

GV311

Britain and Europe

Part 1: A Troubled History

Simon Hix
Professor of European & Comparative Politics

It didn't start well ...

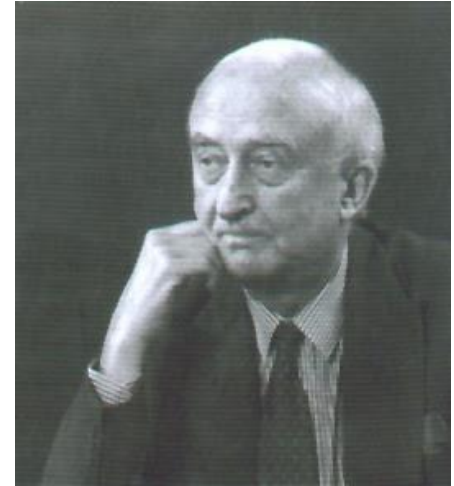
“Fog in the Channel.
Continent Cut Off”

*British newspaper headline,
circa. 1936 (allegedly)*

While others set up the EEC ...

“The future treaty which you are discussing has no chance of being agreed; if it was agreed, it would have no chance of being ratified; and if it were ratified, it would have no chance of being applied. And if it was applied, it would be totally unacceptable to Britain. You speak of agriculture, which we don't like, of power over customs, which we take exception to, and institutions which frighten us. Monsieur le president, messieurs, au revoir et bonne chance.”

Russell Bretherton, British Foreign Office representative at a meeting of Spaak Committee, November 1955



Britain's Alternative to EEC: *European Free Trade Association*

Founded in January 1960 in Stockholm

8 original members: Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Finland (1961)

Known as the “Outer 8” (vs. “Inner 6” of EEC)

Joined by Iceland (1970), Liechtenstein (1991)

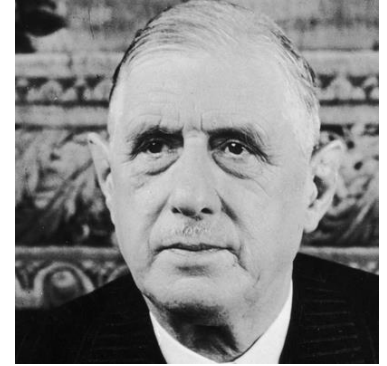


UK and Denmark left EFTA & joined EEC in 1973, as did Portugal in 1986, and Austria, Sweden & Finland in 1995

3 of the 4 remaining members (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) have an agreement with EU: *European Economic Area*

(a “*Puerto Rico relationship*” !)

Please Let Us In ...

