

The Membership of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the European Union

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá postavením Velké Británie v Evropské unii. Přináší analýzu historických událostí souvisejících s členstvím Velké Británie v Evropském společenství, Evropské unii. Dále se snaží objasnit postoj Velké Británie vůči evropské integraci na základě zkoumání historických, politických, ekonomických, sociálních i geografických aspektů a současně také zhodnotit vliv Evropské unie na Velkou Británii. Cílem této práce je zjistit, zda je Velká Británie oprávněně charakterizována jako euroskeptická země.

Klíčová slova: Velká Británie, Evropská unie, Evropská společenství, druhá světová válka, Maastrichtská smlouva, suverenita, národnost, britské veřejné mínění, britské politické strany

ABSTRACT

This work deals with the status of Great Britain in the European Union. It provides an analysis of historical events associated with the United Kingdom's membership in the European Community, lately the European Union. Furthermore, it is trying to explain the United Kingdom's attitude towards the European integration by examining the historical, political, economic, social and geographical aspects as well as to evaluate the influence of the European Union on Great Britain. The aim of this thesis is to determine whether Great Britain is legitimately considered as a eurosceptic country.

Keywords: Great Britain, the European Union, the European Community, the Second World War, the Maastricht Treaty, sovereignty, nationality, British public opinion, British political parties

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EADS	European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company
EC	European Community
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMU	European Monetary Union
ERM	Exchange Rate Mechanism
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNIG	Gross National Income
SEA	Single European Act
SNP	Scottish National Party
UK	United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
UKIP	United Kingdom Nationalist Party
U.S.	United States (of America)
USA	United States of America
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

INTRODUCTION

Great Britain's relationship to the continental Europe is often characterized as reluctant, unenthusiastic or even negative with regard to the European integration. Over the years, this attitude has not changed dramatically. Obviously, there must be some arguments and evidence proving the claim that Great Britain is a eurosceptic country. The question is therefore, for what reason has Great Britain received this labelling?

It is stated that the British euroscepticism has its roots in the development of post-war Europe and is the result of post-imperial British crisis. However, were the consequences of the European development during the 20th century and the loss of the superpower status so crucial for the British nation's perception of the Europe that the labelling - "Eurosceptic Britain" will be associated with this country forever?

It is obvious, that from the perspective of British experts, politicians as well as general public joining any supranational community was unacceptable and tried to avoid it. Preferably, they supported already well-established Anglo-American relations and cooperation within the Commonwealth. Why then, eventually decided to join the European Community and undertake a fundamental change in modern British history? Were there any fundamental economic or political reasons or reconsiderations of British power on the European affairs? Was one of the reasons for Great Britain to create a "bridge" between the continental Europe and the United States? Following and monitoring the political, socio-economic as well as cultural developments throughout the British history, we might find many interesting findings and hypothesis, which answer these questions.

Furthermore, once Great Britain has joined the European Communities (lately European Union) is remarkable to follow Britain's participation on the European matters (i.e. policy, institutions, laws and regulations etc.) either from the political perspective represented by political parties (Conservative versus Labour party, Liberal Democrats, DUP, SNP) and individualities such as Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, recently David Cameron and discuss if their policy-making decisions (related to the EU) have brought benefits or prospect to the country; what was their personal attitude towards the European Union or the general public and its awareness of the European Union as well as how they perceived the advantages and disadvantages of the British membership in the European Union.

Considering Britain's structuring (i.e. England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), it is important to compare the national consensus of the particular nations and do not

generalize opinions and attitudes of the United Kingdom towards the European Union as a whole.

In addition, discussing the current political and welfare situation in the United Kingdom (the impact of the global crisis, the 2010 election, the question of budget and contribution to the EU budget) may bring us to the conclusion if there is still seen the strong eurosceptic attitude or whether the young generation distinctive outlook on EU affairs predominates.

Eventually, trying to respond to these challenging questions, as what is the future role of the European Union and Britain's role within it and what further development of the relationships is expected, might be the intriguing outcome.

1 EUROSCEPTICISM

With hands on deepening of the European Union integration, the “European question” comes to the forefront and plays an increasingly important role in the domestic political scenes. The phenomenon of euroscepticism has possessed a remarkable interest in recent years. However, do we know what this term precisely implies to?

The problem is that neither politicians and scholars nor general public cannot agree to what extent the individual nations or governments or even individuals acting and behaviour may be considered as eurosceptic.

According to the Oxford dictionary eurosceptic person is someone who is not enthusiastic about increasing the powers of the European Union. The term has been employed as a generic label that defines a negative point of view towards the EU.¹

From the perspective of political science is the most famous concept of a political scientist Nicolo Conti, who has identified five attitudes of political parties to integration. Individual positions vary on the scale, on the one hand, bounded by 'hard euroscepticism' and the other “identity europeanism”. The remaining categories are soft euroscepticism, uncertain or ambivalent attitude towards the EU and functional europeanism. Given the focus of our text in the following chapters, only Conti’s division of euroscepticism will be introduced.²

Hard euroscepticism rejects integration process as a whole, oppose to what was previously done within the European integration and also impeach the legitimacy of the EU. Reforming the current integration is not enough, only a new model of cooperation comes on force. Hard eurosceptics propose leaving "their" countries from the EU or the transfer of powers from the supranational level to the level of nation states. Into this group, we could include the British party – United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP, to be mentioned later), whose rhetoric is characterized by significantly protestant, anti-European character.³

¹ Oxford guide to British and American culture, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2005); Anthony Forster, . *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics: Opposition to Europe in the Conservative and Labour Parties Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1-2.

² Vlastimil Havlík, “Euroskepticismus a volby do Evropského parlamentu 2004,” Global politics, <http://www.globalpolitics.cz/clanky/euroskepticismus-EP-2004> (accessed April 15, 2011).

³ Ibid.

The second attitude that Conti has introduced is soft Euroscepticism. In this case, there is no principled opposition to the project of European integration, but rather a negative reaction to some of the outcomes of European integration (one of EU policy or institutional setting of the Union, negative effects of European integration on domestic systems).

The difference between the soft and hard euroscepticism is that soft eurosceptics (political parties) accept the reform of the European Union as a way to remove criticized issues. A degree of radicalism is not as strong as might be observed at the hard eurosceptics.⁴

Euroscepticism may take various forms and is finding supporters not only in political fields. In practice, however, euroscepticism exists and is developing today within the conservative and ultra-conservative ideology. In this context, may be defined as a serious transnational aspect of contemporary conservatism, and in particular creates an ideological basis for cooperation across a number of right-wing parties within the EU. In the British case, we may see example in the Conservatives, which participated on the creation of the European Conservatives and Reformists party (ECR; it is mentioned later) within the European parliament, manifesting rather strong eurosceptic attitudes.⁵

⁴ Vlastimil Havlík, "Euroskepticismus a volby do Evropského parlamentu 2004," Global politics, <http://www.globalpolitics.cz/clanky/euroskepticismus-EP-2004> (accessed April 15, 2011).

⁵ Ivan Sablin, "Euroskepticismus jako ideologie: teorie a praxe," www.zvedavec.org, <http://www.zvedavec.org/komentare/2010/10/4011-euroskepticismus-jako-ideologie-teorie-a-praxe.htm> (accessed April 27, 2011).

