

The Conservative Party, Policy Change, and Europe: 1997-2016

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Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of policy change in the Conservative Party on the question of European integration between 1997 and 2016. The thesis answers two principal research questions. Firstly, in what ways did European policy change in the Conservative Party between May 1997 and February 2016? Secondly, what caused these changes in European policy and how can they be understood in relation to exogenous and endogenous factors? It answers these questions through a qualitative analysis of 36 original interviews with party elites, 119 speeches, 267 parliamentary statements, 290 newspaper articles, and nine manifestoes. Additionally, it has drawn on secondary quantitative survey data from Ipsos Mori, YouGov, and the British Social Attitudes Survey. It concludes that policy has moved incrementally over the period from a minimalist-Soft Eurosceptic position to a more revisionist-Soft Eurosceptic position with Hard Eurosceptic elements. Policy experienced periods of both stability and volatility depending on the internal and external political context. Theoretically, it advances an approach centred upon new institutionalist theories. It argues this better accounts for the underlying processes and mechanisms behind policy change in political parties. In doing so it provides an integrated approach which can be applied to the future study of policy change in other political parties. This thesis makes an original contribution to both the literature on the Conservative Party and European integration, and policy change in political parties more widely. It does so by providing an empirically systematic and theoretically informed analysis of the development of European policy, an approach lacking in previous research, covering a period in which changes in policy over Europe in the Conservative Party would contribute directly to the June 2016 EU Referendum. As such, it also makes an important contribution to our understanding of the UK's historical path towards Brexit.

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‘Many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view’

Obi-Wan Kenobi – *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* (1983)

Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	page iii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix-x
<i>Summary</i>	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
<i>1.1 Thesis scope</i>	2
<i>1.2 Research methods and data collection</i>	2
<i>1.3 Structure of the thesis</i>	5
<i>1.4 Original contribution and key findings</i>	6
Chapter 2: Change in Political Parties	10
<i>2.1 Change in Political Parties</i>	10
<i>2.2 Endogenous Causes of Party Change</i>	14
<i>2.3 Exogenous Causes of Party Change</i>	20
<i>2.4 Conclusion</i>	28
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: New Institutionalism	30
<i>3.1 New Institutionalism</i>	31
<i>3.2 A New Institutionalist Framework of Institutional Change</i>	38
<i>3.3 Mechanisms</i>	42
<i>3.4 Conclusion</i>	53
Chapter 4: Conservative Party and Europe, 1997-2016: Analysis of Change	54
<i>4.1 Categorising Party-based Euroscepticism</i>	54
<i>4.2 May 1997-June 2001</i>	59
<i>4.3 June 2001- May 2005</i>	64
<i>4.4 May 2005 – May 2010</i>	71
<i>4.5 May 2010 – May 2015</i>	74
<i>4.6 May 2015 – February 2016</i>	82
<i>4.7 Conclusion</i>	86
Chapter 5: Europe and Policy Change under Hague, 1997-2001	91
<i>5.1 Historical Legacies</i>	91
<i>5.2 Rival Political Parties</i>	98
<i>5.3 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party</i>	102
<i>5.4 Critical Junctures</i>	107
<i>5.5 Public Opinion</i>	112
<i>5.6 Domestic Political Context</i>	120

<i>5.7 Internal Political Context</i>	124
<i>5.8 Pressure Groups</i>	127
<i>5.9 Individual Actors</i>	128
<i>5.10 Media</i>	132
<i>5.11 Conclusion</i>	133
Chapter 6: Duncan-Smith to Howard – Policy Change and Europe, 2001-2005	136
<i>6.1 Historical Legacies</i>	136
<i>6.2 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party</i>	139
<i>6.3 Rival Political Parties</i>	145
<i>6.4 Public Opinion</i>	150
<i>6.5 Domestic Political Context</i>	153
<i>6.6 International Political Context</i>	156
<i>6.7 Individual Actors</i>	157
<i>6.8 Conclusion</i>	165
Chapter 7: Cameron in Opposition – Policy Change and Europe, 2005-2010	167
<i>7.1 Historical Legacies</i>	167
<i>7.2 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party</i>	172
<i>7.3 Rival Political Parties</i>	179
<i>7.4 Public Opinion</i>	185
<i>7.5 Domestic Political Context</i>	188
<i>7.6 International Political Context</i>	190
<i>7.7 Individual Actors</i>	195
<i>7.8 Conclusion</i>	199
Chapter 8: Cameron in Government – Policy Change and Europe, 2010-2016	201
<i>8.1 Historical Legacies – 1997-2010</i>	202
<i>8.2 The 2010 General Election and the Coalition Agreement</i>	206
<i>8.3 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party</i>	212
<i>8.4 Public Opinion</i>	220
<i>8.5 Rival Political Parties</i>	224
<i>8.6 Domestic Political Context</i>	229
<i>8.7 International Political Context</i>	232
<i>8.8 Factions and Tendencies</i>	233
<i>8.9 Individual Political Actors</i>	239
<i>8.10 Conclusion</i>	241
Chapter 9: Conclusion	243
<i>9.1 Endogenous/Exogenous causes of Policy Change in Context</i>	243
<i>9.2 Contribution of the New Institutional Approach</i>	246
<i>9.3 Applying the Approach to other Examples</i>	249
<i>9.4 Conservative European Policy 1997-2016 and Brexit</i>	250
<i>9.5 Implications for Future Research</i>	251
<i>Appendix: List of Interviewees</i>	253

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

4.1 Conservative Eurosceptic Spectrum	page 56
4.2 Hall's Orders of Policy Change	56
5.1 Conservative MPs in the 1997-2001 Shadow Cabinet	105
5.2 UK Voters and Euroscepticism, 1992-1997	112
5.3 UK Public Attitudes towards the Euro, 1992-1997	113
5.4 UK Voters' Positions on Major Issues (Mean Scores), 1992-1997	114
6.1 UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 2001-2005	151
7.1 MP Ballots: Conservative Party Leadership Election, 2005	170
7.2 Conservative Member's Attitude to European Integration, June 2009	178
7.3 UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 2005-2013	185
8.1 UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 2008-2016	221

Figures

1.1 Levels of Change	page 11
5.1 Conservative Voters' Attitudes Towards EU Membership, 1987-97	115
5.2 UK Voters saying Europe No1 Issue, 1992-2001	117
5.3 UK Public Attitude towards the Euro, 1991-2001	119
5.4 UK Party Leader Satisfaction Ratings, 1997-2001	121
5.5 UK Voting Intention, May 1997-June 2001	122
5.6 'Best Party on Key Issue': Europe, 1997-2001	123
6.1 UK Public Attitude towards the Euro, 2001-2005	152
6.2 UK Voters saying Europe No1 Issue, 2001-2005	153
6.3 UK Party Leader Satisfaction Ratings, 2001-2005	155
6.4 'Best Party of Key Issue': Europe, 2001-2005	156
7.1 UK Public saying Immigration No1 Issue, 2004-2012	183
7.2 UK Voting Intention, 2005-2010	184
7.3 UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 1992-2015	186
7.4 UK Public saying Europe No1 Issue, 2005-2010	187
7.5 UK Party Leader Satisfaction Ratings, 2006-2010	189
7.6 'Best Party of Key Issue': Europe, 2005-2007	190
8.1 UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 1992-1996	221
8.2 UK Public saying Europe No1 Issue, 2010-2016	222
8.3 UK Public saying Immigration No1 Issue, 2010-2016	223
8.4 UK Voting Intention, 2010-2016	225

Summary

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis and explanation of policy change in the Conservative Party on the question of European integration, from May 1997 to February 2016. Firstly, it puts into context what is meant when we say that a political party has changed, before proceeding to examine the exogenous and endogenous factors that can influence a political party to change policy positions. Following from this, it considers how insights from new institutionalist theory can provide a more comprehensive explanation of how an institution like a political party changes policy over time. It achieves this by introducing further theoretical tools and mechanisms, such as path dependency and historical legacy, that helps provide a more detailed analysis of the processes behind policy change. It then traces Conservative European policy from May 1997 to February 2016, identifying the changes and continuities in chronological order. It categorises each period according to Lynch and Whitaker's typology of different varieties of Euroscepticism and identifies the type of change observed. The following chapters are then structured thematically, using the exogenous and endogenous factors of policy change and the new institutionalist theory approach, to analyse the causes of policy change from 1997-2001, 2001-2005, 2005-2010, and 2010-2016.

The main findings of the thesis are summarised as follows:

- Incrementally over the period European policy moves in a more Eurosceptic direction. Using the Lynch and Whittaker (2013) party-based Euroscepticism spectrum, it is categorized as moving from a minimalist-Soft Eurosceptic position in May 1997 to a revisionist-Soft Eurosceptic position with Hard Eurosceptic elements.
- Between May 1997 and February 2016 there were changes to policy on the single currency, referendums on further integration, repatriation of EU policy competencies, and the extent of participation in EU Justice and Home Affairs policy. Reform of EU immigration and welfare policy was introduced during the 2010-2016, as was the protection of the interests of non-Eurozone EU members. The position of Conservative MEPs in the European Parliament also changed multiple times.

- The degree to which exogenous or endogenous factors influenced policy is highly contextualized, with different factors being important at different times depending on the circumstances.
- In terms of endogenous causes of policy change, the role of political elites was consistently the most important driver of change. This includes not only the party leaders themselves, but also the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet ministers directly responsible for European policy. For endogenous factors, the influence of rival political parties (Referendum Party and UKIP) and the international political context were also important to policy change at different times over the period.
- European policy developed a Eurosceptic path dependency during the 1997-2016 period, in which the exogenous and endogenous factors combined with other influences on policy, such as historical legacies and contingent events, to keep policy on this path. This developed incrementally over time, in combination with a number of critical junctures, which stimulated more immediate change.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On January 23rd, 2013, during a speech at the Bloomberg news agency headquarters in London, David Cameron (2013a) committed his party to holding a future referendum on whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union (EU). Cameron's speech marked the first time a leader of the Conservative Party had publicly proposed an in/out referendum on UK membership of the EU. It was a critical juncture on a path that would eventually see the UK vote to leave the EU on June 23rd, 2016, in a national referendum. Many factors contributed to this result. But changing attitudes within the Conservative Party and the party's developing European policy after May 1997 were particularly important. The Conservative policy moved during this twenty-year period from a minimalist-soft Eurosceptic position, to a revisionist-Soft Eurosceptic position with Hard Eurosceptic elements (Lynch and Whittaker, 2013a). This change in policy, to the point at which many in the party could contemplate the UK leaving the EU, raises questions about what causes policy to change in modern British political parties and how these factors interact to produce this change.

This thesis aims to explain how the Conservative Party reached this point in the historical development of their position on European integration by analysing the causal factors which have shaped changes in the Conservative Party's European policy between May 1997 and February 2016. It will therefore answer the following research questions:

- In what ways has European policy changed in the Conservative Party between May 1997 and February 2016?
- What caused these changes in European policy and how can they be understood in relation to exogenous and endogenous factors?

As the review of the literature in Chapter 2 will show, existing theories of party change which focus on a variety of exogenous and endogenous factors are not without value. However, they do not consider enough how temporality, contextual circumstances, and the influence of historical events and actions shape policy and are arguably restricted as explanations to the period and groups of parties to which they were immediately directed. The power of ideas to shape policy change in political parties is also neglected, as is the role of individual agency, with a tendency for explanations to be overly structural and deterministic. If policy change is a process that takes place over time, a more comprehensive theoretical framework is needed in addition to the exogenous and endogenous factors of party change, to explain the

mechanisms at work. As will be developed in Chapter 3, this thesis proposes an integrated new institutionalist framework to overcome these inadequacies, drawing upon the strengths of the different strands of new institutionalist theory.

1.1 Thesis Scope

The justification for the time period this thesis considers, May 1997 to February 2016, is as follows. Firstly, this thesis argues the two events that bookend this period (May 2nd, 1997 following the general election, and February 19th, 2016, when Cameron announced the conclusion to UK-EU renegotiation deal talks and confirmed he would be supporting the UK remaining inside the EU) mark critical junctures in the history of the Conservative Party and European policy. As argued in more detail in Chapter 5, the period from May 1997 marks a critical juncture as the party changed to an openly Eurosceptic position following the general election defeat. From the Shadow Cabinet, to the parliamentary party and party membership, for the first time each was now majority Eurosceptic in composition. Whereas previous leaders, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, had adopted more Eurosceptic rhetoric and outlooks in the latter stages of their leadership, Hague was elected upon and openly articulated a Eurosceptic platform from the outset. This marked the start of a new period for the Conservative Party and European policy, and as such, is the most logical starting point for the analysis of this thesis.

After February 2016 a new period started, dominated firstly by the June 2016 EU referendum announcement, campaign, and vote. Secondly, from the subsequent aftermath of the referendum to the present, the question of how to negotiate a UK withdrawal agreement with the EU that is compatible with the result has been the focus of European policy. As such, February 2016 is the logical conclusion to the scope of this thesis, with the period following the referendum and including the withdrawal negotiations and transition period providing a new opportunity for future academic study of policy change in the Conservative Party on Europe.

Additionally, there are a number of more pragmatic justifications for starting the analysis in 1997, rather than, for example, 1992 or 1988. Firstly, a major strength of this thesis is the new data gathered through interviews with party elites. If the thesis had started from an earlier point it would have increased the likelihood that party elites with knowledge of the European policy development process would be retired from public life and therefore been either much more difficult to contact or have passed away. Moreover, it would have relied

more heavily on interviewees remembering events from which a substantial amount of time had passed, increasing the likelihood of inaccurate recollections of past events. Secondly, the thesis time period as it is already covers a significant period of time (19 years). Research which would have covered analysis of a 25 or 30-year period could potentially have been unmanageable considering the time and length constraints placed on both the researcher and thesis itself. The benefits of a more concise time period of 1997-2016 allows for a more detailed, in-depth, and higher quality of analysis than would have been practically possible if the thesis had covered a longer historical period. Thirdly, and as the bibliography of this thesis indicates, substantially more scholarship has already been completed on the Conservative Party and Europe during the 1988-1997 period than the post-1997 period. As such, the focus of this thesis on the 1997-2016 period allows for a clearer and more important original contribution to scholarship in this area to be made.

1.2 Research Methods and Data Collection

This thesis predominately uses an interpretative, qualitative approach to answer each of its research questions. It adopts process tracing as the main qualitative research method. Most of the primary data collected and analysed is qualitative. It has also been necessary to collect and use secondary quantitative data particularly on public opinion and voting intentions over time, or the attitudes of certain groups, in which secondary quantitative surveys are the best sources of information. These are used to triangulate with the primary qualitative data, as well as to test and challenge the evidence employed from personal accounts of political events.

Process tracing uses a qualitative analysis of multiple documentary sources, such as speeches, interviews, and historical records, to identify the causal mechanisms and sequences at work in everyday social processes in order to explain specific political, economic, or cultural outcomes in single or multiple case studies (Pedersen and Beach 2016; Bennett and Checkel 2015). Tansey (2007:765) observes that process tracing is an approach concerned with ‘developing and testing theory in ways that incorporate attention to the causal processes at work in political life – to the causal mechanisms that link causes to effects’. Process tracing is the approach used here as it enables the analysis of political phenomena which develop as a process over time.

To answer the first research question, a range of documentary data sources were analysed. Firstly, public speeches on European policy by party elites were used to trace the process of policy change over the time period. These were archived, annotated, and analysed using the qualitative data software *NVivo 10*. Public statements on European policy by Conservative Party spokesmen are a strong indicator of the party position on European policy at the time they are given. They are also much more frequent than party manifestoes and therefore allow for the development of European policy to be traced over time, in between the release of manifestoes. ‘Policy speeches’ are defined as stand-alone public speeches given by party elites, such as the party leader or foreign secretary, often with the main focus on one broad area of policy (crime, education, housing, etc). These types of public speeches are frequently used by the policy-making elites of political parties to give in-depth explorations of party positions on specific areas of policy, or to announce new or changed policy positions.

Analysis of policy speeches was supplemented by the use of party manifestoes (UK and European elections) to establish the party positions at elections, in addition to statements in the House of Commons, policy documents, newspaper articles or interviews, especially, but not exclusively, those by the party leader and shadow or foreign secretary. Through the tracing of public statements by key party elites, from multiple points in time across the period and using a wide range of documentary sources, a clear and detailed account of the development of European policy can be established.

A second set of documentary sources was also used, mainly to answer the second and third research questions. These include secondary sources such as the biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs of party elites close to the policy development process within the party, published diaries, historical studies, newspaper reports, and journalistic ‘insider’ accounts of the Conservative Party between 1997-2016. These were employed to support and corroborate explanations sourced from elite interviews, in addition to providing alternative evidence for European policy change.

Secondary quantitative data was also used, for the second and third research questions, in order to trace the development of public opinion. These included quantitative data on voting intentions and public opinion from organisations such as Ipsos Mori, YouGov, and the British Social Attitudes survey, to name the most frequently cited sources.

The primary data collection method used for answering the second and third research questions was a series of 36 semi-structured interviews with former and current Conservative

Party MPs, MEPs, Lords, special advisors, and other party officials. This provided new insights on the development of European policy in the Conservative Party during this period and is therefore a significant element of the original contribution this thesis makes.

Additionally, to gain an insight into the development of European policy during the Coalition government, several Liberal Democrats with first-hand experience were also interviewed. Many of the most high-profile individuals, and those currently or most recently serving in government positions, were naturally unavailable or unwilling to be interviewed. However, considering the difficulty in arranging interviews with party elites, a wide range of decision-makers and those with knowledge of the policy process were interviewed for this thesis (see Appendix). This includes former party leaders, deputy leaders, members of the Shadow Cabinet, and government ministers. Interviewees cover all the periods under analysis, and every effort was made to interview those from a variety of ideological positions on European integration from within the Conservative Party.

As a data collection method, elite interviews are important as they provide researchers with an original insight into the political processes that contribute towards policy development in a political party, collecting information from ‘first hand participants’ (Beamer 2002; Tansey 2007). They provide a useful way in which researchers can confidently generalise about the thought process of individuals in institutions such as political parties, as the individuals providing the information were active in the institution at the time (Goldstein 2002). In doing so, elite interviews can contribute towards establishing which internal and external factors most contributed to the development of European policy at different points in time during this period. Data from elite interviews can be used to corroborate information from other data sources, in addition to contributing to the reconstruction of specific events, or the involvement of certain political actors, that could have been significant to policy development and outcomes, but which are not currently covered in other documentary accounts (Richards 1996; Seldon 1988). In this way, elite interviews can be used to triangulate multiple data sources to improve the reliability of conclusions, as well as providing new additional information not available in from other sources (Davies 2001; Seldon 1988; Tansey 2007).

Interviews were semi-structured in format to allow for both specific questions to be asked of certain events, individuals or policy decisions, and open-ended questions to be asked so that broad issues surrounding the European policy development process could be explored (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). As Seldon (1988:12) notes of the unstructured sections of

elite interviews, ‘what interviewees have to say unprompted, the way and order in which they say what they say, can be all enlightening’. This balances the requirement for specific in-depth responses within a conversational approach, without falling into the trap of entirely unstructured interactions, which can produce poor information and unfocused ‘streams of consciousness’ (Beamer 2002:86). The questions set were focused on exploring the decision-making process behind European policy development, in addition to the internal or external institutional factors that could have influenced this process.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two draws upon a variety of literatures to establish and assess the exogenous and endogenous factors that contribute towards policy change in political parties. Chapter Three set outs how an integrated new institutionalist approach can contribute to a better understanding of policy change alongside the exogenous/endogenous causes of policy change discussed in Chapter Two, by providing theoretical tools and mechanisms which enable a more rigorous and sophisticated theoretical explanation of the processes behind policy change. Chapter Four provides a chronological analysis of the changes and continuities in Conservative European policy from May 1997 to February 2016. Chapters 5 to 8 examines the causal factors which most contributed towards policy change during this period. Finally, Chapter 9 provides a conclusion, summarizing the key findings, setting out additional examples for applying this approach, and the implications for future research in this area.

1.4 Original Contribution and Key Findings

The analysis in the chapters that follow makes the following original contributions to the body of academic literature on the Conservative Party, British political parties and European policy, and policy change within political parties. Firstly, this thesis contributes a more empirically systematic and theoretically informed approach to understanding the development of European policy in the Conservative Party. It does so by assessing change through the perspective of endogenous and exogenous causes of policy change, in addition to theoretical insights on how institutions change over time from new institutionalist theory. Previously, long-form academic accounts on this subject have concentrated on narrative and description, lacking an organized empirical analysis of what has been significant in influencing policy change and what has not (Crowson, 2006; Patterson, 2011). Additionally, arguments have often leaned too heavily on ‘rising Euroscepticism’ as a catch-all, general

explanation of the causes of policy change and has underused theory as a means to explain the nature of policy change.

Secondly, this thesis contributes a detailed empirical account of the development of European policy in the Conservative Party, 1997-2016. It does so with the benefit of original interview data from 36 interviews from elite individuals who experienced and participated in the policy development process directly, providing original first-hand insights often missing from other accounts. It aims to build upon the previous literature on the Conservative Party and European integration, providing an important contribution to what has historically been a major issue of interest in British politics since 1945, in addition to one that continues to attract widespread academic and public attention at the time of writing as the UK negotiates a deal to leave the EU in March 2019.

Thirdly, it provides a framework and approach which can be adopted for the future study of policy change in other political parties, combining the qualitative process tracing research method with the exogenous/endogenous causes of policy change and the integrated new institutionalist framework.

The main findings are as follows. Conservative Party policy towards the EU did move in a more Eurosceptic direction between 1997 and 2016. From May 1997 and to the end of the 1997-2001 parliament, policy maintained a minimalist-Soft Eurosceptic position. During the 2001-2005 parliament, under the leadership of Duncan Smith and Howard, the platform moved to a more revisionist-Soft Eurosceptic position with the party proposing specific areas of EU policy for repatriation to the UK. This was maintained post-2005 under the leadership of Cameron. There were certain points, most notably the immigration cap pledge under Howard and the in/out EU referendum commitment under Cameron, where European policy approached a rejectionist-Hard Eurosceptic position. However, during the period in question, there were no points when party policy as a whole is categorized as Hard Eurosceptic.

European policy changed on the single currency, the question of treaty referendums, areas of EU policy to repatriate, and whether to participate in EU Justice and Home Affairs policy. European policy also expanded to include new areas of policy. For example, the party included reform of EU immigration and welfare policy during the 2010-2015 parliament, which previously had not been included. During the same parliament policy also included the question of the rights and protections of non-Eurozone EU members, which had not been part of the party's agenda previously.

In terms of the endogenous and exogenous causes of change, over the course of the period, political leadership and individual agency was consistently the most influential endogenous casual factor. This included not only the party leaders but also other individual actors such as the shadow/foreign secretary, Cabinet members, and special advisors. Intra-party pressure groups were influential in government during the 2010-2016 period but had much less impact on policy during the opposition years. The ideological profile of the parliamentary and grassroots party, in terms of increasing Eurosceptic attitudes over this period, was a necessary internal condition for guiding policy change in a more Eurosceptic direction but cannot be attributed to any one policy change.

A further key finding is the contribution leadership elections have made to policy change on Europe. Commitments made on European policy by successful candidates, made during the competitive dynamics of the leadership elections, had long term implications for European policy. This occurred in 1997, when Hague proposed the 'two parliaments' policy on the single currency during the leadership election, and in 2005 when Cameron committed himself to removing Conservative MEPs from the European Peoples' Party in the European Parliament. The latter would have long-term implications for the relationship between the Conservative Party and other mainstream center-right parties in Europe.

Exogenous causes of policy change were also important, but the degree to which they influenced change fluctuated during the period. Rival political parties were the most significant factor here. Electoral competition, both real and perceived, from the Referendum Party during the 1997-2001 parliament, and UKIP in the later stages of the 2010-2015 parliament, were influential in convincing the party leadership to change policy. This included policy changes related to referendum commitments, EU immigration, and EU citizen welfare entitlements. Policy change was often influenced by the anticipation of future electoral competition. For example, committing to the in/out EU referendum in anticipation of UKIP success at the 2014 European and 2015 UK general elections.

The electoral performance of the party made an impact, but again this depended on the context of the election. The 1997 election was significant as it stimulated an endogenous change; the coming to power of leadership that was committed to changing policy in a Eurosceptic direction. The 2001 election persuaded Duncan Smith that the party needed to change policy on the single currency, while the 2005 election had little impact. The result of the 2010 election, and formation of the Coalition, changed much of European policy in order

to accommodate Liberal Democrat preferences. The 2015 election was less dramatic in this respect, though the manifesto and unexpected majority bound the party leadership into the referendum and renegotiation plan promised by Cameron in January 2013. This exogenous factor was often important for change as it stimulated endogenous change within the party, by persuading the party leadership that European policy needed to reflect new circumstances.

As with the rising Eurosceptic attitudes in the internal institutions of the party, the parallel development of Eurosceptic attitudes in UK public opinion toward the EU during 1997-2016 was an important external political condition for development of European policy. However, it was the increase in salience of immigration as a concern to the general public, specifically EU migration in the second half of the 2010-2015 parliament, which had more influence on policy than public attitudes to Europe. While public attitudes towards the EU grew steadily more Eurosceptic during the period, the EU/European integration as a political subject was generally ascribed a low priority by voters in public opinion surveys.

The international political context, events taking place or decisions made outside of the domestic political environment, also contributed to policy change. The most important influence here were developments in the EU and the Eurozone. Consistently over the period the Conservative Party changed and modified policy in reaction to the shifting political situation in the EU, the positions of prominent member states, and the direction and nature of European integration. European policy in this case was reactive, with little of this proactive policy change seen in response to anticipated change in the domestic political environment.

European policy mostly developed incrementally over this period, with policy building up in layers over time, but could change more abruptly in reaction to events. Policy would go through periods of relative stability, for example during the 2001-2005 parliament, but also experience periods of instability, such as during the negotiations to form the Coalition in 2010. Over the period individual policies would change, be modified, or dropped, and then get reintroduced under a new leadership depending on the influence of exogenous and endogenous factors. However, when individual policies or commitments to reform became institutionally entrenched in the parliamentary and grassroots sections of the party, these policies and commitments became path dependent and difficult to change.

Each step in this direction increased the costs to the leadership of changing course and made each further step in this direction more likely as positive feedback reinforced the initial decisions. Though there would be some critical junctures (1997 election, the October 2011

rebellion) that directly influenced policy change, change would also be encouraged from smaller contingent events and acts of individual agency. History and the sequence of events also contributed significantly to policy change, with past ideas, events, and individual actions shaping and constraining the decision-making process of each future party leadership.

Chapter 2: Change in Political Parties

This chapter outlines an approach for understanding how political parties change. It sets out to explore the literature on change in political parties and establish the key exogenous and endogenous factors that contribute towards this change. These factors will then form the structure for the thematic analysis in each of the separate empirical chapters on the Conservative Party and European policy change that follows. In addition, it also aims to establish the limitations of this approach and establish the areas in which the new institutionalist theoretical framework, set out in the chapter that follows, can address these limitations. It is specifically focused upon how and why political parties change their policy positions, so it will be this form of ‘change’ in political parties that is being referred to in the following discussion.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it considers what is meant by change in political parties and the levels this can take place at. Secondly, it examines the insights from the party organisation and party competition literatures and how they relate to the research questions of this thesis. Thirdly, it considers the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research on the role of different endogenous and exogenous factors and their relative importance in stimulating change in political parties.

2.1 Change in Political Parties

Firstly, what do we mean when we say a political party has ‘changed’? Harmel and Janda (1994:275) argue that party change is ‘any variation, alteration or modification in how parties are organized, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do’. Mair (1989:258) argues that the essence of when a party changes ‘is elusive, and whether a party actually has changed...is difficult to ascertain’. In this discussion, the focus is on what motivates political parties to change their policy positions.

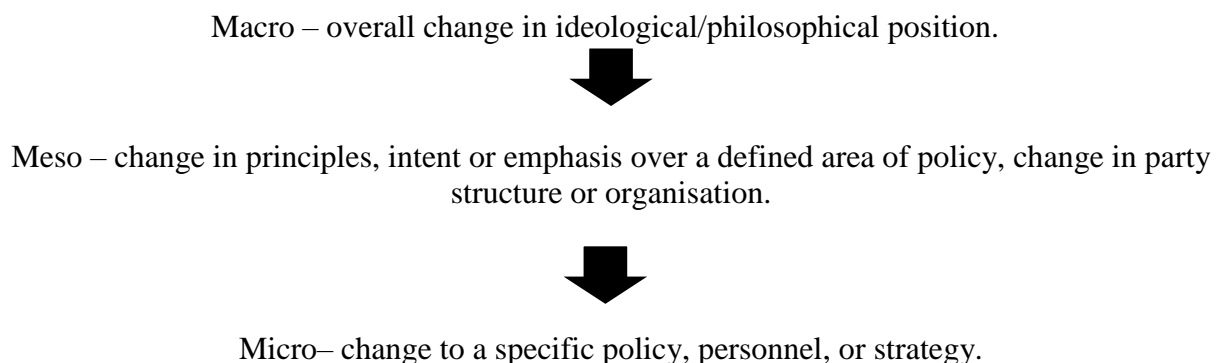
In terms of the organisation itself, change can come in the form of new rules to elect the party leader or senior leadership team, communication strategies, the autonomy of local parties in relation to the central party or the selection of candidates for elections. Changes in ‘interparty relations’ could include the attitude or strategy towards one party from another, increased electoral competitiveness or policy consensus. Party change is therefore any identifiable shift

or adjustment in the political/ideological, organisational, strategic, or tactical choices and actions made by political parties from one point in time to another.

2.1.1 Categorising Change in Political Parties

These processes of change in political parties operate at what Dorey (2007:142, see also Dommett 2015:5) describes as ‘three discrete but logically sequential levels’ of change. The first is the *macro-level*; this is the overall ideological position of the party and acts as the ‘philosophical’ structure in which policy positions are framed and the overall direction of the party is set. The second is the *meso-level*; this entails ‘general statements of principle or emphasis *vis-à-vis* key sectors or spheres of policy’, like local government, education or welfare. It can also include changes to a party’s organisation or structure. The third is the *micro-level*; these are ‘concrete proposals for specific areas’ of policy such as those mentioned above (Dorey 2007:142). Micro-level change can consist of the changing of personnel, such as the party leader or members of the party elite (Dommett 2015). Dorey (2007: 142) argues that these levels of change operate a funnelling effect (see Figure 1) on policy within a political party, with change at the macro-level filtering down to change within individual areas of policy before forming specific policies later on in the process. Dorey (2007) and Dommett (2015) use this theorisation of change in the context of party modernisation, but it can also be utilised in the context of policy change in political parties more broadly.

Figure 1.1: Levels of Change



Adapted from Dorey 2007; Dommett 2015.

Dommett (2015:5) argues that, contrary to Dorey (2007), change in parties should also be possible at the meso and micro-level independently. A political party should be able to change at the meso and micro-levels, without necessarily having to change at the macro-level first. However, change at the ideological macro-level is more likely to result in significant change to policy or party organisation at the meso and micro-levels.

This conceptualisation has much in common with Hall's (1993) 'three orders of change' developed in his examination of British economic policymaking during the 1970's and 1980's. Micro and meso-level change in political parties is broadly analogous with Hall's (1993:279) first and second orders of change. 'First order' change describes adjustments to the detail of policy, how it will be operationalised in practice, but not a change in the goal the policy is trying to achieve (Kroll and Blomberg, 2004). 'Second order' change, or 'normal-policy making' (Hall: 1993), is defined as adjusting policy more broadly but not changing the goals of policy itself. Macro-level change in a political party is similar to Hall's (1993:279) third order change, or 'paradigm shift', in the policymaking process of the British state. Hall (1993) argues (see also Dommett, 2015) that action can take place within the first and second orders of change without necessarily needing radical, paradigm shifting change to instigate it.

As it is more specifically directed at policy change itself, as opposed to general party change in the case of the Dorey (2007) and Dommett (2015) framework, this thesis will utilise Hall's (1993) levels of policy change framework to categorise the types of European policy change observed in the Conservative Party from 1997 to 2016. This analysis will take place in Chapter Three.

Many scholars of political parties have contributed important theoretical ideas to our understanding of what motivates political parties to change. In what follows the most relevant theoretical contributions from the party change literature are used to identify the factors associated with change in political parties. Firstly, this section will examine the theoretical insights from classic studies of party change, from both a party organisation and party competition perspective. Secondly, this chapter will then examine the individual endogenous and exogenous factors of change in political parties from the wider quantitative and qualitative research on party change.

2.1.2 Party Organisation

The key insight of the theoretical literature on party organisation is that political parties can be stimulated to change by changes in their own external environment. Environmental changes can be events, such as the changing of the electoral franchise (Durverger, 1951) or the breakdown of social and economic structures that encourage parties to appeal to new groups in society for support, which occur more gradually (Kirchheimer, 1966). Katz and Mair (1995) argue that environmental social, cultural, and political developments from the 1970's onwards have seen political parties change organisationally to become more connected with state institutions. External environmental factors, such as changes in public opinion, the media, or electoral regulation, have increased in importance, and are therefore more likely to stimulate change within a political party than internal factors such as the party membership (Kirchheimer, 1966; Panebianco, 1988; Katz and Mair, 1995). This highlights the importance of considering environmental, exogenous factors as drivers of change in political parties.

2.1.3 Party Competition

The rational choice literature on party behaviour, individual preferences, and spatial competition between competitive political parties has also contributed to our understanding of policy change in parties (Downs, 1957; Strom 1990; Budge, 1994; Laver, 2005; Bartle et al, 2011). Parties change policy for vote-maximising purposes (Downs, 1957), changing policies in-line with the policy attitudes and preferences of the median voter. Developing this, Strom (1990) identifies three rational choice models of party behaviour: 1) the *Downsian vote-seeking party*, which sees parties motivated primarily by vote-maximisation at elections 2) the *office-seeking party*, which sees parties motivated primarily by achieving elected office and 3) the *policy-seeking party*, which sees parties motivated primarily by advancing change in particular policy areas.

Different groups within a political party could theoretically have different competing goals. For example, the party leadership might prioritise vote and office-seeking, but for internal factions the primary goal could be change in a policy area. As such, different external and internal factors could motivate different groups within a party to achieve or instigate policy change.

A further consideration is whether parties have ‘reliable information’ about the policy preferences of voters in the electorate Budge (1994). Budge suggests factors such as external and internal pressure on the party leadership, perceptions of past and future electoral results, and the policy positions of rival political parties, could also be explanations for why a political party would change policy positions.

The key insights, from the rational choice literature for this thesis are the contribution public opinion, electoral performance, and competition for voters between rival political parties could theoretically make to policy change within a party.

2.2 Endogenous Causes of Party Change

Within the literature that examines party policy change, three endogenous factors are argued to be central in the driving of this change. 1) the political leadership, or individual leader, 2) a change in the dominant faction within a party and 3) the internal party organisational structure (Fagerholm, 2015).

2.2.1 Political Leadership

Many studies identify leadership as an important factor explaining change in parties (see biographies of Thatcher and Blair such as Campbell 2013; Seldon 2004, 2008). Many of these accounts place powerful individual actors at the centre of political events, often to the relative exclusion of other explanatory factors such as environmental circumstances or other internal domestic influences. For example, Olsen (2011) emphasises the central importance of political leadership. While acknowledging that ideology and structural factors are important, Olsen (2011:357) argues that ‘the specific style and outlook of a leader is a crucial, and unfortunately under-acknowledged, factor in shaping executive leadership and policy outcomes’. Executive decisions, Olsen (2011) argues, were as much the ‘product of the biographies’ of the political leaders as they were result of environmental pressures and constraints.

However, what do we mean when we say leadership matters to parties? Why could it have an influence on whether a party changes or not? Political leadership is effective in stimulating change within parties when leaders can project and utilise political influence to persuade individuals, or groups of individuals, to follow particular instructions or pathways. This influence is drawn from a leader’s ‘stock’ of political authority or ‘capital’ (Bennister, et al, 2014). The degree to which a leader possesses political authority, and therefore the extent to

which they can stimulate or constrain change within a political party, is determined by the perception of the individual's leadership skills and the strength of the relationship between the leader and party, and the strength of the leader's reputation both inside and outside of the party (Bennister, et al, 2014). When a political leader possesses these, they have the required 'leadership capital' to draw upon to stimulate change. A leader lacking these attributes is unlikely to have the political authority to push through transformative change. Such resources are not fixed but can change over time depending on external and internal conditions or events.

The statecraft model of political leadership also provides insights into what structural conditions, as opposed to more individual characteristics, are necessary for leaders to gain the necessary leadership capital that can instigate change in political parties. It is also illustrative of how individuals can both gain and lose leadership capital over time.

The statecraft approach to leadership, pioneered by Bulpitt (1986), suggests that successful political leadership is determined by a winning electoral strategy, a reputation for competence, good party management, and political argument hegemony. Political leaders that can develop reputations for being effective in these areas can build their leadership capital levels and be more confident of successfully beginning policy change in a political party. Political leaders that develop poor reputations in some or all of these areas will not only lack the leadership capital necessary to cause policy change but could also be in a weak position to resist policy change they are opposed to.

While many empirical studies that have examined change within parties endorse the importance of the leadership factor, this is not universal. Several studies argue the effect is much more limited than the theoretical scholarship suggests. Harmel et al (1995), using data collected from the party literature of six British and German political parties, found that while the leadership factor was important in some individual cases, for others the effect on change was limited or negligible. Bille (2007) concluded change in the Danish Social Democratic Party between 1960 and 1995 in terms of party manifestos or organisational structure had little to do with the party leadership, nor the three leadership changes that occurred during this period. Changes in policy direction were instead the result of environmental factors and contingent events (Bille 2007:386-8). In subsequent research, Harmel et al (2008) conclude that there is little evidence to suggest political leadership is decisive in parties changing.

Meyer (2013:152-55), using a dataset of 748 European political parties, found leadership change had a 'negative effect...on party policy shifts'.

This is contradicted by individual case-studies that suggest the political leadership factor can be a cause of party change (Clemens 2009; Huneus 1996; Müller 1997; Bale 2012). Müller's (1997:309) study of change within the Austrian Socialist Party concluded that 'leadership change must be regarded as the single most important factor'. In a similar manner Huneus (1996) argues Helmut Kohl's leadership was central to the transformation of the CDU during the 1970's and 80's. Clemens (2009:126) also emphasises the central role played by the leadership factor within the CDU, this time the influence of Angela Merkel on party change during her rise from general secretary to party leader between 1998 and 2000. Bale's (2012) study of change within the British Conservative Party since 1945 concludes that the leadership factor was at least as important in instigating party change as other central drivers, such as electoral performance or dominant factions. However, when considering change in party policy specifically, Bale argues that the leadership of figures such as Thatcher, Heath, and Macmillan were the central factor in driving policy change.

The role of party 'leadership' should not be limited exclusively to an examination of 'leaders', in the singular case of an individual party leader. Leadership within a political party can also be extended to include members of the Cabinet such as the Chancellor or Foreign Secretary, or Shadow Cabinet when in opposition, if we take the British political context as an example. For example, Gordon Brown had considerable influence over the direction of domestic and economic policy in Tony Blair's government, though less so over foreign policy. Keith Joseph was a major influence on the economic, fiscal, and education policy of the Conservative Party during the 1970's and 80's, providing much of the intellectual foundation behind Thatcherism.

The concept of 'leadership' can be broadened further to include prominent special advisors or party officials who have close contact with a party leader, such as communication strategists, policy specialists, or party chairmen. In a similar fashion to that of influential Cabinet/Shadow Cabinet ministers, there are a number of advisors credited with influencing policy positions within British political parties. Alistair Campbell, communications and strategy advisor for Tony Blair between 1994 and 2003 was highly influential during the New Labour years, as was his colleague Peter Mandelson. Steve Hilton influenced

Conservative Party policy following the 2005 election of party leader David Cameron, especially in relation to the environment and public services.

2.2.2 Dominant Factions

An additional endogenous driver of change within political parties is the change or emergence of a new dominant faction. Factions within political parties are groups of political actors that work collectively, at times co-operating or competing with other factions, to pursue like-minded ideological/policy agendas, outcomes or other associated goals and interests (Boucek, 2009). They are distinct from other forms of pressure group that seek to influence parties in that they comprise individuals from within the party structure, such as MPs or party members and officials (Rose 1964:37). Factions within political parties are sustained, 'self-consciously' organised groups of individuals that seek to co-operate on a wide range of policy agendas (Rose 1964:37). This also separates them from pressure groups, who largely focus on one policy area, and what Rose calls political 'tendencies', which are not as formally organised and also lean towards focusing on one policy area.

A faction that becomes dominant within a party can in theory be a powerful driving or constraining force, on policy change. This can occur through gaining control of internal decision-making processes, or through influence over the party membership or political leadership. Several examples in the recent political history of the Conservative Party that illustrate this point. Firstly, the gradual dominance of the economic liberal 'dries', and displacement of the One Nation 'wets', during the 1980's had an important impact on the economic, social, and industrial policies of the Conservative Party in this period. Thatcher was the leading figure, but she could not realistically have executed Thatcherism in the manner that she did on her own. The prominence of the Cameron 'modernising' faction in influential positions in the party from 2005 had a significant impact on the formation of new positions in policy areas such as the environment, public services, and gay marriage. Panebianco (1988), Harmel and Janda (1994), and Appleton and Ward (1997) argue that dominant factions within parties could be a powerful driver of change. Dominant factions are often considered theoretically significant as an 'intervening variable' that exists between an environmental stimulus and a change in party organisation or policy (Panebianco 1988; Appleton and Ward 1993, 1997). For Panebianco (1988: 244-46) the conditions for party

change are necessitated by the existence of a new dominant faction that can take over the party and instigate change.

The evidence from some empirical studies, however, qualify these theoretical assumptions about the importance of dominant factions in driving change in political parties. Harmel and Janda (1995) argue that their evidence supports the conclusion that ‘while factional change is viewed as contributing to special opportunities for party change, there is no implication that change of dominant faction is *necessary* for party change’ (italics added). Harmel and Tan (2003) also argue that changes in the dominant faction and the party leadership are needed for substantial change to take place. This is evident in the post-1998 German CDU. Following the CDU’s return to opposition a process of change both in the party’s dominant factions *and* political leadership was evident (Clemens 2009:125-26). After 1998 the CDU’s social and cultural conservative factions declined due to the shrinking size of the working-class Catholic and religious conservative sections of the German electorate. This, concurrent with the party membership becoming younger, more urban, and more middle class, strengthened the progressive market faction (Clemens 2009:125-26). This combined with the successful rise of Angela Merkel up the CDU’s leadership hierarchy, the party’s ‘most liberal leader ever’, to produce significant change within the CDU’s policy positions.

In contrast Bale (2012:307) found surprisingly little evidence for dominant factions driving party change in the British Conservative Party post-1945. This is because the Conservative Party has been and remains a party of tendencies rather than factions (Rose, 1964).

Fagerholm (2015:3) argues that when considering policy there is ‘no strong evidence supporting the expectation that political parties tend to change their positions as a consequence of a change in dominant faction’. So, the theoretical and empirical literature would appear to support the claim that while dominant factions can be important factors in facilitating change in political parties, they are rarely the principal instigators, or independent of other causes.

2.2.3 Intra-Party Organisation

How the internal decision-making process within a party is structured, and the position of party members and legislative members within that process, can have important consequences with regard to how likely a party is to change in terms of its policy positions. The more dispersed the policy-making power is among the different strata of the party, the more opportunities there are for policy change to be vetoed or constrained. Dominant

factions, however, can seek to overcome distributed levels of decision-making within political parties by ensuring that their supporters are themselves dispersed within each level. This can ensure de facto control of the party decision making process. In reverse, if the ability to instigate change is concentrated within an individual party leader or small group of elites, it is both easier to change policy positions and pressures from external and internal sources can potentially increase. Parties with more hierarchical decision-making processes, such as the Conservative Party, should therefore exhibit greater flexibility to change policy in the face of endogenous or exogenous pressures. Additionally, the position and powers of internal-party institutions, such as conferences or policy forums, can also add to the number of veto points within a political party. The structure of the internal decision-making process can therefore, in theory, be an influential factor in both facilitating change and constraining it.

Both Meyer (2013) and Schumacher et al (2013) have examined the influence of internal-party organisation on party policy change. Meyer (2013:179-205) found that parties with more 'hierarchically organised' internal-decision making processes are more likely to change policy positions than political parties with more 'decentralised' internal structures.

Additionally, greater opportunities for party membership involvement (and therefore more veto points), reduces the likelihood of change to policy positions. Schumacher et al (2013), using data from 55 European political parties, concluded 'leadership-dominated' (hierarchical decision-making) parties were more likely to change policy in response to changes in the position of the mean voter or to loss of office, while 'activist-dominated' (decentralised decision-making) parties were more likely to alter policy in response to the changes in the position of their voters.

Some individual case-studies also endorse internal-party organisation as an important factor in policy change. Fabre's (2008:326) examination of regionalism, party organisation, and state-wide political parties in Spain and the UK concluded that the historical organisational structure of political parties was a key determining factor in 'explaining their multi-level structure and the level of autonomy of their regional branches'. Parties with a centralised 'ethos' were more likely to resist changes in the power of regional branches (2008:326). However, Fabre (2008) concluded that it was actually the party leadership that was the crucial factor in determining the level of power at each stratum of the party. Intra-party organisation was also a central factor within the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) between the 1970s and 1990s (Lago 2006). During the late 1970s to early 1980s the PSOE conducted a process of 'intense concentration of power in the hands of the party leaders' and a 'great

emphasis on internal cohesion and discipline' (Lago 2006:434). While advantageous during this period, this centralised system proved disadvantageous during the 1990's when political competition increased, and the party left office and wanted to reorganise. The centralised organisation now inhibited party change. Lago (2006:435) argues that the organisational choices 'taken at the time the party was reconstructed during the 1970s acted as a sort of 'genetic imprint' that conditioned the subsequent development of the party, slowing its pace and intensity.'

2.3 Exogenous Causes of Party Change

The literature on party change identifies seven main exogenous drivers, or environmental stimuli, associated with change. 1) Electoral performance, 2) Rival political parties, 3) Whether the party is in opposition or in office, 4) Public opinion, 5) The economic environment 6) The media and 7) Ideas.

2.3.1 Electoral Performance

Many theoretical studies have underlined the importance of electoral performance, both in terms of defeat and success, on change within vote-seeking parties (Panebianco 1988; Budge 1994; Harmel and Janda 1994; Appleton and Ward 1997). Harmel and Janda (1994:269) argue that for vote-seeking parties the most 'obvious' environmental influence on party change would be 'electoral failure or at least a pattern of electoral failures'. For parties predominantly motivated by 'ideological/policy purity' the impact of electoral defeats on party change diminishes. Appleton and Ward (1997:345), however, question the assumption that electoral performance must be considered purely in terms of defeat or failure. Electoral *success* must also be considered an environmental stimulus for party change. It is the difference between expectations and outcomes, as opposed to whether the electoral result is interpreted as success or a defeat, which determines whether or not a political party is stimulated to change.

Quantitative research, however, questions the assumption that electoral results are a significant stimulus to party change. Using a sample of eight European parties, Janda et al (1995) compared changes in election manifestos to the outcomes of previous electoral performances. Of the 78 cases examined 'only 17 striking instances of major changes in the issue positions taken by these eight parties when contesting elections from 1945 to the mid-

1980s' were detected. Fifteen were after elections categorised as negative results for the party. Parties that had successful elections were likely to replicate policy platforms at the next election. While poor electoral performance can indeed play 'an important role' in stimulating parties to change, on its own it is not a 'sufficient cause' to account for many types and degrees of change observed in political parties. Other research is considerably more critical of the performance theory (Adams et al 2004; Schumacher 2013). Adams et al (2004:608) rejected the hypothesis that past election results cause political parties to change their ideological positions. This definite conclusion is however questioned by Somer-Topcu (2009), whose study of 23 established democracies showed that parties tend to change policy more after they lost votes in the previous election, than if they had gained votes. This effect then diminishes as the election recedes further into history.

Case-studies also suggest that electoral performance can have an observable impact on change within parties. Duncan's (2007) study of the Dutch Christian Democrats concluded that the 'external shock' of the 1994 Tweede Kamer election instigated change within the party leadership, the factional balance of the party, and its organisational structure. However, as Adams et al (2004) found, the impact of electoral defeat on change was much more limited when the analysis considered the party's policy platform post-1994 (Duncan 2007:83). The theory that electoral success can also drive change within parties (Appleton and Ward 1997) is also supported within the case-study literature on party change. Ágh's (1997) examination of the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) during the 1990's suggests that both the electoral defeat in 1990, and the electoral 'landslide' victory achieved in 1994, were both important drivers of change in the party's 'social position and institutions'. However, the analysis supports the position of Harmel and Janda (1994) as 'change by defeat was easier than by success' (Ágh 1997:427). The 'change by defeat' electoral performance theory is also supported by the case of the post-1998 German CDU. During this period the CDU experienced 'radical' and even 'revolutionary' change, including in policy positions (Clemens, 2009:124). Disappointing election results in 1998, 2002, and 2005 resulted in strong calls for significant changes in policy positions, which many believed would project an image of party renewal to the German electorate (Clemens 2009:124).

2.3.2 Rival Political Parties

Some theoretical studies argue that the positions of rival political parties can stimulate parties to change policy positions (Budge, 1994; Laver, 2005). Budge's 'marker model' (1994:461)

argues that parties that are in ‘long-term competition’ with a rival party will seek to keep an ideological distance by adjusting their own positions to that of their rivals. In addition, Laver (2005:267) argues that some parties, whose leadership are formally unconstrained by party members in changing policy positions, will seek to shift their policy positions to that of the largest party in the party system in which they operate. This ‘predator’ party will continue to change its position until it has become the largest party, at which point it ‘stands still’ (Laver 2005: 267). Laver argues that this is not an inconceivable position for party leaders to take, as it would be logical to assume that most voters are located close to the largest party, in terms of their preference for policy positions.

Quantitative research also suggests that the positions of rival political parties are an important factor. The most in-depth study was conducted by Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) using data from the Comparative Manifestos Project. Based on data from 193 parties in twenty-five countries, the statistical evidence supports the above theories of party behaviour; political parties change policy positions in response to the political strategies of their competitors. In addition, they find that parties are more likely to change policy positions when rival parties that are competing in the same ideological space change their own positions (2009:826). For example, a right-wing party is more likely to respond to changes of a right-wing rather than a left-wing rival. Meyer (2013:165) also finds comparative statistical evidence that a ‘party shifts its policy position if its policy position is outside the ideological territory (defined by the policy positions of its rival parties).’

Several case studies also support these claims. Two prominent examples are the British Labour Party between 1992 and 1997, and the British Conservative Party between 2005 and 2010. Between 1992 and 1997 the Labour Party adopted many of the same policy positions on taxation, public spending, privatisation, defence, and public service reform as the previous Conservative government, as a means of reassuring voters that they had fundamentally changed as a party. A similar process can be argued to have taken place within the Conservative Party following election defeat in 2005. Many of the new policy positions adopted by the party, most importantly increased focus on the quality and reform of public services, echoed the policy positions adopted by the electorally successful post-1997 Labour Party.

2.3.3 Opposition or Office

A further exogenous factor in party change is whether a party is in government or opposition. In a recent study, Schumacher et al (2013:467) theorised that leadership dominated parties would be more likely to change policy positions when finding themselves out of government. As the main aim of leadership dominated parties is office-seeking, losing power is a powerful incentive for these parties to change policy (2013:467). The argument is made that, if this is the case, a party *in* government is therefore less likely to change policy positions as this could jeopardise their main goal (being in government). Walgrave and Nuytemans (2009:194) also make the theoretical assumption that parties in opposition are more likely to have ‘changeable’ policy platforms than governments, as this is one of the only means of attracting voter and media attention.

Theoretically, this is therefore a further disincentive for government parties to change policy positions, in comparison to opposition parties. Meyer (2013:148), however, contradicts these assumptions by arguing that as government parties are likely to receive greater media attention, changes in policy positions are more likely to be noticed by the electorate. This therefore incentivises government parties to change policy positions.

Quantitative empirical studies that have tested for the effects of the opposition/office factor show mixed results. Schumacher et al (2013:174) found while in general ‘office exclusion does not motivate parties to change their position’, this is contradicted when organisational structure is considered. Leadership-based parties are more likely to change policy positions, while activist-based parties are less likely to. Meyer (2013:148) however, finds that parties that have spent longer in government are more likely to change policy positions than those in opposition. Walgrave and Nuytemans conclude the opposite. They find that ‘the more parties tend to be government parties with a long track record of government participation, the less they change their party manifesto’ (2009:199).

Nonetheless, overall the empirical evidence does seem to support the theoretical assumptions that the opposition/office factor is an important factor in understanding policy change in political parties.