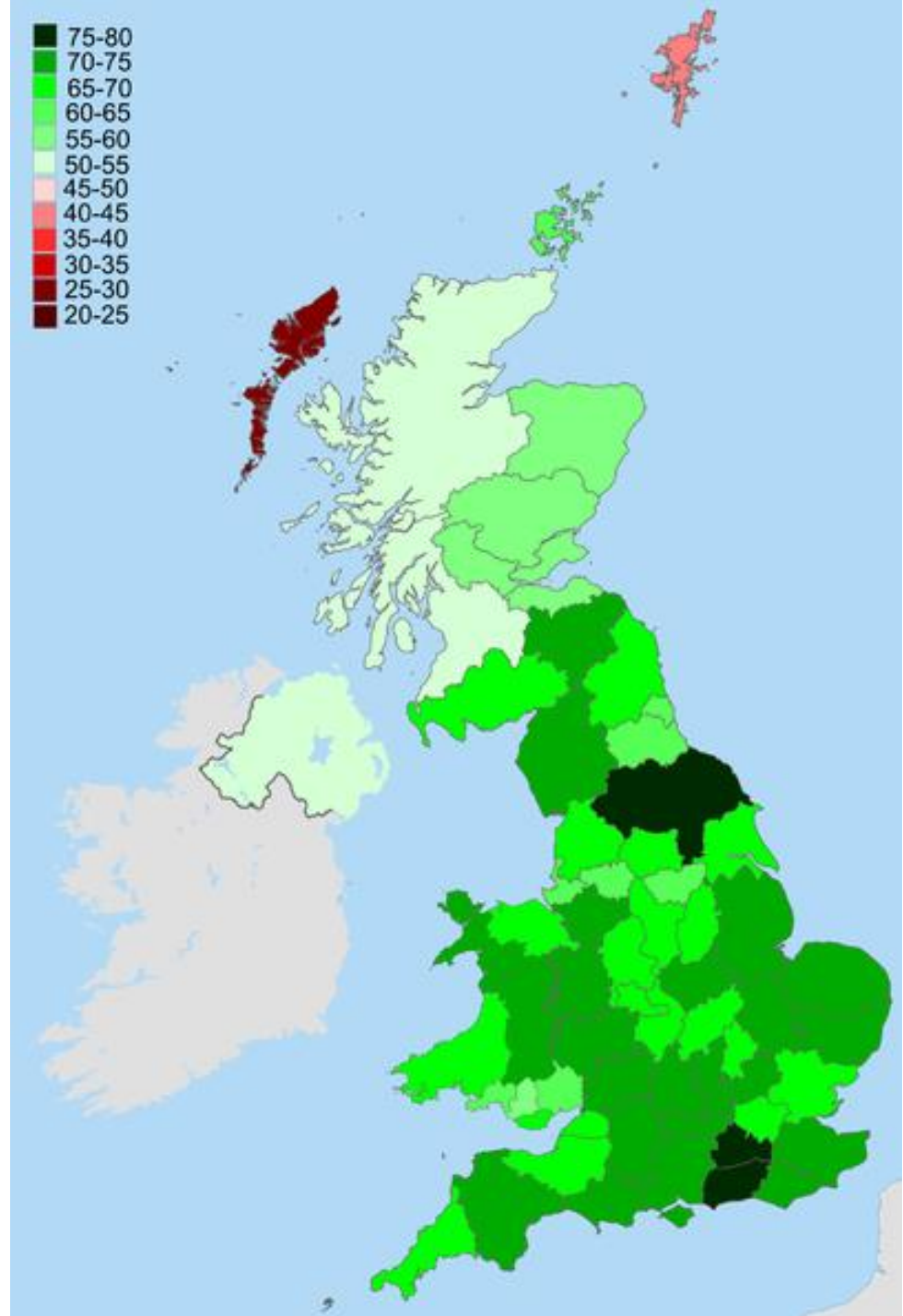


- 1961 Macmillan government applies to join
- 1963 De Gaulle vetoes UK membership
- 1967 Wilson government re-applies
- 1967 De Gaulle vetoes again
- 1969 De Gaulle replaced by Pompidou as Fre. President
- 1970 Heath government negotiates entry
- 1973 UK, Ireland & Denmark join EC
- 1974 Wilson wins narrow election promising renegotiation
- 1975 Referendum on UK membership

“Do you think the UK should stay in the European Community (Common Market)?

Yes	67%
No	33%

1975 Referendum result by county



Thatcher: A British Project for Europe

1975 Campaigns on pro-EC side of referendum

1979 Wins election

1979-84 Battle over UK “budget rebate”

1985 Delors becomes Commission President
Thatcher blocked Claude Cheysson

1985 Lord Cockfield, Commissioner for Internal Market
-> White Paper on Single Market

1987 Single European Act -> “single market” by 1992

Interesting debate in HoC on ratification, 23 April 1986:

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1986/apr/23/european-communities-amendment-bill#S6CV0096P0_19860423_HOC_239

e.g. argument about change from European “Assembly” to “Parliament”!



Thatcher Turns Against Europe

“We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels”, Bruges, 20 Sept. 1998

Under pressure from Howe (Foreign Secretary) and Lawson & Major (Chancellors) she agrees to join ERM (Oct 1990)

Oct 1990, Rome European Council -> IGCs on EMU & Pol.Union
Thatcher says she was “ambushed” by Chr.Dem leaders

1 Nov 1990, Howe resigns over her European policy

“It is rather like sending your opening batsmen to the crease, only for them to find that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain”

22 Nov 1990, Thatcher resigns

Major and the Maastricht Rebels

Sept 1992 “Black Wednesday”

-> UK forced out of ERM

Dec 1992 IGC on Maastricht Treaty

UK opts out of “Social Chapter”



July 1993 Ratification of Maastricht Treaty in House of Commons

Major defeated on Lab. amendment (324 to 316) with 22 Con “rebels” voting against govt. (led by Bill Cash MP) [govt. majority only 18]

Treaty only ratified because Major makes it a vote-of-confidence

Sept 1994 Major “vetoes” Jean-Luc Dehaene for Com.Pres.