2 BRITISH INTEGRATION SINCE THE WORLD WAR II.

“The end of a thousand years of history”, “A thorn in the side of British politics”, “The cause of a nervous breakdown in the political class”, “Loss of the political prestige and participation in its own decision making.”⁶ These are the examples of statements eluding the perception of the British nation towards the integration of the United Kingdom into the European Community.

The remaining question is therefore, why the participation in European integration has caused such turmoil and often appeared as an unpleasant necessity rather than a positive benefit? British tactic policy was called "wait and see" position towards the further integration as well as the policymaking which suited the needs of the moment and the role and functions rarely met the national consensus.⁷

To understand the British attitude to the European integration - the changing nature, scope and significance of British policy, it is necessary to be aware of events happened in the past because those involved the formation of the contemporary British attitudes towards Europe and most likely may contribute to solve the current policy issues and problems, likewise may help to eliminate myths and prejudices that occurred around this subject over the years.

2.1 World War II.

Aftermaths of the Second World War, a possible rebound of fascism, the threat of the growth of communist regimes in Eastern Europe prompted representatives of the states in Europe to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). It was a connecting link (steel was the major element needed for reconstruction of railways, ships, machinery, buildings, etc.)⁸ between the European states, which would ensure cooperation and integration of economies and enhance overall economic growth in post-war Europe.⁹

The United Kingdom, however, adopted a negative attitude towards the entering to the ECSC. There were several reasons, amongst the most significant belonged: entering to the

⁶ David Gowland, Arthur Turner and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

⁸ Martin Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-1995: A History of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 1996), 58.

⁹ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 11-13.

ECSC would certainly undermine its importance of the United Kingdom's commercial, political and sentimental bonds with its colonies and former colonies, most of them integrated in the Commonwealth.¹⁰ Secondly, Great Britain did not want to give up its sovereignty to supranational organizations as well as its position as a world superpower. And last but not least, joining the ECSC was perceived as a threat of weakening, if not even loss of the so-called "special relationship" maintained with the United States and which Great Britain considered as far more important. Britain perceived its position as a "bridge" between the United States and Europe.¹¹

2.2 Britain's joining the EC/ EU

ECSC was later transformed into the European Community (EC) together with the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). After the initial success of the EC, the British Parliament decided to create an alternative - the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), an organization that was founded in 1960 whose aim was to promote and support free trade rather than create a kind of transnational organization. The European Community, however, introduced protectionist measures against EFTA members. This group, formed with other countries whose economies were weaker than the British, was not successful and eventually led Britain to join the European Community.¹²

In 1961, the United Kingdom, headed by Prime Minister Macmillan, first applied for an entry into the EC. The Prime Minister and a part of the Conservatives believed that this decision was correct and imperial united Europe, where the United Kingdom will have one of the key positions on a decision-making process within the EC, should be a substitution for the lost British Empire. This request was vetoed by French President de Gaulle, who feared that the United Kingdom's enter would be a sort of "Trojan horse" (via a so-called

¹⁰ "The treaty of Rome (1957)," The history of European Union, The European Citizenship, <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/traroma.htm#Problema%20brit%C3%A1nico> (accessed March 10, 2011)

¹¹ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 11-16.

¹² Ibid., 13-16; Martin Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-1995: A History of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1-5.

special relationship with the United States) representing a threat in terms of the United States interference into the European affairs.¹³

The second request for the entry to EC was made in 1967, this time under the leadership of Harold Wilson, but again the request was vetoed by de Gaulle. Britain was forced to devalue the sterling and de Gaulle stated that he could not have agreed to let a country with a weak currency join the EC and cause a further decline of national currencies in the community. As with the first application, there was only France inhibiting British entry to the EC.¹⁴

The third application to join the EC was made in 1970. De Gaulle was no longer president of France, so there was not a potential obstacle, and accession negotiations began. Followed by referendums, Britain formally joined the European Community on 1 January 1973.¹⁵

The European Community has gradually expanded and integrated increasingly; a single market (SEA, 1987) was created, based on four freedoms: free movement of persons, goods, capital and services. The European Treaty, which determined the creation of the European Union, was also discussed.¹⁶

By signing the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 the United Kingdom became one of the twelve founding members of the European Union.

During the development of the European Community, with greater or lesser obstruction of the British parliament, the United Kingdom has become a signatory to the primary and amending treaties of the EC/EU (the Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997; the Treaty of Nice, 2003; the Lisbon Treaty, 2009).¹⁷

¹³ Ibid., 14-16.

¹⁴ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 14-16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁶ Martin Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-1995: A History of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 1996), 93-129.

¹⁷ David Gowland, Arthur Turner and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1-17.

3 ISOLATED BRITISH NATION

Many sources indicate that the British euroscepticism has been constantly developing after the Second World War, and in fact, the Second World War and its consequences are the main causes of amplifying this phenomenon. Great Britain was a flourishing country since the 17th century, having a worldwide leadership and suddenly had to deal with certain developments without its intervention and had to accept a result that is no longer a superpower on a global scale, because this task was taken over by the United States and Russia.¹⁸ However, the question remains whether only these circumstances participated in the adoption of the term “Eurosceptic Britain” or other causes might be found in different political as well as psychological and economic areas, supporting the statement legitimately, during the development of the United Kingdom and its nation.

3.1 National identity

Definitely, one of the factors which should be taken into consideration while analyzing the perception of the EU is the characteristic of the British nation and influences which formed it.

Some typical features of “Englishness” those, for instance, Paxman observed and found out their historical roots appear to be quite convincing.

Brits show fairly substantial individualism and criticism. Anglo-Saxons are the people who tend to find flaws in everything discover and remove them and so moving forward. Valuable and instructive is therefore, their critical and analytical ability to solve problems. Certainly, we may deduce that these features contributed to the successful history of the UK, and it is apparent that these properties at least partially have also participated in the formation of quite suspicious attitude towards the integration.¹⁹

3.1.1 Feeling of uniqueness

This illusion, based on historical foundations and leadership in a number of areas in the world could possibly still persist not only among the public but also among politicians themselves. As the commentator from *The Guardian* wrote: “The British think that the French, Germans, Spaniards or Italians are something less. A special kind of illusion

¹⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 495-506.

¹⁹ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), 134-136.

persists that we are superior to the rest of Europe and therefore, cannot fully participate in the integration.”²⁰

3.1.2 Them versus us

In minds of the Brits, Europe is associated with the continent. Maybe the Brits do not even realize it, but when they are talking about other countries they are always saying: “I’m going to Europe”; “I was in Europe” which means “I’m going to France, I was in Germany.”²¹ This, in many cases an unconscious notion, might be considered as another proof of the distant British attitude.

The social construction of Britishness comprises the identification with national history, traditions, institutions and symbols, which is far stronger than with the European ones. This nation-state egocentrism is hardly to be in a harmony with the visions of the intergovernmental Europe. Very often is the British national identity regarded as a threat in deepening of the EU integration, at least in some fields.²²

Frequently, we may come into touch with terms as for instance “the English Parliament as “the Mother of Parliament”, “English is the best!”, “We have the most stable democracy and institutions”²³ telling us that the social distinction is still flourishing and intensify the nation pride.

