Euroscepticism in the united kingdom

Abstract\n\nThere are a number of different factors that have caused British political parties to change their policies on the EU, yet it is often very difficult to determine what these are. Whilst some may suggest that it is down to a change in public attitudes (Ladrech, 2001, p. 4), others would argue that party position changes occur as a result of " environmental incentives with party organisation" (Schumacher et al; 2009, p. 1). Regardless, EU integration is one of the main issues that has divided British political parties since the 1970's and Britain's EU membership has had a significant impact upon political parties. Hence, the two main themes that have run through the main parties with regards to the EU are division and fragmentation, which has led many to believe that ' Europe' has essentially become a " cause of political cleavage" (Smith, 2012, p. 1277) that has widely impacted mainstream political parties. This study will therefore analyse the changing approaches of British political parties since the 1970's in order to determine what factors have led to a change in policies.\n\nIntroduction\n

Introduction to the Study

\nSince the United Kingdom became a member of the European Union, there has been a significant amount of controversy that has surrounded the move. The UK had been trying to join the EU since 1961, yet its membership was rejected by the French President. It wasn't until 1973 when the UK finally became a member and although a referendum was held two years later, which resulted in the public voting in favour of the UK's membership, many have continued to question whether it was in fact a good move. Accordingly, some have argued against further EU integration, whilst others have argued for complete EU withdrawal. This so-called Euroscepticism has existed since

the very beginning and has had a significant impact upon the policies of British political parties. In accordance with this, it will be considered what factors actually caused British political parties to change their policies on the EU since 1970.\n

Research Objective

\nThe objective of this research is to consider what causes British political parties to change their EU policies and to determine what parties are cautious of further EU integration. It will also allow an assessment to be made as to whether there are any parties who support the withdrawal from the EU. Thus, it will also be shown that debate surrounding the EU has not been sustained and that many challenges still exist, causing many to question Britain's EU membership.\n

Literature Review

\nIntroduction\n\nWhen the UK became a member of the EU, every political party was in agreement, yet many debates have subsequently been made as to whether it was the right decision to make. Hence, the debates between Eurosceptics and EU supporters are still ongoing in British political parties today, though there the views of the Conservative and Labour parties are diverse and appear to change frequently. Accordingly, during the 1970's and 1980's the Labour party appeared to be more Europsceptic than the Conservative party and thereby pledged " to extricate ourselves from the Treaty of Rome and other Community treaties" (Politea, 2007, p. 1). During the 1990's, however, the Conservative party appeared to be moving in the same direction by making a pledge not to co-operate with the EU.

Nevertheless, public support for the EU began to grow since it was believed that the EU would be a good thing for Britain, especially after the Thatcherism era. As such, " Europe appeared to be fundamental to the government's attempts to revise the Thatcher settlement and symbolized a modification of some of its less palatable elements" (Gifford, 2008, p. 114).\n\nLiterature Review\n\nRegardless of the EU's initial support, Euroscepticscim is still rife in Britain today and many questions have been raised as to why British political parties have continued to change their policies on the EU since the UK's integration in 1970. Whilst some argue that material factors, such as anti-market and anti-capitalist, are the reason why the policies have shifted, others believe that ideology, such as national sovereignty and anti-immigrationis the reason for the shift. Nonetheless, as put by Kopecky (2002, p. 297); " ideology is the dominant explanation for both types of support, although strategy at times plays a role in explaining specific support." Regardless, it has been argued that " the Chevenementists' shift away from left-right positioning has not paid off electorally" (Milner, 2004, p. 59). This is widely due to the mistrust the public will have in political parties who frequently change their stance and although there may be a number of different factors as to why this happens the public will be fearful of neo-liberal policies. Still, others believe that the changes in policies are primarily the result of Britain's desire to maintain independence and sovereignty (Harmsen and Spiering, 2005, p. 14). Whether Britain's current policies will be maintained is doubtful, especially in light of the recent policy changes: " The last two and a half years have seen the biggest change of Britain's European policy in its four-decade membership of the

European Union" (Teasdale, 2013, p. 1).\n\nTheoretical Approaches\n\nA Culturalist theory of political change will be used in this study in order to explain why political change occurs. This appears to be the most appropriate way to determine what factors have caused British political parties to change their policies on the EU since 1970. This is because; Culturalist theory is based on the idea that people do not respond directly to situations they face and that instead situations are seen through orientations (Eckstein, 1988, p. 790). Hence, orientations are how information is processed and can be changed depending on what is being taught. Accordingly, as noted by Eckstein (1992, p. 281); " a cogent, potentially powerful theory of political change can be derived from Culturalist premises."\n\nResearch Question\n\nWhat factors have caused British political parties to change their policies on the EU?\n\nHow have attitudes towards Europe shifted amongst the two main parties?\n\nProposed Methodology\n\nIn obtaining the relevant information for this study it will be necessary to use a secondary research approach. This is because, already existing data will be capable of being collected and then analysed in order to reach an appropriate conclusion. This is the most cost effective and efficient way of collecting data and is more feasible than using primary research. Hence, it would be difficult to gain access to political parties in order to obtain their views. Therefore, for the purposes of this study; it would be impracticable to use primary research. Opinions will thus be acquired from relevant scholars, theorists, politicians and academics in order to allow a general overview of the topic to be provided. These will be obtained from textbooks, journal articles, online legal databases and governmental reports.\n

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