-> Jacques Santer chosen instead

Meanwhile: Labour in opposition

1983 Labour Election Manifesto

“withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain”

1983-92 Kinnock reforms the party

1988 Delors speech to TUC Congress

Argued that Labour and the unions could win back social and labour market reforms in Brussels, against Thatcher



-> standing ovation & spontaneous chorus of *Frère Jacques*

1997 Labour Election Manifesto

promises a referendum on UK joining the single currency

A different view of Delors ...



And a drip, drip, drip of anti-European stories from the papers owned by Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black, from the mid 1980s onwards

Blair: saviour of UK-EU relations?

May 1997 Huge optimism across EU at Blair's election victory

Blair promises to repair Britain's relations with Europe – “the most pro-European government in British history”

Immediately “signs up” to the Social Chapter of the EU Treaty

June 1997 Amsterdam European Council – leaders welcome Blair

2000 Blair's “friend” Romano Prodi becomes Com.President



And the British press responds

THE Sun
Wednesday, June 24, 1998 28p DEDICATED TO THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

AMAZING COURAGE OF WILLIAM AND HARRY
By EARL SPENCER See Pages 22 & 23

AS EURO LOOMS *THE Sun* ASKS CRUCIAL QUESTION

Is THIS the most dangerous man in Britain?

PAGE ONE OPINION

IT IS the question we never dreamed we would ask.

But we have been forced to think the unthinkable. And today The Sun demands: *Is Tony Blair the most dangerous man in Britain?*

In most respects he is a fine Premier. But he seems determined to scrap the Pound and take Britain into the European single currency.

And that, we believe, will be the biggest gamble any Prime Minister has ever taken. The result could be disastrous for this country. That is why The Sun has vowed to fight it all the way.

Blair is a charming, persuasive politician. We like him. He has the potential to be a truly great Prime Minister. He thinks fast and outflanks opponents with a smile that conceals a touch of steel. These are the qualities which