3.1.3 Insular isolation

One of the factors which influence the British character is the geography. Living on the island on the edge of the continent, surrounded by the oceans and having good connections with its colonies ensured Britain trade expansion to other continents and contributed to its economic growth and prosperity.²⁴

²⁰ Martin řezníček, “Proč Jsou Britové Euroskeptičtí?” BBC World Service, http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/omnibus/eu_britain.shtml (accessed December 2, 2011).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Daniel Hannan and Douglas Carswell, “Localism, Nationalism and the Future of the Union,” *Times*, May 3, 2007. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/letters/article2057075> (accessed August 5, 2010); Charles Grant, “Why Is Britain Eurosceptic?” *Centre for European Reform* (December, 2008): 6-8, www.cer.org.uk.

²³ Mark Leonard, *Britain Tm: Renewing Our Identity* (London: Demos, January, 1997), 18-21., http://books.google.com/books?id=m1_sSvAd-XcC&pg=PT31&lpg=PT31&dq=the+nation+pride+of+English,+english+parliament+the+mother+of+parliaments&source=bl&ots=jGdgnF-2fW&sig=x1Rq4ddWx5Z6JO_KLiTl_s9O188&hl=en&ei=-SDATY2sJs7qOZSo_dwE&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=resul (accessed March 3, 2011).

²⁴ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 2-8

English character, Paxman argues, is to a large extent determined by the privilege of being an isolated island from other countries in Europe. In the 16th century England was not a great maritime power, instead people lived in the English countryside and the sea around them presented defence, safety and security.²⁵

The “insular neurosis” is deeply rooted in the British minds, which is why the evacuation of British troops from German Nazis in May 1940 of Dunkirk, is still a powerful symbol. The concept of insularity has a special place in the imagination of Britons. As a result of the insularity isolation Britons were grown with high confidence in themselves, but to their disfavour, they did not meet at all in what way the things going on elsewhere.²⁶

3.2 Give up national symbol or accept euro

One of the hottest topics in Britain's debate is the introduction of the single European currency - euro and recently, it is the main and very sensitive theme of Britons while the European integration comes to mind.

From the ancient time, the pound is a symbol of national sovereignty and now it should be given up? “Country which lost its own currency is waiving its right to govern itself. Such country is no longer free” Thatcher said. And since her governing this view persists in the majority of Britons.²⁷

There are those who follow the euro. However, it is a very tiny minority that believes that a single currency will help to strengthen the integration, further it will help to reduce interest rates, facilitate trade procedures, etc. Opponents of the euro, representing 65% in the United Kingdom have arguments, which protect the national currency, not only from a sentimental point of view. Number of arguments has been put forwards against the introduction of the Euro such as the British different economy cycle comparing to the European economies also the exchange rate of a pound is far more bounded to the U.S. dollar; moreover, the British economy has a different structure consisted of a much larger

²⁵ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), 123-126

²⁶ Ibid., 32-33.

²⁷ Martin řezníček, “Proč Jsou Britové Euroskeptičtí?” BBC World Service, http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/omnibus/eu_britain.shtml (accessed December 2, 2011).

share of financial institutions than in continental Europe and lastly, according to the conservatives, the operation of single interest rates throughout Europe is a misconception.²⁸

All in all, according to the representatives of the country as well as the majority of the population, the emotional ties to the pound persist and the economic advantages which should bring the introduction of the euro in a form of better and higher investments, exports and lowering the unemployment did not convince the majority of the population.²⁹

Eventually, recent Eurozone economic problems only strengthen their belief that introducing the euro would not be the right choice.

3.3 Post-war idea

Another reason, which probably is an extinction and, which is mainly perceived by the post-war dying-out generation, is an image of the EU as a prevention of war conflicts and keeping the peace in Europe. Actually, this was the initial idea of establishing the European Community after the Second World War. However, all Brits were and still are not wholly equated with this idea. Of course they wanted to precede any more wars but for them, it was mainland Europe that was the initiator of most of the wars and Britain must have been involved in these wars unwillingly. As Paxman stated: “Britons saw themselves as stoic, quiet, disciplined, kind, honest and decent people, who denied all benefits, such as people who would much rather weed beds in the garden instead of defending the world against Nazi’s tyranny.”³⁰

Hence, Britons were and many still remain in favour of an idea that it would be better not to engage much with the European affairs and maintains its cautious and rather sidelined attitude.³¹

3.4 Special relationship

Friendship with the United States replaced the Brits a need to be intricately involved in the chaotic and confused European continent. Since the Second World War, this relationship

²⁸ Ibid; Pedro Schwartz, *The Euro as Politics*, The European Commission (accessed March 2, 2011), 19-28.

²⁹ Martin řezníček, “Proč Jsou Britové Euroskeptičtí?” BBC World Service, http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/omnibus/eu_britain.shtml (accessed December 2, 2011);

³⁰ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), 148-154; David Gowland, Arthur Turner and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1-3.

³¹ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 119-125.

has been developing, and the common ties were becoming stronger and stronger. This “union” was based on the English speaking community and mutual history and traditions.

What strengthened relations with the United States and drew Britain even closer, not only in terms of material aid after the World War II., was the cooperation on the technological and financial development of the military and scientific research into space, design of a nuclear weapon and design of the intercontinental ballistic missiles in the 50s.³²

Furthermore, the special relationship has always been closely tied by the ideological beliefs of the ruling elite as the support of Thatcher to President Reagan during the Cold War; Britain’s approval, under the leadership of John Major, of Persian Gulf War or Blair's support to president Bush in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, etc.³³

Likewise, many EU countries now attempt to define the EU as a counter-weight to the United States. For them, it carries a positive connotation because it is considered as an advantageous room for manoeuvre in international affairs. For Britain, in contrast, again, it is seen as a threat of the "special relationship” and it is perceived as a restriction on Britain’s common foreign policy with the USA.³⁴

3.5 The loss of the colonies

For Britons, who came from the execution of the global agenda as a colonial power, the European experience was a necessary adoption of narrowed and more inward position.

Since the late 18th century, the United Kingdom was the largest empire and ruled the world (44 colonies in 5 continents). Rather than seeking trade opportunities in mainland Europe, they sought raw materials, possessions, trade and power overseas. And they made a good decision. This colonialism brought prestige and wealth, increased military power, exports and international trade. It was standing behind the industrial revolution and participated in the scientific and medical advances, financial and manufacturing development.³⁵

³² David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain (Background Books)* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), 168-169.

³³ John Elliott, “Laid-Back Britain Tolerates Everything, Except the Sate,” *The Sunday Times*, April 10, 2005. http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article86531.ece (accessed October 5, 2010); Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 118.

³⁴ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 113-117.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 117-119; Niall Ferguson, *Britské impérium: Cesta k modernímu světu* (Praha: Prostor, 2007), 21-27.

In the 20th century came a fundamental change. Great Britain had to deal with the consequences of the war. The withdrawal from the empire and the loss of its colonies due to the growing nationalism and their self-determination was for Britain inevitable. So that Britain lost the dominant position of the world superpower and had to deal with an economic decline and reconciled with the changing Europe in every aspect of life. This significant change certainly reflected negatively the nation self-perception and made Britain seek for a new identity and direction and re-valued its impact within the world scale.³⁶ Many people argue that Britain's joining the EC was a mean how to get back on the leading position and become a powerful state again.

3.6 Monarchy and sovereignty

Strategic and planned as well as unexpected and revolting turns and events occurred at various periods with hands on changing attitudes and hopes for future British nation's development. Yet, Great Britain formed into a modern and welfare state. And after some ups and downs in the recent decades, Great Britain is receiving its superpower status again.

