

# British policy towards eu integration



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” Therefore, there is no straight choice about whether Britain’s political future is to be ‘European’ or otherwise. This reflects not just the domestic complexity and combustibility of the debate about European integration, but also a profound sense of ambiguity about what the European Union is now and what it might yet become” (Colin Hay 2002). This quote describes Britain’s position and views towards the European Union very well in order to start my discussion about their political role towards European integration. In this essay I will start by looking into how history has its influence on the given subject and what needs to be done to convince the public that the EU is a necessary institution to be a part of.

Furthermore I would like to look at the issue of the EMU which I see as a key part of the European integration. Historical aspects Britain has in parts of the historical aspect had a hegemonic role in the world and even playing a dominant part in the European economy (post Napoleonic wars) as Rosamond argues Britain played a great part in the economic order that was laid down in the nineteenth century displacing various versions of national political economy (Hay 2002, Rosamond). When Britain also felt that being one of the main reasons that the allies won the Second World War, it shows how they see themselves on top of the world hierarchy. Having this in mind and the fact that ‘ British politicians and officials never had any intention of joining the nascent moves towards a European union in the 1950s’ (Not Playing Their Games, The Economist 2010), it seems that Britain is only in the EU only of necessity and not of their own will. I know that this could be an overstatement, but when looking into some of the texts read before writing this essay I have stumbled upon multiple arguments of why Britain

had to join the EC/EU and this is somehow concerning. How does this then affect the British policy towards EU integration? Well when a majority of the public, parts of the media and a number of political parties are EU sceptic, it might quite easily have a negative effect. This must be changed if the Britain/EU relationship is to succeed.

The politicians need to stress to the population how important the EU is to Britain and vice versa. Especially a crucial aspect to this issue is that Britain is not a hegemony anymore and as Europe has evolved after WWII with the EC/EU it cannot just turn its back on things and has to play an active role for the European Union to ‘flourish’ in the best possible way. But this seems as a difficult task, having the above mentioned in mind and the fact that Britons seeing the problematique as Mrs. Thatcher described it “in my lifetime all our problems have come from mainland Europe, and all the solutions have come from the English-speaking nations across the world.” (Not Playing Their Games, The Economist 2010). The EMU issue If Britain really should take a big step towards European integration, it should be a part of the EMU and replace the Sterling with the Euro. There are also various other things that need to be done in order for this, but as mentioned earlier the EMU issue is a key one in this discussion.

And that’s where the problem may lie. Because if Britain chose to do so in replacing the currencies, it could indirectly send a message to the public that Britain is giving up their sovereignty. And looking back on how ‘nationalistic’ (used in terms as described in the article by Daniel Woodley, Nationalism, regionalism and Europeanism, 2006) and ‘patriotic’ the Britons are about their country I cannot see how this could be possible. Taking into

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consideration the fact that both Greece and Ireland have/is struggling economically, I can only see how this will give the EU sceptics even more 'fire power' against the EMU and the EU. This is a major barricade in this situation and I do not see how Britain can integrate itself in 'Europe' before this has been taken care of with positive outcomes. Furthermore I do not think that a solution in British integration is to join the EMU, but why this is will be in my conclusion. Conclusion Looking at this essay I have only discussed a few topics in a much larger puzzle, but the fact that the British 'identity' and how they see themselves compared to the EU and where it seems to be heading.

I think that these are some of the key issues Britain should look into in determining how (if) to integrate in 'Europe'. It appears to me that Britain is in a place they do not want to be, but still are due to the fact that it would have negative economic consequences if they backed out of the EU. British politicians in my opinion should revise they are there in the first place and why the public is so sceptic in the first place. I am sure this has already been done, but it is disturbing that Britain is at the bottom of the poll from the Economist on whether the EU is a good thing and at the same time trustworthy. Adding to this is the public's "... ignorance of what the EU does and how it works.

The mistaken belief that the EU is responsible for as much as 80% of all legislation in Europe (it is no more than 50%.. "(Not Playing Their Games, The Economist 2010). If the politicians (even the Eurosceptics that still want to be a part of the EU) want to maintain a healthy European Union and why Britain should stay as a member, they have to persuade the general public

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how the EU really works and what ‘ good’ things come from this. This is easier said than done and when having the Problems in Ireland and Greece in mind it will not be easy for the Government to change the public’s point of view towards the EU. Britain is going to play a big part of the future of the EU, but the big question is which path they choose to take.