2.3.4 Public Opinion

Public opinion is the factor which has received the most academic attention in explaining policy change in parties (Fagerholm, 2015). The theoretical underpinning can largely be attributed to the theoretical legacy of both Downs (1957) and Budge (1994), with their work

on theories of spatial party competition. Stimson et al (1995:543) described this theoretical concept, of policy being shaped by changes in public opinion, or the mean voter position, as 'dynamic representation'. Individual actors within political parties 'sense the mood' within an electorate. When the public mood changes actors within parties adjust their behaviour in anticipation of upcoming elections, which directly feeds into decisions of current and future policy positions. As Stimson et al (1995: 545) put it, this will 'drive policy through rational anticipation'. The motivation here is to change party policy coming from the desire to avoid defeat at future elections.

There is strong empirical evidence that variations in public opinion motivate political parties to change their policy. Stimson et al (1995) conclude that policy is influenced by changes in public opinion, although how responsive an institution is to public opinion varies. Using manifesto data from political parties in eight West European nations, Adams et al (2004:589) also conclude that parties change their policy positions when public opinion changes. The effects 'are only significant in situations where public opinion is clearly shifting away from the party's policy positions' (2004:589). Developing these findings, Adams et al (2006:513) conclude that niche parties are much less likely to respond to changes in public opinion than mainstream parties. When niche parties did change policy positions they tended to be punished by voters at the next election, with mainstream parties receiving substantially less electoral punishment when they did the same (2006:513).

2.3.5 Economic Environment

A final exogenous factor associated with stimulating parties to change policy positions are changing economic conditions within the environment in which the party operates (Adams et al 2009). Such conditions could include increasing unemployment, high inflation or shifting international trade patterns. Ward et al (2011) suggest that globalisation has put significant constraints on the policy positions of political parties, especially social democratic parties. This is because interconnected global financial markets, and internationally networked businesses, now allow capital and business to move with much greater ease than in the past. Political parties are therefore extremely conscious of not adopting policy positions that could see capital and businesses relocate to other domains (Ward et al 2011:510). Ward et al (2011:515) hypothesise that globalisation will shift the policy positions of social democratic parties to the right, while conservative parties will be affected by globalisation indirectly, as they react to the changing position of their rival parties.

A number of studies have attempted to ascertain to what extent economic conditions affect the policy positions of political parties. Haupt (2010:7) analysed the policy shifts of 138 European political parties, both right and left-wing, concluding that both types of political party do change their policy positions in response to international economic conditions. In this study there was no statistically significant difference between the policy changes of parties on the right or left, contradicting Ward et al (2011). Ward et al (2011:541) themselves conclude that economic conditions would only affect party policy positions 'if the expected position of the median is far enough to the left, in which case it moves left parties, and to a lesser extent the right parties, in a rightward direction'. Adams et al (2009) also consider the influence of economic conditions on party policy positions. This study supports the overall finding of Haupt (2010:7) that economic conditions do affect the policy positions of political parties but disagrees that there is no difference between the response of left-wing and right-wing parties. Adams et al (2009:612) conclude that right and centre parties react to changes in economic conditions by adapting their policy positions accordingly. Parties of the left however appear 'less responsive to global economic conditions' in comparison. Empirical research therefore largely supports the theoretical assumption that changes in economic conditions will stimulate political parties to change or adapt their policy positions, though there is contradictory evidence on the extent to which this varies according to the type of political party in question.

2.3.6 Ideas, Think-Tanks, and Intellectuals

The contention that ideas are important has a well-established position in the policy change literature (Hall 1993; John 1999; Lieberman 2002; Walsh 2000; Heffernan 2005; Baumgartner 2013). Ideas here interact with political actors, institutions, interests, society, and the socio-economic and political environment to build conditions in which policies can change or be adapted. Ideas, or paradigms, can contribute to party policy change by structuring the way they respond to a political problem, crisis or previous policy failure. A notable example of this is the influence monetarism had on the economic and fiscal policies of the Thatcher governments, a reaction to the perceived failures of post-war Keynesianism and the Labour government's incomes policy (Walsh 2000:485). The idea of monetarism changed policy in a specific direction, controlling the supply of money in the economy, in order to combat rampant inflation. Heffernan (2005) identifies the role the idea of privatisation had on the economic policies of the Thatcher and Major governments between 1979 and 1992, a reaction to the perceived failure of post-war nationalisation and associated

British economic decline. Ideas in and of themselves cannot cause policy agendas to change. They require facilitation through a combination of factors: the strategic interests of actors, the enabling political environment, the capacity to instigate change, and the perceived failure or inadequacy of previous policies.

Paradigm shifts are disseminated to policy actors in political parties through the ‘actions of people and organisations’ (Walker 2014:169). Policy ideas are discussed, debated, and communicated within this environment through a number of sources; intellectuals, professional experts, and think-tanks. Walker (2014:169) suggests that one important cause of Conservative neo-liberal policy positions during the Thatcher years were the ideas originating from think-tanks including the Institute for Economic Affairs, the Adam Smith Institute, and the Centre for Policy Studies. Many of the ideas from these organisations were inspired by intellectuals such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, in a similar way to which the sociologist Anthony Giddens’s ‘Third Way’ political ideas would later influence New Labour. While not inside the structures of the Conservative party itself, they formed part of the ‘Conservative political environment’. Walker (2014:169) argues that ideas ‘must seep into the minds of the politicians, minds made receptive by external factors and their political experiences’. This is disputed by Bale (2014:174-75) who suggests that any direct influence of the New Right think tanks on Conservative policy during this period is a ‘myth’ and the relationship was more ‘altering the climate of opinion rather than shaping the detail of policy’.

Studies on the influence think-tanks have on policymaking in political parties come to ambiguous conclusions. This is not only because it is difficult to quantitatively measure their influence, but also because it is difficult to qualitatively define what this influence actually amounts to. As Stone (1996:689) states, ‘rarely is there a one-to-one correspondence between a think-tank book or study and a particular policy change’. For example, Pautz (2013) argues that think-tanks most associated with ‘modernising’ Conservative policy positions since 2005 (Policy Exchange, Reform, Civitas, Centre for Social Justice) played an important role in assisting the development of new ideas and policy, as ‘amplifiers’ of established party agendas set by influential advisors such as Steve Hilton. Think-tanks also provided means by which links with liked-minded ‘ideological fellows’ could be established, and ideas developed away from the constraints of the official party mechanisms (Pautz 2013:373). However, Labour’s social policy between 1997 and 2001 owed little to the ideas of the four think-tanks (Institute for Public Policy Research, Demos, Centre for Economic Performance

and the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion), with the civil service leading change in this area (Pautz 2011).

It is therefore likely that think-tanks, and their experts and ideas, contribute to the prevailing pool of ideas within the political environment or policy area in which they are focusing, raising the consciousness of certain ideas within the minds of actors in parties. Think tanks and experts ultimately want to ‘sensitise decision-makers to policy problems’ through the ‘gradual, incremental creep of new ideas into the prevailing thinking’ (Stone 1996:689). In most circumstances, the influence of think-tanks on policymaking in political parties is likely to be indirect, rather than observable, concrete, and direct.

2.3.7 *The Media*

Media influences on party policy change has received relatively little academic attention (Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010). Theoretically, the role of the media in policy change is divided between the dichotomous positions of *conduit* or *contributor* (Shanahan et al 2008). The media acts as a conduit role when it amplifies the positions of others within a policy debate, for example between two factions within a party. From this theoretical perspective, the media facilitates the positions of ‘policy entrepreneurs’ that want to direct the policy process in a certain direction within a political party (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). A contributor role arises when the media provides its own positions, ideas, or narratives to a policy debate (Shanahan et al 2008). Kingdon (1984:59) advocates the conduit position, arguing that the ‘media report what is going on in government... rather than having an independent effect on government agendas’. The most sensible theoretical position is likely to be that of Sabatier and Jenkins (1993) who suggest that the media can be both a conduit *and* contributor to the policy process, depending on the political context or policy area under analysis. In other words, the influence of the media on policy change is *conditional* on facilitating circumstances being present (Green-Pedersen and Stubager 2010).

The question is also less about whether the media are a powerful influence or not, but in which circumstances it is a weaker or stronger influence (Newton 2006: 274-5). For example, Brandenburg (2002) concluded that the media did not influence the Conservative or Labour parties’ agendas during the 1997 election. This could be conditioned by the fact that the period being studied was during an election, when political parties are focused on promoting their own policy positions to the media themselves. Green-Pedersen and Stubager (2010) examined the influence of the media on the Danish opposition party’s policy agendas

between 1984 and 2003, measured using radio news data and questions to government ministers. The results concluded that the media did have an influence on the policy agendas of opposition parties in all areas except for foreign affairs (2010:675-6). Political parties were also only likely to react to media attention if the policy area was one in which they ‘owned’ and therefore wished to emphasise to the electorate. As Green-Pedersen and Stubager (2010:675) state ‘...mass media attention is thus likely to generate significant party-political attention only with regard to the few issues playing a central role in issue competition.’ It therefore must be in the interest of political parties for the media attention over a certain policy area to have an influence. Issues such as foreign affairs, in the Danish party system, are not part of the normal ‘issue competition’ between parties and, consequently, media attention on such issues does not influence party policy agendas.

Walgrave et al (2008) supports the findings of Green-Pedersen and Stubager (2010) that media coverage does influence the agenda of party policy makers. This effect is greater on the agenda of individual MPs than on that of the government. Policy issues such as crime, justice or the environment were more likely to be influenced by media attention than foreign affairs (Walgrave, et al, 2008). In a further study of the media and the Belgian party system Walgrave (2008:457) concludes that the media has a more powerful agenda-setting influence with opposition MPs than with government MPs. This is because opposition MPs are more likely to use information they hear in the media as resource for challenging government policy.

The degree to which the conclusions of these studies on the influence of the media are applicable to other parliamentary political systems such as Britain is an open question. However, as Walgrave (2008:458) points out, Belgium is a relatively closed political system with ‘strong political parties and corporatist interest groups’. It suggests that more open political systems, such as Britain, are likely to see the media have a similar strong influence on party elites and the policy process. There is not necessarily anything to suggest that party elites in Britain are going to be any more resistant to the influence of the media on policy than those in Belgium or Denmark. However, what is particularly relevant to this project is the conclusions drawn on the lack of media influence over the political agenda in relation to foreign affairs, which includes European policy.

2.4 Conclusion

That political parties develop, and change is often taken for granted in much political commentary and academic research. It is described implicitly, as part of a wider narrative, and not analysed in detail to determine what individual or combination of factors has contributed to the actual process of change. This chapter has provided a detailed review of what we mean when we say a political party has changed and what factors contribute to this process. It has done so by examining a wide range of the theoretical and empirical literature that considers what endogenous and exogenous factors stimulate political parties to change, with a specific focus on political parties and their policy platforms.

The following conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, there is often disagreement on the influence individual factors have in stimulating political parties to change between studies which have a quantitative data or qualitative case-study approach. It must be recognised that the different approaches can come to drastically different conclusions, partly due to the methodological and philosophical nature of the research methods themselves. For example, a number of quantitative studies reject the idea that political leadership has an influence over policy change in political parties, while many examples using qualitative case studies conclude the opposite. Secondly, what endogenous or exogenous factors that contribute to policy change in a political party are highly dependent on context, time, place, and the individual or group of parties in question. A contributing factor that is not relevant at one time, or for one political party, may be an influencing factor when the context and circumstances for that party changes. Lastly, it is often only when endogenous or exogenous factors work in combination that policy change can occur. Political parties, like many organisations, are often instinctively resistant to changes in policy and need more than one incentive to depart from the status quo.

This chapter has examined the different theoretical and empirical arguments surrounding change in political parties. This has highlighted limitations with relying solely on the party change literature explored as the sole explanatory framework for this thesis. What is missing is an understanding of change in a political party as a process that develops over time and the causal mechanisms associated with this. The next chapter sets out how a new institutionalist theoretical framework can be applied to Conservative European policy, that can address these limitations, and work in combination with the insights on how political parties are stimulated to change that have been identified in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: New Institutionalism

This chapter will set out how new institutionalist theories will be applied to the empirical chapters of this thesis. It will identify ideas from new institutionalism on how political institutions, such as political parties, change over time and the theoretical mechanisms which contribute to this. It adds to this thesis's understanding of what stimulates political parties to change, established in the previous chapter's exploration of the party change literature, by developing a set of theoretical tools which helps to explain and describe the process of change set out in the empirical chapters. Combining the insights from these two literatures, party change and new institutionalism, provides for a stronger theoretical framework to explain European policy in the Conservative Party during this period.

This approach is intended to be integrated and pragmatic. New institutionalist theory, as this chapter will establish, provides many insights into how institutions like political parties change. Different elements of new institutionalism (historical, rational choice, sociological, and discursive) could provide better explanations for change at different points in time over the period of analysis. An integrated approach allows for this and does not exclude an explanation because it does not fit within the traditional parameters of one particular new institutionalist approach. This approach aims to be problem-driven, rather than theory-driven, as these different approaches 'ask somewhat different questions and so bring different aspects of social life into focus' (Fearon and Wendt, 2002:53). This can only be a strength when attempting to explain change in a political party over a twenty-year period.

The first section will introduce new institutionalism and establish the strengths and limitations of each of the four main institutionalist approaches. It will be argued that each approach used in isolation will not capture the complex and dynamic factors that contribute towards the process of change in a party. The second section will set out a new institutionalist approach to explaining change in political institutions that will be applied to the empirical chapters of this thesis. Throughout this section particular attention will be given to how this framework provides a balanced understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, arguing that it is not question of privileging either, but of explaining their interaction within a dialectic relationship to produce institutional change.

3.1 New Institutionalism

The new institutional theory that developed during the 1980's argued that institutions structure politics (March and Olsen, 1984; Steinmo, 2008). Or, to put it another way, institutions structure the preferences and actions of political actors. This gave institutions a causal role in explaining political processes and outcomes (Mohan, 2013). However, it soon became clear that new institutionalism was being interpreted and applied in a number of different ways (Hall and Taylor, 1996). These correspond to what Hall and Taylor (1996) identify as the three new institutionalisms of rational choice, sociological, and historical institutionalism. Each has a different, though not entirely alien, approach to the role institutions have in structuring the preferences and actions of individuals, in addition to how individuals instigate institutional change themselves. Discursive institutionalism was introduced later and is also included as the fourth main strand of new institutional theory.

3.1.1 Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism defines an institution as either a formal organisation (political party, trade union, pressure group) or a system of formal or informal rules (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992). These institutions structure the behaviour of individual actors, and therefore shape political outcomes, by influencing the goals and preferences of these actors (Steinmo, 2008). Preferences are therefore endogenous to the analysis and must be explained through an examination of the institutional and historical context. Institutions within this approach work to constrain and limit the political choices that individual actors have to shape outcomes. In addition, institutions influence political outcomes by structuring the power relations between different individuals by privileging some individuals more than others. Those with less institutionally determined power are therefore less likely to be able to instigate change (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992).

Thelen and Steinmo (1992:2) expand this by stating that 'institutionalists are interested in the whole range of state and societal institutions that shape how political actors define their interests and that structure their relations of power with other groups'. This definition enables the inclusion of a wide range of internal and external social, political, and economic institutions, systems, and rules that can influence the preferences and actions of individuals.

For the research questions of this thesis, the influence of internal, domestic, and international institutions on Conservative European policy will be considered.

Historical institutionalism also places an important emphasis on historical factors when explaining political change, but also continuity through concepts such as path dependency and positive feedback. Path dependency is a term used to describe a series of political changes which are linked to previous historical decisions and existing institutions (Wilsford, 1994). Positive feedback is the theory that the more decisions made which take an institution in a certain direction, or 'path', the harder it becomes for internal or external factors to change this 'path' in a new direction (Peters, 2000a). The historical context, place, and time in which individuals, institutions, and structures interact shapes political outcomes and processes of change by influencing the behaviour and decisions made by actors. A historical institutionalist account would argue that without considering the historical circumstances (context, place, and time) an account of political change, for example within the development of a party's approach to policy formation, will be unable to capture the complexity and dynamic interaction between multiple factors that is observed in real political processes. This is an important strength of this approach and enables in-depth, contextualised, and detailed accounts of political change through predominantly qualitative single or small *n* case study research.

Historical institutionalism has however encountered a number of criticisms from other strands of institutionalist theory, particularly rational choice and discursive institutionalism. The first of these is that historical institutionalism on its own, through historical concepts such as path dependency and positive feedback, are often much better at explaining why institutions *don't* change than why they *do* change (Schmidt 2008, 2010). Environmental structures and historical forces within historical institutionalism operate a power over institutions which can be overly deterministic and does not leave enough theoretical space for processes of change to be explained, as opposed to continuity. Secondly, a historical institutionalist approach that can quickly descend into structuralism provides inadequate space for the role individual agents have in instigating institutional change (Hay and Wincott, 1998:952). This is because the focus within historical institutionalism can often be on the power of institutions and structures to constrain and restrict agency, ignoring the ability of individuals to shape their own institutional environment (Blyth, 2002). Thirdly, discursive institutionalists criticise historical institutionalism for failing to address the power that ideas and discourse, utilised by strategic actors, can have in prompting change within political

institutions (Schmidt 2008, 2011). Fourthly, sociological institutionalism can legitimately criticise this approach for having no explanation of how change can occur *incrementally*, without the need for an exogenous shock, as there is no guarantee one will be recognisable in every case where change is identified. Lastly, rational choice institutionalism suggests that a weakness of this approach is that it lacks generalisable conclusions.

Historical institutionalism on its own therefore fails to consider a number of important insights into political change identified by the other new institutionalist approaches.

3.1.2 Rational Choice Institutionalism

In terms of the 'institutionalist' element of rational choice institutionalism, this approach shares much with historical institutionalism in how they see institutions as key components of political outcomes and processes. They also share a theoretical understanding that institutional rules create 'incentives and constraints' that shape the behaviour of individual actors (Weyland, 2002). However, rational choice institutionalism has a much narrower interpretation of what an institution is, restricting these to simply 'rules of the game', such as electoral laws that govern the administration of elections (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2000:12). The more formal political, economic, or social institutional or structural factors are generally excluded from a strict rational choice approach (Weyland, 2002:60). In addition, this approach also views institutions as not only constraining influences on individual actors but also the *product* of individual actors' interactions. As Weyland (2002:60) indicates this places 'methodological individualism', and the primacy given to the role and actions of individual actors, at the heart of rational choice institutionalist accounts of political change. This is supported by Aspinwall and Schneider (2000:10) who state that 'human action is considered to be the cornerstone of any [rational choice institutionalist] social scientific explanation'. This is a significant strength of this approach when analysing change in a political party, as ultimately it is the individual actions or decisions of actors that make changes in organisational or policy structures, not institutions or structures themselves. This is an insight that is underplayed in traditional historical and sociological institutionalist explanations, though not entirely absent.

Rational choice institutionalism also makes a number of assumptions about the behaviour of individual actors drawn from its deductive methodology (Bell, 2002). In this approach, individual actors are assumed at the start of analysis to have a fixed set of preferences, act to maximise the successful outcome of these preferences and do so strategically, extensively

weighing up the costs and benefits of many possible options (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Bell, 2002). These preferences are given exogenously from the theoretical model. This simplicity allows for formal and generalisable mathematical models to be constructed, which can be applied to many cases simultaneously. The institutional ‘rules of the game’ act to constrain and incentivise this process of utility maximisation by individual actors. Institutions, therefore, act as the context around which individual action occurs and change does, or does not, take place (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2000:11). These ready-made assumptions and systematic formal models, as Weyland (2002:61) states, are advantageous for explaining institutional change due to their coherent logical structure.

The requirement in rational choice institutionalism for simple behavioural assumptions, a narrow conception of institutions and generalisable models has drawn a number of legitimate criticisms. Firstly, from a historical institutionalist perspective, Bell (2002) argues that the depiction of actor preferences in rational choice institutionalism as being static and exogenous to the analysis, in addition to institutions being reduced to simply ‘rules of the game’, does not provide an adequate framework for explaining complex and dynamic political processes. In other words, Bell (2002) is justifiably arguing that simplistic assumptions about individual behaviour and institutions does not accurately reflect the complex nature of the social world (see also Peters, 1999). For, as Hay and Wincott (1998:952) observe, these assumptions actually ‘strip away distinctive features of individualism’ and replace political actors with ‘calculating automatons’. As such, rational choice institutionalism as an ‘analytical tool’ on its own cannot produce satisfactory accounts of these processes, nor the complex endogenous formation of actor preferences, which are partly caused by their changing structural and institutional environment.

Secondly, the ahistorical nature of rational choice institutionalism, displayed in its tendency to explain change over relatively short time periods or at fixed points in time, does not always allow for the analysis to capture the influence of long-term processes. Additionally, this ahistorical approach also fails to take into account that the ‘impact of institutions is often heavily mediated by features of the overarching political or historical context’ (Thelen 2002:93). This matters because historical and political circumstances affect the beliefs, goals, and preferences of actors (Steinmo, 2014).

In summary, rational choice institutionalism has a number of strengths and weaknesses as an approach to explaining political change. The main strength identified is the primacy given to

agency and individual action in rational choice explanations of institutional change. This is not explicitly ruled out by other institutionalist approaches but is often implicitly downplayed or marginalised in the analysis. This is not a trivial insight, as it is actors within political parties that ultimately make the decisions to change or continue with certain policies. A new institutional theoretical framework of party change must therefore take agency and individual action seriously, a point often lacking in overtly structural historical or sociological accounts. However, the major drawbacks of the rational choice approach, the unrealistic simplifications of individual and institutional behaviour, an inability to see change as occurring endogenously, and the ahistorical approach of the overall analysis, is a barrier to adopting a purely rational choice approach to this case study of the Conservative Party and European policy.

3.1.3 Sociological Institutionalism

Sociological institutionalism is characterised by a desire to distance explanations of change away from the methodological individualism of rational choice approaches, in addition to going much further than historical institutionalism in the emphasis upon the power of social, political, and cultural structures to shape individual behaviour. In terms of the structure-agency divide within new institutionalism, the sociological approach is generally the most firmly associated with structural explanations of institutional change.

In the sociological approach, institutions are defined as norms, rules, conventions, templates, and symbols. This is a much broader and looser conception of institutions compared with the rational choice and historical approaches (Koelbe, 1995). As Hall and Taylor suggest (1996:947) these institutions are effectively indistinguishable from culture. It is these cultural institutions and structures that frame individual preferences and behaviour and shape political outcomes. The preferences of individuals are therefore endogenously formed, based on the cultural environment in which they exist. Individuals become culturally and politically 'embedded' within this institutional environment, becoming used to a certain 'way of doing things' and resistant to change (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). To explain change, as opposed to continuity, sociological institutionalism will often draw upon the influence of new cultural norms or conventions imposed from outside the environment under analysis (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). This works in a similar way to the exogenous shock in rational choice or historical institutionalism.

However, sociological institutionalism also draws upon other concepts that can be utilised to explain how institutions, such as a political party, change incrementally over time (Mohan, 2013). This allows the sociological approach to avoid the tendency of historical institutionalism to sometimes rely only on exogenous shocks to explain institutional change. Sociological institutionalism does this by drawing upon ideas from social or ‘population’ ecology. The main contribution that population ecology makes is to “emphasise the dependence of institutions upon their environment, and their ‘embeddedness’ in society and economy” (Peters, 1999:102). As Peters (1999:102) continues, ‘It also points to the extent to which institutions may be in explicit or implicit competition with one another for resources and even survival’. This insight into the competitive nature of the institutional environment is of particular relevance to the study of political parties, as they compete with other parties (institutions) in the political environment over policy, office and votes (Müller and Strøm, 1999). Change therefore occurs *continuously* and *incrementally* as political parties compete with each other and react to alterations in their environment. This is a significant theoretical strength of sociological institutionalism that could be utilised to explain policy change within a political party in the absence of critical junctures or conjunctures.

Yet, sociological institutionalism has a number of limitations that make it unsuited to explaining the development of European policy in the Conservative Party, if used on its own. Firstly, although sociological institutionalism can accommodate incremental institutional change, in general the approach is still better at explaining institutional stability than institutional change (Koelbe, 1995). Cultural institutions and structures act to largely perpetuate the status quo and guide actors to maintain this, as opposed to instigating change. Secondly, Hay and Wincott (1998:952) are also critical of sociological institutionalism’s ‘structuralist orientation’. This is a legitimate criticism, as the cultural institutions, structures, and prevailing environment in which these operate within sociological institutionalism appear to leave little room for individual agency or groups in explaining institutional change (Bell, 2011). For example, as Hall and Taylor state (1996:954), ‘In some cases, the new institutionalists in sociology seem so focused on macro-processes that the actors involved in these processes seem to drop from sight and the result begins to look like ‘action without agents’. As outlined above, a similar criticism of historical institutionalism’s lack of attention to micro-processes is also made. This is not an unimportant observation, as both macro (structural) and micro (agential) processes are evident in policy decision-making processes within a political party.

3.1.4 Discursive Institutionalism

Discursive institutionalism sometimes also referred to as ‘constructivist’ or ‘ideational’ institutionalism (Hay, 2008), is often argued by its proponents to constitute the ‘fourth’ main branch of new institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008, 2010, 2012). The defining characteristic of this approach is the centrality of ideas and discourse to explanations of institutional change (see also Blyth 2002). Institutions in the discursive approach are conceptualised as arenas which ‘frame the discourse’ and act as ‘simultaneously constraining structures and enabling constructs of meanings which are internal sentient (thinking and speaking) agents’ (Schmidt, 2010:4). Importantly, discursive institutionalists often explore the impact of ideas and discourse on political change by using one of the other main new institutionalisms for ‘institutional context’ (Schmidt 2008:304). Discursive institutionalism is therefore often used with the insights of other approaches as ‘background information’ (Schmidt, 2008:304).

Institutional change is instigated by actors through an endogenous process using their ‘background ideational and foreground discursive abilities’ (Schmidt, 2008:304). Or, in other words, an individual actor or group’s social skill in communicating new solutions to collective problems (ideas), for example a new or adapted policy position. In a political party these ideas could be promoted by individual policy entrepreneurs, advocacy coalitions, dominant factions or internal and external pressure groups or think-tanks. Institutional change is therefore not only dependent on the ideas themselves, and the context in which they are in, but also the success (or not) of how and by what means they are communicated and promoted, both internally and externally, by individual actors or groups. This brings ideas and discourse together in the discursive institutional explanation of political change. As Schmidt (2008:305) argues, this allows ‘for a more dynamic, agent-centred approach to institutional change’ when compared to historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism. Individual actors, and their ideational and discursive abilities, are empowered within this approach with a considerable ability to instigate or ‘construct’ change and overcome structural constraints. This approach therefore avoids ‘latent structuralism’ (Hay and Wincott, 1999:952) and focuses on agency, with structure a peripheral consideration. The ability of agents to shape their own institutional environment, despite

constraints, is an important insight that must be taken seriously in any theoretical framework of institutional change.

The apparent marginal role for structure and institutions within discursive institutionalism has been strongly contested (Bell, 2011, 2012). For Bell (2011:887) discursive or constructivist institutionalist accounts of institutional change quickly descend into ‘ideational essentialism’, in which ideas and discursive agents essentially explain all aspects of change, with institutions and structure explaining relatively little. The discursive approach, Bell (2011: 884) argues, is therefore in danger of taking institutions ‘back out’ of political analysis. This is a legitimate criticism, as discursive institutionalism could be argued to be guilty of the same fault it levels at institutionally deterministic approaches, except in this case overly privileging agency rather than structure. This over-privileging of the role of agency and ideas, disconnecting these from the wider institutional and structural factors that can ‘shape and empower agency’, is therefore an important limitation of the discursive institutionalist approach when used in isolation (Bell, 2011:884). Discursive institutionalism can also be criticised for conceptualising an institutional and social world that is constantly in a state of flux, which is contrary to the evidence provided by historical institutionalist studies that show strong patterns of continuity (Pierson, 1994, Dyson, 1999, Torfing, 2001, Kuipers, 2009).

3.2 A New Institutional Framework of Institutional Change

To overcome these problems, this thesis will adopt a mixed new institutional approach that attempts to incorporate the insights of these four new institutional approaches, provide a balanced explanation that does not seek to overly privilege structure or agency, and that explains institutional change as a dynamic and interactive process between institutions, structures, and agents. Instead it is conceptualised that each is ‘mutually constitutive in a *dialectic* manner’ (Bell, 2011:891, emphasis in original). Ultimately theoretical frameworks should guide empirical investigations and should not determine their outcomes. An integrated new institutionalist theoretical framework that does not privilege institutions, structure, or agency therefore has the advantage of approaching the evidence with a more open mind.

This section will set out in detail the mixed new institutionalist model of institutional change that will form part of the explanatory framework for this thesis. It will establish this framework’s conceptualisation of the structure-agency relationship and define the role of individuals and institutions in ‘institutional change’. It will set out the mechanisms that explain how institutions, such as political parties, change, and how institutions resist change.

3.2.1 Institutions

This framework will define an ‘institution’ as either a formal organisation or a set or system of formal or informal rules. In the context of this study this means the political party in question, rival political parties in the same party system, international institutions such as the European Union, in addition to formal systems of rules such as the electoral system or the parliamentary legislative process. Institutions also have the ability to effect change through influencing the behaviour and actions of ‘institutionally situated’ individual actors.

Institutions possess a constraining influence over agents but are not confined to only this role. As Bell (2011:891) explains:

Institutions have properties that help structure thought and behaviour at one remove from the immediacy of thought or action by agents at any given point in time. Institutions can thus shape or sometimes even impose behaviour. This is what gives institutions causal properties and why, at bottom, we pursue ‘institutional’ analysis.

The acknowledgment of institutional situated agents in this process brings in agency and shows how it is the interaction between institutions, structures. and agents that drives change. Institutions are tangible and play an active role in the analysis of institutional change.

Institutions possess internal structures. For example, the Conservative Party itself, a formal institution, can be disaggregated into separate institutions such as the party leadership, parliamentary party, party membership and local associations, intra-party pressure groups/think-tanks, or candidate selection rules or the leadership election system. Externally to the Conservative Party itself are two separate but interlinked institutional spheres, a domestic and international sphere. The domestic sphere includes institutions such as pressure groups, the media, and other political parties. The international sphere includes the European Union and other non-European governments, such as the United States or Australia. These institutions are also structured, for example the European Union can be disaggregated to the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, and the Court of Justice.

3.2.3 Agency

This approach is attempting to bridge the gap between rational choice and sociological institutionalism by arguing that individuals can make decisions both through a process of

calculating their self-interest and from the influence of wider social, political, and economic structures and institutions. It rejects the idea that preference formation must be viewed from either a ‘calculus’ (rationalist– individuals are rational self-interest maximisers) or ‘cultural’ perspective (sociological institutionalism – shaped by wider cultural structures) and seeks a ‘middle ground’ between the two (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Kato, 1996). This dichotomy is problematic as it presents an unrealistic view of human behaviour, as humans both consider their self-interest and wider structural factors when making decisions, depending on the circumstances. How individual actors behave partly depends on the perception of the individual, or group, in question and the institutional context they are interpreting. In addition, this institutional (or structural) context can impose ‘costs and benefits’ on agents and/or restrict the ‘resources and opportunities’ available to them (Bell, 2011:892). This can also influence individual behaviour and incentivise or constrain institutional change.

This leads to this framework’s conception of rationality as bounded rationality (Simon, 1957). Bounded rationality suggests when individuals, or groups, make decisions they do using incomplete or unreliable information. Individuals lack a complete knowledge of all the information to hand and an understanding of all the consequences of the actions that they could take. Individuals also have both a limited amount of capacity, and time, to make decisions based on the information available to them. In complex decision-making processes, where the possibility of unintended consequences is high, such as decisions around policy positions, rationality is bounded for those individuals involved and therefore the institution as a whole.

This new institutionalist approach, constituted by these conceptions of preference formation and bounded rationality, is an approach that ‘focuses on active agency *within* institutional settings and that sees the agents in question as being shaped (but not wholly determined) by their institutional environment’ (Bell, 2011:890). This bridges the gap between a rationalist and discursive institutionalist focus on individualism and agency, and the historical and sociological institutionalist focus on institutional and structural environments. This is of great value when looking to explain periods of change, as well as continuity, in a political party. It also goes a considerable way towards providing a more balanced theoretical focus between agency and structure. Human agency has causal power, like institutions, that directly affect the outcomes of political processes, such as policy development in a political party, to use the subject of this thesis as an example (Fairclough, 2005:923).

3.2.4 Structure

Briefly, it is important to distinguish between ‘institutions’ and ‘structure’, as they are very often portrayed as the same thing in many institutional studies. Structure refers in this framework to the wider context of the political, economic, and social environments in which agents and institutions operate within. Like institutions, structures have the power to both constrain and empower agents and create conditions in which certain decisions are favoured more than others (Bell, 2011:898). Institutionally-situated agents interpret and reinterpret these structural environments when considering their actions. A structural environment could include the stability in a national banking system, demographic change such as increasing levels of immigration within a society or public opinion towards the rights of sexual minorities. Structures therefore have ‘institution-like effects in that they shape the options and strategies available to agents’ (Bell, 2011:899). How institutionally situated agents interpret their structural environment also depends on the institution they are situated within. Structures themselves have causal powers, like institutions, that can shape institutional change through their influence over the decision-making processes of strategic agents.

3.2.5 Institutions, Structure, and Agency

Many, if not all, research into change within institutions such as political parties have at their theoretical core a debate over the relationship between the structure and agency. However, as Hellman (2011:465) suggests, this debate has led those interested in party development into a ‘theoretical deadlock’. In a similar fashion to those that debate the importance of nature and nurture in explanations of certain phenomena in human societies, such as war, neither the structure or agency position is ever likely to land a knockout blow on the other (Thelen, 2010). What can be achieved is a synthesis between these two positions, one that treats both structure *and* agency as important components of institutional change, and that ‘situates agents within a context that frames and shapes the strategies they are likely to pursue’ (Thelen, 2010:56). This new institutionalist framework attempts to provide this theoretical synthesis between structure and agency, or in this context, between institutions, structures and agents.

This is done by theorising a dialectical relationship between institutions, structure and agency (Bell, 2011; Hellman, 2011). As Hellmann (2011: 465) states this conceptualisation of structure-agency sees ‘agents...able to develop different strategic responses to the same structural environment, while, at the same time, the structural environment is strategically selective, favouring certain strategies over others’. Institutions, structures, and agents, ‘operating in a dialectical, mutually constitutive relationship’, interacting with each other to produce institutional change (Bell, 2011:899). Actors within institutions have the ability to instigate change, but what options or strategies are available, or perceived to be the best course of action, are contextualised by the institutional and structural environment at the time and therefore constantly open to different interpretation by actors. Fundamentally, whether the influence is institutional or structural, these effects are mediated through interpretive agents, as it only agents that can take the decisions to change an institution of which they are a part. This provides a position which is a synthesis between structure and agency, with neither concept privileged within the framework, but both interacting in a dialectical relationship.

This section has established how this new institutionalist framework theorises the relationship between institutions, structure, and agency. Drawing on Bell’s (2011, 2012) historical institutionalism, in addition to insights from rationalist, sociological, and discursive institutionalism, this framework conceptualises institutions, structure, and agency working in a dialectic relationship which changes institutions through continuous interaction. It is therefore not a case of privileging either institutions, structure, or agency, but of understanding that all three are intricately linked. However, institutional and structural effects are filtered through agents, so it is human actions that ultimately cause institutions, such as a political party’s Europe policy, to change. This new institutionalist approach attempts to bridge the structure-agency question, providing an integrated theoretical framework for the empirical research questions.

3.3 Mechanisms

The second section of this chapter introduces the mechanisms this new institutionalist approach will use to explain how institutions, such as the Conservative Party and European policy, change. It will also explain the mechanisms that work upon institutions to resist change. This theoretical framework accepts that political parties can experience change that is both abrupt and incremental, and instigated via institutional, structural, or agential

mechanisms. This allows for a broad ‘synthesis of explanatory elements’ that captures the dynamic nature of institutional change (Bell, 2011:906).

3.3.1 Path Dependency

One of the main claims of historical institutionalism on the process of change and development in institutions is that an action or decision, policy or organisational in nature, made individually or collectively, will operate a constraining hold over any actions or decisions made in the future (Greener, 2005). In simple terms, a decision at point A is likely to have an influence on decisions at point B and C. Once this action or particular institutional direction becomes entrenched within an institution it becomes increasingly difficult for this direction to be reversed by institutional agents. This is because as time moves on, and more moves in this same direction are made, the costs to the institution and agents of changing course increase (Pierson, 2000a). However, this does not mean institutions are ‘locked-in’ permanently. Institutional, structural, and agential mechanism effects can all contribute to an institution, such as a policy area like European integration within the Conservative Party, changing direction.

A good example of the power of path-dependency to shape the politics of the future is Pierson’s (1994) study of welfare policy under the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. Entrenched institutional welfare systems that had developed over many decades proved extremely difficult to dismantle, due in large part to the significant costs this would have imposed on both governments. This was despite rhetoric about substantially reforming the welfare state in both countries. Dyson (1999:181) found path-dependent tides, such as a long-term cross-party consensus and hegemonic concepts of Franco-German reconciliation, ‘powerful but not determining’ in the French political elite’s commitment to Economic and Monetary Union.

In the context of a political party a good example of this would be an important change in policy, such as the William Hague’s commitment to rule out a Conservative government joining the Euro (Bale, 2016:79), which, once firmly established within the culture and identity of a party, is difficult to reverse. This helps explain why many institutions, like

political parties, are considered conservative institutions that are resistant to change in many areas once a certain 'way of doing things' has become entrenched.

3.3.2 History and Historical Legacy

Here it is important to make explicit the contribution history makes to path dependency, individual behaviour, and why it is taken so seriously in historical institutionalism more broadly. History is defined here as the individual or collective interpretation of past events, decisions, and actions. The prime reason is that the historical context in which actors, and groups of collective actors, make decisions and formulate strategies is shaped and structured by previous decisions and strategies. This is due to the changing social, political, cultural or economic circumstances that shape the behaviour and decision-making processes of actors (Steinmo, 2008). For example, the policy decisions made by a political party during a long period of economic decline are likely to, though not deterministically, shape these same policy decisions.

3.3.3 Positive Feedback

Positive feedback is a concept that helps explain why path dependency can have a powerful influence over political institutions. The concept of positive feedback is closely associated with the notion of increasing returns (Pierson, 2000a). Positive feedback argues that once an actor or group of actors make a decision or takes a specific course of action, supplemented by further decisions that re-state this action, over time the costs of changing this action increase. These costs could occur in a number of different ways, for example in political costs such as reputational damage or material costs such as money or manpower. It therefore becomes increasingly beneficial to the individual or group to maintain this current trajectory. The path dependent trajectories identified in many studies of national welfare states are themselves the products of accumulated positive feedback built up over many decades of policy decisions (Pierson, 1994, Torfing, 2001, Kuipers, 2009)

However, while path dependency can help explain periods of relative continuity in institutional arrangements, it does not explain how institutions like political parties can shift to a new path or direction. It does not account for the moments or periods of relatively abrupt change. Within this theoretical framework this is conceptualised through contingent events and critical junctures/conjunctures.

3.3.4 Contingent Events and Critical Junctures

The idea of contingency and critical junctures/conjunctures are central to historical institutionalism's idea of how the process of change works within institutions such as a political party (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). A contingent event is an occurrence that transpires which cannot be accurately predicted or anticipated by actors with bounded rationality. It can be understood as an event that is comprised of elements of chance or random effects and is possible, but not necessarily likely, to happen. These contingent events can alter the interpretation actors have of their institutional and structural environment and thus their current preferences (Mohanani, 2013). Logically, therefore, these contingent events can affect actor behaviour. Previous decisions or actions are reassessed in the light of new institutional and structural circumstances, with new actions potentially taken in response.

Contingent events can signify the point where a critical juncture can take place. In these critical moments, an actor's preferences can be altered enough to make choices that deviate from the current 'path'. Critical 'conjunctures' are moments where multiple events take place at the same time. The institutional constraints on actors are metaphorically relaxed and the potential for lasting change is possible, though not inevitable (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). Critical junctures can initiate a period, either during or following the contingent event where decisions are made that can guide institutions down a new path (Pierson, 2004). However, a critical juncture can also occur without the need for a contingent event. For example, elections have the potential to be critical junctures for an office-seeking political party such as the Conservative Party, depending on the results and their interpretation by actors (see previous section on electoral performance and party change). These are hardly unforeseen events, as elections must take place by law and are therefore foreseen, but undoubtedly have the potential to be critical junctures for a political party because of their element of unpredictability.

The degree to which an election can contribute towards a critical juncture and changes within European policy for the Conservative Party is affected by the nature of the election in question. Drawing on the scholarship of a number of American political scientists and their studies of US electoral history (see Key, 1955, 1959; Sundqvist, 1973; Brady, 1978), Norris and Evans (1999) distinguish between five different types of elections; *maintaining* and *deviating* elections, *dealignment* and *realignment* elections, and finally *critical elections*.

Maintaining elections are defined as an election in which political parties mobilise a traditional level of support, based on recent elections. Additionally, maintaining elections are

characterised by little deviation from the norm in terms of policy positions, again in comparison to recent elections (Norris and Evans, 1999). The 2001 British general election can be considered to be a maintaining election, with the balance of power in parliament relatively unchanged compared to the 1997 general election (Labour lost five seats with the Conservative Party gaining only 1). In contrast, deviating elections are characterised by ‘sharp reversals’ in the ‘normal’ share of the vote (within the political context of the time). These are often temporary occurrences and are associated with second-order elections such as those to the European Parliament, which are important to this thesis as political parties have used these elections to ‘road-test’ and develop European policy before a first-order national election. Dealignment elections are characterised by a cumulative weakening of the voter-party bond over a number of elections, while realignment elections are a strengthening of these bonds (Evans and Norris, 1999). Critical elections are ‘those exceptional contests that produce abrupt, significant and durable realignments in the electorate with major consequences for the long-term party order’ (Evans and Norris, 1999: xxxi). Critical elections will also significantly alter the policy agendas of future governments.

Critical junctures therefore can provide actors within a party with what Kingdon (1984) describes as a ‘windows of opportunity’. These are ‘windows’ in which agents can act to change policy positions (party leader or leadership) or increase the pressure for policy positions to change if they do not have the authority to directly make changes themselves (backbench MPs, MEPs, party members). Firstly, they can reveal to policy-makers the inadequacy of a current policy position in the light of changing events (Cortell and Peterson, 1999: 183). Secondly, they can provide the opportunity for individual actors within a political party to discredit an existing policy position and therefore increase pressure on policy-makers to make changes. Whether or not actors take advantage of windows of opportunity created by critical junctures depends on their individual or group preferences. This depends on the individual or group in question and their ideology, domestic political considerations, and institutional status (Cortell and Peterson, 1999:183).

It is possible for individual actors to recognise these critical junctures as providing a window of opportunity for change to take place, and for these actors to take advantage of this to instigate change, concurrently. Other individuals, in the same institution or environment, will not recognise these windows and will fail to either instigate change themselves or prevent change they do not want from taking place. This will depend on the perceptive ability of the individuals or group of individuals in question and their specific circumstances.

It is important to establish that the significance of the window of opportunity provided by a critical juncture is subject to variation. This is due to the type of critical juncture that an institution experiences and how they are perceived by individual actors, both in terms instigating or preventing change from occurring. For example, a critical juncture such as the collapse of a national banking system is likely to provide a wider window of opportunity to instigate policy change than a 'undramatic, non-crisis' event such as a European Council summit (Cortell and Peterson, 1999:185). The costs or opportunities that might result from these to policy-makers and party actors are also different. This can affect the significance of the critical juncture. For example, a damaging election result is going to raise the cost in the minds of party actors of not changing certain policy positions more than one quarter of disappointing economic growth figures. Keeler (1993) describes these variations as 'macro-windows' (created by more significant critical junctures) and 'micro-windows' (created by less significant critical junctures). These are defined by the extent of the change that follows them.

What triggers macro and micro critical junctures? These can be either international or domestic in nature (Cortell and Peterson, 1999). As established within the chapter on policy change in political parties, domestic triggers can have exogenous or endogenous origins to the party (Panebianco, 1988; Harmel and Janda, 1994, 1995). An international trigger may be a global downturn in the economic environment, a political decision by an international institution such as the European Court of Justice, a new international treaty, or a change in policy by an individual or group of nations. Domestic triggers that are exogenous to the party itself could include elections, the policy positions of rival parties, a slowdown in the domestic economic environment and changes in public opinion. Domestic triggers that are endogenous to a political party include changes in the party leader or leadership team or shifts in the power of dominant party factions.

While international and domestic triggers can create these critical junctures, and therefore the windows of opportunity to instigate policy change, political actors must still have the preference to make these changes happen. The preferences of these political actors within a political party are shaped by four factors; environmental conditions (international and domestic triggers), domestic political calculation, ideology, and institutional position (Cortell and Peterson, 1999: 188-89). Cortell and Peterson (1999) apply these to government officials, but these can also be utilised for actors in political parties. Changing environmental conditions can alter the preference formation of political actors. That is, they modify the

perceptions of actors within a party to believe that changing the salience or position of a policy will be preferable to no change at all, due to considered high risks of inaction. This is closely associated with domestic political calculation.

3.3.5 Sequencing

It has been established thus far that institutions, historical mechanisms, and contingent or critical events are important to this theoretical framework's analysis of political processes. What also plays a central role in a historical institutionalist explanation of political and institutional change is the sequence, or temporal ordering, in which these events take place. It is therefore not only important to consider *what* happens when analysing a period of historical time, but *when* these events happen (Pierson 2000b). This is because the order or sequence of events are likely to ultimately affect the political outcomes and processes further on in time. So, for example, the fact that *A*, *B*, and *C* happened in the sequence that they did could have a considerable impact, a historical institutionalist analysis would suggest, on the potential outcome at point *D*. If a sequence is maintained and not interrupted by a new contingent event or critical juncture, with one event linking and reinforcing the other, a self-reinforcing path dependency can evolve. As Mahoney (2000:510) states 'path dependent analysis involves the study of causal processes that are highly sensitive to events that take place in the early stages of an overall historical sequence.'

The sequence of events will therefore act as a structuring, though not determining, influence on the preferences and actions of political actors within institutions. As Monahan (2013:95) observes, 'Sequencing is critical because it allows the analyst to understand how events and structures operated to seemingly narrow down the options available to an actor so that an ultimate decision or path was taken.'

3.3.6 Incremental Change

Many new institutionalists have suggested that this explanation of institutional change, long term path-dependent trajectories punctuated with critical junctures and windows of opportunity in which actors can exploit to instigate change, does not adequately explain some of the complex ways in which institutions can change gradually (Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Mahoney and Thelen, 2009). This is because this model does not seek to explain change that can take place in the absence of critical junctures, or in periods between critical junctures. It implies that during these intervening periods, institutions remain relatively static or do not

change at all. In the case of a political party and policy, in this case European policy, while there might be periods where there are no significant or dramatic changes in content or emphasis, policy does not remain completely static but will change incrementally, in small steps.

To move beyond this punctuated equilibrium model of institutional change, and to allow room for agency as well as structure, an understanding of how political institutions can experience incremental change is necessary (Thelen, 2010). This also enables this approach to incorporate endogenous factors more readily in explanations of institutional change, as opposed to solely relying to exogenous shock factors, which most often characterise critical junctures in the classic punctuated equilibrium model. As Streeck and Thelen (2005:19) state, 'rather than emanating on the outside, change is often endogenous and in some cases is produced by the very behaviour an institution itself generates'. Within the context of a political party this links strongly to those within the party change literature that suggest that endogenous factors, such as the actions and behaviour of political leaders and dominant factions or tendencies, should be considered significant sources of change in political parties in their own right, with or without the environmental factors (Panebianco, 1988; Appleton and Ward, 1993, 1997).

Streeck and Thelen (2005:19-30) identify five 'broad modes of gradual but nonetheless transformative change' within institutions which they call *displacement*, *layering*, *drift*, *conversion* and *exhaustion*. As the exhaustion mode is principally to do with institutional breakdown, this section will concentrate on the first four modes as they more applicable to political parties. Many of these modes of gradual change can be utilised to categorise the incremental development and change of a political party's approach to a specific area of policy, as European policy within the Conservative Party could itself be considered an informal institution, subject to these same modes of gradual change. This approach to institutional change is drawn from the 'social ecology' concept found in sociological institutionalism (Peters, 1999).

Firstly, displacement can occur within a political party when new ideas emerge, be they in terms of policy or organisational structure, that bring into question existing institutional practices or positions. However, rather than simply being stimulated by a change in environmental conditions as Panebianco (1988) would suggest, these ideas are drawn from previous historical moments and reintroduced into the party under a new institutional context.

These new ways of thinking are essentially reintroduced or ‘reactivated’ by political actors. If these newly emergent ideas gain credibility amongst more and more political actors, traditional or current ways of thinking, for example within a specific policy area such as Europe, can become displaced. Streeck and Thelen (2005:20) develop this by suggesting that

‘...in critical moments or periods latent subsidiary ways of action can be rediscovered, and by switching over actors then promote them to dominance or move them from the periphery of the institutional system to its centre.’

These critical ‘moments’ or ‘periods’ are however likely to be stimulated by change in a political party’s external conditions, which motivates political actors to rediscover latent policy ideas and test whether they can persuade the party to change and adopt them. Exogenous factors encourage, and provide endogenous political actors with support, to ‘push in the same direction’ towards certain institutional change they could not have justified on their own. Streeck and Thelen (2005: 22) note, ‘for external shocks to bring about fundamental transformation it helps if endogenous change has prepared the ground’. This is supported in the party change literature by Panebianco (1988), who also agrees endogenous factors are required to ‘condition’ a political party, in order for exogenous factors to be in a position to stimulate change. This also implies that displacement can be both a sudden or gradual process of change, depending on the circumstances in question (Mahoney and Thelen, 2009:16).

Secondly, political institutions can also change incrementally through a process called layering (Shickler, 2001, Thelen, 2002, Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Through the process of layering, political actors attempt to work around the traditional institutional practices by adding, or layering, additional practices that do not immediately challenge the status quo but gradually serve to undermine it. These are presented by political actors as ‘refinements’ or ‘amendments’ to the existing arrangements. As Streeck and Thelen (2005:23) note, these will not ‘typically provoke counter mobilisation by defenders of the status quo’ and will over time ‘alter the overall trajectory of development as the old institutions stagnate...and the new ones assume an ever-prominent role in governing individual behaviour’. In theory, a similar process of layering could explain the gradual change in a specific area of policy within a political party, with the proponents of policy change making incremental amendments to the overall direction of a policy area that, in the long term, sets in motion dynamics that

fundamentally undermine it. This could, in theory, incrementally change a political party's policy position on European integration from pro-European to Eurosceptic over time.

Thirdly, change can occur gradually through drift (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Drift results in change when political actors, intentionally or not, allow a policy platform to remain unaltered even when the environmental conditions change and bring these positions into question. As Mahoney and Thelen (2009:17) state, 'When actors choose not to respond to such environmental changes, their very inaction can cause change in the impact of an institution'. Or, in this case, a political party's position on a specific area of policy. The act of not altering the policy platform itself thus leads to the change, as the new political and economic environment changes their impact and meaning. Examples of this occurring in other areas of policy include American welfare policy, which having failed to respond to a number of new 'risks', over time saw the overall social protections available to Americans decline (Hacker, 2005). Policy was allowed to drift and not adapt to the new conditions, which ultimately changed its original impact and meaning.

A fourth mode of incremental change is conversion. This is different from the previous three modes in that policies are not displaced, amended or allowed to drift but instead are 'redirected to new goals, functions, or purposes' (Streeck and Thelen, 2005:26). In terms of an institution such as European policy with the Conservative Party, this could involve political actors adapting policy positions in response to changing environmental conditions in order to meet new policy goals. Or, alternatively, this could mean new political actors, for example as a result of a change in the dominant faction within the party, taking a specific area of policy and converting this to a new purpose (Streeck and Thelen, 2005:26). This can be the result of political actors exploiting the unintended consequences, or ambiguities of a previous policy position, opening the space to allow the reinterpretation of existing policy. Policy conversion could also occur simply through the passage of time (Pierson, 2004). This is because, as time moves on, the environmental conditions in which the original policy was developed have changed, in addition to the political actors within the party and the perceived political problems of the day (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Policy is therefore converted slowly over time as it adapts itself to the new environmental conditions and political actor preferences.

By incorporating these four modes of incremental change (displacement, layering, drift, and conversion) into this new institutionalist approach, it enables political change to be theorised

as not only a process of institutional equilibrium occasionally punctuated by exogenous events, but as gradual change from endogenous causes and human agency. This makes the framework more dynamic and sensitive to how real-world events develop.