British political system operates more than 1500 years. State structures such as monarchy, parliament, government, and law have developed continuously often unevenly pragmatic rather than in a revolutionary ways. And this experience, or rather the inexperience of the turbulent massive bloody revolutions, fighting and wars, as we know from continental Europe (revolutions in France, the World War II., etc.) is the cause of quite peaceful evolution of the British state and nation associated with the insular tranquil conservative mentality with preferences for traditional customs and institutions and distrust and suspicion of change for a change's sake.³⁷ In general, we may say that the monarchy in the last two centuries flourished since it was an embodiment of the liberal constitutionalism and was playing a key role in a definition of the national identity in contrast to less liberal foreign regimes.³⁸

In Great Britain, the power of the monarchy has never become an absolute and always remained limited - firstly by the rich nobility and later, by both houses of parliament.

³⁶ Ibid., 25-27.

³⁷ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 9-10.

³⁸ Barlow Richard, "Should We Give up the British rebate from the European Union Altogether," *Telegraph*, March 26, 2010. <http://debate2010.telegraph.co.uk/ideaView?id=087A0000000362IAA> (accessed December 15, 2011).

Political power was distributed among a larger number of political entities, and similarly, in consequence, the wealth was distributed. Taxes have been possible to select only by the consent of the parliament. Wealthy individuals were able to be largely assured that any absolute ruler could not seize their property. This fact will become a powerful boost to entrepreneurs in the future and has the effect that English inherited a very deep belief in individual freedom.³⁹

Naturally, either Britain has not escaped the influences coming from abroad during the long historical process. Ethnic cultures, immigrants, growing globalisation and multiculturalism have caused that Britain must face and adapt to these new social and economic trends but the absence of any external successful military invasion since the Norman Conquest AD 1066 allowed the individual nations of the United Kingdom to develop an internally distinctive way.⁴⁰ Therefore, for many Britons the acceptance of the EU governance represents a threat in the sense of voluntarily surrendering decision-making powers, which is unacceptable, and they try to obstruct this process and prevent its further deepening.

³⁹ Niall Ferguson, *Britské impérium: Cesta k modernímu světu* (Praha: Prostor, 2007), 387-389; Charles Bremner, "How Britain Rose from its Sickbed and Become an Envy of Europe," *Times*, October 15, 2004. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article1930383.ece> (accessed January 6, 2011)

⁴⁰ Ivan Dearlove, Brian Stone, Keith Downer and James Kirby, "What Is It to Be English," *Times*, November 22, 2005. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/article2038251.ece> (accessed October 5, 2010);

John Oakland, *British Civilization, an Introduction*, 7th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 2-3, <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/0415365228/pdfs/chapter.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2011).

4 EUROSCEPTIC BRITAIN

For most of the European states, the opportunity to join the European Community (later European Union) presented sustainable peace, democratic development, economic and socio-economic advancement, while for the UK joining the European Communities was associated with a national decline, weakening the position of colonial power and loss of the superpower status.

4.1 Winston Churchill approach towards the integration

“We have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked, but not combined. We are interested and associated, but not absorbed.”⁴¹

Winston Churchill

From this Churchill's quote, we can observe Britain's attitude to the European integration at his time. Although he was not against the creation of the "United States of Europe" and the "Council of Europe" - the first European institution, in whose establishment he had been involved, and was also an early proponent of the pan-European idea, he never thought that Britain or the British Commonwealth should become an integral part. Churchill's attitude towards the EU has been imitated by many of the Prime Ministers, who followed him.⁴²

4.2 Pragmatism of Great Britain versus federalism of the European Community/ European Union

During Churchill's governance, we may feel that Britain led towards an integrated Europe; however, later Great Britain drew off from this acting and underlined its position of the empire with ties to the United States.

Since Macmillan's government, who took over the prime minister position, is the obvious conservative strategy of pragmatic nationalism that can be proven in the following approaches: institutional dynamic tools based on the Anglo-Saxon governance, the so-called *laissez-faire* in the global economy, which was the fundamental opposition in

⁴¹ “Remembrance Day 2003,” The Churchill society London, 1990, <http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/Address.html> (accessed March 11, 2011)

⁴² Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 30-32.

comparison with the EC approach, oppositional attitude toward the federalist Europe's development and transfer of powers to the supranational level. The importance of maintaining British business, political and even emotional ties with its colonies and former colonies, most of them integrated into the Commonwealth, the UK refusal to join a customs union, etc. In other words, the Brits were (and many still remain) very far from the policy objectives of the EC/EU.⁴³

What also makes the United Kingdom different, in comparison with other European continental countries is its legal system. Great Britain has a very specific political system with its peculiar culture, known as Westminster model.⁴⁴ It also has a different system of law based on the Common Law tradition. Although Britain is a constitutional monarchy, unlike the continental custom, has no written constitution.

4.3 Political parties and their anti or pro-European attitudes

Relations between individual parties across the political spectrum of British parliament to the EU may be presented as questionable. The main reason for this assertion is the fact that the parties are not themselves assured what position to adopt. The issues of the European Union integration are so ambiguous and broad, that even members within the same political party have opposite opinions on this issue. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that, for example, during a ruling term of different politicians, his or her opinion on the EU policy issues have changed entirely, not to mention the ideological struggles within the British political parties throughout the years.

Since the 17th century, two political entities - Whigs and Tories have been performing on the British political scene. Whigs supported the liberal attitudes, to all protestant religions behaved tolerantly, whereas the Tories posed stricter attitude toward defectors from the English Church, and did not want to be involved in Europe much. They put emphasis on the entire British Empire. Over the years from these political parties have developed two main current parliamentary parties – the Conservative party and the Labour party.⁴⁵

⁴³ Duncan Watts and Colin Pilkington, *Britain in the European Union Today*: Third Edition (Politics Today), 3 ed. (Manchester University Press, 2005), 207-213.

⁴⁴ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 13-20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 148-156.

4.3.1 Conservatives

Conservative Party could be described as a traditionally patriotic party, which more than anything else prefers British interests.

Generally speaking, Great Britain takes a certain indifferent attitude to the European integration process. Even if the conservatives were against entering into the EC (as well as Labour Party) later were the Conservatives the ruling party which welcomed the entering. During the 20th century, it appeared sometimes more (during Heath's premiership) or far less (during Thatcher's governing) pro-European, but has never fully endorsed the whole European Union policy.⁴⁶

The current position of the mainstream of the Conservative Party indicates reluctant acceptance of the EU membership. As Cameron, leader of the Conservatives and current prime minister, stated, he opposes any kind of further integration.

Surely, conservatives as a whole no longer wish re-negotiations of Great Britain's membership or even possible withdrawal from the EU, even though some party members suppose that "Britain would do far better outside the EU without suffering all the burdens of regulation from the union"⁴⁷, instead they are occupying a position of the neutral members and are trying to take every opportunity of benefits for Britain within the EU.

4.3.2 Labours

Comparing with Conservatives, Labour Party was more pro-European broadly speaking. Just as we can find conflicting opinions within the Conservative party, the same situations may be found in the Labour party. Labours began with the negative attitude towards the entering the EC, subsequently initiated and asked for withdrawal, organized referendum concerning the Britain's membership (1975, unsuccessful for Labours), but later they have been changing their attitude to be more and more pro-European, most significantly seen during Blair's premiership.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 30-34; Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, ²⁰⁰⁴), 162-164.

⁴⁷ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 129-134.