Continued on Page Six

It Quickly Turns Sour

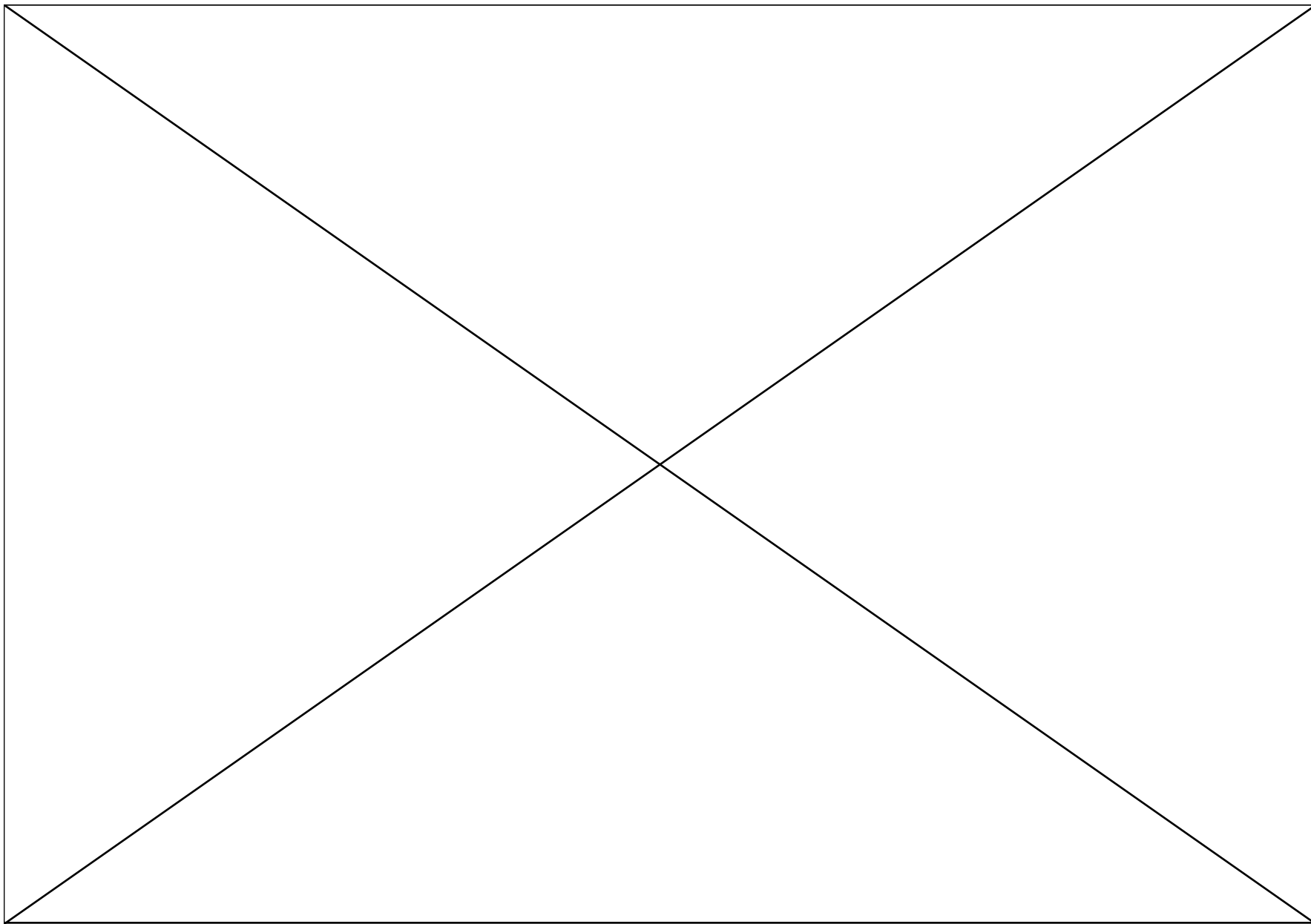
Gordon Brown (Chancellor) emerges as anti-Euro, 5 “economic tests”:

1. Are business cycles and economic structures compatible?
2. If problems emerge is there sufficient flexibility to deal with them?
3. Would joining EMU create better conditions for firms investing in Britain?
4. What would be the impact on UK financial services industry?
5. Will joining EMU promote growth, stability and increase in jobs?

2003 Blair joins Bush’s “coalition of the willing”, vs. Fra & Ger
& engineers an anti-Ger/Fra coalition for Barroso as Com.Pres

2004 Blair promises a referendum on EU Constitutional Treaty, and
then reneges on this commitment when result is Lisbon Treaty

Brown (as Chancellor & PM) repeatedly hectors other EU
governments on their poor economic performance relative to UK !



Cameron: “How to Lose Friends and Alienate People”



2006 Conservatives leave EPP-ED group in EP
Cameron's allies (Merkel, Tusk, and Reinfeldt) are furious

2010 election -> Bill Cash (leader of Maastricht Rebels) becomes
Chairman of European Scrutiny Committee in the H. of Commons

2011 EU Act -> commits UK to referendum on new EU powers

Dec 2011 Cameron “vetoes” Fiscal Compact Treaty
Or: rest of EU agrees not to be blackmailed by UK! (brokered at EPP summit)

2012 Gov't insists that UK loans to IMF cannot be used in Eurozone
=> UK would rather support 3rd world dictators than Greece!