3.3.7 Ideas

Another way in which this theoretical framework can develop upon the punctuated equilibrium, or exogenous shock, model of change is to take seriously the role that ideas play in institutional change. Ideas are here defined as ‘creative solutions to collective action problems’ (Steinmo, 2008:131). Incorporating ideas into the theoretical framework allows for the greater role of individual actors in instigating change within political institutions, including political parties, and avoids explanations of change that are overly deterministic or narrowly focused on structural and institutional factors that constrain and reduce individual agency (Lieberman, 2002, Steinmo, 2008). In doing so, it draws upon the key insight of discursive institutionalism. It therefore provides an endogenous mechanism in which political actors can actually change institutions themselves through the introduction of solutions to problems, or ideas. Looked at from this perspective, the collection of policies that make up ‘European policy’ within the Conservative Party are creative solutions to the collective action problem of how Britain should interact with those nations that most closely border it geographically. European policy within the Conservative Party, can therefore in theory be changed by political actors through the introduction of solutions to real or perceived problems with the UK-EU relationship.

Ideas have significance in this context because conceptually they cannot be separated from interests, as an individual’s ‘interests’ are firmly rooted in their desires, beliefs, and values (Blyth, 2002, Steinmo, 2008). An individual’s ideas and interests are therefore interrelated, with each influencing the other. Examining the role of ideas is therefore an important component of explaining why individuals within institutions, such as elite actors within a political party, make the decisions they do regarding policy. Ideas shape an individual’s or group’s interests and ultimately, therefore, their actions. This makes the understanding of the role ideas have played in the development of Conservative European policy necessary for a comprehensive understanding of this process of political change.

Arguably the most well-known new institutionalist to incorporate the power of ideas into explaining institutional change is Hall (1986, 1989, 1993). In each of these studies Hall explores how specific ideas, such as Keynesianism and monetarism, gradually changed the economic and fiscal policies of countries like the US and UK. These ideas, and the policy changes that they helped shape, would go on to make significant changes to each country's economy.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has set out how a new institutionalist theoretical approach can help better understand the process of change in a political party and the mechanisms which can contribute to this process. It adds to the insights set out in the previous chapter on external and internal drivers of change by providing the language and theoretical toolkit to describe the process of change over time. Combining the insights from the party change literature and new institutionalism establishes a detailed approach in which change in a political party can be understood.

It has established how a general new institutionalist perspective provides for an approach that is integrated and pragmatic, in which a range of theoretical insights into what processes can contribute towards change in a political institution work in co-operation with each other and not in competition. Institutions, structures, and individual agents are in a constant process of interaction, forming dialectical relationships. Institutions can change both quickly and more incrementally over time, depending on the historical context. The importance of critical junctures, individual actors, or ideas therefore depends on the evidence for these in the empirical chapters. This is a strength of this general new institutionalist approach and reflects the limitations applying strict interpretations of the four-traditional historical, rational choice, sociological, and discursive perspectives. The following empirical chapters apply this approach to understand the development of European policy in the Conservative Party, 1997-2016.

Chapter 4: Conservative Party and Europe 1997-2016 - Analysis of Change

The aim of this chapter is to provide a descriptive analysis of the development of European policy in the Conservative Party between May 1997 and February 2016. This will set out the general position of the party in relation to European integration during this time as well as identifying important policy changes, continuities, and substantive themes. To achieve this a qualitative analysis of 119 speeches, 267 parliamentary statements, 290 newspaper articles, 9 manifestoes, and a number of other documents, such as the Coalition Agreement, from this period has been completed. This chapter will be sub-divided into separate periods that start with the beginning of a new parliament and end with the subsequent general election. Each sub-section sets out to describe in detail the changes in European policy identified in that parliament, sequenced chronologically, in addition to the continuities with previous historical periods. At the conclusion of each section the type of policy change and Euroscepticism observed will be categorised. This analysis has consciously sought to avoid providing explanations for the changes identified, which is the role of the four subsequent empirical chapters.

In the last twenty years there have been a considerable number of studies published concerning the definition and appropriate categorisation of Euroscepticism in political parties (Taggart, 1998; Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002, 2004; Flood and Usherwood, 2005; Conti and Verzichelli, 2005; Riishøj, 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a, 2008b; Kaniok, 2009). This chapter therefore firstly sets out to briefly consider this literature and establish the typology that will be used to categorise each parliamentary period in the sections that follow.

4.1 Categorising Party-based Euroscepticism

The most noted attempt at a broad definition of Euroscepticism, in the context of political parties, was by Taggart (1998). Here Euroscepticism is defined as the expression of ‘the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’ (Taggart, 1998:366). A more detailed breakdown of the concept of Euroscepticism in political parties was put forward by Szczerbiak

and Taggart (2008a:7) that distinguishes between ‘Hard’ Euroscepticism and ‘Soft’ Euroscepticism. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008:7-8) define Hard Euroscepticism as being:

...where there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived.

Soft Euroscepticism is defined as where:

...there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that ‘national interest’ is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory.

While Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008:241) have stated that the hard-soft Eurosceptic binary model was introduced to stimulate a conceptual debate about party-based Euroscepticism, and was not intended to be a definite position, it can be criticised for being overly simplistic and not allowing for distinctive positions that exist within the hard and soft Eurosceptic definitions (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002).

Lynch and Whitaker (2013a) who combine the Szczerbiak and Taggart hard-soft Eurosceptic binary model (2008a) with Flood and Usherwood’s (2005) six category model, construct a ‘Conservative Eurosceptic spectrum’, from outright rejectionists (Hard Eurosceptic) to minimalists (Soft Eurosceptic). This is set out below in Table 4.1. This provides for a more detailed categorisation than a simple binary distinction, but not so complex that it becomes difficult ‘to operationalise and categorise parties’ effectively (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008:246) (see Riishøj, 2007). This approach will therefore be utilised to categorise each period in the following sections of this chapter. Table 4.2, as discussed in Chapter 2, shows Hall’s three orders of policy change model which will be used to categorise the type of policy change during each parliamentary period.

Table 4.1: Conservative Eurosceptic Spectrum

Hard Eurosceptic	<i>Maximalist Revisionists:</i> Support an alternative relationship with the EU, for example the ‘Norway’ or ‘Switzerland’ models, where a country would not be part of the EU but would still have access to the Single Market or other EU-wide initiatives.	<i>Outright Rejectionists:</i> Support withdrawing from the EU.
Soft Eurosceptic	<i>Minimalists:</i> Support membership of the EU and the current status quo but are opposed to any additional European integration beyond this point.	<i>Minimalist Revisionists:</i> Support membership of the EU but favour a limited repatriation of powers, in certain specific areas, from EU competence to national control.

Source: Lynch and Whitaker (2013a)

Table 4.2: Hall’s Orders of Policy Change

First Order Change	The instruments, or practical mechanisms, of individual policies are changed, but the overall policy goals remain.
Second Order Change	More broad adjustments to an area of policy, for example new individual policies, but the overall goals of policy remain.
Third Order Change	New goals introduced to an area of policy.

Source: Hall (1993)

4.2 Conservative European Policy: May 1997

The purpose of this benchmarking exercise is not to explore in-depth the development of European policy during John Major’s seven-year leadership of the party, but to establish the policy position of the Conservative Party in this area immediately before the beginning of this thesis’s timeframe, which is the period following the May 1997 general election. The most efficient means of establishing the European policy position of the Conservative Party as of May 1997 is to consider the 1997 general election manifesto. At this point in time, the

general election manifesto was the most comprehensive statement of official Conservative European policy available. The limitation of only using the 1997 general election manifesto at this point is that it does not provide a detailed outline of the European policy developed under Major during the 1992-1997 parliament. However, for the purposes of establishing the position of European policy at this point, May 1997, the general election manifesto provides the best starting point from which European policy can be traced from and into the preceding time periods.

The 1997 manifesto sets out a European policy for the Conservative Party that is opposed to any further European social, economic, or political integration for the UK, the only exception being a 'wait-and-see' policy towards the UK joining a single currency. Nevertheless, the manifesto states the Conservative Party aim is to maintain Europe as a 'partnership of sovereign states' and to oppose any drift towards the establishment of a 'federal Europe' (Conservative Party, 1997).

In terms of social policy, the party was committed to keeping the UK out of the Social Chapter (Conservative Party, 1997:9). The Social Chapter extended EU competences in social policy in areas such as working conditions and gender equality. These provisions were applicable to all member states apart from the UK, after Major had negotiated an opt-out at Maastricht. The Conservative Party also opposed any additional expansion of EU competence over employment policy, for example a new European employment chapter, or UK participation in the Working Time Directive.

On economic and monetary policy, Major had also secured an opt-out from the single currency at Maastricht. The Conservative Party's main policy commitment was to 'keep our options open' and only move towards UK participation in the single currency if the economic conditions were right and sustainable in the long term. The UK would, however, continue to be involved in discussions surrounding the single currency before the official launch on January 1st, 1999. In addition, a Conservative government in the next Parliament would only join the single currency if the British electorate had approved the decision in a referendum (Conservative Party, 1997).

Institutionally, the Conservative Party opposed 'any further extension of qualified-majority voting' (QMV) in EU decision-making processes that would reduce the number of policy

areas in which the UK currently had a veto and erode national sovereignty (Conservative Party, 1997). Additionally, they opposed any increase in the powers of the European Parliament if this was at the expense of national parliaments. The role for national parliaments in the EU would be increased, although there were no proposals in the manifesto for how this would work in practice. Any further moves towards centralised decision-making or removal of the option of permanent opt-outs would be opposed (Conservative Party, 1997). For example, the Conservative Party opposed extending QMV into the justice and home affairs pillar of the Treaty on European Union established at Maastricht, as proposed by the French and German governments at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam (Conservative Party, 1997). Before the Amsterdam Treaty was ratified EU justice and home affairs policy measures could only be agreed by unanimous intergovernmental agreement between member states and therefore could not be passed via QMV.

In other policy areas, such as the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies, the Conservative Party committed a future government only to seek far reaching reforms of these policies and to, especially when concerning the Common Fisheries Policy, bring greater regional control over rules and management (Conservative Party, 1997).

Not every European policy position in the 1997 Conservative manifesto was tasked with opposing or resisting UK participation in further European integration. As the manifesto states, the first priority for the Conservative Party in the future development of Europe was the commitment to EU enlargement (Conservative Party, 1997). The Conservative Party supported the ‘aspiration’ of countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to join the EU, in addition to unspecified ‘others’ (Conservative Party, 1997). On the subject of trade, the policy was to work towards completion of the single market and, eventually, a transatlantic free trade deal (Conservative Party, 1997). In terms of defence, foreign, and security policy, the Conservative Party wanted to see increased co-operation between member states in all these areas, in addition to initiatives to combat international organised crime (Conservative Party, 1997).

The Conservative Party position on European policy, as presented to the British electorate in May 1997, can be summarised as one in which the party had reached, or was at least very close to reaching, the limits of European integration it was willing to countenance. If we adopt the Lynch and Whitaker (2013a:319) framework of Conservative Euroscepticism

policy at this point can be categorised as minimalist-Soft Euroscepticism. The Conservative Party was opposed to the extension of EU competences in almost every policy area, the further centralisation of decision-making, surrender of permanent UK opt-outs, and the introduction of qualified majority voting into any additional policy areas. It is, as Lynch and Whitaker (2013a:319) have described in another context, a ‘this far but no further’ position. It does not, however, suggest any policies that should be transferred from EU competence to full UK control. They support the enlargement of the EU to the eastern and central European nations, the completion of the single market and enhanced co-operation, but not supranational control, in areas such as defence, foreign, and security policy.

4.2 May 1997 – June 2001

European policy in the Conservative Party during William Hague’s leadership sees much continuity with the European policy set out in the 1997 manifesto. The Conservative’s policy position continued to be opposed to any further European integration. Any form of EU institutional development or change that was perceived as reducing national sovereignty, such as an increase in the use of QMV or the expansion of EU competences into new areas, was opposed (Maude, 2000). A clear indication of this was the party position on the Amsterdam Treaty, which the Conservative Party opposed and voted against at 2nd and 3rd reading during its ratification in the House of Commons. During his first major speech as party leader on June 27th, 1997 in Perth, Hague called for a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty (BBC, 1998). This position was repeated by the shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Howard in *The Times* the following month (Howard 1997a). This policy towards the Amsterdam Treaty was eventually dropped between July and November 1997, with the Conservative Party no longer committing to a referendum when challenged over the issue by the Labour Party in Parliament (Howard, 1997c). The enlargement of the European Union, as it had been under the previous leadership, remained the ‘top priority’ for Conservative European policy (Conservative Party, 1999: 1).

However, while the principle of opposition to further integration shows continuity, the Conservative position on Europe during this period did experience important changes. The most significant change was on policy towards the single currency. The policy at the end of Major’s leadership was to ‘wait-and-see’ how the single currency developed and then, if the economic conditions were right and the project had proved to be sustainable, consider the UK

participation after a referendum. The policy towards the single currency under Hague went through two changes. Firstly, at the October 1997 conference in Blackpool, the position set out by the leadership on the single currency was not to join for ‘the foreseeable future’ (Deans, 1997). Following from this, on October 23rd, 1997, the leadership announced that the party would commit to opposing the UK joining the single currency for the life of the current parliament. The leadership also agreed to maintain this policy for the next general election manifesto, subsequent to a positive endorsement of this policy from a ballot of party members (Deans, 1997). This initiative was privately known as ‘Operation Sunrise’. The result of this ballot was announced in September 1998, with 84.4% of the party members that participated in the vote supporting the party leader’s policy on the single currency. Turnout for the referendum was 58.9%. This was a notable change from the ‘wait-and-see’ single currency policy under Major.

The second notable change in European policy during this period was the so-called ‘flexibility clause’, announced by Hague in Budapest in May 1999, on the eve of the June 1999 European elections. This proposed clause would allow all EU member states the final decision on which future EU laws it did or did not want to participate in, outside the areas of the single market, competition, and trade policy (Watson, 1999). In all other areas, national parliaments would have the final say on whether a member state participated. As Hague stated when announcing the policy, “This is about a Europe with the flexibility to allow different destinations as well as different speeds” (Hague, 1999a). It would also protect the UK from being “dragooned into a federal Europe’ (Hague, 1999a). This policy would enable those that did not want to integrate any further, but still wanted to continue to co-operate in other policy areas, the legal option of doing so. Though Major (1994) had spoken of ‘greater flexibility’ and ‘varied geometry’ in the future development of the EU while in government, this was the first time an amendment to the EU treaty had been proposed to formalise it.

A third notable policy development during this period was announced by Shadow Foreign Secretary Francis Maude in June 2000. This was the creation, through domestic legislation, of ‘reserve powers’ for the UK parliament. This was needed because EU institutions, especially the European Court of Justice, had ‘sometimes extended their competence beyond what was set out in the Treaties’ (Maude, 2000). This so called ‘Treaty creep’ was interpreted as a means by which EU institutions could extend the powers of the Treaties beyond what was originally intended, and without the ability of national parliaments to block them.

Reserve powers would ‘guarantee the supremacy of Parliament over certain areas of policy’ (Maude, 2000). This would ensure that areas not included in the competences of the EU under the Treaties, such as defence and taxation, could not face ‘Treaty creep’ through the decisions of the European Court of Justice. This policy aimed at protecting national sovereignty and the supremacy of Parliament.

Lastly, the 2001 manifesto also committed the Conservative Party to ‘veto any further transfer of powers from Westminster to Brussels’ (Conservative Party, 2001). Going a step further than this, the 2001 manifesto also committed the Conservative Party in government to ensure that any future government wanting to transfer powers from Westminster to Brussels, would require approval for this in a referendum (Conservative Party, 2001). This went considerably further than the 1997 general election manifesto, which only committed the party to a referendum on joining the single currency (Conservative Party, 1997).

These four policies, on the single currency, the flexibility clause, reserved powers, and the referendum commitment, can be considered to be the main changes in relation to European policy between 1997 and 2001. When categorising them in terms of Hall’s (1993) framework of policy change, these are second order changes. The European policy goals between the two periods remained the same. These policies were new instruments to which past policy goals could be achieved in the future. Using the Lynch and Whitaker spectrum of a Conservative Euroscepticism (2013a) the Hague period can also be categorised as minimalist-Soft Eurosceptic. There is opposition to any further European integration and the suggestion that EU policy in certain, undefined, areas should be optional rather than mandatory – the so called ‘flexibility clause’. However, at no stage during this period is there a clear list of EU policy areas that the Conservative Party suggest they would repatriate. There is a change to a clear Soft Eurosceptic position on the single currency, with the Conservative Party ruling this out for at least 10 years.

In addition, the Conservative Party during this period also developed a number of policies that aimed at reforming both the institutional structures and processes of the EU, and the ability of the UK parliament to hold these EU institutions accountable. These would tackle some of the negative consequences of the functioning of the EU, as they perceived it, such as a lack of democratic accountability and tendency to over-centralise decision making through deliberately opaque processes. As these policies constitute a similar theme, they have been

grouped together. They can then be easily compared with groups of institutional reform proposals in subsequent time periods.

The first of these themes concerns scrutiny of EU institutions and EU decision-making, in which the Conservative Party proposed a number of policies, often involving the establishment of new independent institutions. These included the establishment of a new European authority, independent from the EU, to scrutinise European Commission decisions and establish the costs and benefits of newly proposed, and already established, EU legislation (Conservative Party, 1999); an independent mechanism to scrutinise EU institutions to prevent ‘over implemented or otherwise misapplied’ EU regulations (Conservative Party, 1999) and a ‘state-aid scoreboard’ to be established by the EU to publicly identify member states providing anti-competitive support to protect their own industries from market forces (Conservative Party, 1999). Other scrutiny policies, aimed specifically at the European Commission, included the power for the European Parliament to remove individual Commissioners from office; a binding code of conduct for all senior Commission officials; and for all Commissioners to be ‘personally responsible in EU law’ for all the money administered in their name (Conservative Party, 1999).

The second of these themes involve the establishment of new independent European institutions that would take over, from the European Commission, competences in specific policy areas. For example, in the 1999 European election manifesto the party proposed removing the European Commission’s authority to implement and enforce EU competition policy and transfer this competence to a new independent European competition authority (Conservative Party, 1999). In the same manifesto the Conservative Party also proposed the establishment of a new independent Anti-Fraud Office, based outside the European Commission, to tackle fraud within EU institutions (Conservative Party, 1999). To enforce the subsidiarity principle the Conservative Party proposed a ‘subsidiarity panel, set up by the Member States’ to screen EU legislative proposals before they were discussed by the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament. This would ensure the EU did not legislate in areas that would be better dealt with at the national level (Conservative Party, 1999).

A last group of policies coalesce around enhanced European policy scrutiny in the UK Parliament. Firstly, the UK Parliament should have the power to debate, and vote upon, UK candidates for European Commission positions put forward by the government (Hague,

1999). Secondly, the Conservative Party also proposed that before Ministers attend Council meetings they should be questioned on the government's position. Subsequently, if the government agreed to a position that differed to those presented to MPs before the meeting Ministers would be required to provide an explanation to MPs on the specific reasons for this (Conservative Party, 1999).

These policy themes indicate that there was strong emphasis during the Hague leadership on European policies associated with increasing the scrutiny and accountability of European institutions and decision-making processes, in addition to enhancing the power of MPs to question the government over European policy decisions. Importantly, however, under Hague it should be noted that there was a specific focus on increasing the scrutiny and accountability of the European Commission and European Commissioners, as well as the reduction in its powers in important areas such as competition policy.

In summary, the Conservative Party policy towards Europe under the Hague leadership shows a degree of both continuity and change with the policy bestowed upon it by Major. Areas of policy continuity include a commitment to resist any further steps towards greater European integration for the UK or the introduction of more qualified majority voting. There are strong continuities in commitments to expand the membership of the EU, complete the single market, increase economic competitiveness, reduce regulation, and develop a more flexible form of decision-making. Areas of policy change during this period include the move to rule out the single currency for 10 years, the commitment to hold referendums on all future EU treaties, the flexibility clause treaty change, and the reserved powers legislation.

4.3 June 2001 to May 2005

4.3.1 Ian Duncan Smith, June 2001-November 2003

The goals of European policy in the Conservative Party, following the election defeat in June 2001, continued under the new leadership of Iain Duncan Smith. As Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Ancram (2001) confirmed to the House of Commons in October 2001:

I am happy to admit that we do not support further political integration...we would want some powers to be returned to national Parliaments where the national interests can be most effectively pursued.

The Conservative Party reflected this position by opposing ratification of the Nice Treaty through the House of Commons on the basis that it was over-centralising and extended QMV, damaging national and parliamentary sovereignty (Ancram, 2001). The Conservative Party also opposed the proposed EU Constitution, calling for approval through a national referendum prior to UK ratification (Ancram 2002c).

However, while maintaining continuity in terms the overall goals of European policy, a number of policy positions changed during the leadership of Duncan Smith. During this period Conservative policy on the single currency changed. Before the new leadership came to power policy on the single currency had been to oppose UK membership for at least the lifetime of the current and next parliament – at least 10 years. Under Duncan Smith this changed to opposition at any point in the future (Duncan Smith, 2001a). The party had therefore shifted from a position in which in the long term it could be in the UK interest to join the single currency, to a new position in which the party was opposed regardless of the circumstances.

In addition, following the September 11th terrorist attacks, new EU-wide criminal justice powers were proposed in order for member states to more effectively tackle terrorism and organised crime. The Conservative's policy position on these plans went through a number of changes between September and December 2001. Initially, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Shadow Cabinet reported that the Conservative Party would 'co-operate fully' with the government in introducing these new EU powers, which included the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) (Jones, 2001). The Shadow Cabinet decided 'that the priority of tackling terrorism overrode its opposition to further loss of sovereignty by giving the European Union greater powers' (Jones, 2001). The following week, after a meeting in Brussels with Conservative MEPs, Duncan Smith hinted that the Conservative Party would only support those powers that they considered necessary, with the suggestion that support for the EAW scheme would be withdrawn (Evans-Pritchard, 2001). In the House of Commons on 17th December 2001, in his response to the Prime Minister's statement on the Laeken European Council, Duncan Smith confirmed the Conservative's new position in opposition to the

EAW, stating that it was a further example of the EU goal of ‘deeper and deeper integration’ and a ‘shift towards greater central authority’ in the EU (Duncan Smith, 2001a).

A further EU policy issue was the subject of whether Conservative MEPs should cease to be members of the European Peoples Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED) grouping in the European Parliament, the largest grouping of centre-right MEPs. In December 2002, it is clear that the Conservative leadership was prepared to change this position. In a letter to the EPP-ED, Duncan Smith confirmed his intention to remove Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED after the 2004 European elections, unless they were given much greater individual autonomy (Watt, 2002). In February 2004, with the party now under the leadership of Howard, this policy was again changed. In a letter to Conservative MPs, Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Ancram confirmed that this was no longer policy to leave the EPP-ED group after the 2004 European elections. Instead, an agreement had been reached with the leadership of the EPP-ED in which Conservative MEPs would be allowed more autonomy to express their different views on European integration (Webster, 2004).

During Duncan Smith’s period as leader of the Conservative Party he made only one major speech on European policy. This took place in Prague on July 10th, 2003. In terms of policy continuity, Duncan Smith confirmed the Conservative’s opposition to any further EU integration for the UK, re-stating that the Conservative Party rejected the EU Constitutional Treaty (Duncan Smith, 2003). Commitments to working towards the long-term goal of global free trade through the EU, in addition to the more medium-term goal of a free trade agreement with member nations of NAFTA, had also been established policy during the last parliament. In this speech, however, Duncan Smith also made a number of new policy commitments. The Conservative Party would seek not only to reform, but also repatriate powers from the EU back to Britain in the specific areas of agriculture, fishing, and foreign aid policy (Duncan Smith, 2003). Furthermore, the Conservative Party would not support the expansion of the EU’s role in foreign policy, and, were therefore against EU initiatives such as the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Rapid Reaction Force (Duncan Smith, 2003).

As in the previous Parliament, the Conservative Party had a number of policies on institutional reform of the EU that aimed to increase the scrutiny and accountability of EU

institutions, enhance the role of national parliaments in the EU decision-making process, and protect the UK from deeper EU integration.

With regards to EU scrutiny and accountability, the Conservative Party under Duncan Smith maintained continuity with Hague era policy. In terms of enforcing the principle of subsidiarity the Conservative Party now wanted a full independent institution in which national governments could appeal if they felt the subsidiarity principle had not been respected by the EU institutions (Ancram, 2002c). In addition, there were policies that aimed to hold the European Commission more accountable, reduce its powers, and simplify the EU legislative process. These included the introduction of a new system of ‘full’ and ‘junior’ Commission posts, full Commission posts would be given to large member states, junior ones to smaller member states (in terms of population); the Council to take the lead in initiating legislation from the Commission; and that directives from the Commission should only state the desired outcome with member states deciding themselves how to implement them (Ancram, 2002c). To reduce the complexity of the decision-making processes, the Conservative Party suggested that the EU should have two types of legislative outcome – binding and non-binding EU law. Binding laws would cover single market policies and ‘other important areas’, which every member state had to follow, with non-binding laws covering all other areas of policy, which member states could follow on a voluntary basis. This was essentially the continuation of the ‘flexibility clause’ policy outlined by Hague between 1997 and 2001.

At this point we see more policies aimed at increasing the role of national parliaments in the work of the EU than had previously been the case under Hague. These include four main policy proposals: replacing the UK Permanent Representative in Brussels with a Europe Minister who would be questioned by MPs every fortnight in the House of Commons; national parliamentary committees to be given an enhanced role in setting the agenda of the Commission; to give five national parliaments that reach agreement together the power to block EU legislative proposals; and for each national parliament to have an EU Scrutiny Committee that would scrutinise EU legislation before it reached the Council (Ancram, 2002a).

Concerning the theme of protecting the UK from deeper EU integration the Conservative Party during this period proposed two changes to the EU treaties. The first suggested that the

preamble of the founding treaty, which includes the commitment to seek an ‘ever closer union’, should be reconsidered in terms of how it applies to the UK (Ancram, 2002b). Secondly, that the founding treaty should be amended to include a precise definition of what are, and what are not, competences of the EU (Ancram, 2002b). These aimed to protect national sovereignty from expansionist interpretations of the treaties by EU institutions, such as the Commission and the Court of Justice.

These policies show continuity in terms of policy themes, such as increasing the scrutiny and accountability of the EU institutions. However, there are also elements of change, with a greater policy emphasis on increasing the powers of national parliaments in terms of both the development and scrutiny of new EU laws.

4.3.2 Michael Howard, November 2003-December 2005

The first major speech on European policy by Michael Howard, following his appointment as party leader in November 2003, was given at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung think-tank in Berlin on February 12th, 2004. In this speech, Howard returns to the ‘flexibility clause’ policy advocated between May 1997 and June 2001 (Howard, 2004a). However, though the policy is not explicitly re-cycled, Howard suggested that the EU needed to expand the use of the ‘enhanced cooperation’ procedure, which was formalised following the Treaty of Amsterdam (Howard, 2004a). This procedure allowed a minimum of nine-member states to co-operate, within the formal EU structures, over certain policy areas if they could not reach agreement with the other member states or wished to proceed more quickly than the other member states. In this case, Howard advocated a policy that would extend the use of the enhanced co-operation procedure to all areas of policy beyond those associated with the single market (Howard, 2004a). Any member state would have the ability to opt-in to an enhanced co-operation measure, rather than ‘having fraught negotiations to opt-out of a new initiative’ (Howard, 2004a). In this same speech, Howard renewed the Conservative’s commitment to repatriate powers from the EU concerning fishing, agriculture, and overseas aid, in addition to confirming the Conservative’s opposition to the EU Constitution and the single currency (Howard, 2004a).

In the 1997 general election manifesto, the Conservative Party had confirmed that they would seek to maintain the British opt-out from the EU Social Chapter (Conservative Party, 1997). However, after the May 1997 election the new Labour government opted-in. Under the

leaderships of Hague and Duncan Smith, though they had not been in favour of the UK opting-in, they had not committed a future Conservative government to restore the opt-out. In his October 2004 party conference speech, Howard committed the Conservative Party to restoring the UK's opt-out from the EU Social Chapter (Howard, 2004b). This had previously been confirmed by a Conservative Party spokesman in May 2004 as not being part of a future Conservative government's European policy (Jones, 2004).

Aside from the commitment to the EU Social Chapter opt-out, the second major policy change in relation to Europe that came under the Howard leadership was in the area of immigration. Prior to this point, there had been no explicit policies that directly contradicted the EU competence in this area, this being the free movement of EU citizens across member states. In September 2004, however, Michael Howard committed a future Conservative government to an 'annual limit to immigration' (Howard, 2004c). This policy, if implemented in government, would have been incompatible with EU law.

The Conservative Party under Howard also proposed a number of EU policies in the area of institutional and procedural reform. These are set out below and can be grouped around a number of themes: EU scrutiny and accountability; enhancing the role of national parliaments; enhancing the role of the European Parliament and reducing unnecessary regulations. Many of these policy themes show continuity with the previous Conservative Party leaderships under Hague and Duncan Smith. However, increasing the powers of the European Parliament is a notable change from previous leaderships, who had worried that increasing the powers of the European Parliament could threaten the role of national parliaments in the EU.

With regards to the second theme, one particularly strong area of continuity is the increased scrutiny and accountability of the European Commission. However, the policy instrument that would achieve this goal changed. To reduce waste and fraud at the European Commission the 2004 European election manifesto contained a commitment to seek a new EU Commissioner role for budgetary control, who would ensure officials responsible for budget management were performing effectively (Conservative Party, 2004).

Several policy proposals also sought to enhance the role of national parliaments in the EU decision-making processes. Some of the policy instruments to achieve this goal continue

from the Duncan Smith leadership, as well as the overall policy goal. Under Howard the Conservative Party are also committed to working towards the establishment of a 'red card' system, whereby five or more national parliaments could work together to block new or repeal existing EU legislation (Conservative Party, 2004). There are restatements of policies such as the introduction of a government minister to head the UK permanent delegation to the EU; the right for member states to initiate EU legislation, instead of only the Commission and the introduction of more than one state holding the rotating presidency of the EU Presidency (Conservative Party, 2004).

Enhancing the role of the European Parliament, however, had not previously been an important area of EU institutional reform for the Conservative Party. These policy proposals were indirectly also connected to reducing waste and fraud at the Commission, as they involve increasing the powers of the European Parliament to hold the Commission to account. The 2004 European manifesto suggested increasing the European Parliament's role in a number of areas, such as giving the European Parliament the right to cross-examine any EU official and see any documents relevant to its role (Conservative Party, 2004). This manifesto also proposed the setting up of a new deregulation and competitiveness committee in the European Parliament to ensure legislation from the Commission was justified and cost effective, in addition to new MP and MEP committees to hold ministers and EU officials to account for EU agreements and legislation.

For the last theme, reducing the cost of EU regulation, this had also consistently been a theme during the previous leaders. Here we also see the policy goal (reducing EU regulations) maintaining continuity but the policy instrument (how the goal would be achieved in practical terms) change. Under Howard the Conservative Party committed to working towards a 25% reduction in current EU regulations, with sunset clauses introduced on all new regulatory proposals.

The period between June 2001 and June 2005 shows European policy becoming more Eurosceptic. Using the Lynch and Whitaker (2013a:319) spectrum, policy during this period can be categorised as minimalist revisionist-Soft Eurosceptic. This is because policy was concerned not only with preventing the UK being subjected to more European integration and reforming the institutions, but also with repatriating powers from the EU. Both Duncan Smith and Howard committed the party to repatriate EU powers over fishing policy, agricultural

policy and overseas aid policy, as well as the restoration of the UK's opt-out from the EU Social Chapter. The move towards an annual limit on immigration can be categorised as a maximalist-revisionist Hard Eurosceptic position, as it sought to change EU policy to before freedom of movement was introduced, but still remain full members of the EU.

Consequently, this period also shows elements of not only second order change (changing the instruments of policy but not the goals) but also third order change (changing the goals of policy). Second order change is evident in Howard's proposal to expand the use of the enhanced cooperation procedure to produce a more flexible EU. Third order change is evident in the commitment to repatriate powers back to the UK and introduce an annual limit on immigration, as these are both new goals for Conservative European policy.

Conservative policy on Europe during the 2001 to 2005 Parliament shows a number of continuities with the Hague leadership period between 1997 and 2001. Duncan Smith and Howard remained committed to future referenda on all new EU treaties that would deepen UK-EU integration, to deregulation, the expansion of the single market, the enlargement of EU membership and the completion of a transatlantic-EU free trade agreement. During this parliament, we also see a number of significant changes. On the single currency Duncan Smith moves the Conservative Party to a definitive position of opposing British entry whatever the future economic circumstances, which was not party policy under Hague. Additionally, in this parliament we also see commitments, both from Duncan Smith and Howard, to repatriate a number of powers from the EU institutions back to the UK government. Under William Hague the policy position was one of reform and opposition to further integration. During this period both Duncan Smith and Howard add the repatriation of powers to the goals of Conservative European policy.

4.4 May 2005 – May 2010

Both during the leadership election campaign and the early days of Cameron's period as Leader of the Opposition, a number of policy commitments on Europe were made. The first was a commitment to return all current EU competences in the areas of social and employment policy back to the UK (Cameron, 2005). This was to ensure that excessive regulation from the EU did not limit the growth and competitive potential of the UK

economy. Cameron stated that this would be the ‘first priority’ of his plan for EU reform and the ‘strategic imperative’ of Conservative European policy under his leadership (Cameron, 2005). In March 2007, Cameron again stressed that the repatriation of these powers from the EU back to UK control would be a ‘top priority for the next Conservative Government’ (Cameron, 2007a). This commitment shows policy continuity with the previous leadership under Howard, who before the June 2005 election defeat, had also promised to restore the UK’s opt-out from EU social and employment policy. In this same speech, Cameron also rejected the EU Constitutional Treaty and renewed the commitment to use UK-EU membership to encourage the promotion of international free trade (Cameron, 2005). Both these commitments demonstrated policy continuity with previous Conservative leaderships.

Cameron also committed the Conservative Party to withdrawing Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED grouping in the European Parliament. This policy commitment on Europe was first made privately, then publicly, during the summer of 2005 while Cameron campaigned for the party leadership. It was later confirmed in November 2005 by an official spokesperson that this would be party policy once Cameron was elected (Carlin and Isaby, 2005). However, no detail surrounding the timetable for withdrawal was made at the time. By June 2006 the Conservative leadership was under pressure to reveal how and when this policy would be implemented (Helm, 2006). At this point in June 2006 Cameron is understood to have given Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague one month to organise the formation of a new European political group and withdraw Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED (Kite, 2006). This proved impossible to implement.

An announcement came the following month on July 13th, 2006 in a joint statement with Mirek Topolánek, then leader of the Czech Civic Democratic Party, that they would both form a new European political grouping following the 2009 European elections (Cameron, 2006). In the same declaration, Cameron and Topolánek announced the creation, outside of the European Parliament, of the Movement for European Reform (Cameron, 2006). This would work towards promoting the ‘ideals of a more modern, open, flexible and decentralised European Union, ready to face the challenges of the 21st century’ (Cameron, 2006) and would provide a platform to develop such ideas before the founding of the new European political group in 2009. The policy was finally implemented following the 2009 European elections when the new European Conservative Party and Reformists Group, in which the Conservative MEPs would now formally sit, held their inaugural meeting.

In June 2006, the Conservative leadership also confirmed that the party was changing its position on the Common Fisheries Policy. Under the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships, the Conservative Party had been committed to repatriating these powers from the EU, either during a future EU treaty negotiation or as part of a UK-only reform package. In June 2006, however, a Conservative Party spokesperson confirmed that it was no longer party policy to ‘unilaterally withdraw’ from the EU Common Fisheries Policy but instead to ‘reform the fisheries regime from within’ (Helm, 2006). This moved party policy over EU fishing policy into line with the Conservative’s long-standing commitment to push for comprehensive reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, rather than unilateral withdrawal.

The next most significant European policy commitment made by Cameron during his period as Leader of the Opposition was in relation to the Lisbon Treaty. This treaty contained many of the provisions of the EU Constitutional Treaty, but instead amended the founding treaties of the EU instead of replacing them with a new treaty. As with the position on the defunct EU Constitutional Treaty, the Conservative Party pledged to give the voters a referendum on any new treaty that emerged from the negotiations between EU national leaders in 2007. This commitment was underlined in a letter to readers of *The Sun*, which appeared in print on September 26th, 2007. In this letter, Cameron gave the following commitment with regards to the Lisbon Treaty: ‘Today, I will give this cast-iron guarantee: If I become PM a Conservative government will hold a referendum on any EU treaty that emerges from these negotiations’ (Cameron, 2007b). This was reiterated the following month by the Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague in his Conservative Party conference speech when he said ‘so let everyone be clear: a Conservative Government elected this autumn will hold a referendum on any EU treaty which emerges from the current negotiations’ (Hague, 2007).

In his last major speech on European policy before the 2010 general election, on November 4th 2009, Cameron announced that the Conservative Party policy of a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty could not be implemented as all EU member states had by that point ratified the treaty (Cameron, 2009). As a result, Cameron announced a series of measures to ensure this could never happen again. A number of these were policies had been announced previously by Conservative leaderships since 1997, such as a commitment to pass a law to ensure that no future government could legally ratify an EU treaty or transfer power to EU institutions without a referendum. This ‘referendum lock’ would come about through

amending the European Communities Act 1972 (Cameron, 2009). The triggering of any mechanisms in the Lisbon Treaty, the so called ‘ratchet clauses’, that enable the expansion of EU competences without amending the treaties would also require the passing of a full Act of Parliament (Cameron, 2009). Cameron also announced that a future Conservative government would introduce a United Kingdom Sovereignty Bill to make it clear that ‘ultimate authority rests with our Parliament’ (Cameron, 2009).

In addition to commitments to repatriate social and employment powers already announced, Cameron also committed a future Conservative government to gaining a full opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, recently legally enshrined in EU law by the Lisbon Treaty (Cameron, 2009). The Conservative Party would also seek an additional protocol for the UK over EU criminal and justice policy, to ensure that EU judges could not extend their influence over the UK criminal justice system (Cameron, 2009). This would involve not only the return of criminal justice powers to the UK, but also the reform of the European Court of Justice to ensure that its powers in relation to criminal justice returned to ‘pre-Lisbon’ levels (2009). These would be negotiated with other member states and the EU institutions over the course of the next parliament and added to any future EU accession treaty to give them enforceable legal affect (Cameron, 2009). Cameron also made it clear in this speech that as party leader he was not in favour of a ‘made-up referendum’ on the UK’s relationship with the EU. A referendum would be unnecessary, Cameron argued, since if the Conservative Party were to form the next government, the people will have given their consent for his European policy at the election (Cameron, 2009).

Conservative European policy under Cameron between 2005 and 2010, in terms of Eurosceptic categorisation, shows overall continuity with the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships. It would therefore be right to categorise it as minimalist-revisionist Soft Eurosceptic on the Conservative Eurosceptic spectrum. There is opposition to further European integration, a commitment to press for significant reforms of EU institutions and pledges to repatriate a number of areas of EU competences back to full UK control. Unlike under Howard there are no policies that approach the Hard Eurosceptic end of the spectrum, such as the previous commitment to impose an annual limit on immigration, which was dropped under Cameron’s leadership. On the Hall spectrum of policy change the Cameron leadership period can be categorised as a mixture of first and second order change – the detail and instruments of policy change, but the overall goals and positions show continuity with

the previous Parliament. However, one element of third order change was the pledge to remove the Conservative MEPs entirely from the EPP-ED and establish an entirely new grouping in the European Parliament. Most of the previous leaderships since 1997, with the exception of Duncan Smith between 2001 and 2003, had maintained a policy to reform the Conservative Party position with the EPP-ED from within the group.

Overall, the Conservative Party position on European policy during the 2005 to 2010 Parliament shows alignment with those policies adopted under Howard. The Conservative Party would remain opposed to further European integration, displayed in their opposition to both the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, for which they demanded national referendums for both treaties. On the repatriation of powers Cameron maintained Howard's pledge to remove the UK from EU social and employment policy but changed the Conservative Party position on the Common Fisheries Policy to one of 'reform from within' rather than repatriation through negotiation. On the question of the Conservative MEPs place in the EPP-ED Cameron changed policy from relative autonomy within the group to complete separation in 2009. Cameron also committed a future Conservative government to amend the 1972 European Communities Act to ensure any future pooling of further powers with the EU would require a national referendum and ensure that the power of the EU over the UK in terms of criminal justice policy returned to 'pre-Lisbon' levels.

4.5 May 2010 to May 2015

After the failure to achieve an outright majority in the House of Commons following the May 2010 general election, the Conservative Party formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. A mutually agreed policy programme for government, most commonly referred to as the Coalition Agreement, was published on May 12th 2010. This was the first formal policy document at the beginning of this new parliament in which we can establish the European policy of the Conservative led-government and compare this with the European policy programme the Conservative Party had stated they intended to pursue if they had formed a single party government.

4.5.1 Coalition Agreement

The Coalition Agreement set out the European policy of the Coalition government for the duration of the agreement. There were many areas of continuity with Conservative European

policy objectives before the 2010 election, but as will be established, many areas of significant change.

In terms of areas of continuity with European policy in the 1997-2010 period, the Coalition Agreement states that government ‘will ensure that there is no transfer of sovereignty or powers over the course of the next Parliament’ (Coalition, 2010:19). The Coalition would also implement Conservative policy through legislating for a ‘referendum lock’ (Coalition, 2010:19). The use of any ‘ratchet’ clause in the EU treaty would require the passing of primary legislation. The agreement also ruled out joining, or preparing to join the single European currency, to ‘limit the application’ of the Work Time Directive to the UK, to work towards a single seat for the European Parliament, and to support the continued enlargement of the EU (Coalition, 2010:19). This shows that the Conservative Party managed to transfer many of their pre-2010 election European policy positions into the Coalition’s programme for government, despite being in government with the more pro-EU Liberal Democrats.

The Conservative Party were certainly successful in getting a number of their European policy positions into the Coalition Agreement, but a comparison with their stated European policy platform prior to the 2010 election show a number of changes. These range from complete omissions, to modified policies, and new policies on Europe. Dealing first with the omissions, it is notable that the one policy position Cameron (2005) had previously described as the ‘first priority’ and ‘strategic imperative’ of his European policy, the repatriation of social and employment powers from the EU back to the UK, was absent from the Coalition Agreement. There was also no mention of working towards a full UK opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which Cameron (2009) had stated as the second most important policy area in which powers needed to be repatriated back to the UK.

A number of policy positions were modified. For example, a pre-2010 commitment to introduce a UK Sovereignty Bill was modified to a commitment to ‘examine the case’ for such a Bill (Coalition, 2010:19). It was announced later, on October 11th 2010 by the Europe Minister David Lidington, that government had decided it was unnecessary to introduce a bill confirming UK sovereignty, as common law already explicitly stated that Parliament is sovereign (Lidington, 2010). EU criminal justice powers, the third area in which Cameron (2009) had previously stated powers needed to be returned to the UK, has been modified to reviewing these powers on a ‘case-by-case basis’ (Coalition, 2010:19) when the UK is

eventually asked which of 130 criminal justice powers associated with the Lisbon Treaty it wants to opt-in or opt-out of. This leaves open the option for the Conservative led-government to opt-in to some specific areas of EU criminal justice powers, which is a change from the pre-2010 election position. There is also no mention of reforming the European Court of Justice to limit the power it has over criminal justice policy. The new European policy included in the Coalition Agreement, which was not Conservative policy before the 2010 general election, is the commitment to ‘examine the balance of the EU’s existing competences’ (Coalition, 2010:19).

4.5.2 EU Criminal Justice Powers

The Conservative Party position on EU criminal justice powers changed during the course of the Coalition government from their position in opposition, which was to return these powers back to the UK. On July 27th, 2010 during a speech in the Commons confirming the government’s decision to opt-in to the European Investigations Order draft directive, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, confirmed that EU criminal justice powers would be decided on a case-by-case basis and on what is in the ‘national interest’ (May, 2010). In this May also confirmed that while the Conservative Party had been opposed to the EAW in the form it was negotiated under the previous Labour government, the EAW was currently under review by the government (May, 2010). On the October 15th, 2012, May confirmed that the government would provisionally opt-out of all 130 EU criminal justice powers established under the terms of the Lisbon Treaty, in order to be able to negotiate with the Commission those individual measures the government would like to opt-back into before the final deadline in 2014 (May, 2012). The following year, on July 9th 2013, Theresa May confirmed that the government had decided to opt-back into 35 EU criminal justice powers, including the EAW (May, 2013). The policy of opting into 35 EU criminal justice powers, enforceable through the European Court of Justice, was therefore a substantial shift in position from 2009, when Cameron (2009) committed the Conservative Party to reduce the European Court of Justices jurisdiction over criminal justice policy to pre-Lisbon levels.

4.5.3 EU Renegotiation and Referendum Policy

The most important European policy change for the Conservative Party during the Coalition government was on the question of a referendum on British membership of the EU. In opposition, Cameron had decried ‘made-up referendums’ that did not ask the electorate to

approve specific proposals, such as a new EU treaty (Cameron, 2009). This position was maintained during the early Coalition period. On September 6th, 2011, while giving evidence to the House of Commons Liaison Committee, Cameron stated that he was against an In/Out referendum: “I don't actually think that is the question most people in Britain want answering. It is about what sort of Europe. I believe we should deliver the sort of Europe people want” (Cameron, 2011a). Cameron also stated the potential for drawing back some unspecified powers in a future negotiation on a new treaty (Cameron, 2011a). Cameron later restated this position in the House of Commons on October 24th, 2011, explaining to MPs that the approach of an In/Out referendum on EU membership ‘would not be right’ (Cameron, 2011b). However, on this occasion Cameron went further than he had previously done before the Liaison Committee, stating that legislating for an in/out referendum now would ‘not be the right time’ given the fiscal crisis in the Eurozone (Cameron, 2011b). While reiterating his opposition to a referendum with an in/out option Cameron did not explicitly rule it out in the long term, if an improvement in the fiscal climate in the Eurozone arose or a new treaty negotiation failed to materialise. This is a notable, though small, change from the Conservatives’ earlier position on the EU referendum.

In June 2012 an article for the *Daily Telegraph* further adjusted policy on an EU referendum. Cameron (2012) stated in the article that he is ‘not against referendums in our parliamentary democracy’ and ‘not against the referendums on Europe’. While indicating that he believed leaving the EU through an ‘out’ vote in a referendum would not be in the national interest, Cameron also argued that an ‘in’ vote now would also not be in the national interest as this would be used as an argument to prevent further EU reform (Cameron, 2012). While still indicating that the most likely route to reforming the UK’s relationship with the EU was through the on-going and future discussions about the Eurozone, Cameron (2012) indicated the ‘need to spell out in more detail the parts of our European engagement we want and those that we want to end’, while stating that the Eurozone crisis and Coalition meant a ‘tactical and strategic’ approach to achieving these goals. Cameron concluded by signalling that a referendum was a potential future option to gain consent from the British people after reform of the UK’s relationship had taken place (Cameron, 2012).

This is an important change from the Conservative Party position between September and October 2011, explicitly indicating here that a referendum on the UK’s relationship with EU is a future policy option under active consideration. However, at this stage there is ambiguity

about whether a future referendum would be asking consent for a specific package of reforms to the UK's relationship with the EU, or consent on whether the UK should be in or out of the EU.

This ambiguity was resolved on January 23rd, 2013. In the so-called 'Bloomberg speech', Cameron (2013a) announced he was now 'in favour of a referendum' on the UK's relationship with the EU. The Conservative Party would commit in their 2015 election manifesto to negotiate a new settlement with the EU, after which they would hold an in/out referendum to determine whether the British people wished to remain members on these new terms (Cameron, 2013a). Legislation would be drafted in the current Parliament and passed by a future Conservative government in the first year of the next Parliament. This new settlement needed to achieve 'fundamental, far-reaching change' (Cameron, 2013a). This future negotiation would focus on five main areas of reform. Competitiveness: renewed commitments to complete the Single Market in services, energy and digital; a push towards more free trade deals; the exemption of small businesses from new EU directives. Flexibility: acknowledgement that some members of the EU will want different levels of European integration, and that differences must be respected; end to the application of the 'ever closer union' principle to the UK. Power must be able to flow back from the EU to member states: the EU needs to assess what it should be doing and what it should not be doing. Democratic accountability: a bigger role for national parliaments in EU-decision making. Fairness: decisions taken by Eurozone members to protect their interests must be fair to those non-Eurozone member states (Cameron, 2013a). These five areas would form the central elements of a future Conservative renegotiation with the EU either as part of a new treaty negotiation, or unilaterally if this does not take place.

Despite stating in the Bloomberg speech that the Conservative Party would draft the legislation for an EU referendum now and introduce the Bill at the beginning of the next Parliament, the Conservative side of the government supported the introduction of a draft EU Referendum Bill in the 2010-2015 Parliament. The backbench Conservative MP James Wharton came first in the private members bill ballot and proposed an in/out referendum on EU membership must take place before the end of 2017. The bill was opposed by both the Liberal Democrats and Labour, running out of time during the Committee Stage in the House of Lords on 31st January 2014. Cameron indicated that the Conservative side of the government would support the re-introduction of the EU Referendum Bill during the next

session of Parliament. The bill was re-introduced on July 2nd 2014, after backbench Conservative MP Bob Neil came third in the annual private members bill ballot, but again failed to pass, this time in the House of Commons.

During the course of 2013 the Conservative Party made a number of changes to their EU renegotiation plan. The Bloomberg speech delivered by Cameron in January 2013 did not include any proposals to include policy areas such as EU immigration, EU freedom of movement, or EU immigration welfare entitlements in a future renegotiation with the EU. However, through a number of interventions in March and November 2013, the question of EU immigration and welfare entitlements were introduced by the Conservative Party as policy areas to be included in this future renegotiation. During a speech on immigration in Ipswich Cameron announced a series of measures the government would now be taking to reduce the draw of the UK welfare system to EU citizens. These included giving EU citizens looking for jobs in the UK the entitlement to only six months of welfare benefits; tightening the test to ensure EU citizens were genuinely looking for work, checking to see whether an individual's English ability was a barrier to work (Cameron, 2013b). Cameron announced that the government 'would take forward negotiations with European partners' to explore whether economically inactive EU migrants could remain the responsibility of their home country before they were entitled to benefits, in addition to exploring whether limits could be placed on the amount of child benefit paid to those with children living outside the UK (Cameron, 2013b). This theme was developed further in an article for the *Financial Times* on November 26th, 2013 titled 'Free movement within the European Union needs to be less free'. In this article, for the first time, Cameron introduced the objective of reforming the EU free movement of people principle. The article also suggested that, in order to protect the economies of current member states, when future nations join the EU arrangements must be introduced to limit the access new EU citizens have to national labour markets. Cameron (2013c) suggested two policy instruments to achieve this goal:

One would be to require a new country to reach a certain income or economic output per head before full free movement was allowed. Individual member states could be freed to impose a cap if their inflow from the EU reached a certain number in a single year.

During this period, between January 2013 and November 2013, we see important changes to the Conservative Party policy of renegotiating the UK's relationship with the EU. EU immigration, freedom of movement and welfare entitlement rules, absent from the initial renegotiation plan announced by Cameron in January 2013, are by the end of that year a central component of the renegotiation and referendum policy.

A further significant change in the relation to the EU renegotiation and referendum policy took place on November 28th 2014, during a speech on immigration by Cameron at the JCB world headquarters in Staffordshire. In this speech Cameron specified negotiating aims in two areas, the free movement of people and welfare entitlements. With the former Cameron indicated the Conservative Party 'want EU jobseekers to have a job offer before they come here and to stop UK taxpayers having to support them if they don't', rather than being free to move to the UK first and then start searching for employment (Cameron, 2014c). In his November 2013 Financial Times article Cameron had suggested two policy instruments for reforming the free movement principle, either an economic convergence principle to ensure full free movement rights only apply to member states of similar economic development, or the ability for EU member states to cap the annual number of EU migrants it will accept (Cameron, 2013c). In his November 2014 speech Cameron only mentioned the economic convergence principle (Cameron, 2014c). On the question of welfare entitlements Cameron indicated that the Conservative Party 'will insist that in the future those who want to claim tax credits and child benefit must live here and contribute to our country for a minimum of four years' (Cameron, 2014c). Cameron also made clear the policy on EU citizens' entitlement to UK child benefit and child tax credits stating that 'there should be no child benefit or child tax credit at all no matter how long they have worked in the UK and no matter how much tax they have paid' (Cameron, 2014c).

