG X.

Table II: Partisanship and Opinion of European Union Membership

Year	Conservative Voters			Conservative Very Close			Labour Voters			Labour Very Close		
	Good	Mixed	Bad	Good	Mixed	Bad	Good	Mixed	Bad	Good	Mixed	Bad
1983	44	33	23	56	25	19	22	28	49	15	25	60
1987	54	24	22	61	15	25	38	29	32	37	19	43
1988	51	28	21	53	27	21	35	30	35	32	13	55
1989	54	25	21	63	18	19	57	27	17	68	14	18
1992S	56	28	17	55	27	19	64	22	15	64	19	16
1992F	48	26	26	44	22	34	54	21	25	57	14	30
1995	47	28	24				49	32	19			
1998	36	32	32				54	32	14			
1999	29	30	41				45	33	23			

Source: Eurobarometer data. Data are drawn from *Eurobarometer Trends, 1974-1994* and Eurobarometer #s 38,44, 49 and 51. "Voters" are those who would vote for a political party 'if an election were held tomorrow.' "Very Close" are those who reported that they identified with a political party and consider themselves 'very close' to it.

Table III: EU Attitudes by Degree of Party Involvement, 1992 and 1997

	All	Voter		Identifier		ID Strong	
		Cons.	Lab.	Cons.	Lab.	Cons.	Lab.
1992 EU Member							
Stay Member	72.7	76.3	70.0	76.3	69.0	70.7	64.7
Leave	21.0	20.0	22.3	19.5	22.9	24.0	27.9
DK	5.7	3.1	7.3	3.6	7.5	4.2	5.5
NA	.6	.6	.6	.6	.6	1.0	1.8
N=	3534	1255	1047	1454	1181	287	272
1997 EU Member							
Stay Member	61.6	58.8	65.5	65.4	73.0	68.0	76.0
Leave	22.6	27.8	28.9	32.0	22.8	29.3	18.6
DK	3.5	3.8	2.1	2.5	4.0	2.7	4.9
NA	12.2	13.5	10.2	.2	.3		.5
N=	1924	481	759	557	707	75	183
1992 In Long Term							
Leave EC	9.7	8.3	10.7	8.5	11.0	11.5	16.5
Reduce Powers	27.8	38.9	19.3	38.5	18.5	43.9	18.0
Leave as Is	16.4	15.5	18.7	15.5	18.2	13.2	15.8
Increase Powers	29.1	26.5	30.9	27.0	30.4	21.6	29.0
Euro Gov't.	9.9	6.5	11.5	5.9	12.1	4.2	10.3
DK	7.0	4.4	8.8	4.5	9.7	5.6	10.3
NA	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1		
N=	3534	1255	1047	1454	1181	287	272
1997 In Long Term							
Leave EC	12.6	14.8	10.3	17.8	12.2	14.7	9.8
Reduce Powers	44.3	58.8	38.5	63.6	41.6	77.3	33.9
Leave as Is	14.7	12.3	18.2	12.2	19.5	4.0	21.9
Increase Powers	8.0	3.3	10.1	4.1	13.4	1.3	19.1
Euro Gov't.	4.5	.4	6.2	1.4	7.4	1.3	9.8
DK	3.8	.2	5.8	.7	5.9	1.3	5.5
NA	12.1	10.2	10.9	.2			
N=	1924	481	759	557	707	75	183

Source: British Election Study 1992-1997 Panel data. The surveys included two EU related questions: a basic question of whether or not Britain should remain and EU member, and a more nuanced question as to what Britain's long term policy toward the EU should be.

Endnotes

¹ Originally developed by Angus Campbell and his associates in the 1950s (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Campbell and Stokes 1959), party identification meant an attitude that acted as a perceptual filter through which candidates and issues were viewed. Simply put, party identification was the individual's psychological affiliation with a political party. Partisanship also exerted a powerful impact on citizens' likelihood of voting and how they behaved once inside the voting booth. Learned relatively early in life (Greenstein 1969), usually because of family ties (Jennings and Niemi 1974), partisanship congealed over the life cycle (Converse 1976). If the ground-breaking research of Donald Stokes and David Butler (1969) can be credited, the notion of partisanship, with its American roots, crossed the Atlantic Ocean in fairly good stead.

² An unusually high 19% of Labour voters responded 'don't know' when asked about their opinion of EU membership in the 1999 survey (Eurobarometer 51). We are unable to supply data on those who are 'very close' to the parties because of data embargoes. However, see Table III which does have such data.

³ The small number of cases in the 1997 panel leaves doubt as to whether this is a statistically significant difference.