Cameron 2: Desparately Appeasing UKIP

Rise of UKIP: 10-18% of vote since mid 2012

-> threat to Con backbenchers

Oct 2011, 81 Con backbenchers vote
against gov't. in call for EU referendum



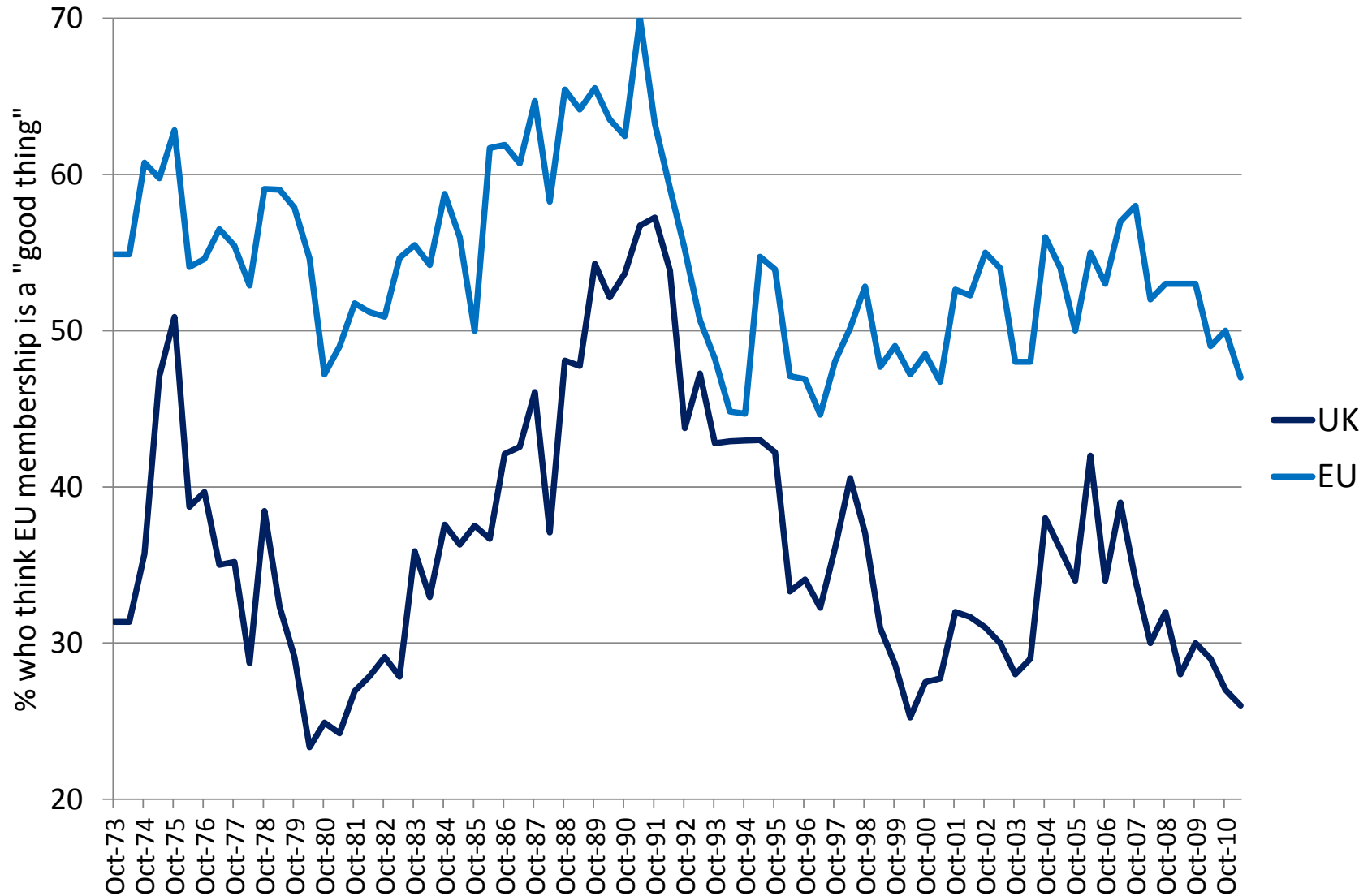
Jan 2013, Speech in Bloomberg, NL -> promises referendum in 2017

May 2013, Gov't publishes EU Referendum Bill
taken forward as a private members bill by James Wharton MP
currently blocked in the H. of Lords