This speech therefore makes a number of changes to the package of EU reforms the Conservative Party had announced during the previous 12 months, introducing new policy instruments to reform EU free movement rules (EU citizen must have job offer to move to the UK), whilst omitting (annual cap on EU workers) and continuing (ban on the exporting of child benefit and child tax credit) with others. In the Conservative Party 2015 general election manifesto, however, the position that EU citizens must have a job offer to move to the UK was absent.

In general, the Euroscepticism of the Conservative Party policy towards the EU during the Coalition period is consistent with that of Cameron's period in opposition between 2005 and 2010. This places this period of policy on the minimalist-revisionist Soft Eurosceptic category of the Conservative Eurosceptic spectrum – a commitment to reform, a resistance to further integration, and pledges to repatriate powers– at least until the Bloomberg speech in January 2013. However, when considering the most important change in European policy during this period, the commitment to hold an in/out referendum on UK membership of the EU, it is difficult to place this policy in the 'Soft Eurosceptic' section of the spectrum as it is a policy that at least opens the possibility of UK leaving the EU. Cameron (2014) himself alludes to this possibility in his November 2014 speech on European policy when he declares that if the EU does not listen to his proposals for EU reform he would 'rule nothing out'. This policy could legitimately be categorised as at least moving towards an outright rejectionist - Hard Eurosceptic position as it suggests that the Conservative Party could support the UK leaving the EU in the future.

Using Hall's orders of policy change the Coalition period shows examples of first or second order changes, as well as a significant number of third order changes. There is a much more significant mix than under the previous Parliament. First order changes include the adjustment on the Sovereignty Bill policy from a commitment to introduce it in opposition to 'examine the case' for it during the Coalition period and the change on EU criminal powers from opposition to each being evaluated on a 'case-by-case' basis. Second order changes include the commitment to remove the UK from the 'ever closer union' principle as a new policy instrument to prevent the UK from being drawn into closer European integration. Third order policy changes include the commitment to an in/out referendum and the introduction of EU immigration and free movement into the renegotiation plan. All these areas emerged as new goals for Conservative European policy during this period.

In summary, Conservative European policy during this period underwent a number of significant changes. Though the Conservative Party were successful in including the referendum lock policy in the Coalition agreement, a number of previous policy commitments such as the repatriation of EU social and employment powers and Sovereignty Bill did not survive negotiations with the Liberal Democrats. During the course of the Coalition period the most important change in policy was the commitment to hold an in/out referendum on EU membership after renegotiating the UK's relationship with the EU. The

basis for this renegotiation also changed during the Parliament with EU immigration, welfare, and free movement as a central pillar of the renegotiation when previously it had not been mentioned. The Coalition period also sees the modification of the Conservative Party policy on EU criminal justice powers from hostility to review on a 'case-by-case' basis.

4.6 May 2015 to February 2016

Following the general election victory on May 7th, 2015 the Conservative Party formed a majority government. As in the previous parliament the major area of European policy change would be seen in the Conservative Party EU renegotiation and referendum policy. However, it was not until November 10th, 2015 that Cameron formally announced the basis from which the Conservative government would negotiate with the EU. Cameron did this both in a formal letter to Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, released to the public and in a speech on the same day in London. In both the letter and speech Cameron identified, as of November 2015, the key policy areas the UK government wanted to renegotiate with the EU.

In both the Chatham House speech and the Tusk letter Cameron identified four main EU policy areas for the formal negotiation: Economic governance and the Eurozone; Competitiveness; Sovereignty and Subsidiarity; and Immigration (Cameron, 2015a). In terms of the general areas of policy there is much continuity here with the Conservative Party EU renegotiation policy developed during the Coalition period. Economic governance and the Eurozone, competitiveness, sovereignty and subsidiarity were all identified as key areas for EU reform in the Bloomberg speech, while EU immigration and welfare was included later.

In terms of the first two policy areas, economic governance and the competitiveness, Cameron went into detail for the first time on the specific policies the UK sought agreement with the EU and member states (Cameron, 2015b:2-4). The policies on economic governance and the Eurozone include 'recognition' that:

- The European Union has more than one currency.

- There should be no ‘discrimination or disadvantage’ to a member state if they use a currency that isn’t the Euro.
- Any changes to economic governance decided by Eurozone member states must always be non-compulsory for non-Eurozone member states.
- The taxpayers in non-Eurozone member states must never be ‘financially liable’ for initiatives designed to support the single currency.
- That non-Eurozone member states have their own institutions responsible for financial stability.
- Any issues regarding economic governance that affect all member states must be discussed by all member states.

On competitiveness, the Conservative Party included two main policies, ‘a target to cut the total burden on business’ of EU regulations and a ‘clear long-term commitment to boost the competitiveness and productivity of the European Union’ (Cameron, 2015b:3).

On the third policy area, sovereignty and subsidiarity, we see strong continuity with Coalition policy in this area. These policies included an end to the ‘ever closer union’ principle applying to the UK’s EU membership; the ability for national parliaments to act together to block EU legislative proposals; a clear EU commitment and mechanism to enforce the principle of subsidiarity; and a clear commitment that the UK will maintain the ‘ability to choose to participate’ in Justice and Home Affairs policy will be fully respected by EU institutions (Cameron, 2015b:4).

In the Tusk letter Cameron identified three policies related to immigration: full free movement would only be implemented for future new member states when their economies have ‘converged’ with existing EU members; tougher and longer re-entry bans for those who abuse the free movement principle; a ban on EU citizens qualifying for any in-work benefits or social housing until they have lived in the UK for 4 years and a ban on EU citizens being able to export child benefit or child tax credits to children living outside the UK (Cameron, 2015b:5).

The UK-EU reform settlement was formally agreed by member states at the February 2016 European Council meeting in Brussels. In the first three policy areas (economic governance, competitiveness, and sovereignty) set out by Cameron in the Tusk letter the Conservative government was largely successful in finding agreement with the EU institutions and other member states. On economic governance the Council agreed to recognise that the EU has more than one currency; guaranteed that the UK would not have to participate in any further bailouts of Eurozone member states; prohibited discrimination towards non- Eurozone member states; guaranteed that if central EU funds were used to support the single currency the UK will be reimbursed; permitted any member state to bring to the European Council for discussion any concern they might have surrounding a decision made by Eurozone countries (European Council, 2016:12-15).

Within the competitiveness policy area, the government won agreement on commitments to complete the single market, ‘enhance the competitiveness’ of the EU, lower the regulatory burden on businesses and undertake an ‘active and ambitious trade policy’ (European Council, 2016:15). However, the Council conclusions on competitiveness did not include a specific ‘target to cut the total burden on businesses’, which Cameron had sought in his November 2015 letter to Donald Tusk.

On sovereignty there was no change between what was outlined in the Tusk letter and the final Council conclusions. Cameron was successful in securing agreement on the principle that the UK was ‘not committed to further political integration into the European Union’, that the ‘ever closer union’ preamble in the EU treaties cannot be used to promote further integration or extend the powers of the EU, and that these clarifications would be written into the European Union treaty ‘at the time of their next revision’ (European Council, 2016: 16). While a clear commitment to the principle of subsidiarity was included there were no ‘clear proposals’ (Cameron, 2015b:4) on how this would be implemented (European Council, 2016:17). The proposal to give national parliaments the ability to block EU legislative measures, the so called ‘red card’ mechanism was also agreed. For a proposal to be considered for rejection 55% of the national parliaments of EU member states must support such an action, completing these votes within a 12-week period (European Council, 2016:17). Cameron’s proposals for commitments on the UK’s status regarding EU Justice and Home

Affairs policy and the right for member states to have full control of national security were also agreed (European Council, 2016:17).

The most significant change when comparing the November 2015 Tusk letter with the February 2016 European Council conclusions is in the area of immigration policy. Instead of a complete ban on EU citizens receiving in-work benefits for four years Cameron secured a commitment to allow the UK to limit the in-work benefits an EU citizen can receive over a four-year period but on a graduated basis. An EU citizen would initially be entitled to no in-work benefits but after four years this entitlement would gradually be increased until it was at the same level as UK citizens (European Council, 2016:23). This mechanism would be authorised for seven years from the point that it was activated by a member state following a decision by the Commission as to whether the member state had legitimate concerns over the levels of immigration it was experiencing (European Council, 2016:23). With regards to the policy on banning the export of child benefit and child tax credits Cameron also had to change the Conservative policy in order find agreement with other member states. Cameron agreed that instead of a ban, the level of these payments could now be linked to the cost of living in the country where the child or children benefiting from these payments were living (European Council, 2016:23). This would initially apply only to new claimants but could be extended to all claimants by January 2020 (European Council, 2016:23). On both the in-work and child benefit areas these were significant changes to their initial policies. In terms of free movement for new member states, no specific proposals were agreed to, despite this being one of Cameron's key policies in the immigration area. The Conclusions only note that appropriate transitional arrangements would be agreed to at the relevant time by all member states (European Council, 2016:23).

European policy during this period, in terms of the Eurosceptic categorisation, does not change dramatically with the position the Conservative Party had established towards the end of the Coalition period. This locates Conservative European policy in the minimalist-revisionist Soft Eurosceptic category of the Conservative Eurosceptic spectrum. As the main policy instruments and goals of European policy show continuity with the end of the Coalition period most of the change seen during this period is as a result of negotiations between the Conservative government and other EU member states over the details of policy. As a result, the policy change can be categorised as first order change as it is adjustments to the detail of policy instruments aimed at achieving certain goals. Here the most significant

first order changes are in the immigration policy area of the negotiations. Cameron did not secure the 4-year restriction on in-work benefits or the ban on the exporting of child benefit but did get agreement for the UK to impose limited restrictions on the payment of in-work benefits for a seven-year period and the indexing of child benefit payments to the cost of living in each member state. This is first order change as the detail of the policy has changed (level and process of payments) but not the policy instrument (EU in-work and child benefit payments) or goal (to reduce EU migration levels to the UK).

This period was dominated by discussions between the Conservative government and the EU institutions and member states over the UK renegotiation package. Cameron confirmed in November 2015 that his renegotiation deal would centre on the four main ‘baskets’. The first three policy areas had been established as the main focus of a UK-EU renegotiation during the Bloomberg speech in January 2013, with the new focus on EU immigration and welfare policy emerging during the period between this speech and the general election in May 2015. The Conservative Party was successful on getting a form of agreement in all four policy baskets, though the detail of the policy instruments designed to reduce the appeal of UK welfare system to EU migrant workers were changed during the negotiations. This is because when considering the first three baskets the detail of what Cameron was proposing was vague or absent, whereas the proposals surrounding immigration and welfare were specific. Policy in this last area of immigration therefore appears to have changed the most between May 2015 and February 2016.

4.7 Conclusion

The aim of this section is to provide a summary of the continuities and changes in Conservative European policy outlined in the previous sections of this chapter. This section highlights the substantive themes that can be extrapolated from this analysis. It will first consider the continuities in European policy before then moving on to the changes.

4.8.1 Continuities in Conservative European Policy, 1997-2016

- The single market and free trade – exhibits strong continuity throughout this period as each leader, from Hague to Cameron, supported both the UK maintaining its position

within the EU single market and expanding the areas which it does not yet fully cover such as the services sector, digital products and the energy market. Each leadership also maintained the commitment to prioritise a transatlantic trade agreement and expand the number of free trade agreements between the EU and other important trading nations or blocs.

- Economic competitiveness, deregulation, and the protection of free markets were all consistent priorities for each Conservative leadership during this period, exemplified by Cameron putting economic competitiveness and deregulation as one of the central ‘baskets’ of his UK-EU renegotiation deal. Howard also had a policy to work towards a reduction in total EU regulation by 25%.
- EU decentralisation and flexibility – Conservative European policy placed great emphasis on policies to decentralise EU decision-making and create greater flexibility for member states. Under Hague and Maude this took the form of a ‘flexibility clause’. Duncan Smith and Ancram proposed a new system of ‘binding and non-binding EU laws’. Howard proposed using the enhanced cooperation route to allow for more intergovernmental decision-making; Cameron secured the removal of the UK from the ‘ever closer union’ principle.
- EU enlargement – Each leadership was committed to supporting expansion of the EU, especially Eastern European nations, and Turkey. Cameron confirmed in the House of Commons on October 19th 2015 that Conservative policy remained to support Turkish accession to the EU.
- Opposition to further European integration – Following the May 1997 general election Conservative policy consistently opposed any further UK integration or pooling of sovereignty with the EU. Since the Maastricht Treaty was agreed by EU member states in February 1992 three further European treaties were successfully ratified – Amsterdam (October 1997); Nice (February 2001); Lisbon (December 2007). Each was opposed by the Conservative Party for committing the UK to deeper European integration and eroding national sovereignty, for example through the expansion of QMV.

- Opposition to an expanded EU role in European defence policy –the Conservative Party consistently opposed the EU developing a separate defence identity. Hague, as Foreign Secretary, went as far as to veto a proposal in July 2011, proposed by France and Germany, for a permanent operational HQ for EU military operations (Waterfield, 2011).

4.8.2 Changes in Conservative European Policy, 1997-2016

- The Single Currency – The policy of ‘wait and see’ on the single currency established by Major underwent two major changes in this period. During the 1997-2001 parliament policy changed from ‘wait and see’ to a rejection of the single currency for up to 10 years. This changed again under Duncan Smith when Conservative policy changed to definitive rejection of the single currency no matter the future circumstances. This position was maintained subsequently by both Howard and Cameron.
- Referendums – Although Major did commit the Conservative Party to hold a referendum on the single currency before allowing the UK to become members, there was never a commitment to hold referendums on future EU treaties. This changed when the 2001 general election manifesto committed the party to ensure that any future transfer of powers from the UK to the EU would require a national referendum. This ‘referendum lock’ policy was maintained by each subsequent leadership and put into law by Cameron after the passing of the European Union Act 2011.
- Repatriation of Powers – The question of which, if any, powers the Conservative Party wanted to repatriate from the EU and return to the UK fluctuated considerably during this period. Under Hague there were no firm commitments on repatriating EU powers. Duncan Smith subsequently proposed repatriation of EU powers over agriculture, fishing, and foreign aid policy. Howard maintained this but added restoring the UK opt-out from the EU Social Chapter. During opposition Cameron maintained the priority to remove the UK from EU social and employment legislation, but changed position on agriculture and fishing policy to ‘reform from within’ rather

than repatriation. During the Coalition, the commitments on social and employment policy were dropped, and were not revived on the formation of a majority Conservative government in May 2015.

- EU Immigration, Free Movement of People, and Welfare – This emerges as an important part of Conservative European policy after 2013 and became a central part of Cameron’s EU renegotiation policy between 2015 and 2016. This is in sharp contrast with all previous Conservative leaderships for whom EU migration and welfare entitlements did not form a central part of European policy. They are mentioned little, if at all, in policy speeches, parliamentary debates, or election manifestoes on European affairs.
- EU Justice and Home Affairs Policy – For the majority of this period the Conservative Party opposed giving the EU further powers in relation to criminal justice and home affairs policy. However, once in government following the 2010 general election the Conservative Party took a more pragmatic position and examined UK participation in these EU policies on a ‘case-by-case’ basis. In July 2013, the government confirmed that they would be opting in to 35 EU justice and home affairs powers. This is clear change during the transition from opposition into government.
- Protections for Non-Eurozone members in the EU – Protections for Non-Eurozone members in the EU became a central part of the David Cameron’s EU renegotiation deal. This policy aimed to address the perception from some EU member states that a more centralised and integrated core group of Eurozone members in future could make decisions that would damage the interests of Non-Eurozone members of the EU like the UK.
- Conservative MEPs and the European Parliament – The Conservative MEPs status in the European Parliament went through many changes during this period. Under Hague the Conservative Party renegotiated their relationship with the EPP to gain greater autonomy. Duncan Smith initially attempted to negotiate further autonomy for Conservative MEPs, but decided it was preferable to leave and establish a new grouping. This policy was reversed when Howard decided to remain within the EPP

but under renegotiated terms. Cameron then reversed this position pledging to leave the EPP during his leadership election campaign in 2005. This was achieved in 2009 when the Conservative Party established the European Conservative Party and Reformist group.

Chapter 5: Europe and Policy Change under Hague: 1997-2001

This chapter sets out to explain the development of European policy in the Conservative Party during the 1997 to 2001 parliament. As such it encompasses the entire leadership period of William Hague. Firstly, the analysis in this empirical chapter (in addition to the three that proceed it) is structured thematically, combining the exogenous and endogenous causes of party change (rival political parties, public opinion, etc) examined in chapter 2 and the causes of institutional change set out in chapter 3 (historical legacies, critical junctures, etc). This chapter also uses the theoretical ideas from the new institutionalist framework (path dependency, incremental change, etc) to better describe and understand this process of change.

As set out in Chapter 4, which traces policy change from May 1997 to February 2016, the empirical chapters in this thesis focus on the most significant changes in Conservative Party European policy during this period. In this chapter the changes examined are the opposition to the Treaty of Amsterdam; the ‘two parliaments’ single currency policy; ‘Operation Sunrise’ and the ballot of party members on the Euro; the flexibility and reverse powers policies; the future EU referendum commitment; and the policies surrounding EU institutional reform. This parliament, under the leadership of William Hague, was a period overshadowed by the conflict and division surrounding Europe during the Major premiership. It is this historical legacy, and the impact it had on policy change during the 1997-2001 parliament, that this chapter turns to first.

5.1 Historical Legacies

5.1.1 The Maastricht Treaty

The debate over the negotiation and ratification of the Maastricht Treaty left the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Conservative Party bitterly divided. ‘Everyone’ was remembering what had happened in the Conservative Party over Maastricht when the party returned after the 1997 election (Mackay, 2016). It was a period in which Anne Widdecombe (2016), Shadow Cabinet 1999-2001, says ‘you can only call a civil war in the party’. Michael Spicer (2012:203), Conservative MP 1974-2010 and leading opponent of the Maastricht Treaty in Parliament, illustrates the extent to which the treaty caused division in the party:

It is hard to describe the enmity which built up at the time between Conservative MP and Conservative MP. In the dining room Eurosceptics would not sit at the table of Europhiles and vice versa. In the voting lobbies, it was not unknown for one Conservative MP to spit at another. Physical violence occurred during the course of one or two crucial votes.

Even after Maastricht was ratified the Conservative Party remained divided over Europe. In November 1994 Major took the unprecedented move to withdraw the whip from eight Conservative MPs who had refused to vote for the European Communities (Finance) Bill, after previously threatening to call an early general election if his colleagues did not support the Bill. To confront Eurosceptics in the parliamentary party and Cabinet, Major called a leadership election in 1995, in which he defeated leading Eurosceptic Cabinet minister John Redwood.

For the Conservative Party the historical legacy of the 1992-1997 parliament was a period dominated by in-fighting over the future direction of European policy. The narrative attached to this legacy is one of policy division and conflict. William Hague was a minister and Cabinet member during this period, as were many MPs who survived the 1997 election, and are likely to have been influenced by the experience of division over Europe during this period. It provides an important element to the historical legacy that the Conservative Party brought with it into the 1997-2001 parliament and provides additional context to the structural environment in which European policy was developed. The historical legacy of the Maastricht rebellion period is therefore an important contributory factor that shaped the content of European policy in this period. As Andrew Copper, the Conservative Party Director of Strategy 1997-1999, explained to me, the legacy of this conflict cast a long shadow over the early Hague leadership period, incentivising it to identify a position which would pacify a majority of the party over Europe:

It was obviously incredibly divisive during the 92-97 parliament and the position, the Major government's position, was not where the centre of gravity of either the MPs or the party members, and indeed not where Hague, was. So, I think the priority was to find a robust and defensible position, especially in terms of the single currency. From the position of effectively being ambivalent about it to something closer to ruling it out.

This contributed to the minimalist soft Eurosceptic policy platform established by the Conservative Party in the 1997-2001 parliament.

5.1.2 Black Wednesday

The ERM crisis, more commonly known as Black Wednesday, refers to September 16th, 1992 when the pound was forced to leave the ERM after a wave of currency speculation had reduced its value in comparison to the Deutschmark close to the previously agreed floor. Britain had originally joined in October 1990 under Margaret Thatcher to link sterling directly to the value of the Deutschmark which was considered ‘the most inflation resistant currency in the Europe’ (Heppell, 2014:104). From May 1992, but specifically in the run up to Wednesday September 16th, 1992, currency speculators began aggressively short selling the pound in order to reduce its value. The government, despite increasing interest rates to 15% on the day and using £3.3 billion in reserves to maintain the value of the pound, withdrew from the ERM on September 16th, 1992.

The Conservative’s reputation for competence in economic policy declined significantly following Black Wednesday, with Labour replacing them as the voters’ preferred party to manage the economy (Heppell, 2014). Disputes about Europe ‘dominated the political agenda’ from then on (Major, 1999:352). As Major (1999:352) later noted: ‘Black Wednesday turned a quarter of a century of unease into a flat rejection of any wider involvement in Europe’. The reputational damage of this event contributed to the landslide election defeat in May 1997 and, in addition, to the growth and legitimisation of Euroscepticism in the Conservative Party (Gifford, 2014).

In the early speeches on European policy by Hague, it is clear that the events of Black Wednesday have influenced the Conservative’s position on European integration, specifically in terms of financial and economic policy. They show a discursive justification for his sceptical position towards the single currency. This was symbolised in October 1997 with Hague (1997b) devoting a section of his first conference speech as party leader to an apology, on behalf of the Conservative Party, for entering the pound into the ERM:

In looking to the future, we have to be informed by the past. I remember when we went in to the ERM...looking back, I believe that going in to the ERM was a great mistake. I am sorry we did it - and we should have the courage and the confidence to say so. It did enormous damage to the credibility of our party and we paid the price. Black Wednesday, negative equity, sky high interest rates, we went in to something when the time was not right. We will never let that happen to our country again.

In his speech to the Confederation of British Industry on November 10th, 1997 the historical legacy of the ERM crisis was also utilised by Hague (1997c) as a discursive tool to warn delegates of the risks of entering into EU financial integration without assessing if it was compatible with the UK economy. In both these early speeches it is evident that the historical legacy of Black Wednesday, for the Conservative leadership, was a contributing factor in the formation of the ‘wait and see’ approach towards the single currency. The language around this event is associated with ‘negative equity’, ‘sky high interest rates’, ‘job losses’, ‘falling investment’ and ‘repossessed and bankrupt businesses’ for the country and ‘enormous damage’ to the ‘credibility’ of the Conservative Party on financial and economic competence. This narrative is also used by Hague as a discursive tool to justify his Eurosceptic approach to the single currency, warning of the dangers of entering without a full assessment of the potential consequences.

It is also important to note that Hague uses both of his first two major speeches as party leader to associate the legacy of Black Wednesday to his position on the single currency. This period, as mentioned elsewhere, in the second half of 1997 is the crucial period in which the new single currency policy was agreed by the Shadow Cabinet. It is therefore significant that Hague is using the dominant historical legacy of the ERM crisis to justify the ‘two parliaments’ policy during this point in time, as it suggests that the sequence of events in the preceding part of the decade following and including Black Wednesday influenced his policy development.

5.1.3 Major’s Post-Maastricht European Policy

The Conservative’s post-election European policy was not created from a vacuum but developed from the historical legacy of the 1992-1997 parliament. The new parliament, and new leadership team, provided the party with a window of opportunity to make changes. However, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, history and the decisions made by actors constrain future actions. To change policy is always likely to create tension among those who had previously created and supported it. Radical policy change is likely to create much more serious and sustained conflict. This likelihood acts as a constraint on those individuals in the present. It is a potential cost to radical change that encourages more incremental action. This was certainly the case for the new Conservative leadership in 1997, who had experienced serious conflict over European policy during the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

The policy platform of the past can also be used as resource for policy decision-makers in the present to draw ideas from. As will be established here, Conservative European policy under Hague, perceived as a Eurosceptic, was significantly influenced by the past European policy legacy of Major, perceived at the time as pragmatically pro-European. The ideas and concepts of the Major European policy, post-Maastricht ratification, were built upon and reformulated by the Conservative leadership during the 1997-2001 parliament.

To provide context, it is important to briefly set out the nature of the Major European policy post-Maastricht. Following Maastricht, Major adopted rhetoric and policy positions that aimed to placate both pro-integration and Eurosceptic elements of the party (Turner, 2000). For pro-integrationists, it was emphasised that Conservative policy was still to continue as a fully engaged member of the EU. On the single currency, the policy was to 'wait and see'. However, after Maastricht Major began to adopt more Eurosceptic positions. There was a determined effort to slow down plans for further integration, with Major calling for a 'new approach' to Europe focusing on everyday concerns of ordinary people, rather than 'abstract concepts' about political union (Major, 1993). At the 1996 Turin intergovernmental conference Major established his aim as a 'partnership of nations' and for agreement on more subsidiarity, more power for national parliaments, reform of the European Court of Justice and the QMV system (Major, 1996). From 'we belong at the heart of Europe' in March 1991, the Conservative European policy had seen a 'slow but sure movement' to a more Eurosceptic agenda (Turner, 2000:172).

The intervention that left the most significant legacy on Conservative European policy in the 1997-2001 parliament was delivered by Major in a speech in September 1994. This firmly established flexibility as the 'central plank' of Conservative European policy (Lynch, 2003). He proposed a 'multi-track, multi-speed, multi-layered' EU which allowed member states to co-operate in the EU, or not, in areas they considered of mutual interest. As long as this did not damage the interests of other member states or confer a form of second-class status on non-participants, member states should not be constrained from doing so. No member state would be forced to take part in any new EU initiative if they decided this was not in their national interest (Major, 1994). The legacy of these ideas of 'greater flexibility' and 'greater tolerance of diversity' developed by Major in 1994 can be seen in a number of the central elements of European policy under Hague. The 'flexibility clause', a new policy announced by Hague in a speech in May 1999, draws directly from the concepts discussed by Major 1994. This policy, to insert a flexibility clause into the EU treaties the next time they were

reformed, would effectively implement in practice the Major flexibility idea. As Lynch (2003) points out, much of the detail around the policy was not developed, but the concept it was trying to implement drew directly from Major's legacy.

The new policy on the single currency, to rule out membership for two parliaments and only enter the Euro after approval from parliament and national referendum, also built upon the legacy of Major's 'wait and see' policy. Hague made the new policy more acceptable to Eurosceptics, by putting a specific time frame to it, but it was not significantly more radical than the Major position. As Major himself stated, Hague's new policy was 'wait and see a little longer'. Rhetorically, Hague signalled a position that was close to ruling out the single currency in principle. However, the substance of the new policy was constrained by the legacy of the Major position. This had been to triangulate a position which would placate both the Eurosceptic and pro-integrationist wings of the party. The legacy of the Major European policy acted both as a historical constraint on the Hague European policy, but also a source of policy ideas during a period where, both in the content and rhetoric of policy, the Conservative Party was moving in a Eurosceptic direction.

5.1.4 The 1997 Conservative Leadership Election

The Conservative leadership contest during the summer of 1997 was dominated by European policy, specifically the question of the single currency. Hague, who was elected leader on June 19th, 1997, made commitments during this leadership contest which would eventually emerge as Conservative Party policy on the single currency: the 'two parliaments' policy. The dynamics of the 1997 leadership contest are therefore an important factor which contributed to the emergence of this policy.

In total six candidates competed for the leadership; William Hague, Kenneth Clarke, John Redwood, Peter Lilley, Michael Howard, and Stephen Dorrell. The candidate of the Thatcherite Eurosceptic wing of the party before the election, Michael Portillo, had lost his seat during the election. There was therefore an opening for a new Eurosceptic candidate. The absence of the leading pro-integration candidate from the contest, Michael Heseltine, also opened up space on the pro-European wing of the party (Heppell, 2007). The competition between the candidates was dominated around the issue of European integration and the single currency, especially between the rival Eurosceptic candidates. Howard, Redwood, and Lilley were associated with strong Eurosceptic views, while Hague was considered a moderate Eurosceptic. Clarke and Dorrell were the pro-integration candidates.

The failure of the Thatcherite Eurosceptics to unite around a single candidate (their support was fragmented among four candidates) allowed Hague to emerge the winner, appealing to centrists and moderate Eurosceptics in the final two ballots.

The importance of the leadership election to European policy change in the 1997-2001 parliament lies in the tactical position Hague and his campaign team took in order to compete with other candidates with more Eurosceptic credentials (Howard, Redwood, and Lilley). Although favourably placed after the first leadership ballot with 41 votes, Hague and his team moved to increase his Eurosceptic appeal to Howard, Redwood, and Lilley supporters, the last two having withdrawn after the first ballot (Bale, 2016). At the beginning of the contest Hague implied opposition to the single currency in principle and that those dissenting from this view would be barred from his Shadow Cabinet (Macaskill and White, 1997). In the second ballot the dynamics changed, with Hague competing against two candidates with strong, but contradictory, positions on the single currency. Redwood was opposed to Britain ever joining the single currency. Clarke supported entry in the future under the right economic circumstances. Nadler (2000, 2015) suggests that it was the strategy to triangulate between these two positions that influenced Hague to decide on the ‘two parliaments’ policy on the single currency. The tactic was to appeal to moderates from both the Clarke and Redwood supporters, in addition to centrists who wanted a united, compromised position. The Conservative Party would oppose the single currency, but not absolutely rule it out. This was a change in Hague’s position from before the first ballot, in which he said was opposed to the single currency on principle. This change was effective at placating both pro-integrationists and Eurosceptics and contributed, in combination with an endorsement from Margaret Thatcher, to Hague beating Redwood and Clarke over the course of the final two ballots (Widdecombe, 2016).

The competitive forces between the Eurosceptic and pro-integration candidates during the leadership election therefore contributed directly to the emergence of the ‘two parliaments’ policy on the European single currency during the summer of 1997, a policy later adopted by the Shadow Cabinet and endorsed in a ballot of party members. Hague, a moderate Eurosceptic competing with strong Eurosceptic and pro-integrationist candidates, formulated a compromise policy that appealed to enough sections of the party to bring him the votes needed to win. This was a compromise position similar to the one Major had reached in the previous parliament. Once adopted by the winning candidate, a path dependent effect took hold of the policy. This meant that as time moved on, and more steps to cement this policy

were adopted, there would have been increasing costs to Hague's authority and credibility as leader if he had attempted to change the policy in either a more Eurosceptic or pro-integration position (Pierson, 2004). The leadership contest is therefore a significant contributing factor to the establishment of the 'two parliaments' policy between 1997 and 2001.

5.2 Rival Political Parties

5.2.1 The Referendum Party

The electoral impact of the Referendum Party at the 1997 general election had important consequences for the Conservative Party approach to European policy post-1997. The Referendum Party, a single-issue Eurosceptic party, was active between 1994 and 1997. Established by millionaire businessman James Goldsmith, the party's sole aim was to achieve a referendum on the UK's relationship with the European Union. They stood 547 candidates at the 1997 election, 83% of the total contested constituencies, and gained 105,722 votes (Carter, et al, 1998). The pressure they put on Conservative candidates, both in the preceding year and during the 1997 election itself, is evident from their campaign spending. A poster campaign was launched on 1,500 sites in January 1997. In total, during 1996-1997, £7,208,000 was spent on press advertising. Two cinema adverts were produced in addition to, during the campaign, one million leaflets and 100,000 VHS video tapes sent to targeted households. The focus of the campaign and the resources invested in it were largely directed to influencing Conservative candidates to take more Eurosceptic positions (Carter, et al, 1998).

Academic studies (Curtice and Steed, 1997; Carter et al, 1998; Heath et al, 1998; McAllister and Studlar, 2000) suggest the electoral performance of the Referendum Party made a marginal to insignificant contribution to the Conservative Party election defeat. This contradicts the accounts of the impact of the Referendum Party given during elite interviews. Curtice and Steed (1997) identify only six seats where it could be argued the Referendum Party cost the Conservative Party the seat. Heath et al (1998) suggest that the Referendum Party had little impact on the Conservative Party electoral performance as the two thirds of people who voted for the Referendum Party in 1997, but who had also voted Conservative in 1992, would more than likely have spread out evenly amongst the other 'anti-Conservative' candidates if they had not voted for the Referendum Party. This was because these voters

were equally as disillusioned with the Conservative Party in 1997 as other voters who supported non-Conservative candidates. McAllister and Studlar (2000) concluded that on average a Referendum candidate cost the Conservative Party 3.4% of the vote in the constituencies in which they stood. They estimate that in 16-19 seats the Referendum Party contributed to the defeat of the Conservative candidate (McAllister and Studlar, 2000). Research is therefore contradictory, with a range of somewhere between 0 and 19 seats affected.

This is in contrast with the perception of some party elites in the immediate period after 1997. As Tim Collins (2016), Conservative MP 1997-2005 and speechwriter to Hague, told me:

One of my memories at a constituency level at the 1997 general election, and I was hearing this in spades from other colleagues, was just how rattled many Conservative activists and long-term Conservative voters were by the campaign tactics of the Referendum Party. They sent VHS tapes to many voters' homes, or at least it seemed like it a lot. There were pledges in all the newspapers. My recollection is that *The Times* in 1997 didn't endorse a political party. They printed a list by constituencies and they put beside the name of each candidate who they recommended you should vote for, according to whether or not you had endorsed the Goldsmith pledge¹. So the starting point in 1997 has to be that the Conservative Party managed to convince itself, and not entirely irrationally, although probably more fancifully than really, that a very big reason, and possibly the biggest single reason, why it had been defeated in the general election of 1997 was because of its divisions on Europe, because it had drifted out of line with public opinion on Europe which it believed was much more Eurosceptic and that the essential component of it getting back to electability was actually to become more Eurosceptic.

While we know that a more Eurosceptic position was not electorally successful for the party at the 2001 general election, it would be incorrect to judge the thinking of individuals in the Conservative Party during 1997 based on this use of hindsight. Evans (1998) argues that the party failed to benefit from growing public Euroscepticism between 1992 and 1996 due to confused signals on what the official Conservative position was. As Evans (1998:575) states, during the Hague leadership period, 'the optimal support-attracting solution for this electoral dilemma would be a united *Eurosceptic* position'. As bounded rationality limits the extent to which political agents in an institution can predict all the consequences of a particular action,

¹ It is correct that *The Times* did not officially endorse a political party at the 1997, instead publishing a list of individuals it decided were sufficiently Eurosceptic to vote for. These endorsements were, however, not connected to the 'Goldsmith Pledge'. See 'Principles Not Party', *The Times*, Tuesday April 29th 1997, p23 and 'Candidates who deserve the Eurosceptic vote', *The Times*, Thursday May 1st 1997, p11.

it is therefore understandable, given the political and institutional context, why it would have been viewed as 'rational' by many Conservative MPs and the leadership to pursue a more Eurosceptic policy position. The academic evidence, however, suggests this did not have a meaningful electoral impact at the 1997 election.

Andrew Mackay (2016), Shadow Cabinet member 1997-2001, emphasises the impact the Referendum Party had on thinking inside the Conservative Party following the 1997 election:

Tony Blair wouldn't have won that complete landslide he did, the biggest since 1945, he would have won a big majority but not 160-170 seats. They did that because of the divisions in the Conservative Party over Europe and of course because Jimmy Goldsmith set up the Referendum Party. UKIP was also set up at that time. Take my great friend Seb Coe who was in the Whips Office with me. He lost Falmouth and Camborne by about 1,500 votes to a Labour MP and between them the Referendum Party and UKIP got over 5,500 votes. Seb would not have lost otherwise. So, we had this stunning defeat and Europe had become toxic. Everyone is remembering Maastricht. Everyone is upset about what happened with UKIP and the Referendum Party.

These two examples illustrate the extent to which Conservative MPs who survived the 1997 election defeat had attributed the success of the Referendum Party to the inability of the Conservative Party to maintain a consistently Eurosceptic message and policy platform. In order to win back voters lost to the Referendum Party, many MPs believed policy needed to become more Eurosceptic (Crowson, 2006). This understanding was then taken forward into the 1997-2001 parliament in which it became common wisdom, contributing to a political environment in which it was accepted that Conservative European policy needed to become more consistently Eurosceptic.

5.2.2 The Labour Party and European Policy 1997-2001

It is also necessary to consider what influence a further rival political party had on Conservative European policy during this period. The Labour Party had, since the beginnings of European integration post-1945, shifted between positive and negative positions towards Europe (Daniels, 1998). During the 1950's and much of the 1960's Labour moved from opposition to general ambivalence on the question of whether the UK should participate in the EEC. While Labour moved to a pro-integration position following the 1966 general election deep divisions remained for much of the 1970's over European policy, with Labour moving back to an anti-European integration position in their 1983 election manifesto (Daniels, 1998). During the period 1983 to 1997, Labour moved gradually to a more

enthusiastic, pro-integration, position on Europe under the leaderships of Kinnock, Smith, and Blair. This policy change was encouraged through a series of electoral and policy factors, including the need for a major modernisation of policy following a third successive general election defeat in 1987, the drift towards a more Eurosceptic policy platform by the Conservative Party following Thatcher's 1998 Bruges speech (Daniels, 1998), and the shift towards a greater role for European institutions in protecting and extending social and employment rights during the European Commission presidency of Jacques Delors (1985-1995).

Lynch (2003), in his assessment of Conservative European policy between 1997 and 2001 states that, along with a number of other factors, that 'policy would also be forged in response to a pro-European Labour government.' Vail (2014:3) also suggests that this shift in policy by the Labour Party 'created strong incentives for the Tories to embrace a harder Europhobic line'. While this was undoubtedly a consideration for Conservative policy-makers during the 1997-2001 parliament, it should not be exaggerated. While Labour's rhetoric and the policy it adopted were more pro-integration than the Conservative Party would have been, such as signing the Social Chapter provisions and greater EU military cooperation, in general Labour policy in this period shows much continuity with the Major approach to Europe (Holden, 2011).

The section on European policy in the 1997 Labour Party manifesto included statements Eurosceptic Conservative Party would have agreed with, such as 'Our vision of Europe is of an alliance of independent nation states', 'We oppose a European federal superstate', and support 'a detailed agenda for reform' in the EU (Labour Party, 1997) The Labour manifesto also mirrored Conservative Party positions on protecting the national veto, expanding the single market, and increasing free market competition in Europe (Labour Party, 1997). On the single currency, Labour even had a version of the Conservative's 'wait and see policy'. Both Conservative and Labour 1997 manifesto sections on European policy showed significant similarities (Wall, 2008). As Holden (2011:157) states, it is 'difficult to argue that there was not substantial commonality in regard to the positions taken on key issues'.

Bale (2006) also agrees that European policy 'hardened' in response to a more pro-European Labour Party. For example, Bale (2006:388) states that the 'two parliaments' policy was decided 'when it became clear that the Labour government would not try to join EMU in its

first parliamentary term'. While the decision to commit to the 'two parliaments' policy on the single currency may have been influenced by the Labour decision not to join in the first term, it was only in a small way. As this chapter shows, the decision on the content of the policy was the result of the historical legacy of Major, the 1997 leadership election, growing Euroscepticism in the party, and Hague's own individual conviction.

It is therefore difficult to argue that Labour policy on Europe during this period led to changes in Conservative policy. The Conservative Party had established their opposition in those areas in which Labour policy was different, such as on enhanced EU defence cooperation, social policy and employment, prior to the 1997 election. Labour Party rhetoric, for example concerning Blair and his early support for the single currency, could be argued to have been an electoral incentive for the Conservative Party to enhance their own Eurosceptic rhetoric, but it did not seem to encourage changes to the substance of policy during this period.

The change seen in European policy from the Labour Party was in tone, rather than policy content (Holden, 2011). This change in tone was important because it gradually limited the political space in which a pro-integration Conservative Party had to speak out and advocate for alternative approaches. The Labour Party was now the party in which pro-Europeanism was mainly centred, which alienated those with similar positions in the Conservative Party. When leading pro-integration Conservatives did speak out, such as in October 1999 when Clarke and Heseltine helped launch the pro-single currency group 'Britain in Europe', they were heavily criticised by many inside the party for sharing a platform with political rivals. This reaction was a powerful disincentive for pro-integration Conservative MPs to speak out, as doing so associated them with the political rhetoric of the party's main political rival. The more pro-European integration tone from Labour, therefore, could be argued to have suppressed the role of pro-integrationists inside the Conservative Party by associating positive rhetoric towards the EU with a direct political rival. This is not to say it would have changed the minds of pro-integrationist Conservative MPs, but it would certainly have encouraged some to keep a low profile in opposition, out of fear of being identified as sympathetic to Labour European policy.

5.3. Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party

5.3.1 Parliamentary Party

A further element of the historical context for the Conservative Party when entering in the post-1997 parliament was the composition of the parliamentary party. In his recollections of this period Ken Clarke (2016:398), Chancellor of the Exchequer 1993-1997, argues that the parliamentary party experienced a ‘dramatic transformation on 1 May 1997. Many senior pro-European MPs had resigned, and many had been defeated... The 1997 intake of new MPs, who became known as ‘Thatcher’s Children’, was a fairly talented bunch, but much more Eurosceptic than previous cohorts, altering the balance of the party considerably’. Michael Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister 1995-1997, contends that at this point in 1997 ‘for many in the party Europe had become not just an issue, but *the* issue’ (Heseltine, 2001:530).

Analysis of the ideological composition of the parliamentary party in 1997 would support these accounts. Of the 165 Conservative MPs who voted in the 1997 leadership contest, Heppell and Hill (2008) categorised 139 as ‘Eurosceptic’, 11 as ‘agnostic’, and 14 as ‘Europhile’. Or, in percentage terms, it is estimated that 88.4% of Conservative MPs after the 1997 election were ideologically Eurosceptic². This was a significant increase on the Eurosceptic composition of Conservative parliamentarians before the 1997 election. In 1992, using attitudinal mapping by Heppell (2002, 2013), only 58% (192) of the 336 Conservative parliamentarians were Eurosceptic. This 30.4% increase between 1992 and 1997 was a much greater increase than in subsequent periods (88.4% to 89.8% 1997-2001, and 89.8% to 91.4% 2001-2005). The number of pro-European integration MPs fell from 98 (29.6%) in 1992, to 14 (8.5%) after the 1997 election.

Survey data on the attitudes of Conservative parliamentarians to European policy show a less dramatic change. Using survey data collected in 1994 by Baker et al (1995), 59% of Conservative MPs agreed with the statement that ‘The disadvantages of EU membership have been outweighed by the benefits’, while 32% disagreed (corresponding figures for MEPs were 77% and 23% respectively). In addition, 64% agreed with the statement that ‘Sovereignty cannot be pooled’ and 56% agreed that ‘An Act of parliament should be passed

² In this context ‘Eurosceptic’ refers to ‘soft Euroscepticism’, which refers to those critical of European integration and the EU institutions, but who fall short of ‘hard’ Eurosceptics who wish to withdraw from the EU (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). Euroscepticism in the Conservative Party during this period was of the ‘soft’ variety, with the debate around withdrawal as a policy option very limited (Mackay, 2016; Widdecombe, 2016).

to establish explicitly the ultimate supremacy of the UK parliament over EU legislation'. The survey was repeated in 1998. While the first question was not repeated in the 1998 survey, the questions on sovereignty and parliamentary supremacy were. In 1998 61% agreed that sovereignty couldn't be pooled and 69% liked the idea of an UK parliament Act of Supremacy (Baker, et al, 1999). The survey data would conclude that Euroscepticism had increased in the Conservative parliamentary party, but not as substantially as when using the attitudinal mapping.

The attitudinal mapping by Heppell could give a more realistic measurement of the change in the Eurosceptic composition of the parliamentary party, which would correspond with eye-witness accounts from Clarke (2016) and Heseltine (2001). The advantage of the attitudinal mapping is that because it does not require a direct response from the individual, the entirety of the parliamentary party can be categorised using the four sources of data (voting records, early day motions, group membership, and public/private comments). The disadvantage of the survey data is that it does not provide in-depth assessment of each individual's views from multiple sources, instead relying on responses to a set of questions from one source, the survey, from one point in time. While the response rates of 38% and 42% for the 1994 and 1998 surveys are good (Bryman, 2012), it is still possible to argue that the attitudinal mapping of the period gives a more accurate reflection of the process of change.

The post-1997 Conservative parliamentary party therefore can be argued to represent a significant change in ideological composition on the question of European integration. This qualitative and quantitative evidence illustrates the Eurosceptic nature of the parliamentary party going in to the 1997-2001 parliament and the political environment in which the Conservative leadership made policy decisions. This institution within an institution, the parliamentary party in the Conservative Party, provided a substantial incentive for the party leadership to follow the grain of opinion. It was also a constraint, as going against this direction would have created conflict which could have damaged the party reputation further.

5.3.2 Shadow Cabinet

The ideological composition of the Shadow Cabinet formed by Hague in June 1997 'set the tone', as Bale (2016:73) suggests, for the direction of Conservative European policy in the

1997-2001 parliament. Influential positions were given to leading Eurosceptic MPs. The new Shadow Cabinet included Peter Lilley as Shadow Chancellor and Michael Howard as Shadow Foreign Secretary. Both Lilley and Howard had been prominent Eurosceptic voices in the Major Cabinet during the previous parliament. Other established Eurosceptic voices included John Redwood, David Heathcoat-Amory, and Iain Duncan Smith. As Table 5.1 indicates, 13 of the 18 MPs in the Shadow Cabinet were Eurosceptic on European policy, with Brian Mawhinney and George Young categorised as agnostic. Importantly, at this early stage Hague also appointed three MPs who were supportive of further European integration, particularly in terms of the single currency; Stephen Dorrell, David Curry, and Alistair Goodlad. It is likely that both Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine, the party's two most senior pro-European MPs, would have also been included in the initial Hague Shadow Cabinet (Snowdon, 2010). Both decided not to serve on the frontbench. This indicates that at the beginning of his leadership Hague was prepared to form a Shadow Cabinet that was reflective of the balance of opinion in the parliamentary party on European policy; a clear Eurosceptic majority but with pro-European MPs also included.

Table 5.1 also shows how the ideological composition, with regards to European policy, of the Shadow Cabinet under Hague changed during the course of the 1997-2001 parliament. It shows that gradually, over the course of six occasions when Hague altered his leadership team, the Shadow Cabinet become more dominated by Eurosceptic voices than it had been in June 1997. As Pro-European MPs such as Dorrell, Curry, and Goodlad left the Shadow Cabinet they were replaced with Eurosceptics such as Liam Fox, Anne Widdecombe, and Michael Portillo (following his return to parliament in November 1999 at the Kensington and Chelsea by-election), rather than likeminded MPs. This reflects a determination by Hague, as his leadership progressed, to form a Shadow Cabinet that would fully support his Eurosceptic direction to European policy. Hague developed a reluctance to placate those MPs that supported further European integration, which was reflected in those he selected for promotion.

Table 5.1: Conservative MPs in the 1997-2001 Shadow Cabinet

Month/Year	Eurosceptic	Agnostic	Europhile
June 1997	13	2	3
June 1998	18	2	0
December 1998	18	2	0
June 1999	16	2	0
February 2000	16	2	0
September 2000	17	1	0

Source: Heppell and Hill (2008).

Initially the Shadow Cabinet was reflective of the ideological composition of the parliamentary party after May 1997; dominated by Eurosceptics, but some individuals who supported further European integration. After the pro-European members had left, over opposition to party policy on the single currency, Hague formed a Eurosceptic leadership team, with the notable exception of Tim Yeo. However, after this point, it is unlikely the Shadow Cabinet – as an institution within an institution – played a significant role in shaping the content of European policy. What role the Shadow Cabinet did play was in supporting and approving the Eurosceptic direction of policy set out by William Hague. Anne Widdecombe (2016) explains that while the Shadow Cabinet was consulted on policy, this only became formalised late in the parliament:

It was a Shadow Cabinet that was run very largely on consultation and consent. In the first couple of years our decision-making processes were not that streamlined on anything and I mean I announced policies at party conference in 1998 and 1999 that I think would have caused a lot more trouble later on. That was because we hadn't got the decision-making process streamlined. By 2000 we had. From 2000 onwards, I would say that everything was shared. William made a point of his Shadow Cabinet giving presentations on their own individual policies and what they were doing so that the Cabinet was up to date.

As Widdecombe (2016) explained when interviewed on the role of the Shadow Cabinet with regards to European policy at this point:

I think that you will find that there was an assumption around the Shadow Cabinet table that Europe was a winner for us and that we were on the right track with Europe. So, I don't actually think that William had a hard job of trying to sell a policy which a substantial number of his Shadow Cabinet didn't

want. He didn't have that challenge. So, when you say were we consulted I think that the answer to that is yes but there was already large-scale agreement around the table.

Nonetheless, the Shadow Cabinet was a key factor in committing to official party policy on October 24th, 1997 that the Conservative Party would oppose membership of the single currency for 'two parliaments', a change in the position from 'the foreseeable future' phrase used by Hague (1997b) at the party conference. This was itself interpreted by many Eurosceptics as a change in policy from Hague's statements during the leadership campaign, though pro-European Shadow Cabinet members such as Dorrell and Curry believed the policy had not been officially adopted (Nadler, 2000). There was therefore substantial confusion at all levels of the party. It was then leading Eurosceptics in the Shadow Cabinet, namely Redwood, Heathcoat-Amory, and Duncan-Smith who insisted that Hague committed to the 'two parliaments' policy, abandoning 'the foreseeable future' line (Nadler, 2000).

For most of this period though, as an institution within the Conservative Party, the Shadow Cabinet was a force which maintained policy on a Eurosceptic trajectory, as opposed to one that sought to change it radically, either in terms of a harder Eurosceptic or more pro-European position. Once the 'two parliaments' policy on the single currency was agreed in October 1997 and the pro-European MPs had left, Hague formulated European policy with a Shadow Cabinet fully signed up to the Eurosceptic direction he was taking. The Eurosceptic composition of the Shadow Cabinet provided an internal institutional factor which would have constrained Hague diverting from a Eurosceptic policy agenda during the parliament.

5.3.3 Party Membership

The ability to consider the changing nature, and trace it over time, of Conservative Party members' attitudes towards European integration in the 1997-2001 parliament is hampered by the lack of research during this period. However, indications of grassroots' opinion can also be ascertained from private polling conducted by the Conservative Party and later reported in national newspapers. While these sources need to be treated with caution, as they are not published academic studies in which all the data and survey questions can be evaluated, they do at least provide some insight into the state of opinion at the time. Combining these two sources can give a good indication of the direction of travel for Conservative members and their attitude towards European integration.

The most representative research of grassroots views on European integration does not start until the 1990's (Whiteley, et al, 1994). Whiteley, et al, (1994) undertook a survey of Conservative members in 1992, with follow up interviews with the same individuals conducted in 1994 (Whiteley and Seyd, 1995). In the 1992 survey, 54% of members agreed with the statement that 'Conservative Party should resist further moves to integrate with the European Community' (Whiteley, et al, 1994:265). This had increased to 61% by 1994 (Whiteley and Seyd, 1995). In 1992 a majority of members also opposed the single currency (57%). A significant minority of members in 1992, 30%, disagreed that the Conservative Party should rule out the single currency or resist further European integration. In 1992, therefore, about a third of the Conservative Party grassroots were pro-integration, although by 1994 this group appears to have started to decline. This trend is likely to have continued in the membership as research into Conservative voters and party identifiers show a noticeable increase in hostility to European integration during the 1992-1997 parliament (Clements, 2010; Stevens, 2013). It is nonetheless interesting that in the early 1990's there remained a significant minority of members who did not support a Eurosceptic direction to European policy.

The indications are that attitudes towards European integration among Conservative members started to move in a Eurosceptic direction after 1992. Evidence for this comes from a number of surveys of grassroots' opinion conducted by the Conservative Party during the 1992-1997 parliament. A national survey of 3,400 grassroots Conservative members, conducted by the Conservative Political Centre think-tank (renamed the Conservative Policy Forum in 1999), before the 1994 European elections and showed 'a substantial majority' opposed to a reduction in Britain's powers to veto European legislation, with a 'small majority' calling for more powers to block European laws (Grice et al, 1994). A survey of 70 backbench Conservative MPs, conducted by *The Sunday Times* during the same period, saw 68.5% of MPs surveyed reject the idea of enhanced blocking powers, an indication that perhaps at this stage grassroots members were more Eurosceptic than the parliamentary party on some European issues.

In 1996 the Conservative Party conducted a survey of the views of 30,000 Conservative members. The subsequent report was entitled *Our Nation's Future: Listening to the Conservative Party* (Lees-Marshment 2001). The report's findings suggest that by 1996 Conservative members, though supportive of the UK's EU membership, were 'fiercely resistant' to transferring more powers to Brussels, with most also opposed to UK membership

of the single currency (Deans, 1996). The Conservative leadership are argued to have used the results of the survey to inform the 1997 Conservative election manifesto (Deans, 1996), at that point the most Eurosceptic general election manifesto produced by the Conservative Party since Britain joined the community in 1973 (Lynch and Whittaker, 2013a).