⁴⁸ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 171-174.

4.3.3 Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats are consistently pro-European in their outlook since the beginning; they even urged the membership and complain that Britain needs to engage further with the EU. They are, for the most part, committed to signing the draft of the EU constitution, and they agree with the introducing of the common European currency. In the past, they also gave strong support to the signing of the Treaty of European Union and the Lisbon Treaty as well. Their disadvantage is their low number, with a little degree of seriousness, and therefore, it is difficult for them to enforce their views.⁴⁹

4.3.4 Minor political parties

Generally, we can say that the smaller parties in the United Kingdom are broadly pro-European. The reason for this attitude is quite simple - the European Union is seen as a potential source of revenue and the field to the successful enforcement of domestic, local policies.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, even at these minor parties - the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru in Wales; in Northern Ireland Ulster Unionists (UUP), Democratic Unionists (DUP) and Sinn Fein can be observed initial disagreement with the membership in the EU and recently some disapproval with the EU policies. Such as - an objective of Sinn Fein is to preserve the sovereignty and neutrality of Ireland, thus is against Common Foreign and Security Policy. The SNP expressed its opposition stance regarding the Common Fisheries Policy and call for returning competence of this policy back at the national level. In addition, Plaid Cymru, which defends the interests of Wales, is against the Common Agricultural Policy, which is for Wales, as the agricultural part of Great Britain highly disadvantageous.⁵¹

An exception between the smaller parties, which are in general pro-European, is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which is in fundamental opposition to the

⁴⁹ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 175.

⁵⁰ David Baker and David Seawright, *Britain For and Against Europe: British Politics and the Question of European Integration*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5-6, http://www.amazon.co.uk/Britain-Against-Europe-Politics-integration/dp/0198280785/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1304421622&sr=8-2#reader_0198280785 (accessed March 10, 2011). Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 139-143.

⁵¹ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 139-143.

EU and was essentially based on this ground. The problem of the UKIP is that the vast majority of Britons does not see the EU membership as a key election issue which made it difficult for UKIP to have a greater political impact.⁵²

4.4 Thatcherism

With Euroscepticism in the British context is also associated prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990), who effectively marginalized the issue - European integration. As a consequence, euroscepticism in the United Kingdom has acquired even more power.⁵³

At the beginning Thatcher (when entering the EC, she was the minister of education) was convinced about the right decision to enter the EC, since succumbing to false claims by Edward Heath, the prime minister between 1970-1974, that Great Britain will not lose its sovereignty. Over the years, her attitude evolved from a certain naive trust that there was no attempt to create a centralized superstate, to rising scepticism and eventually rejection of the creation of the European Union and the request for withdrawal from the EU.⁵⁴

A moral vision of Thatcher carried elements of British patriotism, nationalism, traditionalism - the defence of traditional institutions like the monarchy, sovereignty of the nation-state, the church, family, the preservation of Christian values as well as protestant ethics.⁵⁵

Thatcher's policy, known as Thatcherism was typical for its support of an idea of a strong state as a combination of traditional liberal approach in economics and a conservative approach in defending the state. The interference of the state on the economy was minimal, contrary to the fields of domestic and external security, rule of law and order where the impact of the state was enlarged. She advocated strongly the national representative government where the nation sets its own laws without bossiness of the Brussels bureaucracy.⁵⁶

As Thatcher stated: "What we should grasp, however, from the lessons of European history is that, first, there is nothing necessarily benevolent about programmes of European integration; second, the desire to achieve grand utopian plans often poses a grave threat to

⁵² Ibid., 139.

⁵³ Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 102-106.

⁵⁴ Lukáš Petřík, *Konzervativní revoluce Margaret Thatcherové a Ronalda Regana* (Brno: Centrum pro studiu demokracie a kultury, 2008), 196-198.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 144-155.

freedom; and third, European unity has been tried before, and the outcome was far from happy.”⁵⁷ We can see a fundamental disagreement with the creation of unified Europe, and the formation of the EU, in which, according to Thatcher, democracy cannot be fully put into practice due to the lack of its common elements, i.e. common history, language, culture, customs, traditions and institutions.

All in all, Margaret Thatcher’s political acting and supporting the national interests primarily helped to increase the prestige of Great Britain in the world.

Her credit in the re-establishing the UK as a superpower again, countering the expansion of communism, defending the national interests and promoting global free market, deepening a special relationship with the USA by the common strategic perspective of their foreign policy, certainly cannot be denied.⁵⁸

On the other hand, for what Thatcher is blamed for is that she did not prevent the centralization of Europe, in contrary, she helped it. Despite her eurosceptic opinions and politics, she helped to the transmission of power of national governments and parliaments to Brussels to build the single market (SEA). However, the concept of the EC led towards the single European state since the beginning and if Thatcher had wanted to avoid the loss of Britain’s sovereignty, she would have had to withdraw from the EC. At that time, she did not even think about it as one of the reasons was a problem in her own party, where she had to deal with a strong pro-European wing, which eventually contributed markedly to her fall.⁵⁹

4.5 John Major and the Maastricht Treaty

After the downfall of Margaret Thatcher, the situation in the country changed and a growing public support for a pro-European position appeared (surprisingly, the highest level of support since the 1975 referendum). The initial objective of John Major’s government (1990-1997) to the European Community was to rebuild those relations with the EC countries that were alienated during the Thatcher’s governing.⁶⁰ As we can see from

⁵⁶ Ibid., 191-217.

⁵⁷ Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2003)

⁵⁸ Lukáš Petřík, *Konzervativní revoluce Margaret Thatcherové a Ronalda Reagana* (Prague: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2008), 217-218.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 217-218.

⁶⁰ Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 114-119.

his speech, “My aim for Britain in the Community can be simply stated. I want us to be where we belong. At the very heart of Europe. Working with our partners building the future.”⁶¹

Even though he was significantly pro-European than his predecessor, dealing with problems such as the pace and extensity of the integration must have solved as well. Soon after Major's arrival to the head of the government, he was under severe strain. After heated debates, with the support of the Labour Party and the Liberals and against the protest of many conservatives, eventually succeeded and Maastricht Treaty finally passed through the British Parliament in 1993. Based on the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union was created, aimed at closer cooperation between Member States than ever before, including the common foreign, security and social policy, and within the European Monetary Union (EMU) - the common European currency - the euro was introduced.⁶²

Premier had to cope with the ever increasing euroscepticism of Tories, but his position had improved after conditioned Britain's participation by several conditions – so called opt-outs. He negotiated the postponing of the application of treaties on EMU and protocols of common social policy, because of socialist signs in the unemployment policy.

He managed to prevent potential communitarisation (i.e. the introduction of majority voting, strengthening of the European Commission and European Parliament) of cooperation on foreign policy and home affairs. Furthermore, John Major refused to accept the new name for the community and instead of “federation” enforced “union”. He considered these results as a great personal achievement. On the other hand, other member states have increased their country's integration process, and Britain found itself at the very edge of this process and in many areas has lost influence in its further formation.⁶³

In 1992, respectively on 16 September, later called "Black Wednesday", John Major had to face a monetary crisis. His government was forced to withdraw the sterling from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) after the British pound had fallen to bellow the agreed 6 percent range. Europhobia broke records in the United Kingdom. Although,

⁶¹ Ibid., 115.

⁶² Kenneth O. Morgan and Martin Kovář, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 516-517.