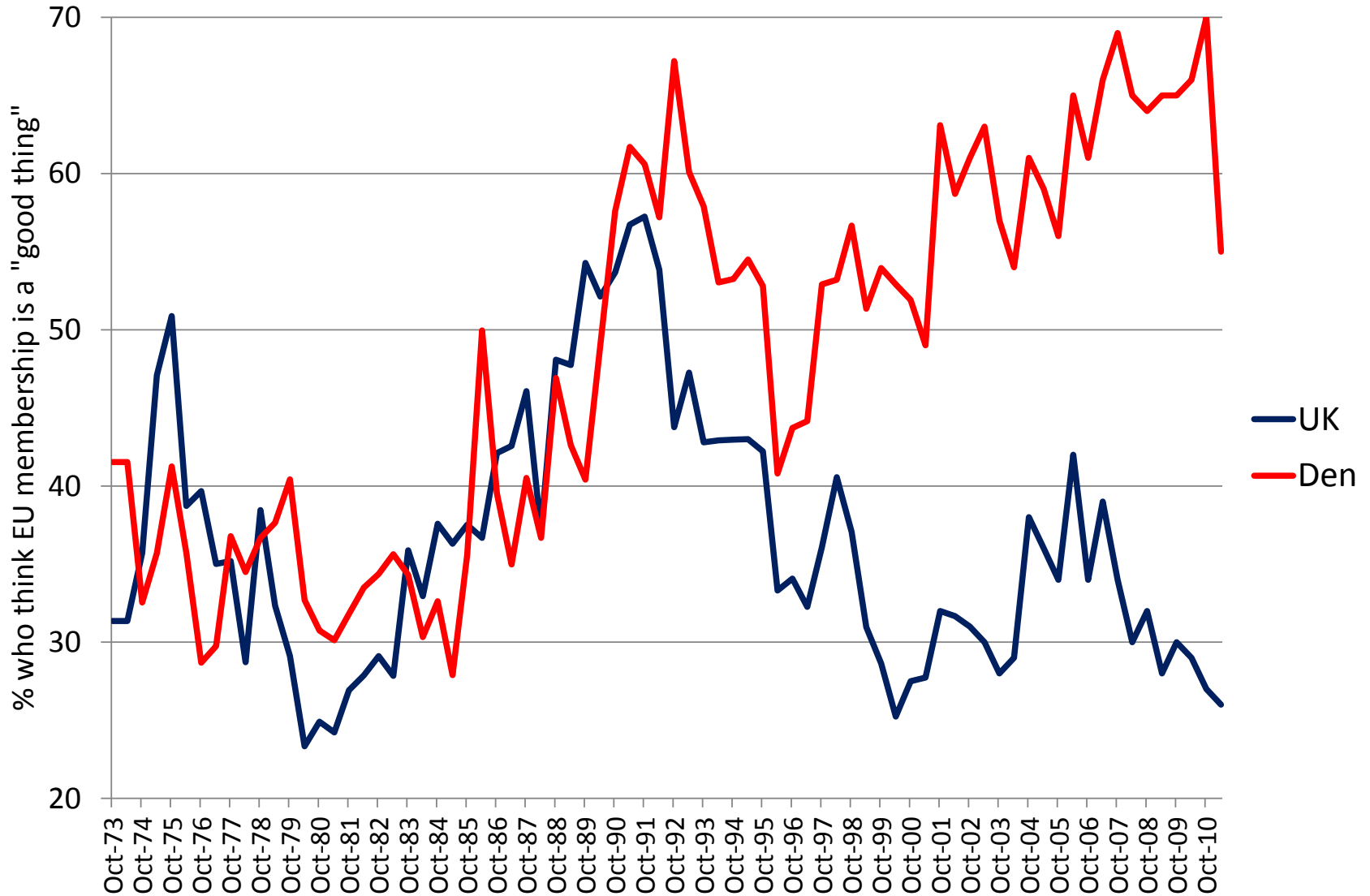
May 2013, *Daily Telegraph* reports that a
member of Cameron's inner circle described
local members as "mad, swivel-eyed loons"