This suggests that Conservative members became noticeably more Eurosceptic in their views between 1992 and 1997. This is significant as ordinary party members, and the activists that campaign and organise for the party, would have interacted with parliamentarians and parliamentary candidates on a regular basis in their own constituencies. It is likely therefore that there would have been awareness from parliamentarians, more importantly those that would go on to form the party leadership after 1997, that many grassroots party members favoured a more Eurosceptic direction to European policy. The potential popularity of an enhanced and coherent Eurosceptic policy with the party membership could therefore have influenced the preferences of policy-makers in the party leadership after 1997.

Overall the change in the ideological composition of the Conservative Party, from grassroots to the Shadow Cabinet, was an important internal institutional factor, which guided the Conservative leadership to take a more Eurosceptic policy position from 1997-2001. This supports other research, which has identified growing levels of Euroscepticism in all levels of the party as being central to this process (Turner, 2000; Forster, 2002; Bale, 2006; Webb, 2008; Lynch and Whittaker, 2013a, 2013b). As this chapter shows, however, growing Euroscepticism in the institutions of the Conservative Party was one of the institutional factors which gave the Eurosceptic direction of policy its path dependency.

5.4 Critical Junctures

5.4.1 The May 1997 Election Defeat

The historical context in which the Conservative Party found itself in May 1997 was one of landslide electoral defeat and entrenched internal divisions that had been generated during the Maastricht and single currency debates. The 1997 election was the worst electoral defeat the party had suffered since 1832 (Heppell, 2007). The Conservative Party lost 178 seats and returned only 165 MPs to Westminster, the worst result since 1945. The share of the vote, at 30.7%, was an 11.2% reduction on the 1992 general election and lower than the previous worst post-war return of 35.8% in October 1974 (Heppell, 2013). In total nine members of the Cabinet lost their seats, including senior MPs such as Michael Portillo, Malcolm Rifkind,

and William Waldegrave. The impact of the defeat hit the Conservative Party ‘very deeply’ and produced a form of ‘psychological trauma’ for many of those involved (Nadler, 2015:354).

The May 1997 election defeat was also a critical juncture for the party with regards to the future direction of European policy. It represented the final phase in the transition of the Conservative Party to a Eurosceptic party, from the pro-European integration party of Macmillan and Heath, to the rise of Euroscepticism during the Margaret Thatcher and John Major leaderships. As the data in the previous section indicates, one institution within the party, the parliamentary party, had a Eurosceptic majority before the 1997 election. This increased after 1997, as many supporters of integration had either left parliament or been defeated at the election (Cowley and Stuart, 2010). However, after the 1997 election there was both a Eurosceptic leader, opposed to further political integration, and a majority Eurosceptic Shadow Cabinet, in addition to a majority Eurosceptic parliamentary party. This had not been the case under previous leaderships. Thatcher was arguably a Eurosceptic leader, but only in the second half of her leadership, and certainly did not run as a Eurosceptic in the 1975 leadership contest as Hague did in 1997. Major took a pragmatic approach to European policy, while both Thatcher and Major organised Cabinets with leading pro-integration and Eurosceptic members. The May 1997 election was therefore a critical juncture for Conservative European Policy, with all of the component institutions of the party becoming majority Eurosceptic. This meant that European policy was likely to move in a Eurosceptic direction from this point on.

5.4.2 The 1999 European Elections

The June 1999 elections to the European Parliament were considered a great success for the Conservative Party (Snowdon, 2010). The Conservative Party put considerable effort into a campaign that was heavy on Eurosceptic rhetoric about substantial EU reform, resistance to further integration and the protection of national sovereignty. This effort was rewarded with the Conservative Party winning 35.7% of the national vote and 36 MEPs, a notable improvement on the last European elections in 1994 (28% and 18 MEPs). Labour managed only 28% of the national vote and 29 MEPs.

Many sources credit the Conservative victory in the 1999 European elections as a turning point, or critical juncture, for the Hague leadership. Snowdon (2010:64) describes this as a

‘crucial turning point for Hague’. This was because both the Conservative opinion poll rating and election results, and Hague’s own approval ratings, had been poor since his leadership began. Many thought Hague would not be able to survive a poor performance in these elections, including Hague himself. ‘I thought that if we lost the European elections I would have outlived my usefulness and maybe it would have been time for me to go. As it turned out we did very well so that thought went away very quickly’ (Hague, as quoted in Snowdon, 2010:64). Coming first in the European elections was therefore clearly a significant event for the survival of the Hague leadership.

It is less clear, however, whether this was a critical juncture for European policy during the 1997-2001 parliament. In terms of the substance of policy it is arguable that the 1999 European election victory was not a critical juncture, as the substance of policy did not radically change between 1999 and the 2001 general election manifesto. In theory, the Conservative leadership could have taken a more Eurosceptic position on the Euro, in reaction to the electoral success, ruling it out indefinitely regardless of the circumstances. They did not, with this change not happening until after the 2001 election.

The impact of the election was that it confirmed to Hague and the Shadow Cabinet that European policy positions they had developed up to this time were right for the party, in terms of where public opinion was, and needed to be emphasised more rather than changed significantly in either ideological direction. The change was of attitude more than the content of policy, which most people in the party were comfortable with. It ‘galvanised’ the Shadow Cabinet behind the current position of European policy (Widdecombe, 2016). As Widdecombe put it to me:

...the point at which it really took off big time was - we had been doing very badly in elections - not only had we lost the general election on a catastrophic scale but we were doing badly in elections in general. Then came the European elections. We had a slogan 'In Europe not run by Europe'. That was our slogan. We had vast successes in those elections. It actually sent seismic shockwaves through Labour because they thought they were utterly safe, invincible, and all the rest of it. And then that happened. From that moment, onwards when we had had that big success the Shadow Cabinet as a whole, not just William, saw Europe as a winner for us. So, I date the real hardening of attitudes on Europe from that point.

Andrew Cooper (2016), Conservative Party Director of Strategy 1997-1999, argues that even though turnout was poor, the fact that the leadership had politically been at a low point before

June 1999, the success at these elections meant that, in terms of European policy, 'they were never going to turn back from that point on'. Tim Collins agrees that the surprise victory in the European elections that year validated the position and convinced the leadership that they had the right policy on Europe:

At the time, European elections were considered a very significant pointer. It came off the back of two years of opinion polls which had told us we were 30-40 points behind and then suddenly we win. So again, I think that at the time, and not irrationally, that this validates what we had thought. That a necessary but not sufficient condition for rebuilding our relationship with the electorate and getting to the point where people would trust us again is to have been seen to have sorted out the European issue.

The emphasis on European policy between mid-1999 and 2001 general election is therefore very strongly connected with the election victory in June 1999. There is however no evidence to suggest the content of policy changed as a direct result of this. Ultimately, the most significant implication of success at the 1999 European elections, and subsequent failure for this message to bring electoral success in 2001, was to convince future Conservative leaders that European policy was not the key to returning the party to government at future general elections. What it did do was provide more positive feedback for the policy status quo, enhancing the path dependency of European policy.

5.5 Public Opinion

5.5.1 Euroscepticism and Public Opinion

Public opinion towards European integration changed substantially between 1992 and 1997. Public attitudes towards the EU during this parliament forms a significant part of the structural environment in which present and future policy-makers in this period, such as Hague and the Conservative leadership, would have been forming their policy preferences. Public opinion, and how it had developed in the preceding parliament, is therefore an important factor in the overall historical context in which William Hague became Conservative leader.

Table 5.2: UK Voters and Euroscepticism, 1992-1997

% agreeing that	1992	1994	1997
Britain should leave the EC	9	10	14
Reduce powers	35	39	52
Leave as is	13	14	16
Increase its power	29	21	9
Work for Single European government	11	11	5
Don't know	4	6	4

Source: Heath, et al, (1998).

Table 5.2 draws upon data from the British Election Panel Study (BEPS) 1992, 1994, and 1997 waves. Participants in the survey were interviewed at the 1992 election, re-interviewed in 1994, and then interviewed again at the 1997 election. As we can see from this table the UK electorate moved in a Eurosceptic direction during the 1992-1997 parliament. Although the number of voters who support leaving the EU during this period is relatively low, there is a noteworthy increase in the number of voters who would support a government policy aimed at reducing the powers of the EU, from 35% in 1992 to 52% in 1997. Table 5.3, drawing on the same data source, also shows a Eurosceptic shift in voters' opinion towards the single currency. In 1992 25% of voters supported replacing the pound with the single currency, while in 1997 this had reduced to 16%. During the same period voters who wanted to keep the pound as the only British currency had increased from 49% in 1992, to 55% in 1997.

Table 5.3: UK Public Attitudes towards the Euro, 1992-97

% Agreeing that	1992	1994	1997
Replace pound	25	20	16
Have both ECU and pound	24	21	16
Only have pound	49	58	55
Don't know	3	2	3

Source: Heath, et al, (1998).

Table 5.4 shows the mean scores from respondents in the 1992-1997 BEPS survey who were asked to position themselves on an 11-point scale in response to a series of two contrasting questions on a range of policy issues, including European integration. The scales were coded so that higher scores represented more right-wing and Eurosceptic positions (Heath, et al, 1998). As we can see from the Table 5.3, European policy was the only issue during the 1992-1997 parliament in which voters were moving in a more right-wing or Eurosceptic direction, mirroring that of the Conservative parliamentary party. On most other issues the electorate were moving away from the Conservative Party and towards the Labour position.

This data shows that the electorate was moving in a more Eurosceptic direction during the 1992-1997 parliament. It provides evidence for the structural environment in which the Conservative Party began to formulate the future direction of European policy in the preceding parliament. It does not provide a direct causal link between itself and the policy changes made to European policy during the preceding period, but it does provide the historical context which would have contributed to and influenced the policy preferences of political actors within the party during the period in question.

Table 5.4: UK Voters' Positions on Major Issues (Mean Scores), 1992-1997

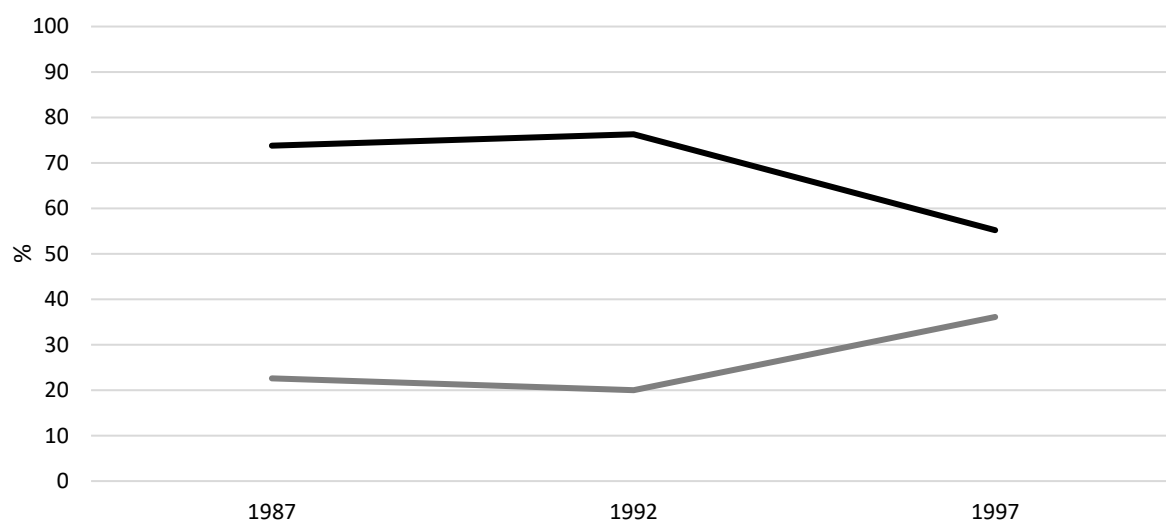
	1992	1994	1995	1996	1997	Change
Europe	5.9	6.5	6.7	6.9	6.7	+0.8
Privatisation	5.9	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.5	-0.4
Inequality	4.9	-	4.3	4.5	4.6	-0.3
Unemployment	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.7	+0.1
Taxes	4.1	4.5	4.1	3.9	3.8	-0.3

Source: Adapted from Heath, et al, 1998:100.

5.5.2 Euroscepticism and Conservative Voters/Identifiers

In addition to public opinion, it is also important to consider the change in attitude towards Europe of Conservative voters and identifiers. Figure 5.1 shows data from the British Election Study surveys in 1987, 1992, and 1997. The question asked during these surveys was 'Should Britain withdraw from the EU or should its membership of the EU continue?' It indicates that Conservative voters were becoming more Eurosceptic in the decade preceding the 1997 general election. Those identifying with the Conservative Party show a near identical change in attitude during this period also. Euroscepticism among Conservative identifiers increased particularly between 1992-1997 (Clements, 2010), a parliament dominated by conflict and division amongst elites in the Conservative Party over events such as the Maastricht Treaty, ERM, and the single currency. British Social Attitudes Survey data also supports this. Conservative identifiers who agreed that we should either 'leave the EU' or 'stay in the EU but reduce its powers' were 45% in 1994, 53.3% in 1995 and 70.9% in 1996. The corresponding figures for the general population were 36.4% in 1994, 36.6% in 1995 and 58.2% in 1996 (Clements, 2010).

Figure 5.1: Conservative Voters' Attitude Towards EU Membership, 1987-1997



Source: British Election Study (1987;1992;1997)

— Continue — Withdraw

Both the BES and BSA surveys show Conservative voters and identifiers moving in a Eurosceptic direction, particularly between 1995 and 1996. Clements' analysis of the BEPS 1992-1997 data, which conducted interviews in every year of the parliament, shows that Conservative identifiers were 'more likely to hold unstable views and change from supporting continued membership to believing that Britain should withdraw from the EU' (2010: 63). Clements (2010:63) argues that this provides evidence that Conservative Party identifiers were inclined:

...to change their view on the European question, perhaps reflecting at the grassroots level the increasing Euroscepticism evident in the parliamentary Conservative Party during John Major's administration.

This raises the question of whether the process is voter-driven or party-driven. As Stevens (2013) points out, the evidence is contradictory. Evans and Butt (2007:42) argue that since the 1990's, as salience towards the issue increased and attitudes to European integration became 'no longer constrained' by left-right values, it has been voters who have shaped party opinion on European policy. As Evans and Butt (2007:43) describe it, increasingly during this period 'voters lead and politicians followed'.

Research by Stevens (2013), however, supports the party-driven model. Using data from 1964-2010 Steven's (2013:553) argues that change in party identifiers is 'calibrated to the speed and clarity of elite re-positioning, only seeming to unfold over several election cycles when elite change is also gradual'. Conservative identifiers would also respond quickly to changes in elite opinion, for example between 1992-1997 when Conservative elite messages became increasingly Eurosceptic (seven out of ten changers who became more Eurosceptic during this period identified with the Conservative Party) (Stevens, 2013). A similar pattern was evident between 1970 and October 1974, when the pro-integration messages of Heath's Conservative Party also saw more Conservative identifiers than Labour identifiers switch to a more pro-European position during the same period (Stevens, 2013). This process of change was most intense when the issue was highly salient, between 1992-1997, but also continued more gradually in subsequent parliaments.

The evidence shows that both Conservative voters and those who identified with the Conservative Party were becoming more Eurosceptic in their attitudes towards European integration, particularly during the 1992-1997 parliament. This would have further added to the structural environment in which the Conservative leadership and parliamentary party would have encountered Conservative voters and supporters who were becoming more Eurosceptic in their views. This, in turn, is likely to have influenced the direction of future policy, if not the specific content. As Cooper (2016) points out, the Conservative leadership were specifically conscious of where they thought Conservative voters and public opinion were when deciding to stick to the new single currency policy:

The public were clearly against joining the Euro. I think that was the honest conviction of most Tory MPs and most Tories. Public opinion suggested that most Tory voters were even more of that view. In order to stabilise the party internally because the position Major ended up with, it wasn't a hard-enough position, in either sense of that word, and it wasn't where the country or the party actually were. It is weird looking back on it, that it was so hard to do, because it is now so unthinkable that we would ever join the Euro but at that point the mood was it felt like a sought of mad, hard-line thing to do - to say never... We were certainly conscious of the fact that as a party that had lost heavily and were trying to find ways to re-connect with the British people there weren't many issues on which the British people agreed with the Tory party but this was in fact one of them.

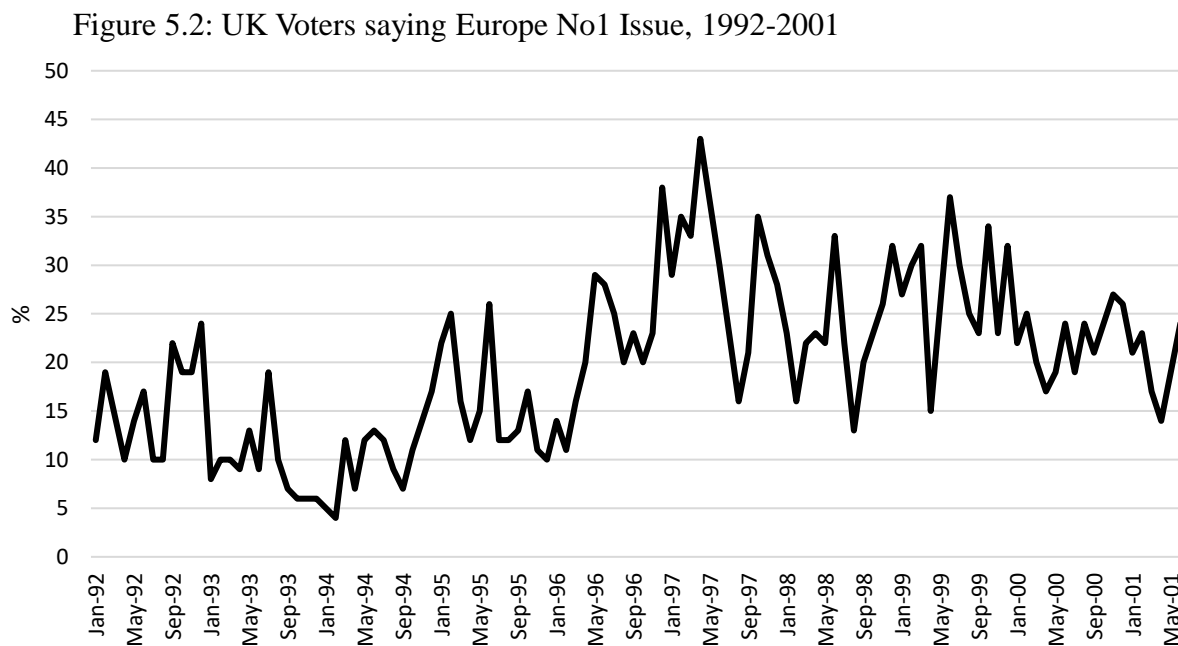
On the single currency, the Conservative Party was acutely aware that Conservative voters, identifiers, and public opinion in general was close to the party's position. This clearly was an important factor in convincing, over time, many members of the Shadow Cabinet and parliamentary party that a more Eurosceptic line on the single currency was politically the

best position to be in if they wanted to unite the majority of the Conservative Party, in parliament and the country. Public opinion was therefore an important structural factor which contributed to this policy change.

5.5.3 European Policy and Issue Saliency

A further structural factor connected with public opinion and European integration, that contributed to the overall political environment in which the Conservative Party formulated European policy during this period, is the saliency of European integration. That is, the extent to which public opinion saw European integration as an important issue facing the country. As discussed in Chapter 2, shifts in public opinion are identified by numerous quantitative studies in the party change literature as being an important influence on policy change in political parties (Stimson, et al, 1995; Adams, et al 2004, 2006; Ezrow 2011).

Figure 5.2 below uses data from the Ipsos Mori Political Monitor (1988-2006). This is a monthly survey that seeks to track changes in the saliency of policy issues amongst UK public opinion. Survey participants are asked two questions; *What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?* and *What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?* The answers to these questions from respondents are then combined to



Source: Ipsos Mori (1997;2006)

produce a percentage of respondents identifying a given policy issue as an ‘important issue facing Britain today’.

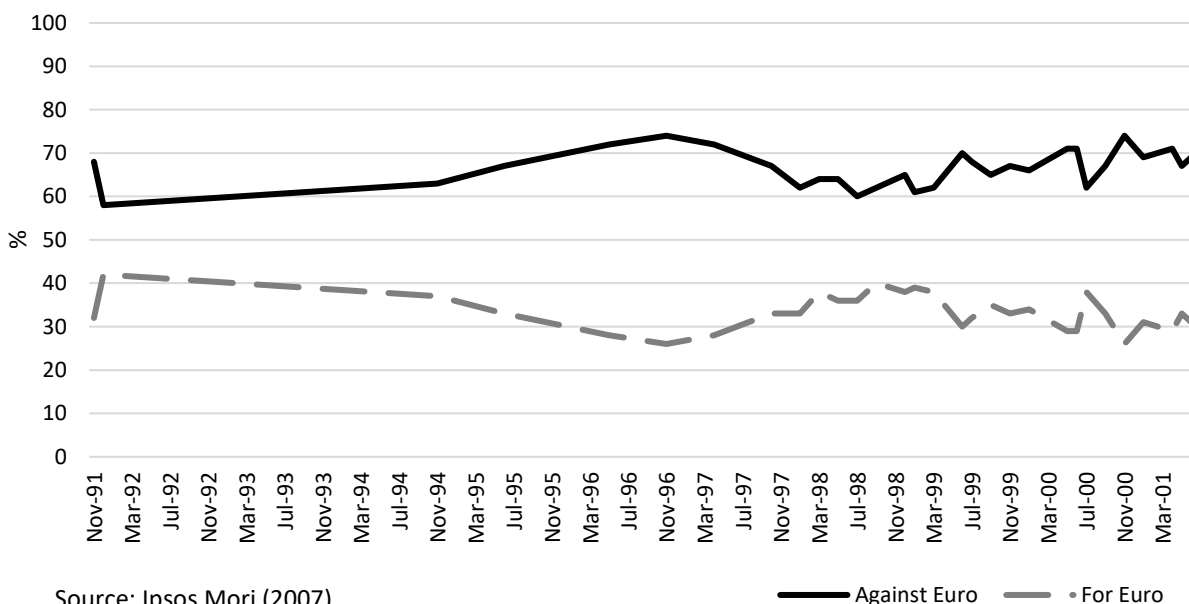
Figure 5.2 shows that between January 1992 and January 1997 the salience of European integration amongst the British public increased incrementally over this period, from 12% in January 1992 to 29% in January 1997. It was as low as 4% of respondents in February 1994 and as high as 38% in December 1996. However, while Figure 5.2 shows that the salience of European integration fluctuated considerably during this period, the overall trend was towards higher saliency of European integration amongst the public over the course of this period. This is likely to be a response to the widespread media coverage of events such as the parliamentary ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the debate surrounding Britain and the single currency, as well as the conflict in the Conservative Party over European policy. This data is informative as it helps to put in context the environment the individual actors, who would become the policy-makers in the party after May 1997, experienced between 1992-1997. This higher saliency amongst the public, combined with shift towards a public opinion which was more Eurosceptic, helps explain why individual actors within the Conservative Party could perceive a more coherent Eurosceptic European policy being a potential vote winner.

Figure 5.2 suggests higher saliency in the 1997-2001 parliament, in which the saliency of European integration reached its highest point between 1992-2001 at 43%, than during the 1992-1997 parliament. However, the trend between January 1997 and May 2001 itself is it actually towards lower saliency for European integration, especially after January 2000. This could be explained by the public focusing more on domestic issues, such as the economy and the public services, in the run up to the 2001 election. What is harder to explain using this data is the shift after June 1999, and in the period preceding the June 2001 general election and the campaign itself, by the Conservative Party leadership to focus heavily on Eurosceptic messages surrounding the single currency and opposition to future political integration. The trend in the saliency of European integration amongst the public is actually at some of its lowest points post-January 2000. This suggests the saliency of European integration amongst the public was not the main driver of this change in emphasis, and that other factors were more influential.

Figure 5.3 provides data, also from Ipsos Mori, on public opinion and Britain joining the single currency. Respondents to the survey were asked; *If there were a referendum now on*

whether Britain should be part of a Single European Currency, how would you vote? This indicates that between November 1991 and June 2001 the public were consistently, and by a substantial margin, against Britain joining the single currency. This suggests that strong public hostility to the single currency could have been an influential factor in the Conservative Party adopting the ‘two parliaments’ policy on the single currency after May 1997. As Nadler (2000:242) argues, it was ‘Hague’s gut instinct (and informed opinion) that his European line was the majority view.’ On the question of the single currency this was accurate at the time.

Figure 5.3: UK Public Attitudes towards the Euro, 1991-2001



Source: Ipsos Mori (2007)

An internal memorandum, circulated amongst the Conservative leadership in late 1997, indicates that public opinion on the single currency was an important factor in the party placing so much emphasis on the policy. The memorandum discusses focus group and survey data which indicated that the public shared the concerns of the Conservative Party with UK membership of the single currency. This, the memorandum argues, provides an important political opportunity for the Conservative Party (Private information):

The fact that we are in tune with the overwhelming popular instinct on what is widely understood to be the single most important decision facing us in the years ahead gives us the chance to use the single currency as a means to draw people back to the Conservative Party. Crucial to this opportunity is the fact that most people do not know what our policy on the single currency is (or indeed the government’s). People do now know that their instincts on the single

currency are by and large the same as ours. Properly executed, the process of communicating this fact to them can play a major part in restoring our standing as a party which is to be taken seriously, which understands their concerns, which can – and does – speak on their behalf.

This shows direct evidence that the Conservative Party leadership were influenced by public opinion, both of ‘lost’ Conservative voters and the wider general public, when considering the future direction of European policy. The influence, however, is to confirm to the party leadership that public opinion is closer to their policy position than to that of the Labour Party and that this should be emphasised as a ‘mobilising issue’ to re-build support for the Conservative Party lost since 1992. The content of the policy, the ‘two parliaments’ position, does not appear to be affected by, or the result of, the influence of public opinion. As a contributory factor its role is to confirm to the party that their overall position on European policy, and the single currency, is in tune with Conservative voters and the general public. The Conservative leadership believed that as surveys showed public opinion agreed with them on this issue, this indicated that the ‘two parliaments’ policy could be an electoral strength for the party in the elections to come (Bale, 2016).

5.6 Domestic Political Context

To fully understand changes made to Conservative European policy between 1997-2001, the domestic context in which this policy was formed must be considered. The domestic political context in which the Conservative Party existed as an institution in UK during this time, was one contributory factor that structured the preferences of individual actors and the decisions they made regarding European policy.

Hague began his leadership of the Conservative Party in June 1997 with a perceived lack of authority from the party as a whole (Cooper, 2016; Collins, 2016). This is partly down to the circumstances surrounding Hague’s victory over Clarke in the third ballot of the 1997 leadership election. Widdecombe (2016) argues that the result of the final ballot of MPs, in which European policy had been the ‘deciding factor’, was ‘actually quite close’. Hague was victorious in the final ballot with 92 votes (56.1%) to Clarke’s 70 votes (42.7%). While Heppell (2008:123) is entirely correct to suggest this was actually a ‘comfortable victory’, the perception in the party was that the victory over Clarke, and the pro-integration agenda he represented, was far from convincing. In the background, there was also the issue that, had

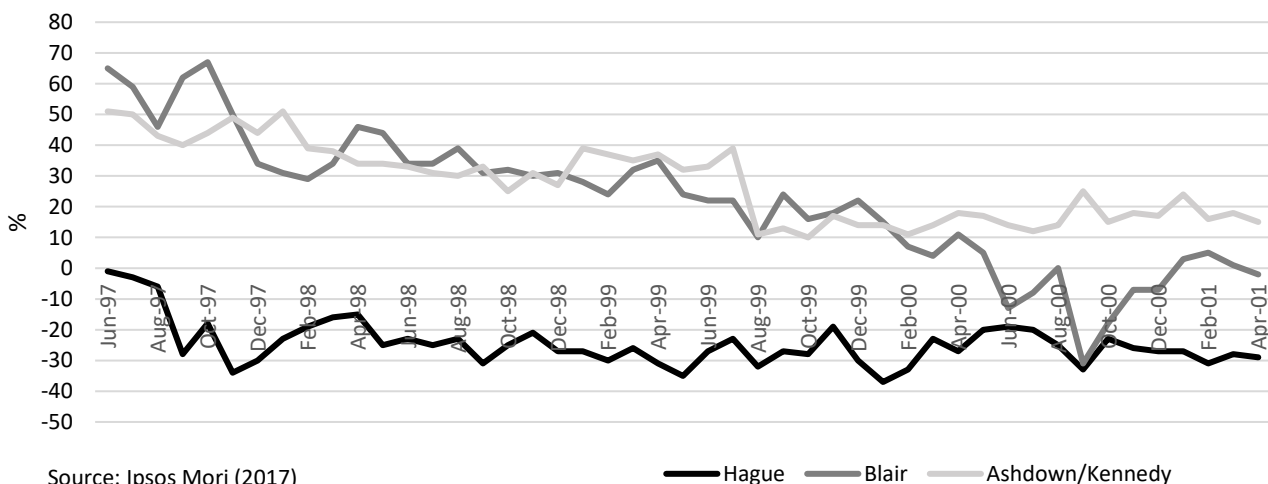
Portillo not been defeated at the 1997 election, he would have been expected to easily have won the leadership contest that year (Collins, 2016). This contributed to a perception within both the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary party that Hague lacked authority, with a leader-in-waiting (Portillo) ready to takeover. European policy, a perceived strength for Hague, therefore became an important policy area to focus on for Hague and his leadership team. As Cooper (2016) notes of the single currency question in the early part of the 1997-2001 parliament:

From 1997 to 1998 it was a dominant internal issue. It wasn't the highest priority as the party was in an unbelievable mess and from fairly early on in the Hague leadership was wobbly. One of the respects in which it was wobbly, aside that it didn't have much of an impact on the wider public, was that within the party he wasn't considered particularly strong which made this a very important issue. Then it was getting through to the European elections.

Collins (2016) agrees that Hague lacked authority in this early period and that European policy, particularly the hardening of the Conservative position on the single currency, was a response aimed at correcting this problem:

From the very start, there were some people who had question marks over the legitimacy of Hague's leadership, because he was someone who hadn't been terribly well known in the country when he took over. He was seen as very young, he was kicked about very hard by the so-called Tory papers.... So, William's position, though not by me, was always seen by some as provisional, slightly under threat. There was always the sense there were people out there who would be strong alternatives to William, who if they got back into Parliament or who had been in Parliament in 1997, would have won, and I think Portillo would have won very comfortably in 1997 if he had held his seat. So, all of that was part of William Hague's attempt to entrench his leadership, to establish a direct relationship with the membership who had not had a ballot on whether he should have been leader or not.

Figure 5.4: UK Party Leader Satisfaction Ratings, 1997-2001

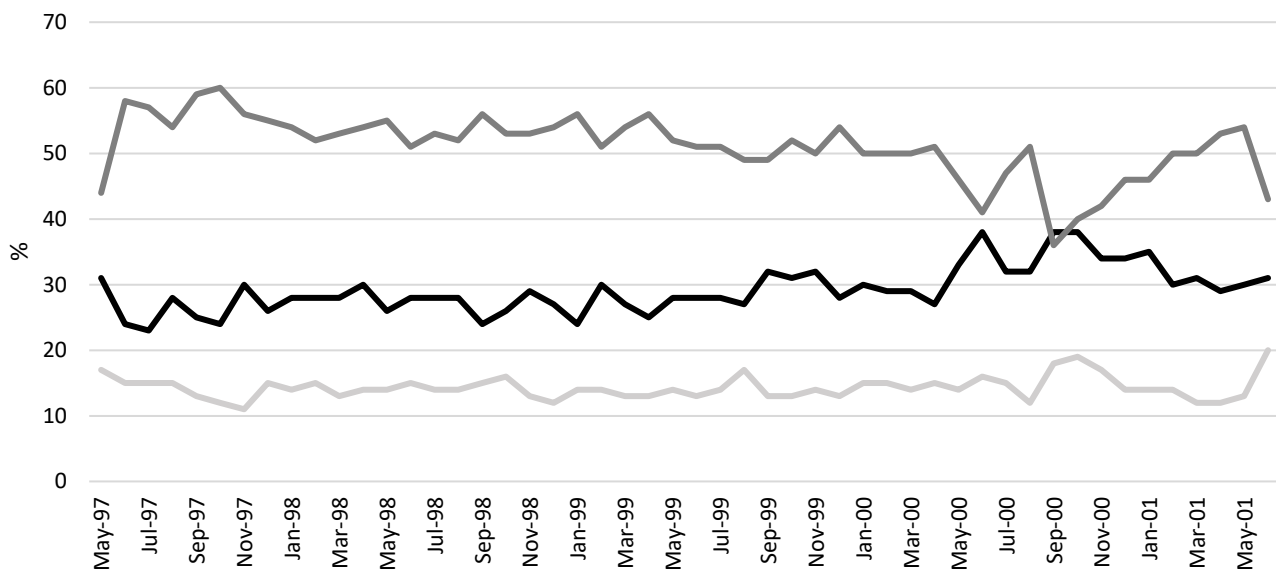


Source: Ipsos Mori (2017)

This perception from inside the Conservative Party is matched by the public perceptions of Hague as a leader, in the early months of his leadership. As the Ipsos Mori data in Figure 5.4 indicates, public perceptions of Hague fell dramatically between June and December 1997. While both Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders also saw their satisfaction ratings decline, the ratings for Hague remained poor throughout his leadership.

In addition, as Figure 5.5 shows, the Conservative Party also experienced sustained periods in which voting intention data showed them a considerable distance away from the Labour Party, especially in the first three years. This political context created a structural environment which incentivised the Conservative leadership to use his perceived strengths on European policy to connect and establish a relationship with party members and the general public.

Figure 5.5: UK Voting Intention, May 1997- June 2001



Source: Ipsos Mori (2002)

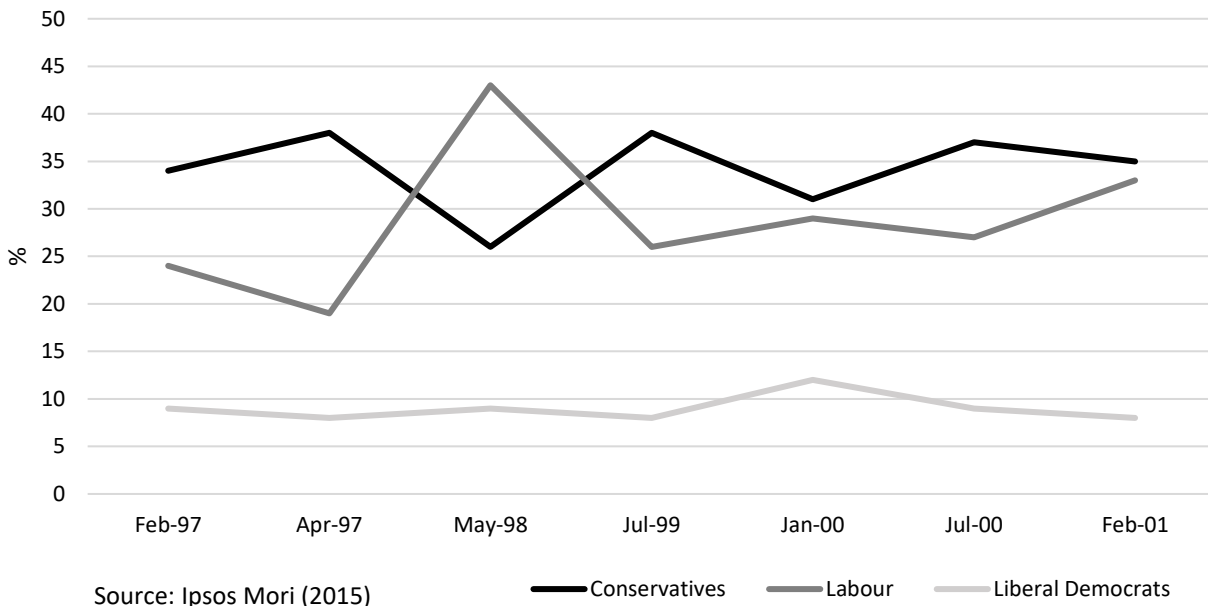
— Conservative — Labour — Liberal Democrats

Another element of the domestic political context during this period that encouraged Hague and the Conservative leadership to focus on European policy during this period was the fact that it was a policy area, unlike others such as the economy, crime, health, or education, in which the public considered the Conservative Party the most competent. Widdecombe (2016) suggests that this context during 1997-2001 was an important factor:

One of our biggest problems during that period of opposition - immediately after the first success Blair - Blair was on so much of our ground that we couldn't actually find things that really distinguished us, and Europe was that big opportunity. It was the big opportunity. It was the one area in which they are never going to come on to our ground. That was how we saw it at the time - he is never coming that far... they were right on our territory and we had to find something that distinguished us. Europe was the big opportunity. That was a very big driving force.

This perception is supported by quantitative evidence from Ipsos Mori's 'Best Party on Key Issues' survey, which shows that for much of this period the public considered the Conservative Party the 'best party' for European policy.

Figure 5.6: 'Best Party on Key Issues': Europe 1997-2001



The domestic political context for the Conservative Party was therefore one in which they were also playing catch-up to their main political rivals, the Labour Party, in every respect apart from European policy in which the public perceived the Conservative Party to be the strongest party. With strong economic growth, the economy was effectively neutralised as an area in which the Conservative Party could stand out from Labour between 1997-2001 (Nadler, 2015). As interviews with party elites indicate, the party leadership focused on this policy issue as one area in which 'clear blue water' could be placed between themselves and the Labour Party (see also Kelly, 2001). As result of this perceived strength, European policy was also focused on to enhance Hague's authority both in parliament and the country.

5.7 International Political Context

Another dimension to the structural environment in which the Conservative Party formed European policy was the international political context. Events and actions which took place in this environment, most specifically within the EU, would be interpreted and reacted to by policy-makers in the Conservative Party. This would then, potentially, influence the policy preferences and result in new or changed policies in response to a particular event or change in circumstances. The international political context could therefore act to directly influence the policies adopted.

The international event which most directly produced change in Conservative European policy during this parliament was the scandal associated with Jacques Santer's presidency of the European Commission (1995-1999). In December 1998 Paul Van Buitenen, an official in the Commission's financial control unit, sent a report to the European Parliament alleging that fraud and corruption was widespread at the Commission. The scandal would lead to the resignation of the entire Commission on March 15th 1999, after the publication of a highly critical report by an independent committee. A debate followed on the lack of powers the European Parliament and member states had to hold Commission officials accountable, in addition to the perceived culture of secrecy in the Commission itself (BBC, 1999; Craig, 2000; Ringe, 2005).

The Conservative Party used the scandal as a window of opportunity to propose wide-ranging reforms that would both reduce the Commission's power and increase the scrutiny capacity of the European Parliament and national governments. Hague (1999), responding to the scandal in a newspaper article, announced a number of new policies: new British Commissioners must be scrutinised and confirmed by the House of Commons before taking office; an independent fraud office; a new code of conduct for Commission officials; a register of interests for Commission officials and new powers for the European Parliament to swiftly remove those Commissioners found to have abused their power. This was a direct response not only to the end of the scandal, but to a number of years of reports of financial mismanagement and poor accountability of officials at the Commission.

The Conservative Party also used this as an opportunity to argue that the Commission was in turmoil was because it had too many responsibilities. As Hague (1999) stated, 'Europe's politicians in general, and our Prime Minister in particular, must acknowledge that this crisis

has been caused by a European Union whose reach is greater than its grasp...after this of all weeks, Europe should do less, not more'. This would mean reducing the powers and responsibilities of the Commission. To achieve this the Conservative Party proposed removing Commission responsibility over two areas, new regulation compliance costs analysis and the administration of competition policy. Each would be handed to new independent regulatory bodies. These policies were developed further in May 2001, with Francis Maude announcing that the Conservative Party would reduce the Commission to an 'impartial civil service' with its right to initiate legislation reduced (Lynch, 2003). The shadow of corruption and mismanagement that surrounded the Santer Commission, and those events connected to it, provided the stimulus for these institutional reform policies to be introduced.

A further international event of significance to European policy, immediately prior to this time period, was the result of the 1992 and 1993 Danish referendums on the Maastricht Treaty. Danish voters had initially voted 'No' to the Maastricht Treaty in a constitutionally required referendum on June 2nd 1992. This sent shock waves through the EU and member states, as all EU members had to ratify the treaty for it to come into legal effect. The EU and Danish government subsequently renegotiated a series of opt-outs - on the single currency, the Common Foreign and Defence Policy, Justice and Home Affairs, and EU citizenship – which was put to Danish voters in a second referendum on May 18th, 1993. This was approved with 56.7% voting in favour of the new deal.

This event stimulated the renewed interest – and subsequent calls for such procedures with regards to the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties – for referendums in Conservative European policy, especially when concerning changes to the EU treaties. These referendums would then, in the presumption that they would be lost, lead to Britain renegotiating a new membership arrangement. Major, after initially resisting such an idea, conceded a referendum on the UK joining the single currency but did not formally agree to hold referendums on future EU treaties. This changed during the leadership of Hague. Collins (2016) argues that it was the Danish referendums on the Maastricht Treaty which stimulated an interest within the parliamentary and grassroots party for referendums on future treaty changes:

By the time you come to Maastricht it may not have been such a massive issue had it not been for the result of the Danish referendum. Probably no one would have noticed that the ratification process in other states was different and some

member states were getting referendums. The fact that the Danes voted 'No' flagged up the fact that they were getting asked, and that the UK was holding the presidency of the EU in first half of 1993, so therefore John Major had to play a big role in sorting out what was going to happen. That then meant that people said 'Well, so the Danes get a say and get told that they have to have another go, but the Danes are going to be given special terms'. So, that sparked all that off.

The change in policy over the use of referendums on EU treaties, can be traced back to the impact of the 1992 Danish 'No' vote on Conservative parliamentarians and members. Eurosceptic members of the Major Cabinet at the time of the Danish rejection, such as Howard, Lilley, Portillo – all who became leading members of the Hague Shadow Cabinet – saw this as an opportunity to 'reject a treaty they had never liked and substitute it with a looser agreement with the EC' (Seldon, 1998: 294). This, following the 1997 election, would become Conservative policy on the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties. Those who had at the time failed to persuade Major in 1992 found Hague much more receptive to the 'referendum and renegotiation' policy response to future treaty changes. The influence of Margaret Thatcher, who had started calling for a referendum and renegotiation policy prior to the 1992 election, was also a factor, but it was the impact of the unexpected Danish 'No' vote which sparked future Conservative Party commitments to the referendum and renegotiation policy.

In addition, the direction of European integration during this period was also moving in the opposite direction to Conservative European policy. The Amsterdam Treaty was a 'revising rather than a pioneering treaty' (Nugent, 2010:60) but it included the extension of QMV, a High Representative for foreign policy, in addition to elements of security policy coming into the remit of the EU for the first time (Nugent, 2010). The Treaty of Nice, initially regarded as a tidying up exercise for items not completed at Amsterdam, expanded qualified majority voting and EU competences in a number of areas. As Nugent (2010:63) rightly points out, these covered 'relatively uncontentious and not very politically significant matters'.

Lastly, the development and introduction of the European single currency between 1992 (the provisions for which were set out in the Maastricht Treaty) and 1999 created a new economic context for the European Union, with an inner Eurozone bloc and outer non-Eurozone group. This contributed further to a path towards closer political and economic integration which many EU nations and political parties, of both the left and right in Europe, saw as the future of European integration. This added further to the sense that Conservative European policy

and the mainstream consensus view of political opinion in the rest of Europe were heading towards very different destinations.

The direction of travel, however incremental, was the EU integrating more and expanding into more policy areas. Conservative policy was that the EU should do less in fewer areas, concentrating mainly on full completion of the single market, removing international trade barriers and implementing competition law. Amsterdam and Nice were the first EU treaties in which the Conservative Party issued a three-line whip to oppose in the House of Commons (Lynch, 2003). This process ensured that European policy drifted in a Eurosceptic direction during this period, as the process of European integration and Conservative policy objectives continued to diverge.

5.8 Pressure Groups

During the 1997-2001 parliament, several pressure groups attempted to influence Conservative Party policy over European integration, with varying degrees of success. These groups operated from both the Eurosceptic and pro-integration wings of the party. Evidence suggests that activity by one pressure group, Conservative Mainstream, played an important role in shaping the implementation of 'Operation Sunrise', the September-October 1998 referendum of Conservative members on the single currency. Conservative Mainstream was founded in 1996 as a Conservative pro-European pressure group.

In a private memorandum circulated amongst the Conservative Party leadership in 1998, the activity of Conservative Mainstream is connected with the need to conduct a referendum of the party membership to confirm the 'two parliaments' policy on the single currency. The group was accused of organising a campaign of events for the 1998 party conference to show that many party members believed the single currency policy is only temporary (Private information). This challenge to party policy led to the implementation of Operation Sunrise, before the 1998 conference. This was to marginalise Conservative Mainstream, by demonstrating that the party membership endorsed the policy, reassert the leadership's authority and 'mark the unarguable resolution of the question of what the party's policy on the single currency is or should be' (Private information). It would also be a 'unmistakably bold stroke of personal leadership' from Hague to prove to these opponents that the membership supported him on this issue (Private information).

This evidence shows that activity from a Conservative pressure group did cause the party leadership to change policy and conduct the single currency policy referendum a number of years before they had originally planned to. The content of the policy did not change, but the timing and implementation did, as the leadership were worried that the party could be depicted as divided over European policy during a period in which they were trying to move on from the Maastricht/ERM crisis period.

A second pressure group also attempted to influence European policy during this period. The Thatcherite pressure group Conservative Way Forward, founded in 1991 to promote the political principles of the Thatcher governments, has been argued to have played an influential role in trying to encourage Euroscepticism within the Conservative parliamentary party during the 1997-2001 parliament (Walters, 2001). This involved a campaign by activists to put pressure on local Conservative associations, mainly in safe or marginal seats, to select Eurosceptic candidates before the 2001 general election (Walters, 2001). An investigation carried out by Party Chairman Michael Ancram, indicated that many of these operations could be linked back to Conservative Way Forward activists (Walters, 2001). Walters (2001:131) suggests that ‘the operation at the 2001 election by a hardcore of right-wing activists to make sure Eurosceptics got selected and Europhiles kept out was the most sophisticated – and successful – ever conducted inside the party’. Through this campaign Conservative Way Forward activists directly sought to influence the balance of opinion within the parliamentary party on European integration.

Unlike the activity of Conservative Mainstream, which was focused on policy, the evidence suggests that Conservative Way Forward was mostly interested in influencing candidate selections. Conservative Mainstream, in collaboration with other pro-integration pressure groups, had the more immediate impact on European policy with the timing and implementation of Operation Sunrise. Conservative Way Forward can be seen as a more long-term strategy to incrementally create a more Eurosceptic parliamentary party. The impact of this is difficult to measure, and there is no evidence to suggest that the Conservative Way Forward strategy led directly to any policy changes itself. However, indirectly, an increasingly Eurosceptic parliamentary party after 2001 could in turn then put pressure on the decision-makers to guide European policy in a Eurosceptic direction.

5.9 Individual Political Actors

5.9.1 Shadow Foreign Secretaries

The first European policy change of the Hague leadership was the announcement that it would be party policy to oppose the Amsterdam Treaty and to call for a referendum to be held before it could be ratified by parliament. This was made less than two weeks into Hague's leadership during his first major speech at the Scottish Conservative Party conference in Perth on June 27th, 1997 (BBC, 1998). Major had been successful in managing to delay any significant decisions on the new treaty until the June 1997 European Council summit, minimising divisions within the Conservative Party before the May general election (Seldon, 1998). While the 1997 Conservative manifesto did include opposition to further extensions of QMV, more powers for the European Parliament, and UK participation in the Working Time Directive, they did not include opposition to the treaty itself or a pledge to hold a referendum on the agreed text. It was instead implied that they would be opposed if the treaty resulted in significant institutional change.

The action of an individual agent, Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Howard, during the summer of 1997 is likely to have been a significant factor in convincing Hague that the Conservative Party should support a referendum on the provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty. While it is understandable that an openly Eurosceptic leader and Shadow Cabinet would have opposed the Amsterdam Treaty, it is less clear why Hague would have announced Conservative support for a referendum at this time. Heywel Williams (1998), former special advisor to John Redwood 1993-1997, suggests that it was Howard who encouraged Hague to support a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty. That Howard continued to press for a referendum on the Amsterdam agreement during this period is also suggested by Crick (2005). Howard (1997a) confirmed the Conservative's call for a referendum in an article in *The Times* on July 1st, 1997. In a report published by the Centre for Policy Studies on May 8th, 1997, *The Future of Europe*, Howard (1997b) made clear that 'The British people must have a final say over any decision taken at Amsterdam to reduce their right to govern themselves...that must not be allowed to happen without the explicit consent of the people, expressed through a referendum.' This indicates that Howard considered calling for a referendum on the constitutional provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty a central policy option for the Conservative Party prior to his appointment as Shadow Foreign Secretary. Combined

with the evidence above, it points to Howard's influence as a policy entrepreneur in the new Shadow Cabinet as being the crucial factor in convincing Hague to call for a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty as his first major European policy announcement.

5.9.2 Special Advisors

As is the case with the leaders of most political parties, Hague had a group of advisors that worked closely with him. Hague has himself described Sebastian Coe (Chief of Staff), Tina Stowell (Deputy Chief of Staff), Daniel Finkelstein (Director of Policy) and George Osborne (Political Secretary) as his four closest advisors during this period (Hague 2016:44). Others included Archie Norman (Party Chief Executive), Andrew Cooper (Director of Strategy), Rick Nye (Director of Research), Amanda Platell (Head of Media 1999-2001) and Nick Wood (media advisor). Alan Duncan and John Whittingdale both acted as Hague's Parliamentary Private Secretary during this period.

As mentioned above, Hague himself had a very clear idea that European policy needed to progress in a Eurosceptic direction and that further European integration needed to be resisted. As such both Cooper (2016) and Widdecombe (2016) are both sceptical of the idea that these advisors had a significant influence on this policy area, as Hague himself had strong convictions for where he wanted the Conservative Party to be on European policy. Widdecombe (2016) suggests that it was Coe and Finkelstein who 'wielded the most influence over his thinking', but there is no evidence that this included European policy. Amanda Platell, who joined as Head of Media in 1999, and her media colleague Nick Wood, were influential with regards to getting Hague to focus his energy on 'core vote' issues, specifically the 'two parliaments' policy on the single currency (Cooper, 2016). This was especially true after the 1999 European elections, in which the single currency pledge was perceived to have been so influential to the result (Cooper, 2016). Andrew Lansley and Tim Collins were both key to the emphasis placed on the single currency at the 2001 election, as both had been advisors to Hague during the 1999 European elections (Walters, 2001). This influence appears to have extended only to emphasising and communicating aspects of European policy they perceived to be electoral winners for Hague and the party, rather than influencing the content of policy itself.

5.9.3 *The Leader*

It can be argued that the main factor, when considering European policy change in the Conservative Party during this period, comes down to the importance of the individual agency of the leader, as opposed to institutional or structural factors. Hague himself, as the leader and the chief policy maker in the Conservative Party, was fundamentally more Eurosceptic than Major. Nadler states that while at the time he was publicly supportive of Major during the Maastricht negotiations, privately he was much more Eurosceptic when discussing European policy during Cabinet meetings and in conversations with Major himself (Nadler, 2000). This is supported by others close to Hague (Cooper, 2016). Mackay (2016) states that at this time 'William had strong Eurosceptic views without being what I would call pointy headed'. Edward Macmillan-Scott (2016), leader of the Conservative MEPs 1997-2001, supports this view suggesting that Hague was 'initially...seen as Eurosceptic, but not a fanatic'. Free from the constraints of collective Cabinet responsibility after the 1997 election, Hague indicated during the leadership campaign that European integration had reached its limits. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* Hague (1997) stated that:

It is our role to show a line can be drawn in the transfer of sovereignty to elsewhere, that we can be in Europe, yet not run by Europe, and that we will fight a government that sells off our sovereignty for the sake of happy summit photo-calls.

The evidence suggests that Hague had strong Eurosceptic convictions when he became leader in June 1997 and maintained this, with the support of colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet, throughout his leadership. As Cooper (2016) makes clear, Hague was resistant to those individuals who wanted a more moderate approach:

He had a very clear view. But he was leader, so he listened to people around him. Not everyone around him agreed with him. Osborne, who was his political secretary, was very uneasy about going too far on it and favoured a more moderate position. Seb Coe, who was closest to him and his immediate team was constantly trying to pull him back into a centrist position and didn't like 'In Europe, Not Run by Europe'. Quite often William would say 'In Europe, Not Run by Europe' but also 'In Europe, not taken over by Europe'. That really used to annoy Seb. He used to push back against that quite a lot. More of the voices in the Shadow Cabinet were the other way, whose own view had been a more robust view pre-1997 and it was mostly the same characters that had been in the government. So, you had people like Howard, Portillo, Lilley. Lidington was William's PPS, he had a much more centrist view. But most people were comfortable with taking a more Eurosceptic position.