⁶³ David Gowland, Arthur Turner and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Routledge, 2009), 116-127.

the other member states must have undergone a similar situation, Major's government suffered a deep wound, and was accused of having mishandled the situation best.⁶⁴

4.6 Tony Blair

Major's successor, Tony Blair, achieved unrivalled victory in the elections 1997th.

A young, dynamic leader of the Labour Party, decided to transform the Labour Party into a modern political party - New Labour Party purged of the influence of powerful central trade unions and old-style socialists as well as a pragmatic approach towards the EU.⁶⁵

Despite his reformist ideas, transformation efforts and leadership of the country, Blair's government in relation to the EU in most respects followed the Major's administration and obeyed the Major's creed – “belong to the very heart of Europe“.⁶⁶

We can even say that Blair was more enthusiastic about the EU in some ways. Within the Treaty of Amsterdam, in 1997 Blair signed up the country for the Social Chapter (thus renouncing one of the opt-outs that Major had negotiated). The Blair's government, especially during Britain's presidency to the EU in the second half of 2005, was eager to reform some of the common EU policies (Common Agricultural Policy, budget), which involve directly the UK to a large extent, but without much success. Added to this, Blair was also keen on enlarging the EU and to develop its international role.⁶⁷

Despite all of these pro-European efforts, it was evident that Great Britain's politics was characterised by its intergovernmental policy elements, meaning to definitely preserve the European Union, but as an alliance mainly economic in nature, which the unity of the political institutions needs only very marginally.⁶⁸ Though Britain has opted out the exception for social policy, but kept the exception of EMU, a selective access to the Schengen acquis and affairs of the "high politics" as well as gave a clear preference for intergovernmental cooperation and a focus on transatlantic security ties.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 263-265; Kenneth O. Morgan and Martin Kovář, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 516-517; Kenneth O. Morgan and Martin Kovář, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 517-519.

⁶⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan and Martin Kovář, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 517-519.

⁶⁶ Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie* (Praha: Grada, 2010), 359-363.

⁶⁷ Lenka Rovná, Zuzana Kasáková a Jan Váška, *Evropská unie v členských státech a členské státy v Evropské unii* (Praha: VIP Books, 2007), 174-175.

⁶⁸ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 241-269.

⁶⁹ Lenka Rovná, Zuzana Kasáková a Jan Váška, *Evropská unie v členských státech a členské státy v Evropské unii* (Praha: VIP Books, 2007), 168-175.

Continuous efforts to increase the growth of power to the European institutions, the establishment of the euro on 1 January 1999, made British politicians cautious and reserved (so called "wait and see policy"). Lately, rejection of the European constitution, Blair's reversal of a previously promised referendum on the EU Constitution, was quite anticipated development of the British reluctant attitude towards the EU.⁷⁰

4.7 Gordon Brown

After a takeover of power in the country by Gordon Brown's government (2007-2010), we can observe fewer amounts of enthusiasm in his policy towards the EU than its predecessor. A typical aspect of Brown's presidency was preserving and promoting Britishness.

"British values have much to offer, persuading a global Europe that the only way forward is intergovernmental not federal, mutual recognition not one-size-fits-all central rules, tax competition not tax harmonisation, with proper political accountability and subsidiarity, not a superstate."⁷¹ He was no exception among the Labour politics in giving priority to the British values and despite accepting the EU; he still kept a certain oppositional attitude towards integration.

However, Brown could not avoid a further deepening of the integration and so in 2007 the controversial Treaty of Lisbon has been signed by Brown, against the background of a largely hostile British press, general public as well as many politicians.⁷²

4.8 David Cameron

In the last parliamentary elections, held on May 2010 won the Conservative Party and David Cameron has become a prime minister, who with the help of the Liberal Democrats led by Nick Clegg formed a coalition.

It is stated that Cameron is the most eurosceptic leader of the Conservatives⁷³. To characterize deeply Cameron's attitude towards the EU, we would probably need a longer time perspective, however, it is already evident that as a leader of the Conservative Party is

⁷⁰ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010), 529-531; Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie* (Praha: Grada, 2010), 359-363.

⁷¹ Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 145.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 144-146.

⁷³ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 133.

in his perception towards the European issue anything but sympathy with his partisans as well as former conservative prime ministers.

Another example of a protest of Great Britain against the working of the EU illustrates a creation of a new faction in the European Parliament - Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) formed by the British government party (under Cameron's leadership)- the Conservative Party and other EU countries (55 members from eight member EU countries) in 2009.

According to Cameron, the reason for the new faction is to deviate from the too centralizing direction, which leads to still deeper EU integration. ECR strives for a more open and flexible approach, which also puts more emphasis on alliance with the USA. Federal Europe is not the aim of the ECR; instead, pursue the plurality of opinions, which, according to the ECR may be the only asset for the European society and democracy. ECR rejects bureaucratization of Europe and creation of a "single centralized superstate".⁷⁴

⁷⁴ "The ECR in the European Parliament," European Conservatives and Reformists Group, <http://www.ecrgroup.eu/ecrg-and-eu.asp> (accessed December 12, 2010).

5 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE EU AND INFLUENCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON GREAT BRITAIN

It is true that the UK position has changed after 1945. The colony had disappeared so as the world's superpower status and the post-war era was accompanied by the economic crisis that peaked in 1970. Despite all, the visions about the terrible decline of the British state are a bit misleading. Throughout the twentieth century, Britain was among those of the richest and prosperous countries. British science and technology have maintained its level. University of Oxford and Cambridge have always been among the best in the world. The focus of the global financial trade also remained in the City of London and the rise of prosperity followed after the aggressive economic improvements of the British economy since 80s, when the elimination most of the structural problems were managed.⁷⁵

Gross national product from 1948 to 1973 grew very satisfactory with rate of 3 percent per year and the living standard of an average Briton increased by 300% in the years 1945 to 2000.⁷⁶

In the 70s, many thought that the crisis will lead to major social upheavals and revolutions, but deep-seated universal respect for national institutions resisted.⁷⁷

5.1 Political-economic perspective

There is a major dispute to what extent the EU's regulatory regime restricts flexible and globalised British economy and why the British economy might be considered as another potential cause of the British euroscepticism.

The economy of the United Kingdom is made up of business and financial activities rather than of manufacturing and production. This composition has resulted in the domination of business, which focuses on maximizing the economic flexibility business and sales of financial assets worldwide. The power of financial capital, supported by institutional subordination of the state, has been creating a direct relationship between the government and global market forces, which is not typical for other European countries.⁷⁸ Moreover, to displeasure of other EU countries, the United States has been involved in the

⁷⁵ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 158-160.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 158-160.

⁷⁷ Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), 49-56.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 147-149.

United Kingdom GDP by far greater shares of foreign investments, inside and out, in comparison with its European rivals.⁷⁹

Since the mid-90 years, the British economy surpassed in many indicators the main economies of Western Europe - France, Germany and Italy. Apart from the effects of recent global crisis and some drawbacks (the already mentioned low production), Britain may boast of a relatively stable high growth and low unemployment. Eventually, implementation of Thatcher's structural fund has been beneficial for the British economics (liberalisation of labour markets, the openness of foreign investment as well as the British rebate negotiated by Thatcher, etc.)⁸⁰

Although today, following the global crisis, there are increased talks about transformation of financial markets their regulation and control, in our case by the EU institutions, it is very unlikely that the United Kingdom would like to abandon its established economic model.