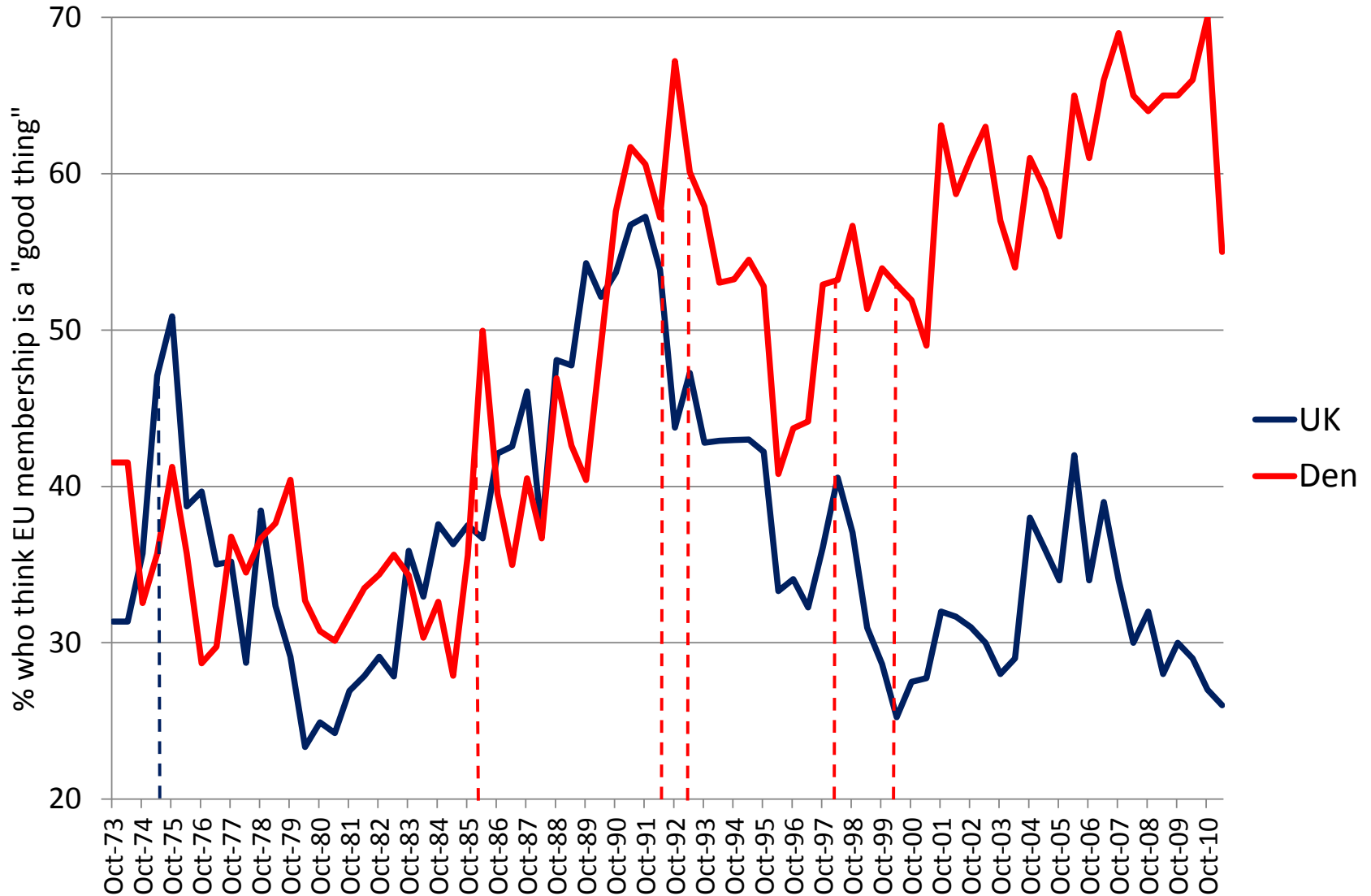
Public Opinion



Public Opinion



Public Opinion



Summary: Continuity & Change

Continuity

Dominant policy: we must be at top table, preventing others going ahead without us

Divisions within both Lab & Cons since 1950s
e.g. Wilson vs. Gaitskell, Thatcher vs. Clarke etc.

Change

From Anti-EU Left in 1970s, to Anti-EU Right in 1990s

Declining popular legitimacy of EU project

Cameron's policy is a fundamental break from the past
“please go ahead without us”

The UK has “one hand on the exit door” (H. Van Rompuy, 2013)

-> declining influence of UK within the EU

e.g. UK chose every Com.Pres. since Jenkins, but not now