Widdecombe (2016) supports this view that the individual agency and Eurosceptic conviction of Hague, as leader, was one of the most important factors in changing European policy during this period:

I don't think that William ever thought 'How do we position the party?' I think that he knew. Don't forget the Clarke/Hague election had essentially been about Europe... William knew what he wanted, and he wanted a Eurosceptic party... He ran the show on that basis. So, I think that he looked at the agony of the Maastricht years and the fact that John Major had, as far as he could, tried to accommodate everyone and it simply didn't work. William just took the line that he knew accorded with most people in the party, if not with all his MPs, and promoted that. So, when you say 'he was trying to position this, he was trying to position that' he actually had a very firm view from the start.

As Holmes (1998) points out, Hague's soft Eurosceptic instincts worked 'with, rather than against, the grain' of opinion on European policy within the parliamentary party and grassroots. This confidence that Hague's attitude towards European integration was inline with party opinion enabled him to construct a European policy and a Shadow Cabinet that reflected his own convictions, without fear that this would cause significant conflict in the party. Because of this Hague was resistant to senior pro-integration MPs such as Clarke and Heseltine because he believed they were in the minority, not him, on European policy (Holmes, 1998). Change in European policy during this period – on the Amsterdam Treaty, the single currency, Operation Sunrise, the flexibility clause, the reserved powers provision – fundamentally took place because the Conservative Party now had a soft Eurosceptic leader who believed that the UK's relationship with the EU needed to be extensively reformed, and that further integration needed to be resisted on principle. A Conservative leader more sympathetic to European integration, or more supportive of the EU status quo, would not have made the changes to Conservative European policy as Hague did as leader between 1997-2001. The Eurosceptic instincts of Hague were therefore central to driving this process of policy change.

5.10 Media

As discussed in Chapter 2, the academic evidence for the media influencing the policy change in political parties is mixed. Collins (2016) notes that there was an understanding within the elite circles of the Conservative Party that European policy had drifted away from

the Eurosceptic attitudes of the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* who they needed to gain the support of if they were ever going to return to government. However, this is more to do with the growing Eurosceptic attitude of the general public, as shown previously in this chapter. Newspaper editors and owners are more likely than not responding, in part, to this trend in public opinion during the 1990's in much the same way the Conservative party elites were.

Collins (2016) also suggests that the media was influential in encouraging Hague to announce a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty. The content of the policy, opposing a new EU treaty on principle, would likely be picked up by Eurosceptic newspapers during a time in which Hague and the Conservative Party were struggling for national media attention:

Particularly in the early part of his leadership William was very conscious of the fact that he was getting very little publicity for what he was trying to do, so he was thrashing around a bit to find something that was newsworthy to say. Which doesn't at all mean that he had come up with the idea believing that it was the wrong idea, but more that it was produced for a headline at a particular time.

Or, in other words, the content of the policy had already been decided but the timing of the announcement was in part influenced by a lack of media coverage during the early months of the 1997 parliament. A Eurosceptic policy announcement such as this would likely attract the attention of the media and start connecting Hague with voters. Overall, during this period, the evidence suggests that while the need for media coverage at certain points in time might have encouraged the announcement of policies, there is little evidence the media influenced Conservative policy makers to specifically change the content of policy. At most the Eurosceptic positions of newspapers such as *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* provided an additional Eurosceptic structural element to the political environment experienced by Conservative Party elites during the 1997-2001 parliament.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Conservative Party European policy changed and developed during the 1997-2001 parliament, using a thematic structure and guided by the new institutional framework. It has drawn upon the themes from the party change literature and the new institutionalist framework (historical legacy, individual agency, critical junctures, path dependency, internal and external institutions, the structural environment) established in

chapters 2 and 3, in addition to new insights from elite interviews. This concluding section will set out how each policy change has been explained, any limitations to this explanation, how it adds to the existing literature on this topic, and how the new institutionalist framework has enhanced the explanation beyond existing accounts.

Firstly, the change which defined this period was the ‘two parliaments’ policy on the single currency, was the result of a combination of factors. The historical legacy of the Maastricht Treaty and the ERM crisis, created an incentive for Hague to change policy on the single currency to a more Eurosceptic position in order to avoid future conflict. The historical legacy of policy *ideas* from the Major era, ‘the wait and see’ position, also constrained Hague from ruling the single currency out completely for the same reasons. As a result, in the competitive environment of the 1997 leadership election, Hague established a triangulated position to win the leadership that could appeal to Eurosceptics and the remaining pro-integrationists. The individual agency and Euroscepticism of Hague was also a key factor, as this chapter has set out, in driving through a more Eurosceptic position on the single currency.

Individual agents, specifically the Shadow Foreign Secretaries Howard and Maude, appear to have been crucial individuals in some specific policy changes. Howard was key to the decision to propose a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty, and Maude appears to have been directly responsible for the ‘reserved powers’ proposal. It was unfortunately not possible to interview Francis Maude for this thesis, but it does appear that he was the individual most responsible for this policy change (Maude, 2000). The origins of the ‘flexibility clause’ can be traced directly to the historical legacy of policy ideas from the Major era, in which the concept was established, and is a key example of historical ideas influencing future policy decisions.

Operation Sunrise, the membership ballot on the ‘two parliaments’ single currency, was stimulated by the domestic political context of Hague’s lack of authority during the early stages of the parliament, with the timing of the ballot the direct result of activity by pro-integration party pressure groups at the 1998 party conference. The international political context, both in terms of the Santer Commission scandal and the move to further European integration in the EU, provided a window of opportunity for the party to propose Eurosceptic reform policies designed to decrease the power of EU institutions.

The 1997 general election was a critical juncture for the party with regards to European policy. As this chapter has established, many in the party blamed the success of the Referendum Party on an insufficiently Eurosceptic policy, which created pressure on the leadership to move in this direction. After the 1997 election, a majority of the parliamentary party, Shadow Cabinet, party membership, in addition to the leader himself, were now Eurosceptic for the first time. This ideological composition of the internal institutions of the party corresponded with increasing public Eurosceptic attitudes in the external structural environment. This created a path dependency which incentivised European policy to move in a Eurosceptic direction, with positive feedback from internal and external institutions to the changing content of policy reinforcing this path as time progressed. This combined with Hague, as a Eurosceptic party leader and main policy-maker, to provide the necessary conditions for policy to change.

This chapter has contributed a broader and more in-depth empirical and theoretical analysis of the development of European policy during this period than the current Conservative Party literature, which has tended to credit changing policy to only a limited range of factors, such as rising levels of Euroscepticism in the party and public opinion. The application of the new institutionalist approach, as set out in Chapter Three, has enabled this chapter to consider the institutional, structural, individual, historical, and ideational factors working as part of this process of change. As such, it provides a richer and more detailed explanation of change.

Chapter 6: Duncan-Smith to Howard - Policy Change and Europe, 2001-2005

This chapter seeks to explain the development of European policy within the Conservative Party during the 2001-2005 parliament, under the leaderships of Iain Duncan Smith (2001-2003) and Michael Howard (2003-2005). It takes as its starting point the immediate aftermath of the Conservative Party's defeat at the June 2001 general election and concludes at the end of the subsequent parliament, just before the May 2005 general election.

As chapter 4 indicated, there was some continuity in the general framework of European policy between the Hague, Duncan Smith, and Howard leaderships. The Conservative Party continued to oppose further political integration, such as increases in the supranational powers for EU institutions, new policy competences for the EU or changes to the number of EU policy areas subject to qualified majority voting in the EU Council of Ministers. In addition, both the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships opposed ratification of the Nice Treaty and Constitutional Treaty, calling for national referendums before ratification in both cases, in which the party would campaign to reject both treaties.

The changes that this chapter will seek to explain include the movement to unconditional opposition to the single currency; the support, then opposition, towards the EAW after 9/11; changes to the Conservative Party's relationship with the European Peoples' Party-European Democrats grouping in the European Parliament; repatriation of EU policy competences, such as the social and employment policy; the move to an annual limit on immigration, in addition to a collection of smaller policy changes focused around institutional and procedural changes to the functioning of the EU, such as on enhancing the role of national parliaments in the EU decision-making process.

6.1 Historical Legacies

6.1.1 Hague and European Policy, 1997-2001

The historical legacy of the Hague approach to European policy had a direct impact on the thinking of the Conservative leadership in the aftermath of the 2001 general election.

Although it was acknowledged that Hague had developed a more Eurosceptic position with which the Conservative Party was comfortable, Duncan Smith believed that the policy platform was 'intellectually incoherent' (Heppell, 2015: 369). This was especially true of the

‘two parliaments’ policy on the single currency. Hague had also failed to prevent conflict on the European issue within the Conservative Party during the 1997-2001 parliament. As Iain Duncan Smith, Conservative Party leader September 2001 - November 2003, explained when interviewed:

When I took over as leader I wanted it [the single currency policy] to end because it didn't end the arguments in the party. They went on and on. It got bad under William. So, I said that the only way to end this is to accept the fact that the Conservative Party will not, if in government, ever take the UK into the single currency. That was the bubbling issue at the time. It was really the flag at the top of the flag pole in terms of European policy, although it was only a tiny part of the whole European issue, but it was a critical issue. So, I then launched my campaign on the basis that we would never join. I was roundly assailed by what I call the so-called intelligent media who said, 'You can't say never!', 'Why have you said never?', and I said well you can say never because I know that if I'm leader, or if I was to become PM, I would never do it...it is just not right for the UK.

It was this legacy of ‘incoherence’ on the single currency that convinced Duncan Smith that policy on the single currency needed to change from ruling out membership for ‘two parliaments’, to ruling out entry forever, whatever the circumstances (Eastham, 2001). As the quote above indicates, Duncan Smith’s decision was influenced by pragmatism as much as by his Eurosceptic principles (Heppell, 2014). The need to lower the saliency of European policy within the party was crucial, as the party wanted to talk about other policy areas, such as health and education, and to prevent the issue dominating coverage of the party in the media (Crowson, 2006). This view was supported by other senior members of the parliamentary party³. The historical legacy of European policy during the Hague years, as interpreted by Duncan Smith himself and others like Chief Whip David Maclean, therefore contributed directly to the change of policy on the single currency. As set out in the new institutionalist approach in Chapter 3, the historical legacy of past events had direct influence on future policy change in this case.

6.1.2 The 2001 General Election

During the Conservative’s 2001 general election campaign the question of European policy was a constant feature (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002). Interventions by Thatcher, her commitment to ‘never’ accept the single currency, and ‘leaked’ documents from the European Commission on plans for EU tax harmonisation, ensured that Europe was never far

³ See Spicer (2012:465) diary entry for October 8th, 2001, in which he meets the new Chief Whip David Maclean: ‘Maclean wants to suppress everything European’.

from the headlines (Jones, 2001). The ‘Keep the £’ campaign was a central theme of the Conservative campaign (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002). Despite preliminary hopes that the question of the single currency and Europe would attract voters towards Conservative candidates, the Conservative campaign team played down European policy in the last week of the campaign as it became clear it was not appealing to marginal voters and those who had backed the Labour Party in 1997. This was a change from the original campaign strategy, in which the party had planned to push hard on Europe until election day (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002). The 2001 general election was another defeat for the party. The Conservative Party gained only a single seat. The share of the vote, 31.7%, was only 1% greater than it had achieved at the previous election. On a low turnout of 59%, the Conservative’s total votes had decreased by 1.2 million to 8.3 million (Heppell, 2014). The academic consensus is that campaigning on opposing more European integration, channelled through high profile opposition to the UK joining the single currency, was ineffective in attracting ‘swing’ voters away from Labour in 2001 (Collings and Seldon, 2001; Geddes, 2002).

The chief campaign organisers, Andrew Lansley and Tim Collins, were adamant that the focus on the single currency was the best available electoral strategy for the party in the circumstances (Lansley and Collins, 2001). Lansley and Collins’ reasoning was that Labour were dominant in policy areas such as the economy and public services, and therefore the campaign had to focus on subjects in which the Conservative Party had the strongest policies in the eyes of the public. Many in the parliamentary and grassroots sections of the party disagreed. They believed that the focus on European policy, at the expense of other policy areas, during the campaign ‘directly’ contributed to the scale of the defeat (Alderman and Carter, 2002:570). The key impact from the 2001 general election campaign for many in the subsequent leadership teams, Duncan Smith and Howard, was to discredit the idea that a focus on European policy could deliver success at a general election. The party needed a settled, coherent position from which they could then spend more time on developing new policies for the public services and the economy. As Michael Ancram, Shadow Foreign Secretary 2001-2005, explained when interviewed:

...in the last week of that 2001 campaign we majored very much on 'Save the Pound'. Which didn't shift the polls one iota. I think that after the election there was a feeling that there is no point going on screaming and shouting about Euroscepticism in that format because that it didn't have any effect politically. Then we saw, almost as a counter-reaction to this, the Labour Party losing interest in it.

Ancram (2016) also explained that the impact of the 2001 general election defeat on European policy was to convince the party leadership that this was not the answer to expanding Conservative support in future general elections. Voters in marginal constituencies had not been persuaded to shift their support from Labour to the Conservative Party. This shift away from the single currency moved the focus onto other areas of European policy during the 2001-2005 parliament:

I don't think that it did consciously, I think it did so unconsciously. There we had been, the great party trying to save the country from the dreaded Euro, and the country didn't seem to want to be saved from the Euro. So, there was no point banging on about it, to use Cameron's famous phrase. So, we began to concentrate much more on the development of Europe, the position Europe was taking on various issues.

The impact, therefore, of the 2001 general election on European policy during this period was threefold. Firstly, it contributed to Duncan Smith's belief that a definitive party position on single currency membership was needed for Conservative European policy to have any credibility with the public (Duncan Smith, 2016). Secondly, it convinced the party leadership that a parliament and general election campaign in which European policy was a central theme would not be electorally successful (Ancram, 2016; Duncan Smith, 2016). The focus would instead turn to developing policy to improve public services and the economy. Thirdly, it saw a shift away from the question of the single currency and towards policies associated with constitutional change in the European Union, such as increasing the role for national parliaments in the EU policy-making process.

6.2 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party

6.2.1 Parliamentary Party 2001-2005

Analysis of the 2001 Conservative Party leadership election allows us to determine the ideological composition of the parliamentary party on European policy. This leadership election was, as it had been in 1997, dominated by tensions over the Conservative Party position on the single currency and the direction of European policy in general (Fowler, 2008). Duncan Smith used his reputation as a Eurosceptic, and history as a leading parliamentary opponent of the Maastricht Treaty, to win the support of both Eurosceptic colleagues in parliament and party activists in the final membership ballot (Alderman and Carter, 2002; Heathcoat-Amory, 2012). Alderman and Carter (2002:584) suggest that the

2001 leadership contest ‘underlined the supremacy of the Eurosceptics in the parliamentary party’, as the leading pro-integration candidate received only 36 first round votes in the parliamentary ballot, in comparison to 49 during the 1997 contest (Ken Clarke was the candidate on both occasions).

Heppell and Hill (2010:50), using the same attitudinal mapping methodology discussed in the previous chapter, determine that at the time of the 2001 leadership contest the parliamentary party consisted of 149 (89.8%) ‘Eurosceptic’, 8 (4.8%) ‘Europhile’, and 9 (5.4%) ‘Agnostic’ members. The comparative figures for 1997 are 139 (84.8%) ‘Eurosceptic’, 14 (8.5%) ‘Europhile’, and 11 (6.7%) ‘Agnostic’. This indicates that both in numbers, and proportionally, the parliamentary party was becoming more Eurosceptic. The pro-integration element of the parliamentary party had also diminished in comparison to the 1997 composition. The change is steady, rather than dramatic, but this must be placed in context with the substantial change observed between the 1992 and 1997 parliaments. Thus, it is difficult to attribute much direct causal influence for this change on the development of European policy under Duncan Smith and Howard, as the increase in the Eurosceptic composition of the parliamentary party is small. The influence on policy of this dramatic change in opinion during the 1992-1997 parliament had predominantly been ‘spent’ during the 1997-2001 parliament under Hague, in which European policy had moved in a distinctively soft Eurosceptic direction. As such changes in policy as a direct or indirect result were unlikely. It did ensure, however, that any major changes in policy in a more pro-integration direction were just as likely to be strongly resisted by the parliamentary party. With one committed Eurosceptic leader (Duncan Smith) taking over from another (Hague), this was also unlikely.

During the Duncan Smith leadership period, there was pressure from some Eurosceptic MPs to focus more heavily on European policy⁴. This was largely because a number of his Eurosceptic colleagues expected Duncan Smith, as a former Maastricht rebel, to take a high-profile stance on the issue. Theresa May, then a Shadow Cabinet member, recalls that many Conservative MPs had supported Duncan Smith during the leadership election because of his Eurosceptic reputation and were subsequently disappointed when more focus was not placed on the issue when he became party leader (May, as cited in Hayton and Heppell, 2010:429).

⁴ John Redwood, for example, was one prominent Eurosceptic who disagreed with this approach. See ‘Redwood: Europe is our trump card’, *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, October 09, 2001; pg. 34-35.

Duncan Smith (2016) recalls this pressure, but also his view that, as party leader, he was determined to focus on other policy areas:

Everyone knew what our opinion was, saying never to the single currency allowed us to be very clear about that. I said that I wanted us to re-focus on domestic issues. It was the beginning of my travels to Easterhouse and Gallowgate and to various other parts of the UK. Also, where I started travelling around Europe looking at different health services. I wanted the Conservative Party across these domestic issues and not Europe. So, for the first year or so of my leadership I deliberately did not talk about Europe and did not want to talk about Europe. For quite a while I got a lot of criticism from Eurosceptics who wanted us to go on about Europe and I said I don't want to do it. So, I didn't actually say anything about Europe.

Ancram (2016), who was a leading member of both the Duncan Smith and Howard Shadow Cabinets, suggests that apart from a persistent few, the parliamentary party did not lobby the party leadership much on European policy during this period:

There was the unavoidable Bill Cash. He raised it on every single possible occasion. He was very persistent. So, there were those in the party but in a sense, they were on the outside edges. I think most of the party had been reasonably comfortable with where IDS first, and then Howard, were trying to place the party. Europe was not an issue in the 2005 election.

This would suggest that European policy was of relatively low saliency in the Conservative parliamentary party during the 2001-2005 parliament, with other factors contributing more to the direction of European policy during this time. Howard was assisted in maintaining discipline in the parliamentary party by the expectation of a general election in 2005. This focused the minds of MPs on party loyalty and a successful result at the election, as opposed to questioning the content and prominence of Europe. In addition, Howard was also assisted by the deeply troubled leadership period under Duncan Smith. Conservative MPs were willing to give Howard considerable space, and the benefit of the doubt in many policy areas such as European integration, to take the party forward to the 2005 election in a competent manner. They were desperate to move on from the Duncan Smith leadership and the disunity this had displayed to the public. This gave Howard an advantage in maintaining discipline in the parliamentary party and protected him from policy confrontation in some areas, including Europe. The parliamentary party was thus a less significant factor during the 2001-2005 parliament than in the previous parliament.

6.2.2 *Shadow Cabinet 2001-2005*

The first Duncan Smith Shadow Cabinet in September 2001 ‘leaned heavily to the Eurosceptic right’ (Ball and Seldon, 2005:259). Using the Heppell and Hill (2005) ideological categorisations we can estimate the composition of the Shadow Cabinet as 19 (86.3%) ‘Eurosceptic’, 1 (4.5%) ‘Europhile’, and 2 (9.1%) ‘Agnostic’. Ancram and Howard, both prominent Eurosceptics, were installed as Shadow Foreign Secretary and Shadow Chancellor, respectively. Other notable Eurosceptics included Bernard Jenkin, Eric Forth, and John Whittingdale. Bill Cash was appointed Shadow Attorney General, though remained outside the Shadow Cabinet. The number of Eurosceptics in the Shadow Cabinet are likely due to Duncan Smith being a prominent Eurosceptic himself, personal connections to fellow Maastricht rebels (Cash, Jenkin, Winterton, and Whittingdale) and the fact that a number entered parliament at the same election as him (Jenkin and Whittingdale). Quentin Davies was the sole pro-integration member.

Given Duncan Smith’s brief tenure there was only one significant reshuffle, in July 2003, when the Shadow Cabinet was expanded. The ideological composition remained relatively unchanged with 21 (87.5%) Eurosceptics, 1 ‘Europhile’ (4.1%) and 2 ‘Agnostics’ (8.4%). Howard introduced a smaller Shadow Cabinet, reducing its size from twenty-four to eleven. Proportionally it was less Eurosceptic than the first Duncan Smith Cabinet, with 9 (81.8%) ‘Eurosceptics’, 1 (9.1%) ‘Agnostic’, 1 (9.1%) ‘Europhile’, becoming more Eurosceptic (90.9%) in when the sole pro-integration member, David Curry, resigned from the Shadow Cabinet in March 2004.

Despite the majority Eurosceptic composition of both the Duncan Smith and Howard Shadow Cabinets, minus Tim Yeo and a token pro-integration member, there is not much evidence to suggest that the Shadow Cabinet played an important role in influencing European policy during this period, as an institution itself. This is likely because both party leaders had solid reputations as strong Eurosceptics in the parliamentary party and were therefore more trusted to maintain a Eurosceptic European policy than Cameron would be later, and Hague had been earlier, due to their lack of association with this policy area. Duncan Smith and Howard both had a history of resisting closer European integration during the 1992-1997 parliament.

This reflected the low saliency of the issue in the parliamentary party during this parliament. Mark MacGregor, Chief Executive Officer of CCHQ 2002-2003 and Conservative parliamentary candidate 1997-2005, says the Shadow Cabinet under Duncan Smith was supportive of his European policy position:

It is surprising that there were people in the Shadow Cabinet - take David Maclean - who was Chief Whip, strong Eurosceptic - but became absolutely persuaded that the way the Tories had to revive themselves was not talking about Europe. So once the more intelligent people got into the Shadow Cabinet you are presented with polling. You can do one of two things. You can say 'Oh I think we can ignore that and wait until the public moves to us' or you should recognise the logic of the case that other people are making. Lots of people who were strong Eurosceptics said 'Completely get it. We need to have a policy on this. I'm not going to change my mind on this, but I am going to focus on other issues'. So, people like David Maclean became very strong advocates within the party to stick by that new approach.

As the above quotation suggests, the fact that the Eurosceptics had some of their 'senior representatives' in the Shadow Cabinet actually meant the party leadership faced less difficulty with the parliamentary party over European policy during the Duncan Smith leadership period, not more. As the Eurosceptics had their ideological soulmates on the 'inside', they could be more confident policy would stick to a strongly Eurosceptic path.

This continued during the change of leadership to Howard in November 2003, who continued the Duncan Smith strategy of maintaining the soft Eurosceptic direction of European policy, as inherited from Hague, while focusing in public on other policy issues like health, crime, and education (Hayton, 2012:70). Prominent Eurosceptics were still uneasy about the downgrading of European policy, as Spicer (2012:518) records in his diary. Owen Paterson was also, like Spicer, privately not happy about European policy being side-lined (Spicer, 2012:526). This, however, does not seem to have deterred the Conservative leadership team. As Stephen Sherbourne (2016), Chief of Staff to Michael Howard 2003-2005, explained when interviewed:

Very simply, Michael's position was that he wanted to close down the debate while he was leader. So as not to get the party into a state of division or distraction. As I recall he managed to do this quite effectively. I don't think that the party was obsessed with the issue publicly while he was leader and managed to close down the debate to a very large extent. He made one major speech on Europe which was all about variable geometry that was designed to make sure that he had a definitive statement of policy. But by and large we didn't want to have a debate about it because we thought that it was a distraction from the main

issues that we wanted to fight on. We didn't want to run the risk of divisions in the party.

6.2.3 Euroscepticism and Conservative Party Members 2001-2005

The development of Euroscepticism in the Conservative membership during this period, and the potential impact it had on the direction of European policy, is difficult to ascertain as there are no academic sources of information on which to draw. A potential proxy, if not an entirely satisfactory one, is to use the result of the 2001 Conservative leadership election members ballot, as this was between two candidates with distinctive Eurosceptic (Duncan Smith) and pro-integration (Clarke) positions on European policy. In this ballot turnout was 79% and 256,797 votes were cast. Duncan Smith received 155,933 votes (60.7%) and Clarke 100,864 (39.3%). In a leadership election campaign dominated by discussions about the single currency and Europe, it is likely that many votes were cast reflecting the members' views on European integration. However, this is likely to be underestimating the level of Euroscepticism amongst the party membership. As we know from the parliamentary ballot in the 2001 leadership election, Duncan Smith drew his support exclusively from Eurosceptic members, while Clarke attracted some Eurosceptic support, in addition to the pro-integration wing of the parliamentary party (Heppell and Hill, 2010). Using the membership ballot data could therefore give a slightly distorted picture. Nonetheless, it does give an indication that the party membership remained strongly Eurosceptic in late 2001.

Evidence from elite interviews suggests that Euroscepticism in the membership of the party was impacting on those candidates being selected to contest parliamentary elections. Mark MacGregor was a parliamentary candidate at the 1997, 2001, and 2005 general elections and suggests Euroscepticism in the membership did contribute towards more Eurosceptic parliamentary candidates being selected:

It [Euroscepticism] was built into the DNA [of the party membership]. So, if you wanted to get selected as a candidate... if you expressed a 'Europe's not all bad' attitude - if you said that - forget that, you just weren't going to get selected...it's part of the DNA of the Tory Party. People who were Eurosceptics selected Eurosceptic candidates.

This was not the case with every Conservative association, however. Some were less likely to consider a candidate's 'Euroscepticism' as a significant factor in the selection process. James

Wharton, Conservative MP for Stockton South 2010-2017, told me when asked whether Eurosceptic credentials were required to be selected as a candidate:

No. It might be now... I remember in... before the 2005 election, so it would have been in about 2003-2004. I was the chairman of my local association in Stockton and we did the selection, the selection for Stockton South. No one asked about Europe. One person suggested asking about Europe... that was at a time when it was starting to exist as an issue. It doesn't mean there weren't lots of Eurosceptics around but in my association, it was a bit of a non-issue. Yet if you had read the media even then it was a Eurosceptic party etc. etc., so I think it became self-fulfilling.

This suggests that the picture is more complicated than simply rising Eurosceptic attitudes leading automatically to more Eurosceptic candidates and then MPs, and that the degree of influence will have varied between different associations in different parts of the country.

One indication of party membership opinion on European policy can be determined from a survey of constituency association chairman conducted by *The Times* in March 2002. In response to media reports that Thatcher now advocated the leaving the EU, 71 of 100 constituency association chairmen disagreed with Thatcher and believed the UK should remain in the EU (Lister, et al, 2002). This is an indication that while the party membership might have accepted soft-Euroscepticism, there was still a clear majority that had not accepted hard-Euroscepticism, at this stage. Overall there is little evidence, from elite interviews or other sources, to suggest that the party membership was a significant contributory factor on European policy in the 2001-2005 parliament. The low saliency experienced by the parliamentary party also extended to the party membership, who maintained their Eurosceptic attitudes but wanted the party leadership to focus on other political issues.

6.3 Rival Political Parties

6.3.1 UKIP and the 2004 European Elections

The 2001-2005 parliament saw the gradual emergence of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) as a serious force in the UK political system with the potential to provide serious competition for the Conservative Party (Usherwood, 2008, 2014, 2016). Their influence at the 2001 general election was limited, lacking the impact the Referendum Party had made at the 1997 general election. On average, support for the Conservative Party was

only 1.6% lower in seats where either UKIP itself, or the Referendum Party, had stood previously, with the most significant falls in areas with the most Eurosceptic voters in 1997 (Ford and Goodwin, 2014:40). Despite this poor performance, there is evidence to suggest that Conservative Party were concerned about UKIP even at this early stage. Bale (2016:118) notes that Conservative strategists were worried enough about the impact of UKIP in key marginal seats that they tried to persuade local UKIP parties to not contest those seats which had Eurosceptic Conservative candidates. This impact, however, was still only at the fringes and does not appear to have been a major subject in the 2001 leadership election, or for the Duncan Smith leadership team afterwards

The most important electoral breakthrough for UKIP, at this point in time, was the 2004 European elections. When the election was over the results for UKIP were ‘by far the best set of results in their brief history’ (Ford and Goodwin, 2014:48). UKIP increased their vote by 9.2% on the previous election in 1999, winning 2.6 million votes and 12 seats in the European Parliament. Post-election research indicated that 45% of UKIP voters had supported the Conservative Party at the 2001 election (Bale, 2015:384). The question is to what extent did the success of UKIP at the 2004 elections impact on Conservative European policy. Ford and Goodwin (2014a:47) suggest that pre-election polls in the preceding weeks before the election, a YouGov poll for *The Daily Telegraph* suggested 18% of people likely to vote would support UKIP, ‘was creating panic in Conservative central office’. Whether there was ‘panic’ or not is debatable, but references to the ‘extreme’ UKIP candidates who supported the UK leaving the EU appeared in a Howard (2004) speech on European policy, for the first time, nine days before the June 10th election.

Howard (2016) denies that the UKIP success at 2004 elections impacted on the development of European policy before the 2005 general election:

I don't think that it did. UKIP did well in those European elections in 2004 but they weren't generally thought to be much of a threat at the general election. I knew what I wanted to put in our manifesto because it was what I believed in.

This is supported by Sherbourne (2016) who also argues that, despite the success UKIP enjoyed at the 2004 European elections, the effect on Conservative European policy was limited:

It [European policy] wasn't dictated by the threat from UKIP, it was dictated by the fact that we had to have a position on Europe, it had to reflect Michael's Euroscepticism, which was basically the way that the party was moving anyway. So, Michael was in tune with the party. Let's have a position which hopefully people can sign up to which was not going to antagonise the pro-Europeans. He was very keen, as I recall, before he made his big speech [February 2004], I think he phoned up some of the Europhiles, like Ken Clarke, to let them know he was saying this and that even though they wouldn't necessarily sign up to the policy, they wouldn't necessarily open up the whole debate again. The tactics were let's have a position, not everyone will sign up to it, it will reflect the majority opinion of the party, but it didn't need to open a great division, divide, or debate. That was the strategy. I think even without UKIP that would have been the strategy on Europe.

Spicer (2012:537) records that at a special meeting of the 1922 committee, called following the 2004 European elections, Howard told those MPs present that Conservative policy on Europe wouldn't change following the success of UKIP. While it is plausible to argue that the overall policy on Europe did not change following the 2004 European elections, as Howard (2016) and Sherbourne (2016) do, it is less plausible to argue that no changes were made to the detail of policy. Sherrington (2006:73) suggests that the success of UKIP in the 2004 European elections 'required the Conservative Party to revert to the more comfortable sceptical ground on Europe'. This would be a more realistic assessment, though this was not all down to the European election results. A September 2004 parliamentary by-election in Hartlepool saw UKIP beat the Conservative Party into fourth place, with only 9.7% of the vote. Howard responded by bringing John Redwood, a senior Eurosceptic MP, back to the Shadow Cabinet as his 'deregulation' spokesman, who immediately announced that the Conservative Party would be reviewing all EU laws as applied to the UK and would consider 'renegotiating' any they decided were 'excessive' (Carlin et al, 2004). This was interpreted as a move to reassure Conservative voters tempted by UKIP's hard-Eurosceptic policies (Snowdon, 2010). Additionally, Howard's October 2004 party conference speech announced that following a Conservative victory at the next general election the UK would be removed from the jurisdiction of EU social and employment policy. This had previously been ruled out in May 2004 by a Conservative spokesman, a month before the 2004 European elections, and this change is likely to have been partly due to both the influence of John Redwood and the electoral success of UKIP during the previous four months. The sequencing of these events and the changes outlined above suggests UKIP did have some causal impact on the content of European policy.

The Conservative Party also announced a new immigration policy, after the June 2004

European elections, but before the September 30th Hartlepool by-election. In a speech on September 22nd, 2004, Howard (2004b) stated that it would be Conservative policy to allow parliament to set an annual limit to legal immigration to the UK, introducing an ‘Australian-style points system’ to evaluate work permit applications. This policy announcement, and the overall speech itself, was communicated as a statement on Conservative immigration and asylum policy. What was not acknowledged was that this policy clearly had a European policy dimension, as any ‘annual limit on immigration’, would logically have to include EU citizens, which would be illegal for the UK to restrict under EU ‘freedom of movement’ rules. On face value this constituted a major policy change and could be interpreted as a response to the success of UKIP at the 2004 European elections.

Elite interviews, however, suggest this was not the case. Sherbourne (2016) contends that at the time the Conservative leadership did not interpret this announcement in this way, insisting that they saw this policy announcement and their position on Europe as entirely separate issues:

...the immigration thing was not really to do with the European free movement of labour. It was a general policy that was really outside the European argument. So, it is true that Howard's position was that we were supposed to have transitional controls, as I think that France and Germany did, when we had the new entrants like Bulgaria and Romania joining. But it wasn't deployed in the way, let us say, in the way that UKIP have deployed the argument, or some Eurosceptics do today. As I recall it was basically a separate 'We need to get control on immigration'... We didn't have a policy of opting out of freedom of movement. So, I think that the immigration debate was a general one not a European one... Whether it was deliberately or unintentionally ambiguous I'm not sure, but I'm not sure that we wanted to get into the position of wanting to link this to Europe because it would have confronted us with the question of either our policy would have had to have been to leave the EU, or have to opt-out of what clearly is a fundamental tenet of the EU which was the free movement of labour.

This immigration policy announcement, for reasons of political necessity and party management, was therefore not connected with European policy and was not meant as a challenge to EU freedom of movement rules. As Sherbourne (2016) suggests, the party leadership was aware that to include EU migration in this policy was to suggest that they wanted to end freedom of movement, a position which the Conservative leadership did not support. This suggests that while the announcement was highly likely to have been a response to the success of UKIP, and concerns about a loss of voters and activists to them over this period, it did not cause a change in European policy as EU citizens were not included. That

this was not exploited by rival parties or the media at the time highlights that, even with the Eastern enlargement of the EU at the time, EU migration had not become the highly salient issue for the Conservative Party that it would later become during the 2010-2015 parliament. It does appear, however, that the decision to call for the exit from EU employment and social legislation was connected to the electoral success of UKIP in 2004, as this matches the sequence of events.

6.3.2 The Labour Party and European Policy, 2001-2005

The dominant issue for the Labour government in European policy terms during the 2001-2005 parliament was a third phase, following the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, of negotiations for a new constitutional settlement for the EU. This new path was agreed by the EU heads of government in December 2001. A 'Convention on the Future of Europe' was established at the same meeting, to consist of EU and national politicians. The Convention's recommendations were given to the European Council in June 2003, with negotiations beginning in October 2003. However, these talks broke down in December 2003, before being revived the following spring when Spain and Poland dropped objections to reforms of the voting system. The EU Constitutional Treaty was agreed in October 2004 but was rejected by voters in France and the Netherlands in May 2005. The start of negotiations raised the saliency of European policy in the Conservative Party and the UK. It had been relatively dormant as an issue since the 2001 general election.

The Conservative Party opposed the EU Constitutional Treaty under both the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships. The principal objections were that it took powers away from member states, centralising it in EU institutions, and would fail to reform the EU to make it more flexible. Both leaderships promised national referendums on the treaty. If already ratified when they entered office at the next election, they would seek to renegotiate it with the EU. The Conservative Party campaigned heavily on the referendum issue during 2004 in the build-up to the European and local elections. The party started a national petition calling for the government to hold a referendum on the EU treaty (Bale, 2015). In April 2004, Tony Blair committed a future Labour government to hold a referendum on the new treaty, under pressure from referendum campaigns organised by the tabloid newspapers and the Conservative Party, in addition to Cabinet ministers who feared the issue would severely damage the party at the June elections (Baker and Sherrington, 2005:306). The Conservative Party had banked on capitalising on the Labour government's reluctance to hold a

referendum, and Blair's announcement in April 2004 left them without a unique selling point to their European policy before the elections. Howard, in private, then considered calling for a referendum on a 'fundamental renegotiation' of the UK's overall relationship with the EU, in response to the Labour referendum pledge (Bale, 2015:383). The concern was that UKIP could portray Labour and the Conservative Party as having the same policy on the EU constitution. He was persuaded, by advisors including David Cameron, that this would prove counterproductive and 'only legitimise UKIP' in the eyes of voters (Bale, 2015:383). The interesting point here is that despite the change in policy from the Labour Party, and the temptation to change to a harder Eurosceptic position by Howard in response, the Conservative Party did not react by changing policy themselves to 'outbid' Labour. The risk, at the time, was that this would subsequently increase the electoral threat of UKIP, rather than diminish it.

6.4 Public Opinion

6.4.1 Euroscepticism and Public Opinion

Table 6.1 shows data, drawn from the British Social Attitudes survey, of UK attitudes towards the European Union during the 2001-2005 parliament. Overall, the data shows that British attitudes remained relatively stable over the course of the 2001-2005 parliament. There was a small increase in the number of respondents taking a hard-Eurosceptic attitude, advocating leaving the EU, but this had only increased from 14% in 2001 to 16% in 2005. However, in contradiction to this, there was also a small increase in the number of respondents supporting the status quo, from 21% in 2001 to 24% in 2005. Most respondents supported the soft Eurosceptic position, 38% in 2001 and 36% in 2005, to remain members of the EU but to try and reduce the powers it has over member states like the UK.

The stability of public attitudes towards the EU during this period largely discounts this as a factor which stimulated change in Conservative Party European policy during this parliament, as there was little change in public attitudes. The structural political environment, at least in terms of the public opinion towards the EU, was stable. What it does help explain is the low priority in which both Duncan Smith and Howard gave to European policy during this parliament and the continuity seen in the soft Eurosceptic direction of policy, as this correlated with public opinion at the time.

Table 6.1: UK Attitudes towards the EU, 2001-2005

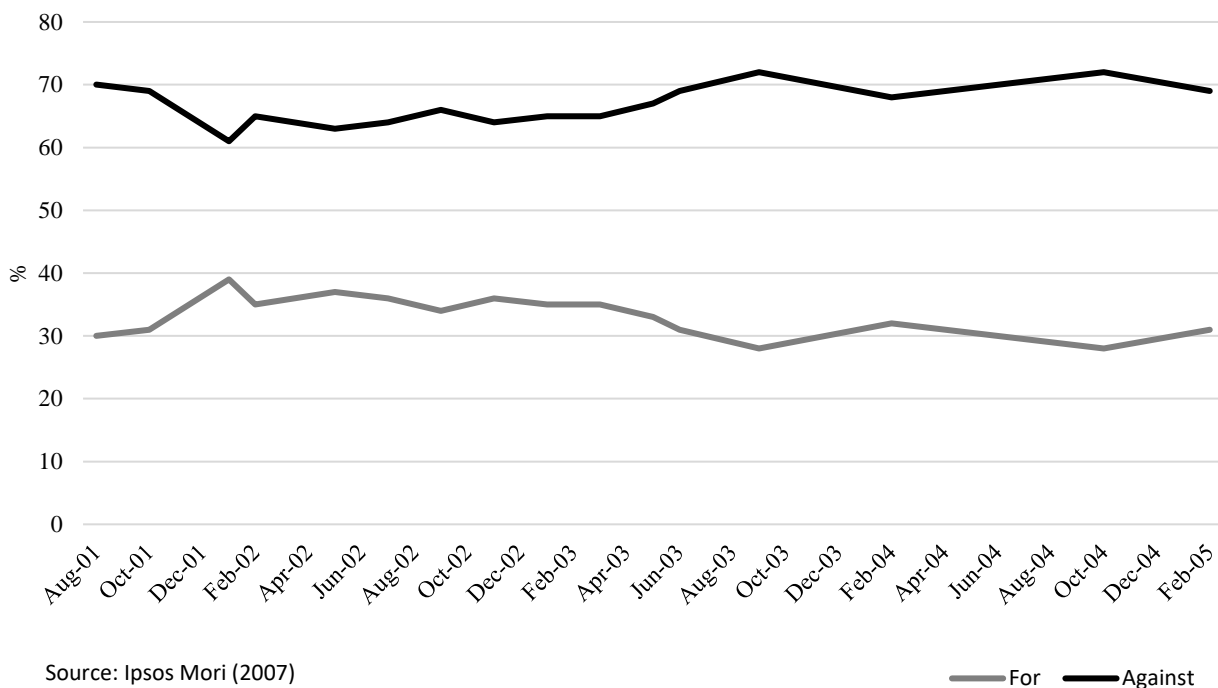
% Agreeing	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Leave the EU	14	15	15	18	16
Stay in EU but reduce its power	38	35	32	38	36
Leave things as are	21	23	27	23	24
Stay in EU and increase its powers	10	12	11	7	10
Work for single European government	7	7	6	5	4

Source: British Social Attitudes 33 (2016).

The sector of the public that would have been responsive to harder Eurosceptic policies towards the EU was small, whereas the section of public open to soft Eurosceptic policies, aiming to reduce the powers of EU institutions, was significant. As Eurosceptic politicians themselves, it was therefore convenient to align policies that aimed to reduce EU power over the UK, with that of public opinion. This data therefore provides some of the structural context in which the Conservative leaderships considered European policy during this parliament.

Figure 6.1 presents data from Ipsos Mori on public attitudes to joining the single currency during the 2001-2005 parliament. It shows a significant majority of the public still opposed the UK joining the single currency in line with public opinion during the 1997-2001 parliament. This provided Duncan Smith with the political space to rule out single currency membership for the UK under a future Conservative government, with the understanding this was working with, and not against, the current structural political environment. It was not a factor that ‘triggered’ this decision, as opposition to the single currency had been well established in the UK for many years. Public opinion was a necessary enabling condition, as it would have been a political risk to have opposed the single currency if there was strong public support, but it did not determine the timing of the decision itself. If public opinion was the main stimulus, Hague would have ruled out the single currency during the 1997-2001 parliament, when public opinion was equally as hostile. The fact that Hague and Duncan Smith took different decisions when both faced strong levels of public hostility to the single currency, suggests that other factors played a more pivotal role.

Figure 6.1: UK Public Attitude towards the Euro, 2001-2005

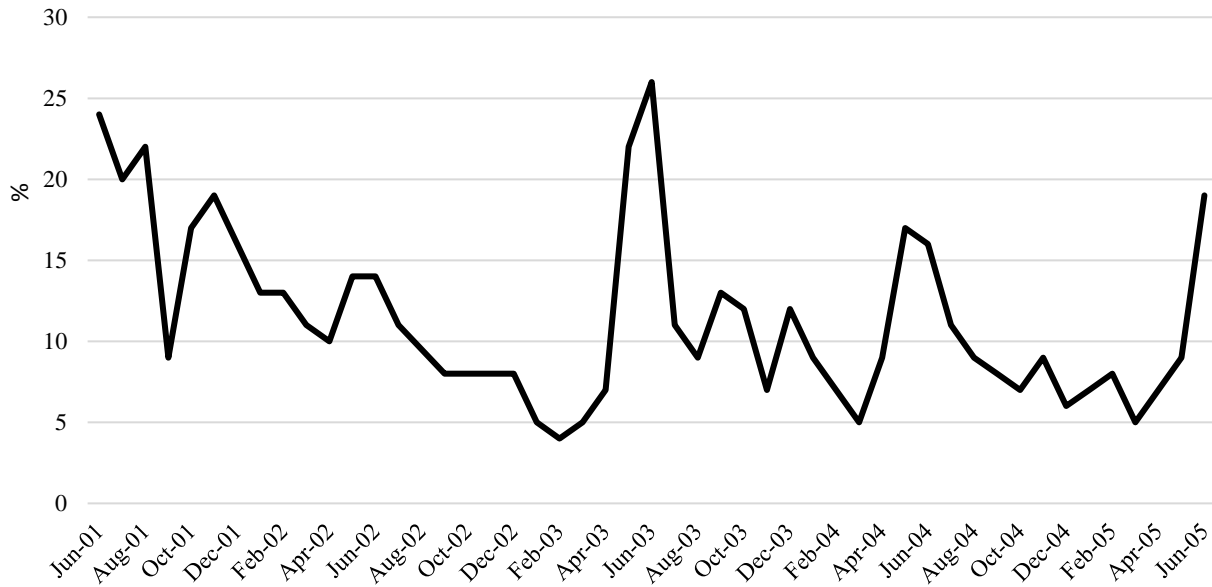


Source: Ipsos Mori (2007)

Figure 6.2 provides an indication of the salience of Europe during the 2001-2005 parliament. Overall, the trend for Europe during this period was to decline in salience though, as in the previous parliament, there were sporadic fluctuations in both directions of higher and lower levels of salience. The spike in the salience of EU issues between April and June 2003 is likely to be the result of several events. Tensions between the UK and other EU member states, especially with Germany and France, following the Labour governments support for the US coalition led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, had been the focus of media attention during this period. Additionally, on June 9th, 2003 Gordon Brown announced that the single currency had only passed one of the five tests the Treasury had set it for compatibility with the UK economy. This accounts for the notable spike in salience in June 2003. However, this period of high salience for EU issues did not influence Conservative Party policy as Duncan Smith had already formally ruled out the Conservative Party supporting the UK joining the

single currency in 2001. The Conservative Party had also supported the Labour government's position on the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Figure 6.2: % UK Voters saying Europe No 1 Issue, 2001-2005



Source: Ipsos Mori (2006)

6.5 Domestic Political Context

The domestic political context of the 2001-2005 parliament for the Conservative Party was one in which the ‘heat’ surrounding Europe in the party gradually diminished. For the early part of the parliament, Duncan Smith (2016) credits this with the early, and definitive, decision to rule out joining the single currency, ‘...as soon as I did that, Europe went off the boil slightly.’ Ancram (2016) agrees that during this parliament ‘...the temperature had gone out of it. That was the progression’. Heppell (2015) suggests that the focus on European policy declined during this period as the pro-integration members of the parliamentary party, which amounted to only eight MPs following the 2001 election, had essentially given up trying to keep their colleagues open to new forms of integration with the EU. Many, like Major and Heseltine, had retired, and those remaining, like Clarke, focused their attention on other policy areas. The election of a strong Eurosceptic leader in Duncan Smith and the decision on the single currency marked the end of the ‘Eurosceptics v Europhiles’ debates of the Major and Hague years, with the division reforming later between soft Eurosceptics v hard Eurosceptics (Heppell, 2015). This allowed Duncan Smith the domestic political space

to focus on non-European policy issues. When Howard became leader in November 2003 this domestic political context on the European issue continued, allowing Howard to maintain a low profile on the issue in the run up to the 2005 general election (Hayton, 2012).

Howard (2016) agrees with Duncan Smith (2016) that the European issue had diminished in salience for the Conservative Party during this parliament:

...it wasn't a big issue in domestic politics... I had inherited a party that had been wracked with dissent for well over a decade, particularly on this kind of issue, but on other issues as well. I was fortunate, I think, as by the time I took over I was elected unopposed and, secondly, I think people were a bit tired of all the wrangling that had gone on and that made it easier for me to impose discipline on the party which was one of my key priorities, which I think I succeeded in doing. So that for the 18 months between the time I took over and the general election of 2005 we were a united party and there was very little dissent. Obviously after the election and in the 6 months between the election and my stepping down we were in a leadership contest and things were...not difficult, but different. But for the 18 months between my election and the leadership election we were a united, disciplined party, I think I can fairly claim.

This is understandable when considering the part played by European policy within domestic politics during this parliament. The only major European policy development in domestic politics during the 2001-2005 parliament, aside from the Labour government's announcement on the single currency, was the 'Convention on the Future of Europe' and the start of the negotiations over the EU Constitutional Treaty in October 2003. As the survey data from the Ipsos Mori Issue Index suggests, these two events did not lead to significant increases in the salience of Europe amongst the public. The Conservative response, under both Duncan Smith and Howard, showed path dependency with the position taken by Hague to the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties. This continuity with the previous leaderships position was therefore also unlikely to raise the salience of European policy within the party itself, as it was entirely in line with the previous policy and party opinion.

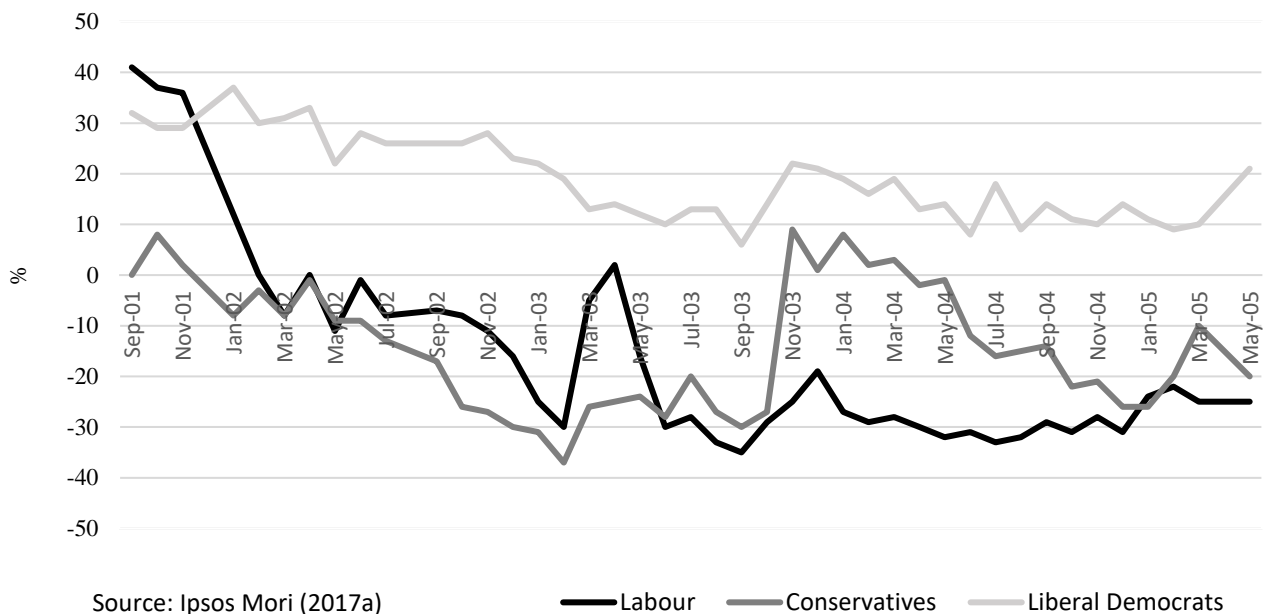
MacGregor (2016) sums up the attitude the Conservative Party took to European policy development during this period:

There wasn't much to change. You change your policy for two reasons. One because other things happen - external events - the introduction of the Euro for example - you need to have a policy on that if it comes in. Or treaties. So, you tend to change your mind on things like that when external events drive you to make a decision but there was nothing of that nature. And because it wasn't very important. It was almost like there was a ban on talking about it. We are

going to talk relentlessly about issues that feature at the top of the political agenda rather than ones that were at the bottom on the agenda. If something came up and someone asked us about it, we are going to do something about it, but otherwise we will be entirely reactive about how we deal with these things. So, all are pro-active actions, when we send the leader to do speeches, that is going to be about other stuff. There wasn't a deliberate plan to downplay it. It didn't need to be deliberately downplayed because it wasn't very important. That is the weird thing about the previous experience under William that he hyped up something that wasn't important.