5.2 Devolution

Within the analysis of the British position in the EU is also appropriate to take into account the different territorial units of the United Kingdom and their views on the EU.

As far as we concern the union of the four nation of the United Kingdom, there were many tumultuous periods and still persist in competitive differences related not only to the political field. In the past, despite the tensions between different parts of the British Union, the idea of British identity was more or less shared by the individual countries. This was due to the imperial position of Britain in the world and identification with the powerful institutions of the state as a monarchy, law, parliament, military and the Protestant religion. However, pressure on the constitutional change increased in the 20th century resulting into the first devolution - the separation of Ireland in 1921 and the second devolution - transfer of certain political powers from London to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1998-9 and forming the National Assembly in Wales, Scottish parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie* (Praha: Grada, 2010), 376.

⁸⁰ Charles Grant, "Why Is Britain Eurosceptic?" *Centre for European Reform* (December, 2008): 6-8, www.cer.org.uk; Richard Baldwin, *Economics of European Integration*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Mcgraw Hill Higher Education, 2006), 88-89.

⁸¹ John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 68-72; 84-86.

As a consequence, devolution of powers to regional authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland called for change in several respects. Talking about the European issues, this change led to the expansion of institutional players in the system of European security policy, while meant to create new channels of communication between Britain and Brussels institutions. Finally, devolution has also brought some kind of permanent tension between the national and regional levels of governance.⁸²

The English saw that the governments in Scotland and Wales are offered autonomy, and the European Union is not pushing the future based on nation states, but rather created by a complex of relationships between a federal heart and regional pulse.⁸³

On the other hand, British citizens expressed a preference for local decision-making processes and 55% of the population values these, from their point of view, beneficial traces with Brussels. To illustrate this claim, a decisive impulse in the right direction was carried out in the conflict in Ireland, where the EU invested more than 1, 5 billion Euros in Ulster and so that helped to assist in the convergence of Britain and Northern Ireland.⁸⁴

In the recent years, we may register tendency to the localism of the Brits and, whereas in the past, there was a strong confidence to the national central government, nowadays people view authority with suspicion leading to schism and non-conformity in many areas of society.⁸⁵

In general, there is a very little difference between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a whole on attitudes to Europe. Where there are differences these tend to be an appreciation of specific benefits. Where divergences occurred over the last thirty years, these were related to specific political and historical context such as the 'Independence in Europe' campaign in the 1980/90s.⁸⁶

Great Britain managed to cope with the changes in political power caused by the devolution quite well and adapted the administrative apparatus of government to multilevel governance introduced by the EU while trying to maintain the existing rules, traditions and

⁸² Lenka Rovná, Zuzana Kasáková a Jan Váška, *Evropská unie v členských státech a členské státy v Evropské unii* (Praha: VIP Books, 2007), 190-197.

⁸³ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), 43-59.

⁸⁴ Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie* (Praha: Grada, 2010), 366-367.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ European Commission, "Attitudes Towards the EU in the United Kingdom," Flash Eurobarometer 318 (March, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_329_315_en.htm (accessed April 10, 2011)

culture. Even so, most issues are decided by the central government. However, there remains the question of how long the coherence of the British politics remains and when the individual parts of the country will call for a greater decision-making competence.⁸⁷

5.3 The role of the media

An important aspect of Britain's relationship towards the European integration is a low degree of public identification with the EU and doubts about the usefulness of its membership in the EU. Even where public and political elites advance their support for integration, it is often rather the pragmatic concept standing behind their rhetoric based on calculations of material and political costs and benefits than the expression of identification with the abstract ideals of the European unification. In this context, the important role plays media.⁸⁸

The public image of the EU is in the British media interpreted as a technocratic, top-down, remote and unaccountable organization. It is known as a source of easy financial gain, which also attracts negative publicity because of its enormous bureaucratic apparatus and its expenditure. The media exaggerate or completely reinterpret unauthorised articles and so extend the myths surrounding the EU's activities.⁸⁹

Euro myths such as: “The EU wants to make all our road signs show distances in kilometres; The EU wants to make Kent part of France; Our Parliament has to do what the EU says, and all our laws come from there now; the Lisbon Treaty means Britain must have armed EU police officers on patrol on our streets” and many others are constantly reported in the British press, so that no wonder, the public perception is negatively influenced and is distinctively nourished by the dichotomy, *them versus us*, mentioned earlier.⁹⁰

Objectivity of the British media has been subjected by the public survey. The results are that British citizens' replies indicate a generally perceived negative bias in reporting on

⁸⁷ Martin řezníček, “Proč Jsou Britové Euroskeptičtí?” BBC World Service, http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/omnibus/eu_britain.shtml (accessed December 2, 2010).

⁸⁸ Lenka Rovná, Zuzana Kasáková a Jan Váška, *Evropská unie v členských státech a členské státy v Evropské unii* (Praha: VIP Books, 2007), 168-181.

⁸⁹ David Gowland, Arthur Turner and Alex Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 211-214.

⁹⁰ “The EU in the United Kingdom,” *Euromyths*, http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/euromyths/index_en.htm (accessed April 20, 2011); Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004)

EU affairs on television, radio and in the written press: the “too negative” replies outnumbered the “too positive” responses. Reports appearing in the written press were seen to be the most negative: almost half of respondents (48%) indicated that reports about the EU tended to be unnecessarily negative. Even those respondents who expressed consistently unfavourable opinions about the EU and the UK’s membership mostly agreed that press reports about the EU were too negative (41% vs. 31% who saw them as objective and 16% who felt the reports were too positive).⁹¹

⁹¹ European Commission, “Attitudes Towards the EU in the United Kingdom,” *Flash Eurobarometer 318* (March, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_329_315_en.htm (accessed April 10, 2011)

6 RECENT SITUATION

In previous chapters, the assumptions of British identity and economic development are mentioned that were and some of them still remain the possible causes of the eurosceptic attitude of the United Kingdom.

It is obvious that Britain's position in the world has been developing throughout the centuries; it went through the periods of the Empire, Commonwealth and eventually became a member of the European Union. This process is continuing in the 21st century. In the past Britain's interests were focused worldwide and westward, after joining the EU, Britain started to cooperate with Europe.⁹²

Therefore, it would be only one-sided view to pinpoint the negative aspects of Great Britain towards the EU and not to mention progressive cooperation and integration efforts, and adoption of the EU policies, even though the British proposals and contributions are characterized by intergovernmental elements, a large effort to keep the European Union as an alliance primarily economic in character, which needs political institutions but not too bloated. Even in the matters of external, defence and internal affairs, Britain is anxiously guarding to sustain its decision-making process in London and supports moving of the minimum number of competences to Brussels.⁹³

6.1 British bright sides

Although Britain has negotiated several opt-outs from the common European legislation, is not a member of the Eurozone and the Schengen area, and stays sidelined in many political issues, yet we can say that Britain has contributed considerably in certain EU policies.

The fact is that a number of specific changes, reforms and proposals and documents of the EU legislation were triggered by a specific demand from the United Kingdom (i.e. actively contributes to the common European Security and Defence Policy, has been an active proponent of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), put the emergence of a European Ombudsman, contributes to the sustainable development strategy that will help strengthen the EU's role in regional politics, etc.)⁹⁴

⁹² Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain* (Hampshire, England.: Ashgate, 2008), chapters 2,3,6; John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 6 ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 7.