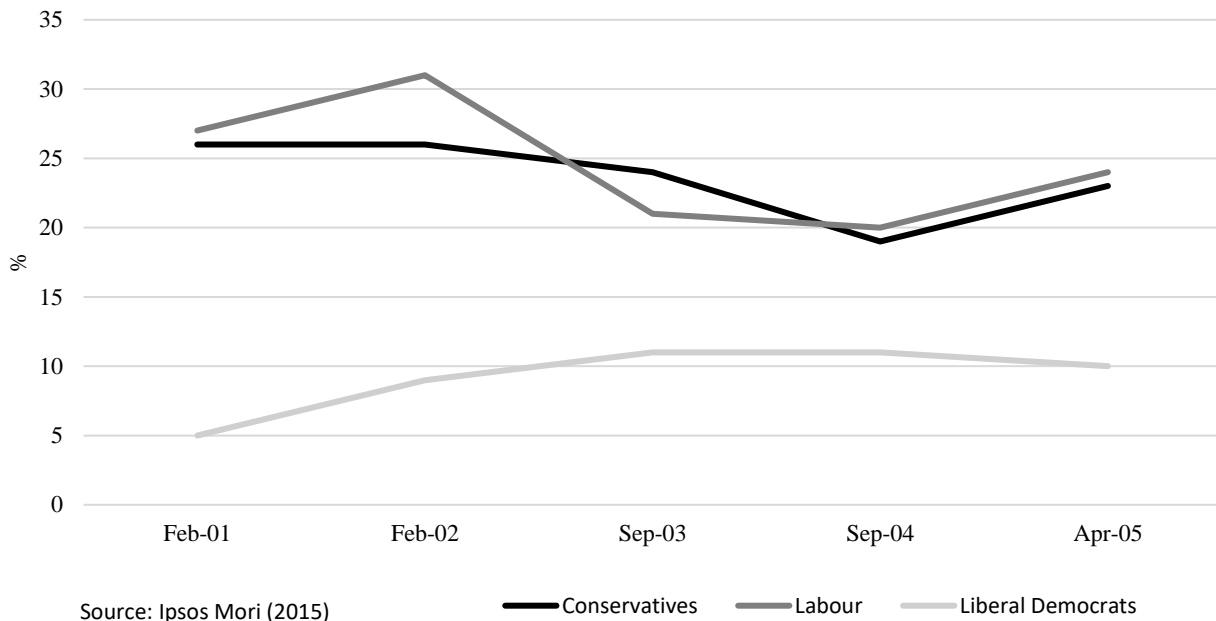
On both leadership ratings and voting intention, according to Ipsos Mori survey data shown in Figures 6.3 and 6.4, the Conservative leaders and party during this parliament were more competitive with Blair and the Labour Party, than under Hague who consistently lagged well behind both. Of course, this data hides many of the internal party management issues and policy conflicts the party also experienced, but it is perhaps also an indication why both the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships did not retreat to the comfort zone of trying to raise the salience of European integration by introducing new Eurosceptic policy positions.

Figure 6.3: UK Party Leader Satisfaction Ratings, 2001-2005



In the previous chapter, there was clear evidence from elite interviews and other sources that many in the Conservative leadership team believed that during the 1997-2001 parliament, and especially following the 1999 European election victory, European policy was an electoral winner for the Conservative Party as the public trusted them more than the Labour Party on this issue. As Figure 6.4 shows, this was not the case during the 2001-2005 parliament, with

Figure 6.4: 'Best Party on Key Issues': Europe, 2001-2005



the Labour Party often more trusted than the Conservative Party on European policy. This is perhaps another reason why the Conservative leaderships were not incentivised to focus on European policy during the 2001-2005 parliament, as they were starting to lose their traditional competitive edge on the Labour Party over this issue.

6.6 International Political Context

The international political issue which dominated headlines during the 2001-2005 parliament was not the future of the EU, but the threat from global terrorism. The response to the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the global response to Al Qaeda, and the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, were the focus of heated debates on the direction of British foreign policy. The relationship between the UK and the EU was relegated to a second order consideration. This was despite the 'Convention on the Future of Europe' and the negotiations on the EU Constitutional Treaty which followed it. However, the UK political and media establishments focus was on world affairs and terrorism. For other EU member states, such as Germany and France, their participation was much more limited, with more

focus on the future development of the EU. Overall, the result of this international context for the Conservative Party was to direct most of the leadership's energy and time on these immediate foreign policy concerns, rather than Europe.

Michael Ancram (2016), Shadow Foreign Secretary during the 2001-2005 parliament, believes the relative policy continuity and low priority given to European policy during this period by both the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships is partly explained by the impact the response to 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had on the Conservative foreign policy agenda:

My feeling as party chairman at the time was that the party's opening stance was much more Eurosceptic than it was afterwards. But I think that is because these other things, the war in Afghanistan and Iraq were taking up peoples', if you like, international consciousness... As I mentioned before, my two annual outings on Europe were the two post-Council of Ministers debates. I don't think my speeches changed all that much over the four years. There was a consistency. They were not the things of the moment though. The things of the moment were 'shock and awe'. Afghanistan, eventually towards the end of my time Helmand, which I was against. The party were also much more interested in that than they were on Europe at that time.

The Conservative Party leadership had given their support to the Labour government's response to 9/11 and to direct British military involvement in the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The Conservative Party were strongly connected with these areas of policy, which helps to partly explain the lower priority, and the stability of policy, given to European affairs in this parliament. The foreign policy team were focused away from the EU and the leadership wanted to talk about it as little as possible. The international political context of the 2001-2005 parliament, therefore, is an additional structural factor which helps to explain the relative stability of European policy during this period.

6.7 Individual Actors

6.7.1 The Leaders – Duncan Smith and Howard

As with the previous chapter, in which it was argued that the Eurosceptic conviction and individual agency of Hague was central to European policy change during the 1997-2001 parliament, the same applies with the leadership factor in the 2001-2005 parliament. The individual agency of the leaders was crucial in not only the change that did occur, but also resisting further change in a harder Eurosceptic direction, which Duncan Smith and Howard

at the time did not believe was necessary or appropriate. Both leaders were considered more Eurosceptic by their parliamentary colleagues than Hague, which considering the control Conservative Party leaders have over policy-making, partly explains why European policy moved gradually in a harder Eurosceptic direction. Moving European policy to a more moderate position would have been against the ideological convictions of both Duncan Smith and Howard, and considering their reputations for vigorously opposing European integration, would have looked inauthentic to both the rest of the party and the general public.

Duncan Smith was the key figure in establishing the 'harder but quieter' position on European policy during this parliament (Bale, 2016), specifically on making the key decision to rule out, indefinitely, a Conservative government ever joining the single currency. This decision was made individually by Duncan Smith (2016) as he believed the party could not move on without it being made. As he responded when asked directly if this was an individual decision on his part: 'Yes. My view was that you could never settle this until it was clear.'

Despite a revival during the early days of the Hague leadership the Conservative Policy Forum, which ostensibly had a role to play in party policy development, was by this point inactive and not considered an internal institution that had to be formally consulted on major policy changes such as this. There is no evidence to suggest they played a meaningful role in European policy development at this time.

It is also clear that the decision to oppose the proposed introduction of the EAW by EU members in late 2001, following the September 11th terrorist attacks on New York, was the result of a change of mind by the party leader. The Conservative Party had initially welcomed the idea of the EAW (Jones, 2001), on the grounds that sacrifices needed to be made in order to enhance European security, but later opposed the measure in December 2001 as an unnecessary centralisation of power in EU institutions. A key figure in this change of view was Duncan Smith, who explains his thinking as follows:

I do remember that I was unhappy and uneasy about agreeing to British citizens being allowed to be taken somewhere else. Giving the power to the EU. That I didn't agree with.

Evans-Pritchard (2001) notes that this change of policy followed a meeting between Duncan Smith and the Conservative Party MEP group in the European Parliament. The suggestion

here is that Conservative MEPs opposed to the EAW could also have played an influential role in this policy change, though there is no additional evidence to suggest they played a key role, or that Duncan Smith disagreed with their position at the meeting in Brussels.

Duncan Smith also played a key role in changing European policy from not simply opposing further political integration, or vaguely suggesting that the EU institutions should have less power, but to proposing specific EU policy competences in which a future Conservative government would seek to repatriate to the UK parliament. Duncan Smith (2003) did this in his only major speech on European policy during his time as leader of the opposition, in Prague on July 10th, 2003. A future Conservative government would seek to repatriate powers over agriculture, fishing, and foreign aid from the EU back to the UK (Duncan Smith, 2003). Duncan Smith (2016) explains why he took European policy in this more specific direction, away from the general Eurosceptic messaging of the Hague years:

We took it further on from there and said we have a view, an agenda, which was shared by quite a lot of countries, including East European countries which was why I made that speech in Prague. It was a stronger position than William's. I thought we had to develop our position. I think we had got into a mess on things like 'flexible Europe' which didn't work for me. I thought we needed to be much clearer about what we were looking for, that if we wanted a different relationship we needed to define what that meant. That was what that speech was about.

Duncan Smith can therefore be credited with edging Conservative European policy at this point away from the abstract constitutional reforms of the Hague leadership (see the 'flexibility clause' or 'reserved powers act') to specific ideas about what policy areas should, and what should not, be reserved for the EU institutions. The Conservative Party would not abandon policies on constitutional reform of the EU, but they would not be the main pillars of their European policy platform.

When Howard replaced Duncan Smith as leader in November 2003, he maintained the policy to repatriate EU competences over agriculture, fishing, and foreign aid. These were all included in the 2005 Conservative election manifesto, with the commitment on EU agriculture policy downgraded from repatriation to 'further and deeper reform' (Conservative Party, 2005:26). In October 2004, however, Howard (2004b) extended this by also including social and employment policy, the so called 'EU Social Chapter', which was also included in the 2005 manifesto. While this policy change can partly be explained by the success of UKIP

in the 2004 European elections and Hartlepool by-election, the role of Howard himself as a political actor also contributes to the explanation. As Employment Secretary during the Maastricht Treaty negotiations in December 1991, Howard had been a strong opponent of the EU Social Chapter and had threatened resignation if Major did not achieve a full opt-out for the UK. There is also evidence that ‘repatriation of powers’ was a central part of Howard’s own Eurosceptic philosophy on UK-EU relations. In *The Future of Europe*, a 1997 pamphlet produced by the Centre for Policy Studies and written by Howard (1997b), he makes clear that the future relationship between the UK and the EU must work on the basis that powers can move back to the member states when those individual members believe it would be in their national interest. The idea that powers can only move in the traditional direction, from member states to the EU, was ‘a perception that must be reversed if Europe is to maintain public confidence’ (Howard, 1997b). Howard, therefore, had a strong personal commitment to the repatriation of powers from the EU, in addition to long-term opposition to the ‘EU Social Chapter’. It was, of course, partly a continuation of Duncan Smith’s European policy agenda. Nonetheless, Howard’s own personal commitment and historical policy positions were also an important factor in this policy change.

A further change in the European policy agenda of the Conservative Party following the change of leadership between Duncan Smith and Howard was more philosophical. In his only major speech on European policy, Duncan Smith (2003) set out the philosophy that would establish his European policy as one that would aim for a ‘New Europe of sovereign democracies’. Although only loosely defined in the speech, it would include an EU which was less centralised, less interventionist, and more focused on economic enterprise, and global poverty reduction. Duncan Smith (2003) was specific that this would mean an EU which was ‘intergovernmental – not supranational’, an ‘alliance of sovereign nations’. This was an agenda that envisioned a radically changed purpose and structure to the EU, which was then, and is now, an international organisation with a mix of intergovernmental and supranational institutions.

In his main speech on European policy during his leadership, Howard (2004) moved away from this philosophy set out by Duncan Smith in the Prague speech. His main proposal was, as he described it, for an EU based on a ‘live and let live’ philosophy, or ‘variable geometry’, in which individual member states or groups of member states could choose the level of integration they believed was appropriate, rather than it be imposed on them by other member states or the EU. This was similar in nature to the ‘flexibility clause’ proposed under Hague,

and originally proposed by Major in 1994. This was less radical than the Duncan Smith agenda, as it was not calling for the end to supranationalism in the EU, but was instead calling for member states to have more choice and flexibility about which elements of integration they participated in.

When asked about the differences between how Duncan Smith's and Howard's approaches, Ancram (2016) supports the suggestion that although there was much continuity, it is not accurate to state there was no change in policy or differences in philosophy between the two leaders:

I suppose in a rather strange way Howard's was a little more flexible than IDS... we were trying to find an accommodation. But more broadly than that the structure of our policy changed a bit. I was very much part of the movement to a return to the Europe of nations. Which I had always been for many, many years. I think IDS would have liked to have gone further than that. He didn't even like there being even that much of a link. Howard had the variable geometry solution. Which was quite difficult to explain but it was basically a multi-speed, multi-shaped Europe. That was where in my time we ended up. That was our position. Not a comfortable position but one in which the party was willing to accept... I made a major speech in Germany where I set out what I regarded as the Conservative Party's position which was very much towards the Europe of Nations direction. Which was going back a long way. Howard's variable geometry was not going back as far as that. So that's what I mean when I say...I think Howard was more, I wouldn't say pro-European, but he was less radical than IDS and to that extent me.

Both Duncan Smith and Howard, as key individual actors within the Conservative Party, were therefore central to changes in the party's European policy during the 2001-2005 parliament. Their own individual commitments and beliefs on the future direction of UK-EU relations, in combination with their position as party leader, were directly responsible for the overall philosophy and many of the key policy positions, if not all of the more minor changes. These subtler changes, as it will be explained below, were the responsibility of the Shadow Foreign Secretary and his foreign affairs team.

6.7.2 Conservative MEPs and the EPP-ED

The question of which grouping Conservative MEPs were members of in the European Parliament developed gradually into a controversial issue for the Conservative Party during the 1992-1997 parliament. As the Conservative Party became more Eurosceptic during this period, greater attention was paid to the ideological stance of the European Peoples' Party towards European integration, the main centre-right political grouping in the European

Parliament. Conservative MEPs had been aligned to the EPP since April 1992 (Lynch and Whitaker, 2008). While ideologically similar to the Conservative Party in many policy areas, the EPP also supported further European integration for EU member states, a position the Conservative Party in Westminster and the country became strongly opposed to between 1992 and 2001. Pressure began to develop for Conservative MEPs to leave the EPP, but this was resisted by Conservative MEPs who were more pro-integration than most MPs or party members (Lynch and Whitaker, 2008). As a compromise, Hague renegotiated the Conservative Party position in the EPP, what Lynch and Whitaker (2008:33) describes as a 'revised relationship', with the EPP changing its name to the 'European Peoples' Party-European Democrats'. Conservative MEPs would now be aligned to the 'European Democrats' section of the grouping, with more rights to operate separately from the rest of the group.

This change was stimulated by the election in 1999 of more Eurosceptic Conservative MEPs, such as Daniel Hannan, Geoffrey van Orden, Martin Callanan, and Roger Helmer. Van Orden (2016) describes the new MEPs as having 'a very different approach to the EU compared with some of our predecessors.'. This result was encouraged by a change to the selection procedure for MEP candidates, instigated by Hague after 1997, that effectively ensured more Eurosceptic MEPs would be elected in 1999. Edward Macmillan-Scott (2016), Conservative MEP leader 1997-2001, believes that Daniel Hannan was the main individual actor at the time agitating for Conservative MEPs to leave the EPP grouping in the European Parliament.

Duncan Smith was the first party leader to actively consider leaving the EPP-ED for a new Eurosceptic group. However, Duncan Smith had initially followed the Hague position on EPP-ED membership of remaining aligned to the group but seeking further autonomy. This was the preference of Ancram and MEP leader Jonathan Evans (Lynch and Whitaker, 2008). Duncan Smith then changed his policy back to leaving the EPP-ED when his preferred new membership terms were rejected by EPP-ED group leader Hans-Gert Poettering (Lynch and Whitaker, 2008). Howard then changed policy once again and reverted back to a policy of renegotiating the Conservative MEPs membership terms within the EPP-ED, which was agreed ahead of the 2004 European elections. Howard appears to have had a clearer view from the beginning of his leadership, that leaving the EPP would cause more problems than it would solve. Howard (2016) explained to me why he decided against forming a new grouping:

Because I thought that there was a real difficulty over who we would sit with in the European Parliament and I thought it would be used against us in domestic politics. I could see Blair every other week at PMQ's saying this is the party that sits with X, Y, and Z in the European Parliament and that was something I was determined to head off if I possibly could. To be honest that was my main motivation.

During his leadership Duncan Smith was trapped between an ideological desire to distance the Conservative Party from a political affiliation in Brussels that he, and many others at all levels of the party, considered to be far too pro-integration, but also a pragmatic consideration that establishing a new grouping could bring with it additional problems. Michael Spicer (2012), 1992 Committee Chair, records in his diary during the period the pressure Eurosceptic MEPs put on both Duncan Smith and Howard to leave the EPP-ED, with Daniel Hannan threatening to resign from the party on two occasions between 2001 and 2002 unless this was achieved (see 470 and 479).

Ancram (2016) appears to have played an important role in convincing Duncan Smith that forming a new Eurosceptic grouping was not in the best interests of the party:

At the very start IDS was keen to do, funnily enough, what Cameron did 8 years later, which was to walk away from the EPP and form another grouping. I think I stopped that because I went around mostly Eastern parts of Europe, the new members, to see what sort of partners we might find in order to get a grouping together. They were a pretty strange bunch. I came back and said I don't think it would be very good for the perception of the party to be associated with that group of people who were on the extremes and some distinctively eccentric. So, we had one or two quite hard conversations with Hans-Gert Poettering and the rest of the EPP. In the end, I was asked if I could reform our position acceptably to them within the EPP. Which is what under Howard I succeeded in doing.

Ancram (2016) is also insistent that Duncan Smith had come around to his argument that for political and pragmatic reasons it would be better to stay within the EPP-ED but push for further reform, and suggests that if Duncan Smith had remained leader beyond 2003 he would have signed the renegotiated agreement like Howard:

IDS had basically accepted my advice that the alternative to the EPP was unacceptable. I did two tours, I think, through Estonia, Slovakia, Hungary, the rest of the Baltic countries, and Denmark because that was another country with anti-European parties. I came away with the feeling that this just wasn't going to work for us. I don't think that it has worked particularly well, I have to say, since Cameron took the same choice. I think that IDS would have been happy to take a compromise.

This evidence suggests that Ancram played an important role as an individual political actor, across both the Duncan Smith and Howard leaderships, in persuading both party leaders that alternatives to the Conservative Party maintaining their alliance with the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament would be politically damaging to the party in the long-term.

Although the party leaders themselves were also central to the policy ultimately adopted, it is also clear that a determined policy entrepreneur, in the form of Conservative MEP Daniel Hannan, was also key. He was responsible for a well-organised campaign in multiple institutional arenas within the Conservative Party, to change party policy on the EPP-ED alliance and leave to form a new Eurosceptic group. Hannan and his fellow campaigners were unsuccessful during the 2001-2005 parliament but would return to the campaign during the 2005 leadership election, which is discussed in the following chapter.

6.7.2 The Shadow Foreign Secretary – Michael Ancram

In addition to the high profile European policy changes during the 2001-2005 parliament, such as those on the single currency and EPP-ED membership, there were also a number of more low-profile policies connected to the EU and European integration that were also announced during this parliament. These policies were often technical in nature, normally associated with changes to the institutional and policy-making procedures of the EU, which is perhaps why they received little media attention. They broadly fall into three themes; EU scrutiny and accountability; the role of national parliaments in EU decision-making process; and protections for UK national sovereignty, the details to which are set out in Chapter 4. As Chapter 4 illustrates, these three themes showed some continuity between the Hague, Duncan Smith, and Howard leaderships. However, the detail and content of the policies did change between these time periods, as different actors developed different mechanisms to implement the same policy objectives.

From elite interviews, it is clear that the shadow Foreign Secretary, Michael Ancram, in addition to his team of shadow ministers, had considerable autonomy to develop these more low-profile elements of European policy, as long as they did not stray from the leader's Eurosceptic philosophy. Ancram (2016) explained that while more technical policies were important, they did not change the central ideas of party policy, which was set by the leader:

Well Howard set them out in the first European speech that he made in which he set out five principles, one of which was accountability. Which then became part of the policy as we deployed it. I can't remember my exact speeches, but I seem to remember all those elements were involved in them. They weren't window dressing, but they were kind of the decorations on the tree. The tree was very much the same...If we talked about accountability we began to deploy what we meant by accountability and how we saw it being operated. It may sound funny, but they were the decorations on the tree, they weren't the tree itself. The tree itself was fundamental reform. For all the decorations, they were important, but they weren't the main drift of policy.

Richard Spring (2016), Opposition Spokesman for Foreign Affairs 2000-2004, explains further how this hierarchical policy making process worked:

The general lines were set, and we had agreement on those. There was no difficulty about that. The issues, proposals coming out on the EU, perhaps accepted by the government. This was by Ancram and Maude, with IDS and Hague. Then later I would discuss with either one of those two in more detail how we would handle this, what specifically we would ask for and what amendments we would put down. Then there would be further discussions. We had policy experts, lawyers etc, who would help us formulate the responses. So, it was a kind of macro down to a micro level. I was not involved in the ultimate macro conversations. Obviously, they did happen, say before Michael or Francis went into talk to the leader, we would sometimes have chats about what we were seeking to do. But that was it, I was not party to those conversations. I think that is the way it always works.

These low-profile technical policies, essentially how to operationalise the key European policy themes, were the responsibility of the Shadow Foreign secretary and his team of shadow ministers and advisors, and changes to these policies during the 2001-2005 parliament can be attributed to them as the main causal factor. What input the leader had in the detailed discussions surrounding these technical policies would appear to be limited, although they could veto suggestions as party leader.

6.8 Conclusion

In the previous chapter, utilising the new institutionalist approach theoretical mechanisms and tools set out in Chapter 3, this thesis argued that the 1997 general election was a critical juncture for the Conservative Party and European policy. It established a path dependent Eurosceptic trajectory for Europe, in which the Conservative Party policy platform was moving incrementally in a more Eurosceptic direction. In this chapter, also utilising the new

institutionalist concepts, it has been shown that this path dependency continued and was relatively stable, though there were important policy changes. As both elite interviews and analysis of secondary survey data indicates, European policy was a low policy priority both within the internal institutions of the Conservative Party and external structural environment. The 2001 election and the emphasis on Europe had convinced many within the party that though policy would remain on a Eurosceptic path, it was not a high priority area for policy development. The international political environment contributed to this, with foreign policy dominated by the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Incrementally, Eurosceptic attitudes in the institutions of the party and in the external political environment continued to increase, but this contributed to the stability of the Eurosceptic path to European policy during this period rather than influencing policy change.

The decision to rule out membership of the single currency was the result of a combination of factors. The historical legacy of the 1997-2001 parliament, and the perception that the 'incoherent' position on the single currency had contributed to disunity within the party, contributed to Duncan Smith's decision on the single currency. The failure of the position to have any impact on the electorate at the 2001 election was also a factor. The domestic political context for Duncan Smith was also different than to Hague at the start of his leadership. Duncan Smith, with a history of Eurosceptic activism, had secured the leadership via ballots of parliamentary colleagues and party members. This gave him the authority necessary to change policy to a more straightforwardly Eurosceptic position.

Ultimately, however, it was the individual agency and Eurosceptic attitude of Duncan Smith himself that was the key factor in the single currency decision being made. With the low saliency of Europe both in the internal institutions of the party and the domestic/external environment, the role of the individual leaders was key to policy change in this period. As this chapter has set out, the policy change on the EAW, the renegotiation of EPP membership, the inclusion of specific EU policy areas to repatriate, and the annual limit on immigration, were all ultimately the result of individual judgements by Duncan Smith, Howard, and Ancram. On the detailed proposals for EU institutional reform, this chapter has established through elite interviews that these were the prerogative of Ancram and his shadow foreign affairs team.

Chapter 7: Cameron in Opposition – Policy Change and Europe: 2005-2010

This chapter seeks to explain the development of European policy within the Conservative Party during the 2005-2010 parliament, in which, from December 6th 2005 to May 11th 2010, David Cameron was leader of the opposition. It takes as its starting point the May 2005 general election and concludes just before the May 2010 general election. Overall, and in keeping with the policy of each leadership period explored in the previous chapters, the Conservative Party maintained the Soft Eurosceptic policy platform that had been established since 1997.

The analysis of changes in Conservative European policy in this chapter will endeavour to explain Cameron's commitment to remove Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED group; the subsequent decision to delay leaving the EPP-ED until after the 2009 European Parliament elections; the change in position on the Common Fisheries Policy, from unilateral withdrawal to 'reform from within'; the reversal of the decision to commit a future Conservative government to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty; and the commitments in November 2009 speech to introduce a 'referendum lock' and a 'UK sovereignty bill' after the 2010 election, in addition to fully opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the return EU powers of crime and justice policy to 'pre-Lisbon levels'.

This chapter will begin by reflecting on two important political events that immediately preceded the start of Cameron's period as opposition leader, the 2005 general election and the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election, considering what influence they had on European policy change in this parliament.

7.1 Historical Legacies

7.1.1 The 2005 General Election

In contrast to the 2001 general election, in which the issue was a prominent feature of the campaign (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002), European policy 'barely registered' as a topic during the 2005 general election (Geddes, 2005:280). Instead, the election focused on crime, education, health, immigration, and the economy (Green and Hobolt, 2010). The Conservative Party and Labour were content for Europe to be a non-issue during the

campaign, with Howard preferring to concentrate on immigration policy. As elite interviews suggested in the previous chapter, Howard sought to avoid opening up the debate on Europe within the Conservative Party and during the election campaign. This strategy was effective in holding on to support in the seats the party already held, but was much less effective in Labour held constituencies, where the Conservative share of the vote declined by 0.21% (Norris and Wlezien, 2005). Overall, it was another poor electoral performance, with the Conservative share of the vote increasing by only 0.7% compared with 2001, despite a net gain of 33 seats in total.

The 2005 general election campaign itself, unlike those of 1997 and 2001, therefore had little direct impact on the future content of European policy in the parliament which followed, as it did not feature as a major issue. Indirectly, however, it did lead to the eventual resignation of Howard and subsequent election of Cameron, who did make changes to the European policy platform. Howard was unlikely to have made these himself, such as the decision to leave the EPP-ED. The 2005 election was, nonetheless, directly important in convincing those remaining individuals, in the parliamentary party at least, who had not been convinced by the result of the 2001 election, that focusing heavily on topics such as Europe, immigration, tax cuts, or crime would not return the party to government anytime soon. Those who had previously emphasised the need for the leadership to focus more energy in these areas now accepted that for the party image to be detoxified, policies needed to be developed which had more widespread electoral appeal. As a result, there was less pressure for the leadership to focus on Europe.

7.1.2 The 2005 Leadership Election

The Conservative Party leadership contest of 2005, much like the general election campaign, was not dominated by the European question in the same way the 1997 and 2001 contests had been, both of which had elected Eurosceptic candidates in Hague and Duncan-Smith. Cameron made a number of promises to both the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary party during this election process that led to party policy change on Europe. In a similar way to which Hague's commitment to a 'two parliaments' policy which had emerged during the 1997 leadership contest, Cameron would promise to remove Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED grouping in the European Parliament. The 2005 leadership contest is therefore an important factor to consider when analysing the development of European policy during this parliament.

Four candidates entered the 2005 leadership contest; Clarke, Fox, Davis, and Cameron. In terms of their positions on Europe, Clarke once again entered the leadership contest, as he had done in 1997 and 2001, representing the pro-European Conservative Party on the centre-left of the party. Davis and Fox both represented the Eurosceptic Thatcherite right of the party, with Fox also known for his social conservative views (Heppell, 2007). Cameron, the least known candidate, was socially liberal and moderately Eurosceptic, representing a triangulated position between Davis/Fox and Clarke. As Heppell (2007:179) accurately states, ‘by the time of the 2005 leadership election, the centrality of the European ideological divide had diminished considerably’. As a result of this, the question of Europe was of relative low salience during the contest in comparison with previous leadership elections. A quantitative study by Green and Hobolt (2010) on the issues most discussed during the campaign supports this assertion.

Despite this, Cameron made a number of policy commitments on Europe during the course of his successful campaign. On November 8th, in a speech to the Centre for Policy Studies, Cameron (2005) committed a Conservative government under his leadership to ‘the return of powers over employment and social regulation’ as the ‘strategic imperative of my European policy’. This demonstrated continuity with Howard, who had made the same commitment in October 2004. Cameron showed further continuity on European policy with previous leaderships in this period by renewing Conservative opposition to further EU treaties and by supporting calls for the EU to re-focus on reducing trade barriers and business regulation.

The major break with the European policy inherited from the Howard leadership came over the issue of the affiliation of Conservative MEPs in the European Parliament. Though trailed during the summer, a spokesperson for Cameron confirmed that if elected he would remove Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED and establish a new Eurosceptic grouping as soon as possible (Carlin and Isaby, 2005). Davis, Cameron’s main rival at this point, was not prepared to make a similar commitment. The pledge was perceived as an effort to persuade Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to support Cameron in the parliamentary ballot stage, rather than Davis or Fox. In the final ballot of MPs, Cameron secured the support of more Eurosceptic MPs (78) than either Davis (53) or Fox (50) (Heppell and Hill, 2009).

Table 7.1: MP Ballots: Conservative Party Leadership Election, 2005

	First Ballot	Percentage	Second Ballot	Percentage
David Davis	62	31.3	57	28.8
David Cameron	56	28.3	90	45.4
Liam Fox	42	21.2	51	25.8
Kenneth Clarke	38	19.2		

Sources: Lynch and Garnett, (2007); Heppell (2008)

Table 7.1 shows the results of both rounds of voting in the parliamentary section of the leadership election. The interesting question here is to what extent the competitive dynamics of the leadership election campaign, and the need for Cameron as the least well-known candidate to stand out from his rivals, was an important causal factor in this policy change. Clarke (2016:428), eliminated after the first ballot of the leadership contest, believes that the commitment was ‘totally unnecessary in terms of winning votes’ and that ‘his team could obviously not bring themselves to believe that he was on his way to victory without the hard-line Eurosceptics and he was persuaded to reach out to them.’ This implies, on one level, that Cameron was on course to get to the membership ballot and win, even at this stage. However, it also suggests that Cameron and his campaign team were not confident that they were on course for victory and needed to make this pledge to secure the support of Eurosceptic MPs and party members. Another Conservative MP (Private interview), in Parliament at this time, supports the view that the EPP pledge was not needed for Cameron to win:

When he was running for leader he promised some of the Eurosceptics that he would withdraw from the European Peoples Party in the European cohort. I don't think he had to make the commitment, but it was a commitment, for whatever reasons, that he made, perhaps to try and differentiate from other candidates, show his Eurosceptic credentials. Or possibly it was a demand from a small rump of the Conservative Party, the Bill Cash and the Bernard Jenkins who were demanding this, along with Daniel Hannan in Europe. I don't know but I suspect that was the case. He fell for it. I think that he would have won anyway.

This interpretation is reflective of the perspective of many Conservative MPs at the time. It is, of course, impossible to know for sure that Cameron would have won without the EPP pledge, but it is certainly plausible that he could have. However, this being the said, there is also evidence to suggest this was not the view of Cameron, his advisors, and many other members of the parliamentary party.

Cameron and his advisors were confident they could win the most votes in the final MPs ballot if they were up against Davis and Clarke, but were concerned that he was competing

for the support of the same group of, predominately Eurosceptic MPs, as Fox (those who would not vote for Davis or Clarke) and was in danger of being eliminated in the first ballot as a result (Elliot and Hanning, 2012). Announcing his candidature in the last week of September, Fox pledged to leave the EPP if he were leader. Cameron and his team saw “the danger to his right flank, decided to break his ‘no promises’ rule and matched this sop to the Eurosceptic right” (Elliot and Hanning, 2012:291). This was effective in persuading many Eurosceptic MPs to support Cameron rather than Fox in the first ballot (Denham and O’Hara, 2007; Elliot and Hanning, 2012). Many of the 56 MPs who had not declared their support for a candidate prior to the first ballot on the day voted for Cameron, his support rising from 27 ‘assumed supporters’ to 56 ‘real votes’ (Heppell, 2007:183).

In addition, a YouGov survey of Conservative Party members in early September 2005 indicated that if Davis and Cameron made the final ballot, the grassroots would elect Davis with 53% of the vote, to Cameron’s 36%. A repeated survey in early October 2005 showed that Cameron would now defeat Davis, 66% to 33%. This was remarkably close to the final result. In the last stage of the leadership election, the membership ballot, Cameron defeated Davis by 134,446 (67.7%) votes to 64,398 (32.3%). While it is not being claimed the EPP pledge was the only cause in the eventual success of the Cameron campaign, the modernize to win agenda and the sense Cameron was a ‘winner’ were obviously crucial factors as well, it nonetheless contributed to the turnaround witnessed.

Graham Brady MP, Shadow Minister for Europe September 2004 – May 2007, believes that the EPP policy commitment was the significant factor in Cameron’s victory during the 2005 leadership election:

It is important to note that the key to Cameron’s leadership election was the pledge to take the Conservative Party out of the EPP. He had used this as a vehicle to secure the support of a significant number of very Eurosceptic colleagues. One thinks of people like Bill Cash who were voting for Cameron in that leadership election.... if Cameron had asked me for advice on that point I personally would have advised him that I didn't think it was the most important thing to do. I always thought it was somewhat of a diversion from the substantive changes. But it was more about the politics. It was positioning which was intended to demonstrate unshakeable Eurosceptic credentials.

Malcolm Rifkind, Conservative MP 1974-1997 and 2005-2015, who announced that he would campaign for the party leadership in 2005 but withdrew before the official process began, also believes that this policy change was motivated by competition between Cameron and the other Eurosceptic candidates:

I think he recognised that, first, he had to get to the final two names that would be put to the party membership and his opponent at that time was Davis who had a strong Eurosceptic background. I think Cameron wanted to neutralise that potential advantage Davis might have had by demonstrating his own Eurosceptic credentials. I think that he does have Eurosceptic credentials, but they are not nearly as ideological.

The evidence suggests that, while it may not have been the only contributory factor in Cameron making the EPP withdrawal commitment during the leadership campaign, competition between Cameron and the other candidates (Davis and Fox), viewed as having stronger Eurosceptic backgrounds, was the most significant factor in influencing this policy change. It was a commitment neither Hague, Duncan Smith, or Howard had previously made, despite Eurosceptic voices in the party campaigning for it during all three previous leaderships. It also mirrors the decision by Hague during the 1997 leadership campaign to commit to change party policy on the single currency to outflank his Eurosceptic rivals, suggesting competitive leadership elections are an important factor in policy change on Europe during this period.

7.2 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party

7.2.1 Parliamentary Party, 2005-2010

Following the 2005 general election the Eurosceptic component of the Conservative parliamentary party continued to increase proportionally, if only slightly, with the overall increase in the number of new MPs elected (Heppell and Hill, 2009). After the 2005 election 91.4% of Conservative MPs were identified, or self-identified, as Eurosceptics. This is a 1.6% increase on the previous 2001-2005 parliament (89.8%). However, it can be argued that by this point the Eurosceptic-Europhile distinction had become obsolete and that the Soft Eurosceptic-Hard Eurosceptic distinction had emerged as a more accurate way of identifying the ideological division over Europe in the parliamentary party. From the 181 Conservative MPs identified as Eurosceptic by Heppell and Hill (2009) it can be estimated that 89% took a Soft Eurosceptic ideological position and 11% a Hard Eurosceptic ideological position.

The proportion of pro-European integration MPs had decreased by 1.3%, down from 4.5% in the 2001-2005 parliament to 3.5% after the 2005 election. The number of MPs deemed agnostic on the subject was broadly similar, 5% after the 2005 election, in comparison with 5.4% in the previous parliament (Heppell and Hill, 2009).

As in the previous general elections since 1997, the trend of a proportionally more Eurosceptic, and less pro-European integration, parliamentary party continued. As stated in previous chapters, it is not possible, or sensible, to draw any direct causal link to any specific policy change and attribute this to the general rise and decline of Euroscepticism and pro-Europeanism in the party. This was a necessary institutional condition, within the different levels of the Conservative Party, for policy in general to change in a Eurosceptic direction, but they did not directly cause the individuals with decision-making powers to make these choices. These are the result of other historical, structural, institutional, and ideational factors, in addition to acts of individual agency, that are discussed in this and the previous chapters.

The significance of the parliamentary party after the 2005 general election was not the general rise in Euroscepticism itself, but the number of Conservative MPs elected who had strong Eurosceptic views that approached the hard-Eurosceptic end of the European ideological spectrum. These newly elected MPs were not only strongly Eurosceptic in their views but also active on the promoting these views. They included Douglas Carswell, Phillip Hollobone, David Davies, Brian Binley, Stewart Jackson, Anne Main, Phillip Davies, Peter Bone, and Mark Pritchard.

These new MPs signified a new generation of Eurosceptic campaigners within the Conservative Party, who would enter parliament following the 2005 and 2010 elections, associated but distinctive from the veteran Eurosceptics of the 1990's. Significantly, it was Phillip Davies who founded the 'Better Off Out' group in 2006, a cross-party organisation that advocated the UK leaving the EU. Fellow MPs from the 2005 intake that supported the launch of the group in Parliament included Douglas Carswell, David Davies, and Phillip Hollobone (ConservativeHome, 2006a). Davies (2016) explained when interviewed that:

Lots of people would say 'we need to get powers back' but no one would actually say that we need to leave the EU. I made a speech at the Freedom Association saying that we should leave and then in April 2006 I started Better Off Out and we had a parliamentary launch. I expected that there would only be me at this parliamentary launch, as literally no one else had said that we should leave. Anyway, as it turned out 10 MPs turned up. I can't even remember who they all were. Eric Forth was there. Chris Chope, Nicholas and Anne Winterton, Phillip Hollobone, Douglas Carswell. I can't remember who else was there. Much to my astonishment. But that was great, because I thought that I was a lone wolf. So that is where we really got a bit of momentum in parliament for it.

This marked the point when Conservative MPs, who either supported the UK leaving the EU, wanted an in/out referendum, or powers repatriated from EU, began to become more organized and determined to see party policy move in their ideological direction. In general, however, this was still at an embryonic stage in the 2005-2010 parliament and there was little desire from Eurosceptics to ‘rock the boat’ in significant numbers before an election many saw as winnable. For example, in November 2007, only six Conservative MPs supported a Liberal Democrat parliamentary motion expressing regret that the government had not introduced a bill to hold an in/out referendum on UK membership of the EU (Cowley and Stuart, 2010).

7.2.2 Shadow Cabinet, 2005-2010

Cameron formed his first Shadow Cabinet on December 8th, 2005. As the proportion of the parliamentary identifying, or being classified, as Eurosceptic rose to a new high of 91.4% following the 2005 general election, the Shadow Cabinet followed the same trend. Of the twenty-three people in Cameron’s first Shadow Cabinet (excluding those shadow ministers with the right to ‘attend’) 100% were ‘Eurosceptic’ on the European ideological divide (Heppell and Hill, 2009). This proportion remained the same after Shadow Cabinet reshuffles on July 2nd, 2007 and June 18th, 2008. The only non-Eurosceptic MPs to join the Shadow Cabinet during the 2005-2010 parliament were Clarke (‘Europhile’) and Young (‘Agnostic’) in Cameron’s last reshuffle before the 2010 general election on January 19th, 2009.

Cameron managed to surpass Duncan Smith and Howard in having no declared pro-European Shadow Cabinet member until Clarke joined in January 2009⁵. However greater scrutiny reveals that Cameron appointed a number of moderates who leaned towards the ‘Soft’ Eurosceptic end of the European ideological spectrum. Shadow Cabinet members such as Lansley, Spelman, Willets, Lidington, Hunt, Grieve, and Clark, all fitted into this category, and represented the majority moderate Eurosceptic position. Cameron did have Shadow Cabinet members that leaned towards the ‘Hard’ Eurosceptic position, such as Fox, Villiers, and Davis, but they were a minority. Also gone were the veteran Eurosceptics who had periods in the Shadow Cabinet between 2001-2005, such as Jenkin, Cash, Forth, Whittingdale, and Ancram. Therefore, while it is accurate that Cameron maintained a consistently Eurosceptic Shadow Cabinet during his period as opposition leader, the Shadow

⁵ Clarke was offered a Shadow Cabinet position at the beginning of the Cameron leadership, but declined.

Cabinet was dominated by moderate ‘soft’ Eurosceptics, with the veteran Eurosceptic campaigners of previous Shadow Cabinets largely absent.

7.2.3 Party Members, 2005-2010

There is more data available on the views of Conservative Party members towards Europe during the 2005-2010 parliament than during the 2001-2005 parliament. This includes a YouGov survey of party members conducted in June 2009 for Webb and Childs (2011), in addition to a series of surveys carried out by the blog and activist website ConservativeHome founded in March 2005 by the former Conservative Party staffer Tim Montgomerie.

Shortly after its foundation, ConservativeHome started regular surveys of party members. The surveys were accessible to all readers of the ConservativeHome website, but those completing the surveys were asked to identify whether they were a party member or non-member. The data subsequently published would be collated from those self-identifying as party members. As with internal party surveys of members reported in newspapers, though these surveys should be treated with caution, they can provide some information on the position of party members on European policy during specific periods, in the absence of surveys from established polling agencies.

An early example of this concerned party policy towards the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In April 2006 ConservativeHome (2006b) conducted a survey of their ‘Members Panel’ on statements that should be included in the next Conservative general election manifesto. In this survey 68% of Conservative party members agreed that the statement ‘the European Union should return responsibility for fishing and aid policies to member states’ should ‘definitely’ be in the next manifesto. As ConservativeHome (2006b) stated this showed a ‘big appetite within the Tory grassroots for practical measures to address the continuing loss of British sovereignty to the EU’. Both repatriation commitments had been party policy under Howard. However, in June 2006, a party spokesperson confirmed that it would no longer be policy to negotiate a withdrawal from the CFP and that if elected the party would attempt to reform the CFP instead. There was no similar clarification on EU foreign aid contributions, in the manifesto or separately. This is an example of the new leadership changing European policy, despite evidence that suggests that the party membership preferred a renewed commitment to the existing, more Eurosceptic policy. This is likely because although the issue was important to party members, it possessed low

salience to the general public, and was a commitment that would have been extremely difficult to deliver successfully.

In July 2006, the ConservativeHome (2006c) Members Panel survey asked party members whether they supported the aims of the recently launched Better Off Out campaign. Thirty percent of respondents replied that they ‘support this campaign and hope that Britain will eventually leave the EU’; 33% that they had ‘sympathy for this campaign’ but were concerned that political rivals would use the issue ‘to portray the Conservative Party as divided on Europe’, and therefore did not support the campaign; while 33% stated they opposed the campaign and wanted to see ‘Conservative Party fighting for British interests within the EU’. In total, therefore, 66% of self-declaring Conservative members in July 2006 either supported or had sympathy with the idea of the UK leaving the EU. This is in contrast with the survey of members conducted by the Conservative Party in 1996 discussed in Chapter 5, which showed that though resistant to further integration with the EU, most party members supported the UK remaining inside the EU (Deans, 1996). In the ConservativeHome members’ survey, only a third opted for the pro-EU membership option. It is important to note that while we are not comparing like-with-like, this does provide some evidence for the view that during the 10-year period between the two surveys, Conservative Party members’ attitude to Europe was moving in a ‘Hard’ Eurosceptic direction.

This development in the attitude of party members to Europe in the decade since 1996 is also reflected in the attitude of members to UKIP. In a further ConservativeHome (2006d) members survey in December 2006, 42% party members identified UKIP as the ‘other political party closest to the views of Conservative Party members’. Although there is no comparative data for earlier in this period, it is reasonable to surmise that this figure would have been smaller during the 1997-2001 parliament. This would likely have been due to the much lower profile of UKIP during this period, but also a difference in the ideological position on Europe at this time. As an internal survey of the party membership indicated in 1996, though most wanted powers returned and the veto protected, most also supported the UK staying members of the EU (Deans, 1996). It is, though, additional evidence to suggest the drift of a sizable proportion of the party membership to a more ‘hard’ Eurosceptic stance on Europe.

In addition to this, we also have data for the attitudes of party members to the Lisbon Treaty. The survey was conducted by ConservativeHome (2007) in October 2007, and asked members for their response to a number of questions on the Conservative's position on the Lisbon Treaty, as well as wider European policy. On the subject of the new EU treaty itself, 77% of party members agreed that the Lisbon Treaty 'amounts to a significant surrender of British powers and should be opposed'. With regard to EU powers, 67% of members supported the idea of repatriating powers, such as social and employment policy. On constitutional reform of the UK-EU relationship, 63% of respondents supported 'a referendum that mandated an incoming Conservative government to negotiate back to the idea of a free trade area'. Finally, only 33% agreed that if the Lisbon Treaty had already been ratified 'it will be very difficult to undo, and the Conservative Party would be unwise to promise to do so'.

These surveys show that Conservative policy on Europe, as it developed over this parliament, varied in the extent that it went with the grain of grassroots' opinion. Despite grassroots' opinion being against the scrapping of the Howard pledge to repatriate control of UK fishing, the Conservative leadership took a different policy option, opting to commit to reform the current EU system. Additionally, while grassroots' and leadership positions on opposition to the Lisbon Treaty were aligned, the evidence presented above suggests party members did not agree that a future Conservative government should drop the commitment to a referendum on Lisbon if it had already been ratified by all EU member states. In these cases, the key factor in this policy change is what the Conservative leadership perceived as being practically deliverable. They believed they had a good chance of forming the next government and did not want to be consumed by years of difficult negotiations with the EU. Further to this, it was also about managing the potential for conflict with the EU in the next parliament, in order to increase the chances of being successful in other areas. Cameron had already made a high-profile commitment to negotiate back control of social and employment policy, which would have been difficult to achieve on its own. Adding fishing, foreign aid, trade, or agriculture, would have amounted to a full renegotiation of UK membership terms, which would have gone against the leadership's desire to keep European policy low-key in a future government.

As well as the ConservativeHome surveys, we also have data from a YouGov survey of 1613 Conservative members, carried out for Webb and Childs (2011). This data was collected in June 2009, towards the end of the parliament, in comparison with the ConservativeHome

Table 7.2: Conservative Members Attitude to European Integration, June 2009

Group	Mean Score on 0-10 Scale	n=
Liberal conservative	7.7	411
Thatcherite	9.1	598
Traditional conservative	9.06	605
Total	8.73	1614

Source: Webb and Childs (2011)

surveys from the beginning and middle of the parliament. Table 7.2 shows the mean scores of party members responses when asked to place themselves on a 0-10 scale, 0 representing the position that the UK should integrate ‘fully’ with the EU, and 10 representing the position that the UK should ‘protect its independence from the EU’ (Webb and Childs, 2011). The responses are also separated into three clusters; Traditional Conservative Party (social Conservative Party, support well-established institutions, and moderate state economic intervention) Thatcherites (economically right-wing, suspicious of both social and economic state intervention), and Liberal Conservative Party (economically right-wing, but socially liberal) (Webb and Childs, 2011).

As the ConservativeHome survey also shows, the data in Table 7.2 confirms that Conservative members, as of June 2009, are ‘firmly on the Eurosceptic wing’ (Webb and Childs, 2011). The majority, nearly 75%, are classified as traditional Conservative Party or Thatcherites. As Table 7.2 indicates, the mean score for both groups were around 9 on the 0-10 scale, suggesting a ‘hard’ Eurosceptic attitude to Europe.

The smaller liberal conservative grouping, representing around 25% of the party members, produces a mean score of 7.7. While obviously still placing this group on the Eurosceptic half of the spectrum, it does suggest that a minority group with the party membership held more ‘soft’ Eurosceptic views at this point in time. Overall, a picture emerges from this survey of the Conservative membership leaning heavily towards a ‘hard’ Eurosceptic attitude towards the UK-EU relationship.

The picture overall is of grassroots’ opinion moving in a harder Eurosceptic direction, with greater proportions of party members supporting both a radical restructuring of the UK-EU relationship or leaving the EU entirely.

7.3 Rival Political Parties

7.3.1 UKIP, 2005-2010

If the 2001-2005 parliament was the period when political parties such as the Conservative Party had started to take notice of UKIP, the 2005-2010 parliament was the period when UKIP began to emerge as a serious political rival for the patronage of Conservative activists and voters. UKIP recovered quickly from their disappointing 2005 election result, where they achieved only 2.2% of the vote, stimulated by three main factors. The first was the election of Nigel Farage as party leader, a politician with considerably more national appeal than previous UKIP leaders, and someone with a determination to turn UKIP into a fully functioning political party that campaigned on a wide range of issues. Secondly, UKIP were successful in attracting some of the Conservative voters and activists alienated by the liberal, metropolitan Conservatism associated with Cameron (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). Thirdly, UKIP also benefited from the rise in the salience of EU immigration, capitalizing on the discontent with policies for stricter border controls.

At the 2009 European elections, although UKIP only increased their share of the vote by 0.4%, gaining a single seat on their 2004 performance, the result was still significant. This was because, for the first time in their history, UKIP had come second in a national election, pushing the Labour Party into 3rd place. It had been helped by the MPs' expenses scandal, with UKIP managing to exploit the anger generated towards established political parties (Ford and Goodwin, 2014a, 2014b; Ford, et al, 2012). However, while the expenses scandal and concern over immigration were certainly important, research suggests that Euroscepticism was still the main driver of support for UKIP at the 2009 European elections (Whitaker and Lynch, 2011). Further analysis showed UKIP were drawing their support from centre and centre -right voters, with support increasing regionally in the West Midlands, South West, North West, Yorkshire, and the North East (Whitaker and Lynch, 2011; Ford and Goodwin, 2014). These were exactly the voters and electoral regions the Conservative Party needed if they were to return to government at the next election. Even before the 2009 European elections, an ICM poll had showed that 14% of Conservative voters could potentially switch to voting UKIP at the next election.

The extent to which the rise of UKIP influenced the policy thinking of Conservative parliamentarians and the party leadership, at this point, is limited. Davies (2016) argues that, in contrast to the divisions to come during the Coalition years, the Conservative Party was actually relatively united on Europe during the 2005-2010 parliament:

After 2005, with Cameron as leader, in effect from that moment on, the Conservative Party was united on Europe. In the sense that aside from a dozen or so fanatics, your Clarkes, who are representative of very few Tory MPs now. Everyone agreed that we needed powers back from the EU. The whole parliamentary party was agreed. So, we were agreed on the direction of travel as a party. We were united as a party. With Major, you had some MPs that wanted to go more into the EU... Under Cameron we were all united because we all wanted to get powers back. The question was how many? I wanted to get them all back and he wanted to get some back, but on the direction of travel we were all the same. So, in that sense we were all happy. So, when the media kept banging on about splits in the Tory Party over the EU. That wasn't how we saw it. We were happy that at long last we all wanted to travel in the same direction.

Andrew Mackay, Senior Political and Parliamentary Advisor to Cameron 2005-2009, doesn't believe the rise of UKIP during the parliament had any direct influence over changing the content of European policy during this parliament. However, there was the fear that if UKIP replicated their success at the 2009 European elections at the next general election it could deny the Conservative Party a return to government by appealing to Eurosceptic Conservative voters (Mackay, 2016). Smith (2015:372) suggests that this was also concerning MPs, candidates, and party members, and directly links this to these groups being 'more vocal in their own Euroscepticism' and for continued calls for a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. While there is undoubtedly some truth to this, it should also be considered that these groups within the Conservative Party were equally motivated by opposition to the integrationist *ideas* within the treaty itself and were merely reflecting long-standing opposition to these ideas since 1997.

It does appear that, although UKIP had started to worry the leadership towards the end of the 2005-2010 parliament, this was too late for it to have influenced the content of European policy in this period. In early 2007, for example, Lord Ashcroft, Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party, briefed a meeting of Conservative MPs to 'dispel the idea that UKIP presented a serious threat' (Bale, 2016:305). UKIP's electoral success would have delayed impact, manifesting itself following the 2010 election, when it could be more clearly demonstrated that UKIP's appeal to voters could be significant in a 'first order' election. This will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

A growing body of academic literature makes the case that ‘extreme right’, or ‘radical right’, political parties in Europe, such as UKIP, have had success in influencing more mainstream parties to adopt their own policies, in order to prevent the seepage of ‘their’ voters to these parties at elections (Schain, 2006; Jean-Yves Camus, 2011). Others, such as Mudde (2013), are less convinced of the impact of so called ‘populist radical right parties’, arguing where they have made a difference it has been ‘limited’, and usually only on the question of immigration policy. Even in this area the impact is only to increase the salience of the immigration issue, not to cause mainstream parties to adopt firmer immigration policies, which are likely to have shifted for other reasons (Mudde, 2013). It is the conclusion of this thesis that where UKIP is concerned, during the 2005-2010 period, the impact on the content of Conservative European policy was also limited. It may have increased the salience of Europe leading up to and following certain events, such as the 2009 European elections, but its electoral impact had not yet reached the point at which the Conservative leadership needed to make concessions to it on Europe. Changes made up to this period, and during it, were the result of alternative causal factors.

7.3.2 The Labour Party and European Policy, 2005-2010

The main issues that dominated European policy for the Labour government during the 2005-2010 parliament was the controversial resurrection of EU constitutional reform in the form of the Lisbon Treaty, the perceived breaking of Labour’s manifesto commitment to hold a referendum, and the unexpectedly large increases in Eastern European migration to the UK following the end of immigration restrictions on new EU members in 2007.

In May and June 2005, referendums in France and the Netherlands rejected the Constitutional Treaty. After a short pause, many of the main features of the unratified treaty were repackaged as the Lisbon Treaty, with all member states agreeing to a final text of the treaty in December 2007. In its 2005 manifesto, Labour had promised a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty before parliamentary ratification. In April 2007, on the grounds that the new agreement was no longer a ‘constitutional’ treaty, Blair confirmed that there would not be a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

In August 2007, the Conservative Party launched the ‘Don’t Let Brown Let EU Down’ campaign to put pressure on the government, and new Labour leader Gordon Brown, to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty before the next election (Cameron, 2007b; Hague, 2007).