⁹³ Lenka Rovná, *Kdo vládne Británii?* (Praha: SLON, 2004), 13-18.

⁹⁴ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 171-179.

Furthermore, Britain is a great supporter of the EU enlargement, which will increase the security, prosperity and efficiency (during the UK Presidency in 2005 the accession negotiations with Turkey have started). When the EU extended in 2004 Great Britain showed its openness, i.e. by making their labour markets accessible for all citizens of the new EU member states.⁹⁵

Regarding the annual contribution to the EU budget, United Kingdom's contribution is increasing every year. In 2007, the UK's contribution to the EU budget was approximately 0.5% of the UK's Gross National Income (GNI). Between the years 2009/10 the United Kingdom's net contribution raised by 60% to 7, 2 billion Euros. The UK has a negative net position in the EU, meaning that it pays more than it directly receives from the EU budget. In 2009, this difference amounted to about 0.12% of GNI.⁹⁶

And it is not only the British contribution at the level of economics but, we can speak about the impacts on the European countries at the cultural level, too.

For instance, in Berlin thousands German music fans waved Union Jacks to relayed broadcast of the Proms and Rule Britannia, in the Czech Republic, Tesco becomes a household name. Drunken tourists and football hooligans (unfortunately for Britain) shape the local view as much as those universal icons - Harry Potter, Robbie Williams, David Beckham and James Bond illustrate what many of the continental Europeans see as the British supremacy in continental Europe.⁹⁷

Much to the displeasure of France and Germany the English language has taken over the dominant position and has become Europe's *lingua franca*. Beyond 40 % of Europeans claim to speak English as a first or second language, more than French German Italian and Spanish combined. Over the past decade, English has come to dominate work at the European Commission and other EU institutions as well as many companies adopted English as their corporate language (Thales, Siemens, EADS...)⁹⁸

⁹⁵ "Spojené království v Evropské unii," Euroskop.cz, <http://www.euroskop.cz/395/sekce/spojene-kralovstvi-v-evropske-unii/> (accessed February 25, 2011).

⁹⁶ Peter Laurence, "Eu Adopts Bigger Budget For 2010," BBC News (December 17, 2009), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8418275.stm> (accessed April 9, 2011). Ed Potton, *The EU Budget*, in the House of Commons Library, <http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snep-00864.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁹⁷ Charles Bremner, "How Britain Rose From Its Sickbed and Became the Envy of Europe," *Times*, October 15, 2004. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article1930383.ece> (accessed January 6, 2011).

⁹⁸ Ellis Wasson, *Dějiny moderní Británie* (Praha: Grada, 2010), 368-383.

All in all, Britain's perception of battling to defend beleaguered interests against a French – German driven machine has blinded it to a new reality, and the 27 member states may take a good example of British social model, business methods, diplomacy, economic affluence and cultural power.⁹⁹

6.2 Public opinion

Since the last and the only referendum held in 1975 where the majority of Britons approved the continuation in the EC, the attitude has changed. The data taken by the Eurobarometers survey, which brings knowledge of public opinion towards the EU and also compares the results of individual member countries has shown that today the Brits are not as much supportive of the EU as they used to be in the 70s (when, more than 60% voted for the staying in the EC¹⁰⁰).

From this survey, we can observe a long-term negative British opinion; in many charts, British public is thinking ill of the EU so that is occupying the front position if not the first ranks among the most eurosceptic countries.

The deterioration in perceptions and criticism of the direction of the EU are most striking in the United Kingdom (51% in 2010, raised by 9% since the previous year) comparing to other EU countries. The leading position amongst the EU countries Brits also possessed when it comes to the question, whether the EU is beneficial for their country. 27% Brits think that the EU is beneficial, whereas 60% has the opposite opinion.¹⁰¹

Another figure showed that Britons distrust the EU institutions (61% do not trust the EU Parliament and 56% the EU Commission) and as a whole, general distrust of the EU predominates in six countries and not surprisingly, the United Kingdom (64% vs. 20%) belongs to them, too.¹⁰²

At the same time, the survey reveals a lack of interest of British public towards the EU politics comparing to other EU countries. 56% of the British said they do not understand how the EU works, 82% responded they knew little or nothing about it. Six in ten British

⁹⁹ How Britain rose from its sickbed and became the envy of Europe

¹⁰⁰ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union (Politics Study Guides)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 146-151.

¹⁰¹ European Commission, "Attitudes Towards the EU in the United Kingdom," Flash Eurobarometer 318 (March, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_329_315_en.htm (accessed April 10, 2011); European Commission, "Public Opinion in the European Union," Eurobarometer 74 (February, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm (accessed March 5, 2011).

respondents indicated that they did not want to receive more information about the EU. 55% of British respondents felt that European issues had not been important in the last general election in May 2010.¹⁰³

□ Respondents were equally split as to whether the Conservatives or Labour best represented their views on Europe (24% and 23%, respectively.)¹⁰⁴

What can we draw from these results is the fact that the British public is not very enthusiastic about the European Union and Britain's integration to it. Even though Great Britain is becoming more liberal in views about how people live their lives because younger generations, who have more tolerant views, are replacing older, fewer tolerant ones. We would expect that at the same time, the attitude towards the EU will favourably start to change as well. Virtually, the truth is that the most positive perception of the EU was well above average among the youngest respondents (aged 15-24: 63%), full-time students (67%) and those with the highest level of education (59%), but the process of pro-europeanization in Great Britain is very slow.¹⁰⁵

Referring to the mentioned numbers and statistics, it is evident that Britain largely retains its rather eurosceptic stance and general disinterest in the European politics regardless of whether the British citizens are Labour or Conservative supporters.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ European Commission, "Attitudes Towards the EU in the United Kingdom," Flash Eurobarometer 318 (March, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_329_315_en.htm (accessed April 10, 2011); "Public Opinion in the European Union," Eurobarometer 74 (February, 2011), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm (accessed March 5, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Despite the continued specifics of Great Britain's participation in the European Union, undoubtedly the EU is reflected in all areas of the United Kingdom; its system of governance, economy, British culture and identity. Moreover, after analyzing the development of Great Britain within the EU in the 20th and 21st century, we may assume that the influences of the EU will even intensify.

A deep sense of Britishness, determined by the pride of the English language, culture, national symbols, traditions and sovereignty, is still evident as well as a continuing need to preserve these virtues. Any outside intervention or limiting elements and regulations dictated by the European Union are received with great disfavour.

Therefore, we may claim that Britain is rightfully regarded as a eurosceptic country. British citizens try to distance themselves and manifest a fairly strong suspicion of the European Union, even though they know very little or nothing about the way the EU works and how its decision-making process affects them now or in the future.

Based on the given evidence, the European Union is not an important subject for the Brits daily lives, whose are far more concerned about their domestic problems and partially British politics, too.

There is very likely chance that the future generations will hold a different opinion than the older ones. Many young Brits do not feel their Britishness with the same enthusiasm as their parents, grandparents and ancestors. Causes can be varied. Notably, I think that still growing globalization, immigration, multiculturalism, blurring of states 's borders and fading of national traditions as well as the increasing awareness of inability to cope alone (i.e. isolated European states) with waves of capital within the globalised market economy etc. will cause in the future, that Brits are willing to surrender parts of their national pride for the sake of the national welfare.

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P I The first appendix.

P II The second appendix.

APPENDIX P I: APPENDIX