In September 2007, Cameron made his famous ‘cast-iron guarantee’ to readers of *The Sun* that the Conservative Party would hold a referendum on Lisbon. As such, part of the motivation behind the Conservative Party making this policy decision at this point in time was in direct response to the Labour Party’s own decision not to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Christopher Howarth, Senior Researcher to the Shadow Europe Minister Mark Francois MP 2007-2010, agrees that this was an important motivation for the Conservative leadership:

If this looked the same as the Constitution there was a domestic political point you could score which was that the Labour Party promised a referendum on the Constitution and they welched on the deal, because they stood for election on the basis that they would hold a referendum on the constitution. So as an opposition party holding the government to account...it was quite powerful, powerful because it was true. They stood for election on one basis and it looked like they were trying to sneak something through...Cameron wanted to be Prime Minister and he was on the sceptical side. Why not? You agree with it anyway, and all these things are coming together. So, it was a matter of trust...it is a logical thing for an opposition party that wants to take over to say that we will promise a referendum on this.

The motivation behind the Lisbon Treaty pledge and referendum campaign in August-September 2007, therefore, was at least partly stimulated by the desire to exploit a vulnerability of the Labour Party over a manifesto commitment which many observers felt the government was failing to adhere to for politically convenient reasons.

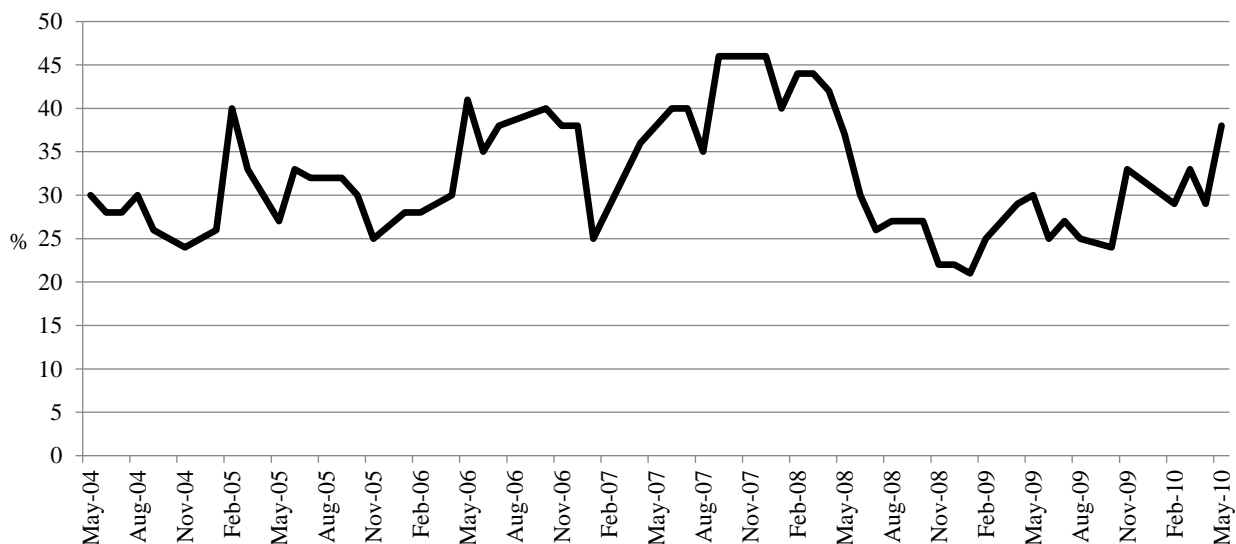
The second aspect of Labour Party decision-making that influenced European policy was the gradual rise in the numbers of migrants moving to the UK from EU member states. In 2004 ten nations, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, had joined the EU. The UK government, along with Sweden and Ireland, were the only member states to not immediately impose transitional immigration controls on the citizens of the new member states. As a result, and in combination with the strong UK economy, 423,000 people moved to the UK between 2004-2012 from the new EU nations (Watt and Wintour, 2015). In May 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, this time with some transitional restrictions on numbers and entitlements enforced until 2014. Caroline Spelman (2016), Shadow Cabinet member 2005-2010, explained to me that in her view the unforeseen implications of this policy began to emerge during this parliament:

Undoubtedly, the migration problem started. Rather naively Labour made a huge mistake in 2004 of not putting in place or requiring any transitional measures. Most other states had transitional measures, such as Germany and

France, liberal countries like the Netherlands. Their transition measures included the numbers coming from Eastern Europe as well as the access to their benefit system... So that had the knock-on effect of making the UK even more attractive to come to. It made it attractive to come to because there weren't quotas on the numbers, you automatically got an insurance number and pretty much automatic support for the same support a British citizen would have. Having said that very few migrants actually applied for JSA, they came here to work. Indeed, they got jobs, jobs that people weren't prepared to do. But that did cause a lot of resentment in communities that are predominantly white and poor. UKIP exploited that discontent.

The decision on transitional controls for new EU member states made by the Labour government did contribute to growing discontent within UK public opinion on immigration policy. In the long term, this was exploited by UKIP. However, it is difficult to support the view that public discontent was growing in a significant way during the 2005-2010 parliament. As survey data from the Ipsos Mori indicates (Figure 7.1), the percentage of the public ranking immigration as the most important issue facing the country was relatively stable, with the characteristic peaks when immigration policy was particularly prominent in the news cycle. Such as during mid-2005, when Bulgaria and Romania officially joined the EU.

Figure 7.1: UK Public saying Immigration No1 Issue, 2004-2012

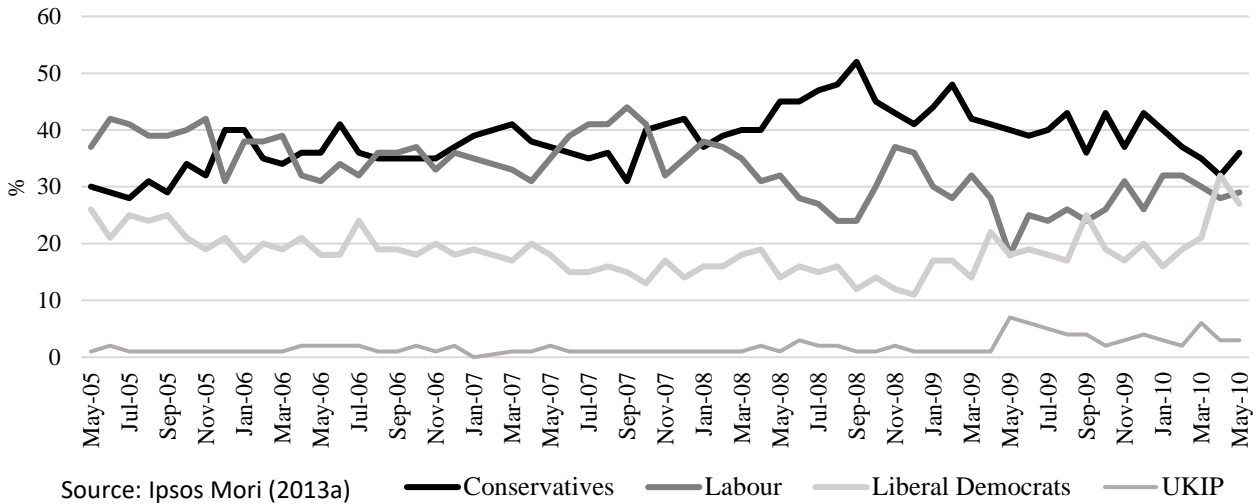


Source: Ipsos Mori (2006;2014)

In addition, it is also difficult to entirely support the view that UKIP were making a significant impact on the domestic political environment during the 2005-2010 parliament. As voting intention data from Ipsos Mori shows (Figure 7.2), political support for UKIP remained flat for most of this parliament, increasing modestly in the period up to and

following the 2009 European elections. If UKIP were exploiting public anger with immigration, especially from the EU, for political support during the 2005-2010 parliament, this did not strongly translate into increasing national support. Even when considering the 2009 European elections, UKIP only increased their vote share by 0.4% on their 2004

Figure 7.2: UK Voting Intention, 2005-2010



performance. This is hardly evidence of a dramatic rise in UKIP support during this period, though there is some indication it was beginning to alarm some Conservative MPs and candidates after 2009 (Smith, 2015). It is much more likely that public concern over EU immigration and UKIP started to put real political pressure on the Conservative position on European policy during the 2010-2015 parliament, and this pressure materialised gradually over a number of years. However, the political origins of these sources of future pressure on the Conservative Party in government were indirectly the result of decisions made by the Labour Party during the previous parliament over new EU member state transitional controls.

7.4 Public Opinion

7.4.1 Euroscepticism and UK Public Opinion

Table 7.3 shows the changes in public attitude to the UK-EU relationship between 2005 and 2013. As in previous chapters this data is taken from *British Social Attitudes 33*. As Table 7.3 shows, data is missing from 2007, 2009, and 2010-2011, when the British Attitudes Survey

Table 7.3: UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 2005-2013

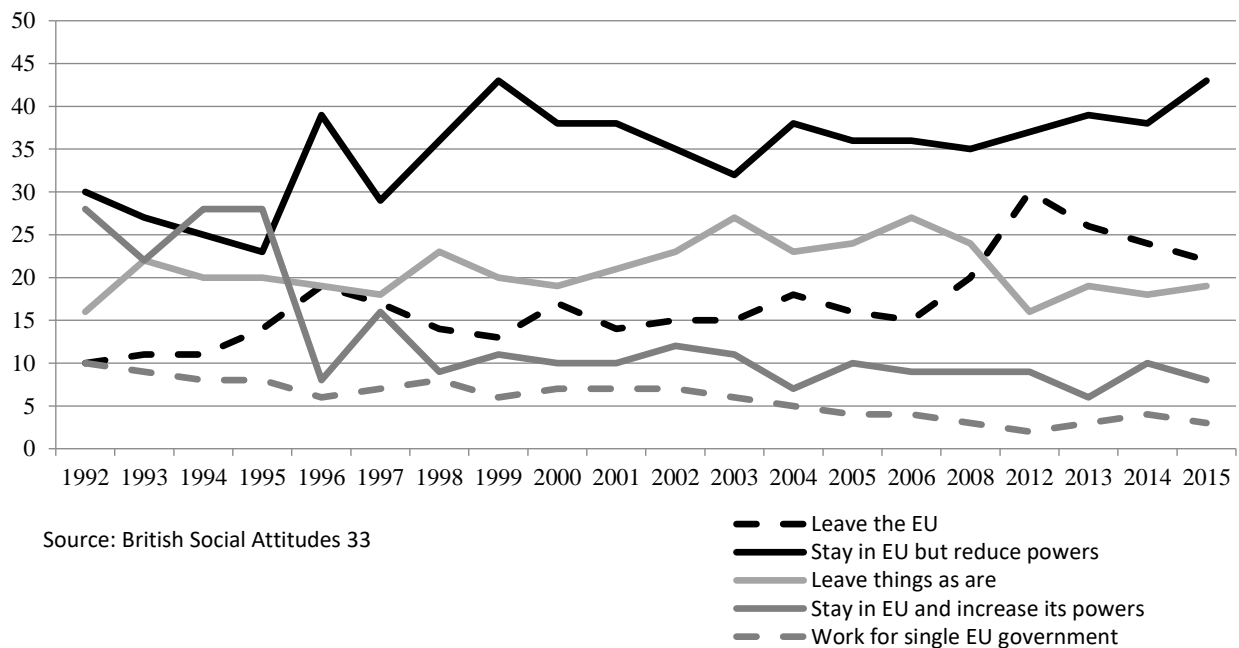
% Agreeing	2005	2006	2008	2012	2013
Leave the EU	16	15	20	30	26
Stay in EU but reduce its power	36	36	35	37	39
Leave things as are	24	27	24	16	19
Stay in EU and increase its powers	10	9	9	9	6
Work for single European government	4	4	3	2	3

Source: British Social Attitudes 33 (2016).

did not ask interviewees these questions on UK-EU integration. However, extending the table to include data from the 2012 and 2013 surveys enables us to encompass the entire 2005-2010 parliament while also seeing the position of public opinion on European integration a few years later, in the early Coalition period suggests that support for the ‘status quo’ on the UK-EU relationship was falling, while at the same time ‘hard’ Eurosceptic attitudes, leaving the EU, were increasing. In 2005, those agreeing with the statement that the UK ‘should leave the EU’ were 16% of those surveyed. In 2012 this had increased to 30%. Those who agreed that we should ‘Leave things as they are’ decreased from 24% in 2005 to 16% in 2012. Those agreeing that the UK should stay in the EU but reduce its powers, the ‘soft’ Eurosceptic position, remained relatively unchanged from 2005 to 2012. As such, the data suggests that during 2005-2010 public opinion was moving in a more ‘hard’ Eurosceptic direction, with support for the UK leaving the EU and the status quo increasing and decreasing, respectively. Support for the ‘soft’ Eurosceptic option, remain EU members but seek to reduce power it has in the UK, remained the most popular position. This was also, broadly speaking, still the European policy the Conservative Party had been advocating under each leadership since 1997, with Cameron being no exception during the 2005-2010 parliament.

During the same period that the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that public opinion was becoming more Eurosceptic towards the UK-EU relationship, survey data also suggests that the public gave Europe a low priority. Figure 7.3 shows data from the British Social Attitudes Survey. During the 2005-2010 parliament this suggests that Europe decreased in significance for the general public. This is partly explained by the priority public opinion gave to economic and employment related policy in a parliament dominated by the 2007-2008 financial crash. However, as Figure 7.4 indicates, public opinion gave a similar low priority to European policy in 2006, before the financial crash. Cameron’s desire to give European policy a low priority during the 2005-2010 parliament was therefore also matched by the priority given to Europe by the general public.

Figure 7.3: UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 1992-2015

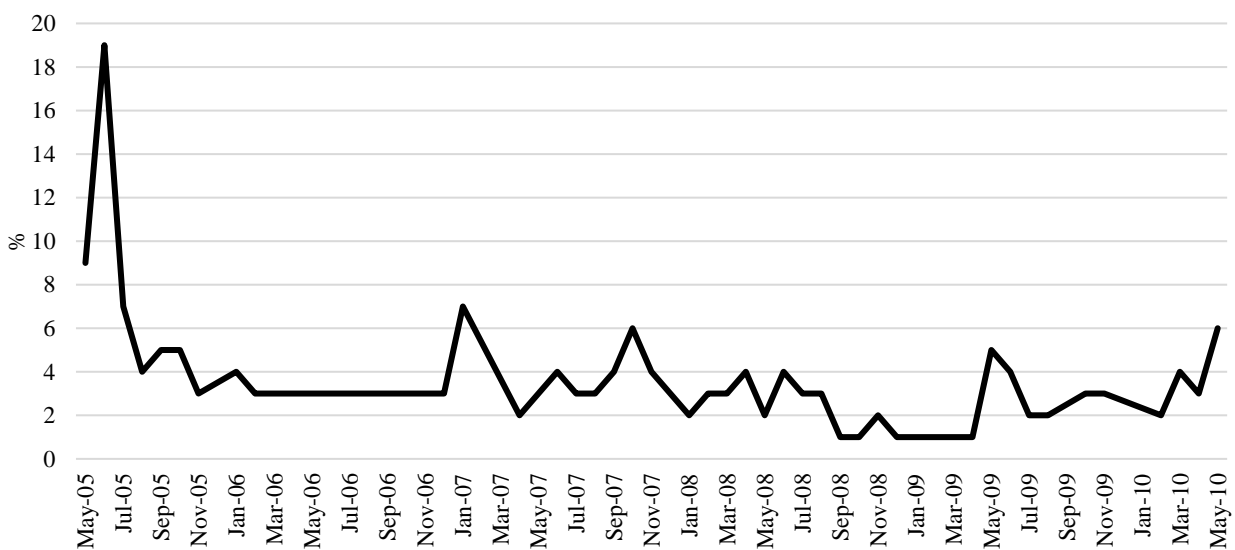


On the question of the EU Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, the attitude of the general public broadly correlates with Conservative Party policy during this period. Conservative Party policy towards both EU treaties was firmly against the treaties themselves and for a referendum to decide whether Parliament should ratify them or not. Ipsos Mori data also shows public opinion was supportive of the party position on national referendums, but more ambivalent on rejecting the treaties themselves. In June 2005, 67% thought there should be a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, while 56% thought it should be rejected. In September 2007, 81% agreed that the treaty should be put to a referendum. However, in the

same September 2007 survey, only 46% said they opposed the new treaty, with 44% supporting it. Interestingly, in March 2008 an Ipsos Mori survey also found that an in/out referendum (38%) was more popular than a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty alone (18%). It does need to be pointed out that 36% of people in the same survey either didn't want a referendum at all or didn't have an opinion either way. Public opinion was, therefore, in line with party policy on the need for national referendums on the EU reform treaties, but considerably less animated with the contents of the treaties themselves.

Over the course of the 2005-2010 parliament, Conservative Party policy continued to go with the grain of popular attitudes towards the UK-EU relationship. This can be broadly summed up as increasingly soft Eurosceptic (in favour of EU membership but keen to see a reduction in EU powers) and supportive of referendums on new EU treaties. As the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests, there was also a growing trend in public opinion to support the

Figure 7.4: UK Public saying Europe No 1 Issue, 2005-2010



Source: Ipsos Mori (2013b)

UK leaving the EU. This does not appear to have coincided with any subsequent moves to more 'hard' Eurosceptic policies by the Conservative Party in the parliament currently under consideration and may be more relevant to the analysis on policy change in the following chapter. Nonetheless, it is important to note the increasing proportion of the public who favoured a 'hard' Eurosceptic policy during this parliament. There is no substantial evidence to suggest changes in public opinion during this parliament was a significant factor in changes to Conservative Party policy on Europe over the same period. As Spelman (2016) made clear when interviewed, her experience was that the general public had little knowledge

of or interest in the Lisbon Treaty process, which was much more likely to animate Eurosceptic parliamentarians. It remained a political condition of the structural environment that provided an incentive for policy to be broadly maintained, though it did not provide the motivation for specific alterations on the policy platform on Europe itself.

7.5 Domestic Political Context

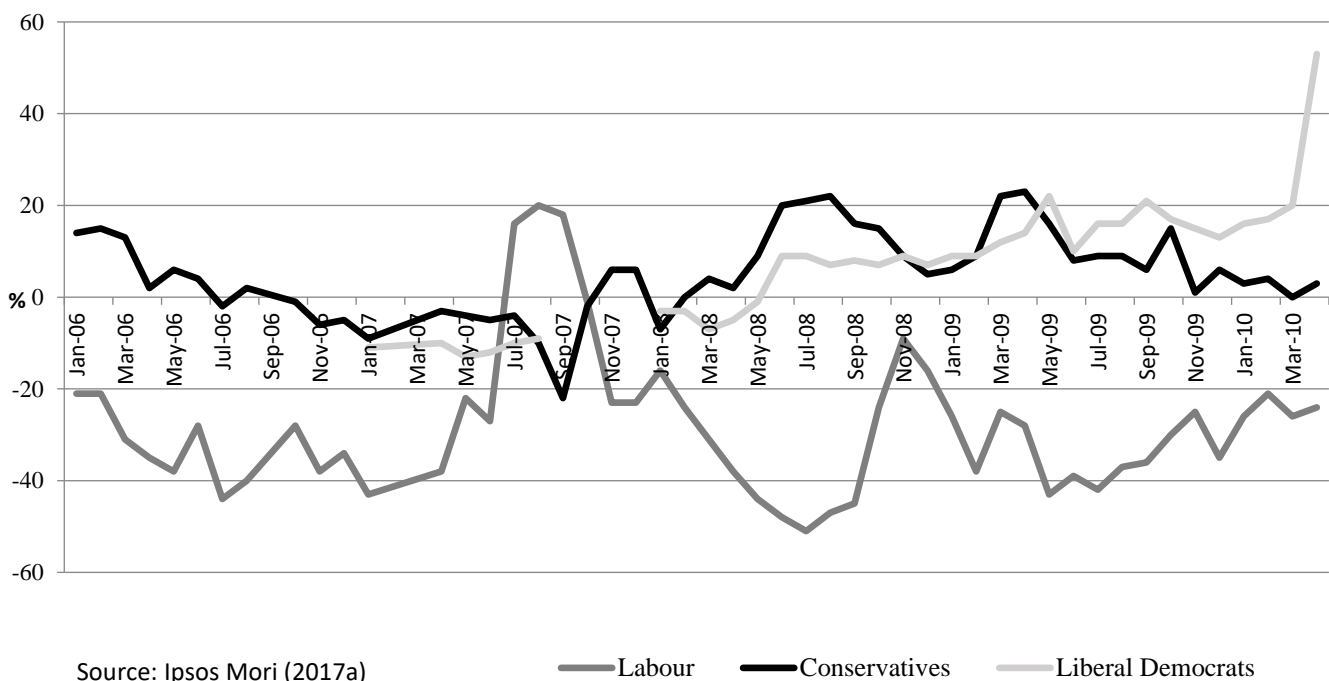
The domestic political context for the Conservative Party in opposition during the 2005-2010 parliament can be separated into two periods, divided in the middle between the September 2007 collapse of Northern Rock and the subsequent 2008 financial and economic crisis. Pre-September 2007 Cameron in opposition emphasised policy areas that were not traditionally associated with the Conservative Party, such as environmentalism, global inequality, and international development, in an attempt to improve the image of the Conservative Party in marginal constituencies that had remained loyal to the Labour Party between 1997 and 2005. Following the onset of the financial crisis in late 2007, the context shifted to economic policy and strategies to increase GDP growth, employment levels, and reduce the increasing public accounts deficit. In both these periods, therefore, different political priorities ensured European policy was not given a high profile by the leadership. This reflected public opinion during this parliament, which also shifted towards prioritising economic policy as the financial crisis increased unemployment and stagnated wages.

In much the same way as the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dominated the domestic political agenda during the 2001-2005 parliament, the 2007-2008 financial crash meant the economy and the public finances dominated the 2005-2010 parliament. As Spelman (2016) notes, 'I honestly don't think that between 2005 and 2008 that the Europe issue featured heavily'. In the build-up to the expected general election in October 2007, Europe also didn't feature much either, as the Conservative campaign was focused on 'Brown's economic competence' (Spelman, 2016). This enabled Cameron to stick to his commitment to prevent the party 'banging on' about Europe in public and not re-open the subject until a change in the external political environment compelled him to address it. The eventual need to address substantive areas of European policy, the internal question of the EPP membership aside, would come when the

Lisbon Treaty ratification process was completed. It would not come, in the 2005-2010 parliament, from the domestic political environment.

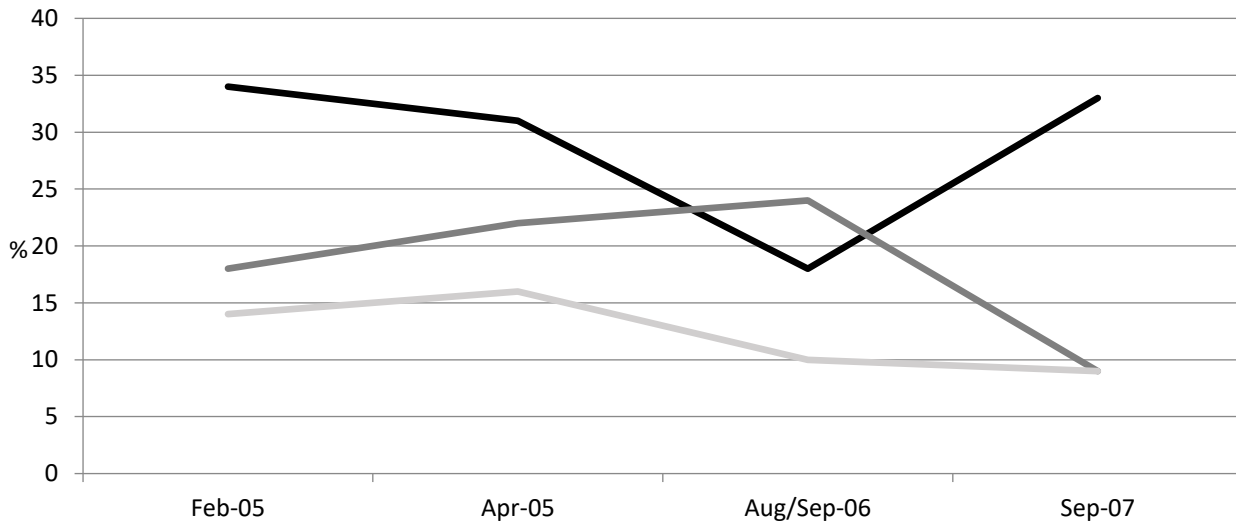
As a result of the abandoned general election of autumn 2007, which damaged Brown’s political authority and abruptly ended his honeymoon period as Prime Minister, how the public viewed both the leaders themselves and the main parties also began to shift. As Figure 7.5 shows, reporting data from Ipsos Mori during the 2005-2010 parliament, Cameron significantly improved his leadership satisfaction ratings. This was in contrast to Brown, who saw his dramatically fall over the same period, although these did recover slightly later on in the parliament as the 2010 general election grew closer. Similarly, support for the Conservative Party survey also increased steadily, as presented in Figure 7.3. This improvement was largely built on a successful strategy of questioning Labour and Brown’s economic competence following the financial crash. This enabled Cameron to avoid the fate of previous leaderships since 1997 by not feeling compelled to change course and re-focus on policy areas popular with core supporters, such as Europe and immigration, to help improve poor ratings. This, combined with clear lead on which party would have the strongest European policy (see Figure 7.6), enabled the leadership to approach the 2010 election

Figure 7.5: UK Leadership Satisfaction Rating, 2006-2010



relatively free from domestic political pressure to make significant changes to European policy.

Figure 7.6: 'Best Party on Key Issues': Europe, 2005-2007



Source: Ipsos Mori (2015)

— Conservatives — Labour — Liberal Democrats

7.6 International Political Context

During the 2005-2010 parliament it was the international political context, and the politics of the EU institutions in Brussels, that contributed more to changes in Conservative European policy than the domestic political environment in the UK. Two main factors contributed to these changes in policy. Firstly, there was the political composition of the European Parliament and the difficulty of finding acceptable new Eurosceptic partners for the Conservative MEPs, which forced the Conservative Party to delay leaving the EPP-ED until after the 2009 European elections. Secondly, the completion of the Lisbon Treaty ratification process before the 2010 general election forced the party to change their commitment to hold a referendum. This in turn influenced Cameron into committing to future legislation such as the 'referendum lock' and the 'UK sovereignty Bill' that would prevent a future Conservative government from legally being able to refuse a referendum in similar circumstances. Cameron and the Conservative leadership had to react to these political developments in continental Europe and the EU to maintain coherence and credibility to their European policy, to satisfy opinion within their own parliamentary and grassroots' ranks, and in the

case of the EPP-ED decision, to prevent damage to the party reputation. This section will now explore in detail each of these two cases.

7.6.1 The European Peoples' Party

As mentioned previously in this chapter, Cameron was successful in securing the leadership of the Conservative Party in December 2005, partly though not entirely, on a commitment to withdraw Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED grouping in the European Parliament. Publicly, no commitment was made on a timetable for this policy to be implemented. Privately, however, it is clear the commitment was for MEPs to leave the EPP-ED soon after Cameron was elected. The creation of the new Eurosceptic grouping would follow. Daniel Hannan MEP, a Eurosceptic campaigner for leaving the EPP-ED since his election in 1999, appears to have understood the commitment from Cameron was to withdraw 'on day one' of his leadership (Spicer, 2012:571). Spicer (2012:575) also states that the commitment was to withdraw 'overnight' following a Cameron victory. However, in July 2006, with the policy still not implemented, Cameron announced that the MEPs would remain in the EPP-ED until after the 2009 European elections. The time between would be used to organise the new group.

The main reason for this change in policy, from a process that was expected to take weeks to one that they acknowledged would now take years, was that the leadership did not anticipate the difficulty they would face in finding acceptable Eurosceptic partners in the European Parliament. Howarth (2016), who worked closely with the Shadow Europe Minister on implementing this policy during the 2005-2010 parliament, explained to me the main problems they faced:

...it had to look credible. Just giving a leadership order that the MEPs would leave the EPP immediately, which of course he could have done as soon as he became leader in 2005. If he had done that some of the MEPs would have probably mutinied. The MEPs were split between the very pro-EPP, almost federalist types, less of those exist now, and the diehard Eurosceptics, Dan Hannan and the like, who probably would have ended up leaving on his own account. The leadership of the MEPs had a very difficult job. The centre was telling them to leave and sit on their own, they were very vocal that this would lose them all their committee posts and then whatever influence they had. This was not what they wanted to do.

It would seem, therefore, that the leadership were not prepared to force Conservative MEPs to leave the EPP-ED without a credible new group to move to first. Not doing so would have

led to their MEPs losing political influence in Brussels. The prospect of a high-profile row with both Eurosceptic *and* pro-integration MEPs is also likely to have acted to encourage the leadership to make adjustments to this policy. Howarth (2016) also explained to me the difficulty in finding partners for the new group:

...to be credible you had to find a new group or one of the existing groups...they thought they would get a hammering in the media if they left the EPP and joined a group that a) had UKIP in it, or B) it had Lega Nord in it, for instance. So, this was the strategic problem. You had to find enough Eurosceptic, moderate parties...the sad fact is that in Europe there aren't many centre-right, Eurosceptic, free market, pro-Atlanticist parties. They don't really exist. You're trying to make bricks with no clay.

The reputational damage that might follow from co-operating with political parties that might hold extreme or eccentric views, and the political ammunition this could give to domestic political opponents, also contributed to the decision to delay implementing the policy. More time was needed to find enough suitable centre-right parties to work with in order to form a new group. Waiting until after the 2009 elections provided more time to examine potential partners and left open the prospect of new moderate parties winning seats to the European Parliament at that election, with whom the party could potentially work with safely.

This is an example of the international and the domestic political contexts contributing to policy change. New information gathered by the party with regard to the situation in the European Parliament and the position of Conservative MEPs, stimulated policy change by convincing the party leadership that forming a new grouping too soon could produce negative political consequences for the party in Westminster. This would be in the form of reputational damage and a high-profile display of internal division if the party leadership was to keep to the original policy of leaving the EPP-ED quickly by forming alliances with perceived extremist MEPs. Though the initial stimulus for change has its origins in the international political environment, consequences most feared by the leadership in Westminster appear to have been domestic in origin.

7.6.2 The Lisbon Treaty, 2007-2009

The second part of the international political context, which changed European policy for the Conservative Party as they reacted to political developments in the EU, was the negotiation and ratification process for the Lisbon Treaty. Negotiated during 2007, with formal

agreement in Lisbon on December 18th 2007, the Lisbon Treaty was an agreement between the member states to reform the existing treaties of the EU. Though the intention was to remove or play down those aspects of the Constitutional Treaty that had proved controversial in many member states (Bache, et al, 2013), in reality the ‘vast majority of its provisions were retained in the Lisbon Treaty’ (Bache, et al, 2013:177). Reforms such as an expansion of QMV into all EU policy areas apart from taxation and foreign affairs, a President of the European Council, and a de facto EU Foreign Minister, remained from the Constitutional Treaty. The Conservative Party had opposed the Constitutional Treaty in their 2005 manifesto, as they had opposed the Nice and Amsterdam Treaties. As such, it was ‘reasonably clear’ the Cameron leadership would oppose the new treaty (Howarth, 2016).

Howarth (2016), who also worked on the response to the Lisbon Treaty process, suggests that while the opportunity to call for a referendum on Lisbon and exploit the Labour government’s resistance to holding one themselves was a motivation for the Conservative leadership, the ideas and principles contained in the treaty were also an important factor. As he explained when interviewed:

When the final text came through of what the reform treaty would be we obviously had to find out pretty quickly what was in it and how much of it was the same. I remember on the night that we got the text, quite late in the evening, the key things were the President, QMV, the foreign minister...It was on that basis that Hague and Cameron decided, I think one of them was on holiday because it was a phone call, they decided that 'It's got a president in it, it has more going to QMV. On that basis, I'm going to call for a referendum.'...It wasn't just opportunistic...they already thought that European integration had gone too far. They would have opposed it. If it had been really trivial, which it wasn't, if the Lisbon Treaty had been what Blair said it was, just a tidying up exercise, a few things about how the Council worked...it might have looked over the top to promise a referendum on something that didn't really have any real meat in it. That would have been more difficult. If it had nothing in it, they may have opposed it on principle in Parliament but calling for a referendum I think they set the test that it had to have something substantial in it...

This suggests that the while the opportunity to create a political divide between the Conservative Party and the Labour government over Europe was a motivation for the commitment to a referendum, the substantive *ideas* within the Lisbon Treaty itself surrounding the deepening of European integration was also an important reason for the Conservative leadership to oppose it. Not to do so would have been to reject the party position on integration, as set out in each Conservative manifesto since 1997, which was to oppose further UK-EU integration. As Howarth (2016) suggests, if the treaty had not

contained major integrationist elements, it is plausible they would have still opposed it at Westminster to satisfy parliamentary and grassroots' opinion, but not called for a referendum. The decision was therefore a reaction to both the substantive ideas agreed by EU member states in the treaty, in addition to the position of the Labour government.

Cameron (2007b) and Hague's (2007) commitment on the Lisbon Treaty in the summer of 2007 was that a Conservative government, if the treaty had not already been ratified by all EU member states, would hold a referendum in the UK and campaign for a 'No' vote. Following the appointment of Brown as Prime Minister in June 2007, and the prospect of a general election in the autumn, the potential for the party being in a position to implement this commitment was real. The potential for a snap general election ended in October 2007, when Brown decided against it. If the parliament went to May 2010, the Lisbon ratification process was highly likely to have been completed and the Conservative Party would need a new policy position towards a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

The Conservative leadership managed to delay changing their position on the Lisbon Treaty while the ratification period concluded with a holding position which stated that they would 'not let matters rest there' if the treaty was fully ratified before the next general election. The ratification was drawn out, as the new treaty was controversial in a number of EU member states, and by the end of 2008 Ireland, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany had still not ratified the treaty (Bache, et al, 2013). Ireland only adopted the treaty following a second referendum in October 2009. In the end, after pressure from the EU and other member states to complete the process, the Czech Republic became the final EU country to formally ratify the treaty in November 2009.

This change in the international political context, that the Lisbon Treaty had now come into legal effect as of December 1st 2009, meant the Conservative leadership had to change their policy towards the treaty. It was no longer possible for an incoming Conservative government to hold a referendum on a reform treaty that had already been ratified. In a speech on Europe on November 4th 2009, Cameron confirmed the proposed referendum could now no longer take place. As Andrew Mitchell (2016), Shadow International Development Secretary 2005-2010, explained to me, the decision to drop this commitment was 'not accepted by large parts of the Conservative Party'. Heathcoat-Amory (2012:149) supports this statement, describing the decision as causing a 'great deal of unhappiness in the party, and allegations of bad faith' towards the party leadership.

In response, Cameron announced a series of new policy commitments in the November 2009 speech. These included a ‘referendum lock’ law to legally prevent future governments from agreeing to further European integration without conducting a national referendum first. A similar commitment had been included in the 2001 general election manifesto. Cameron also announced a UK Sovereignty Bill, a commitment to negotiate a full-opt out from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, legal protections to prevent EU influence over UK crime and justice policy, in addition to the previously announced commitment to repatriate powers over social and employment policy. These policies would be negotiated with the EU following the election of a Conservative government and given legal authority when inserted into the next EU accession treaty. As there is no formal process in the EU for such actions, Cameron was committing the Conservative Party to a ‘renegotiation of our relationship with the EU’ (Heathcoat-Amory, 2012:149). These policies were ‘an important step in the right direction’ for many Eurosceptics (Heathcoat-Amory, 2012:152).

These policy commitments, while having echoes in the European policy of previous Conservative leaderships, were introduced to fill the vacuum left behind by abandoning the Conservative policy towards the Lisbon Treaty. This had been caused directly by the change in the international political context; the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 before the election of a Conservative government was possible. It is an example of how a change in political circumstances in an international environment, external to the party itself, resulted in changes to European policy being forced on the party leadership.

7.7 Individual Actors

7.7.1 Cameron and Euroscepticism

To put into context the decisions Cameron made on European policy during his period as Leader of the Opposition, and also later as Prime Minister, it is important to consider what ideological stance Cameron himself took towards Europe. Considering his background on this issue, and previous policy positions on the UK-EU relationship, will provide for a clearer understanding of the motivations behind the decisions made on Europe by the Conservative Party during the 2005-2010 parliament.

The term ascribed to Cameron’s position on Europe before he was elected party leader was that he was a believer in ‘moderate’ Euroscepticism (Denham and O’Hara, 2007). As a

candidate in Stafford during the 1997 general election, Cameron had, like many Conservative candidates during this election, focused a significant amount of his campaign on European policy. Cameron mostly took the official party position at this time, that European integration was approaching its limits and that the party supported continued membership of the EU. He went against the position set out by Major on the single currency by opposing it in principle (Ashcroft and Oakeshott, 2016). This was, however, a common position among Conservative candidates, with around 200 making the same commitment. It would be the consensus position for most of the party following the 1997 election, even if the official position up to 2001 was to only rule it out for 10 years. Bale (2016) points out that Cameron would have been incentivised to take this position to protect himself from having a Referendum Party candidate stand in his seat.⁶

This is an interesting insight in two respects. Firstly, Cameron did take a largely ‘moderate’ Eurosceptic position during this period. His views aligned with the position of the party leadership, and he took a view on the single currency which would have been common among fellow candidates and grassroots activists. Secondly, it could also have influenced Cameron into believing, as many candidates and MPs did after the election, that a smaller party could not be allowed to ‘outbid’ the Conservative Party with a more Eurosceptic position, without damaging consequences to the Conservative vote share. There is, however, no corroborating evidence to suggest that this was Cameron’s perception at the time. This was, as evidenced in Chapter 5, a common belief among Conservative candidates at the 1997 election.

During the 2001-2005 parliament, Cameron’s stance on Europe again corresponded with the position of the party leadership. As Cameron stated in an email to an academic who had questioned his Euroscepticism before the 2001 election, he was opposed to the single currency, opposed to any further transfer of power to Brussels, and supportive of the renegotiation of EU authority over UK fishing rights, in addition to undefined areas in which EU policy had been a ‘disaster’ for the UK. (Ashcroft and Oakeshott, 2016). Again, these were not unusual views for a Conservative candidate at the time. This provides further evidence to the view that Cameron was at least as motivated by opposition to the integrationist ideas in the Lisbon Treaty, as he was by short-term political advantage over the Labour Party. Those who knew Cameron during this period also maintain that however

⁶ Despite this, the Referendum Party stood a candidate in Stafford.

strong his criticism of the EU was, he always maintained the pragmatic position that the UK was still better off remaining in the EU (Ashcroft and Oakeshott, 2016).

Cameron's Euroscepticism before 2005, therefore, generally moved with the grain of the majority of his parliamentary colleagues, sticking predominately to the 'official' party position when there was a clear one to stick to. A further example of Cameron 'moving with the times' was on repatriation of EU social and employment policy. This had been party policy since October 2004, when it was announced by Howard, and included in the 2005 election manifesto. Cameron was appointed by Howard to write the manifesto, under his guidance. This same policy commitment would remain, alongside his pledge to withdraw from the EPP-ED, as the two main elements of his European policy when he entered the 2005 leadership contest. Cameron's Eurosceptic background was therefore remarkably consistent, suggesting many of his policy decisions on Europe during the 2005-2010 parliament are at least partly shaped by his own historical positions on European integration, in addition to an unwillingness to stray too far away from the mainstream attitude of his party colleagues.

7.7.2 Leaving the EPP – The Role of Individual Actors

Previously in this chapter, the competition between the Eurosceptic candidates in the 2005 leadership election had been presented as the main factor in producing Cameron's policy commitment to withdraw Conservative MEPs from the EPP grouping in the European Parliament, which was fulfilled in 2009. The role of individual actors, and the influence they had on the decision-making process, also contributed to this policy change. Cameron's individual views on the integrationist ideas and principles of the EPP-ED family of political parties also added to this decision. This was explained to me by Andrew Mackay (2016), who was appointed as special advisor to Cameron shortly after his election to the party leadership:

...when he asked me to do the job for him straight afterwards and I turned up I assumed that this [the EPP pledge] was something he had just thrown in. To my surprise he found the whole EPP Christian Democrat thing, rather collectivist Christian based, not to his liking, and genuinely wanted out. I assumed he was just doing the American primary stuff. So, there was a lot of soul searching because IDS went to the Marbella conference of the EPP, with all talk of pulling out, but then decided he couldn't pull out as leader. IDS chose to stay. He probably had too much on his plate. But Cameron actually didn't like them and the whole idea and wanted out.

As explained above, Cameron's views on Europe were at least as Eurosceptic as the average Conservative MP in 2005. Therefore, it is entirely plausible that he shared the hostile attitude

towards the EPP-ED that many of his more prominent Eurosceptic colleagues did, which fitted with his need to appeal to Eurosceptic colleagues in the 2005 leadership election. This is a different interpretation to Ganesh (2014), who argues this decision was part of wider strategy announcements on 'traditional' Conservative policy areas, in the late summer of 2005, designed by George Osborne to draw more support from traditionalist and Thatcherite MPs. This could have been suggested with the full knowledge that Cameron himself was not ideologically against such a move himself. Howarth (2016) also credits the influence of Heathcote-Amory in leading a group of Eurosceptic MPs who met with Cameron during the leadership contest. It is not clear, however, whether the group made any specific policy requests related to Europe at this time. Nonetheless, the role of individual actors was key to this process, with Cameron and Osborne the main protagonists.

7.7.3 Lord Ashcroft and Modernisation

In the wake of the 2005 general election defeat, former Conservative Party Treasurer 1998-2001 and party donor, Lord Ashcroft, published *Smell the Coffee: A Wake-Up Call to the Conservative Party* (2005). In this pamphlet, based on extensive polling, Ashcroft argued that unless the Conservative Party modernised the image of the party, so that it better reflected modern society, and started to talk about and develop policies in areas the public prioritised, the Conservative Party would continue to lose elections like they had done since 1997. Among a number of other policy areas, Ashcroft was influential in convincing many in the parliamentary party, as well as the leadership and Shadow Cabinet, that making Europe a high-profile policy area would be to the continued detriment of their shared goal of finally returning the Conservative Party to government. Mackay (2016) believes Ashcroft's polling and research played an important role in this endeavour during the 2005-2010 parliament:

It was Ashcroft who used to go to the 1922 Committee and really upset them as they would all be there to talk about Europe and he would show that every time the Conservative Party banged on about Europe, and the public saw them on the TV news in the evenings, the poll reading went down. He would say that it doesn't mean that the people listening are Europhiles, very pro the EU and can't vote for that party - they looked at these Tories talking about this and thought 'This isn't my world. Why aren't they talking about crime on my street, my child's school, my granny in hospital who was left on a stretcher - and all the other things - and therefore they think 'these people aren't for us, they are on a different planet'. Ashcroft tried again and again and again to explain to some of these people whose ears were not open at all.

Although not all Conservative parliamentarians were persuaded by Ashcroft's position on Europe, it did convince many others (Mackay, 2016). As Bale (2016:250) observes, Ashcroft's interventions, such as this, helped strengthen Cameron and the party leaderships position that European policy should be kept as a low-profile issue, and with as much stability to its content, as possible.

7.8 Conclusion

The Cameron years in opposition saw a number of policy changes related to Europe which this chapter has aimed to explain. As this chapter has set out, the origin of the policy on Conservative Party membership of the EPP echoes the circumstances of Hague and the 'two parliaments' position on the single currency. Each has its origins in the competitive dynamics of a leadership election, Cameron in 2005 and Hague in 1997, where each candidate signalled an important change to European policy from a perception that this would help them win the leadership. Both are also examples of individual agency making decisions that would change policy on Europe. As with the 'two parliaments' position, the EPP pledge developed path dependent power in which the costs of Cameron changing his position once he was leader would have been considerable. What was possible was to delay the implementation until after European elections in 2009. The primary cause of change after 2006 was the international political context and situation in the European Parliament, in which it would take considerably longer than the leadership had anticipated to find suitable partners. Again, this also echoes the experience of the party leadership during the 2001-2005 parliament.

The changing stance on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, from withdrawal to 'reform from within', very likely pragmatic, in which the Conservative leadership did want to commit to any further difficult negotiations with the EU if they returned to government at the next election. On the question of the changes in position on the Lisbon Treaty in November 2009 - and the subsequent commitments to introduce legislation on a 'referendum lock' and a 'UK sovereignty bill' after the 2010 election, in addition to getting a full UK opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the return EU powers of crime and justice policy to 'pre-Lisbon levels' - this was a further example of the Conservative leadership reacting to the changing international political context in the EU and changing policy to reflect the new circumstances. If the Conservative Party had returned to power before the treaty had been

ratified, due to the path dependent nature of European policy, is it likely a Cameron government would have held a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

The tools, mechanisms, and concepts of the new institutionalist framework set out in Chapter 3 have guided and structured the analysis in this chapter. These have included the historical legacy of past events and decisions, path dependency, individual agency, the influence of internal and external institutions, the impact of ideas, and contribution of the structural environment. These have been, as the above text shows, embedded in the analysis and as a result has produced a more theoretically focused explanation of European policy change in the Conservative Party during this period.

Chapter 8: Cameron in Government – Policy Change and Europe, 2010-2016

This chapter seeks to explain the development of European policy within the Conservative Party between the May 6th 2010 general election and February 19th 2016, when Cameron announced the conclusion to UK-EU renegotiation deal talks and confirmed he would be supporting the UK remaining inside the EU. This means that, unlike the previous empirical chapters, this chapter covers two parliaments, the entirety of the 2010-2015 parliament and the first nine months of the 2015-2017 parliament. This enables this chapter to consider the development of European policy during Cameron's premiership.

This period showed considerable change in both the Conservative Party's own domestic political circumstances and the content of their European policy. The party was in government with the power to implement policy, firstly in coalition with the Liberal Democrats and, secondly, as a Conservative majority government following the May 2015 general election. European policy experienced dramatic change, with policy moving rapidly in a hard-Eurosceptic direction with commitments to legislate for a referendum on UK membership of the EU and further pledges to restrict the welfare entitlements and free movement rights of EU citizens coming to the UK. There was also policy continuity, with the European Union Act 2011 and the limited renegotiation of UK-EU membership terms 2015-2016, reflective of similar pledges made by each party leader, from Hague to Cameron, while in opposition.

The changes this chapter will explain include the differences between the European policy commitments in the Conservative Party 2010 manifesto and Coalition Programme for Government; the change in position, from opposition to government, on the EU criminal and justice powers; the acceptance of a referendum on UK membership of the EU by the end of 2017, the change from opposition to support for legislating in the 2010-2015 parliament on an EU referendum, in addition to explaining the development of the Conservative Party 'renegotiation' of UK-EU membership terms policy between the May 2015 election and the June 2016 EU referendum.

This chapter will begin by summing up the period in opposition, 1997-2010, and considering the impact this had on European policy during 2010-2016, before moving to reflect on the influence of the May 2010 general election and the formation of the Coalition government.

8.1: Historical Legacies, 1997-2010

8.1.1 'Renegotiation and Referendum', 1997-2010

As developed in the theoretical framework, this thesis emphasises the part historical context and legacy plays in party change and understanding why political actors make the decisions they do, in this case on the direction of policy. As such, the decisions made by the Conservative leadership in government between 2010-2016 need to be understood in the historical context of thirteen years of opposition, and that many of these policy decisions over time became path dependent, meaning that a future Conservative leadership would face substantial political costs from internal and external stakeholders if they attempted to resist their implementation while in government.

On the question of the January 2013 EU renegotiation and referendum commitment, the Conservative Party had been legitimising the idea that a renegotiation of UK membership terms, followed by a referendum to endorse or reject the new deal, could be an appropriate mechanism for resolving European policy disputes. Major had committed to a referendum before he would agree to join the single currency. Hague and Duncan Smith had supported referendums on the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, with Howard and Cameron both launching campaigns for referendums to block ratification of the EU Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties in 2004 and 2007 respectively. Each leader, from Hague to Cameron, had also set out in opposition how they would renegotiate how EU law and directives applied to the UK, ranging from specific policy areas to a comprehensive all-areas approach. This long series of commitments legitimised the *idea* of renegotiating UK membership terms and holding a referendum on the EU when the Conservative Party returned to government. This idea developed a path dependent power, which contributed to the campaign for an EU referendum that emerged following the 2010 election, both within and outside of Conservative Party institutions.

Cameron's 'cast-iron guarantee' to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty while in opposition in September 2007, and the perception that this commitment had been broken,

made a significant contribution to creating the political space for the EU referendum campaign to grow after 2010. Many of those interviewed for this thesis commented that this was a significant event in the years preceding the Bloomberg speech. Widdecombe (2016) states that the perception that Cameron had gone back on his Lisbon commitment ‘opened the opportunity’ for the referendum commitment to be made in 2013. Additionally, Choqe (2016) believes that the failure to keep to his promise on Lisbon was a ‘major factor’ in Conservative MPs agitating for an EU referendum in the early years of the Coalition government. This was because it communicated to the public that the Conservative Party could not be trusted to keep to their commitments on Europe, legitimising the political message of UKIP. It also developed feelings of betrayal and bitterness towards the leadership by many Conservative MPs, who felt Cameron was too keen to drop an issue which was important to them (Dorey and Garnett, 2016).

Many Conservative MPs saw the European Union Act 2011, which would have triggered a referendum in the event of further powers being transferred to the EU, as poor compensation for dropping the Lisbon pledge (D’Ancona, 2013). Mackay (2016) supports this perspective, suggesting that the seeds of the January 2013 referendum pledge were sown in the Cameron opposition period:

I think so, yes. I really do. It made it respectable to have a referendum. If you think about it, it would be difficult if you were Cameron and I was saying ‘Just a minute, you’ve accepted the principle – you were going to have one on Lisbon, but events overtook you and the treaty was signed and gone before you had got to office. Surely you can have an in/out one?’

Cameron, as well as others in the Conservative leadership, understood that abandoning the Lisbon commitment was deeply resented by those on the Eurosceptic wing of the parliamentary party, and that his alternative of a ‘referendum lock’ would only placate them for a limited amount of time (D’Ancona, 2015).

By accepting the principle of holding an EU referendum in opposition, through a high profile public commitment, Cameron gave the path dependent nature of the EU referendum idea within the Conservative Party additional strength. This, combined with an equally high-profile perceived U-turn on the pledge, made resisting the campaign for an EU referendum additionally difficult in his early years as Prime Minister, as the issue now had a new sense of ‘legitimacy’ in the Conservative Party and the wider public (Carswell, as quoted in Shipman, 2016:7). The principle of a referendum was therefore well established in the Conservative

Party during the opposition years after 1997, giving the idea of an EU referendum greater path dependent power that could be acted upon once the party was in government after 2010. The political costs of Cameron and the leadership attempting to resist the path dependency of these long-established ideas between 2010 and 2013 will be detailed later in this chapter.

8.1.2 European Peoples' Party, 2005-2009

The decision by Cameron to remove Conservative MEPs from the EPP-ED which was not fully implemented until 2009, had long-term implications for the development of European policy during this period. Douglas Carswell (2017), Conservative (2005-2004) and UKIP (2014-2017) MP for Clacton, believes this was a 'key' moment in 'shifting the trajectory on Europe' within the Conservative Party in the period between leaving the EPP and the referendum commitment in 2013. Coordinated by Daniel Hannan, a group of between 15-20 Conservative MPs from the 2005 intake pledged to publicly support Cameron in the 2005 party leadership election if he publicly committed the party to leaving the EPP-ED. Although unconvinced that Cameron and Osborne had any real understanding of why this mattered so much to some Eurosceptic Conservative MPs, Carswell (2017) argues that this was significant, psychologically and physically, in gradually separating the Conservative Party leadership away from its association with pro-integrationist political parties in continental Europe, and closer towards those that shared the Eurosceptic views of Conservative MPs, MEPs, and members. As Carswell (2017) explained further to me when discussing the significance of the EPP withdrawal post-2010:

As long as we were in the EPP, it would create a long-term tendency to shift the default setting within the Tory Party towards the pro-European side. If we left the EPP that ratchet would go into reverse...If British MEPs, and a large chunk of the Tory Party, saw their natural allies as German Christian Democrats, it would frame the debate about Europe in a certain way. Once that link is broken it frames the debate in a wholly different way and goes way beyond the influence of MEPs, which is at best marginal. I don't think Cameron saw the importance of that point, which was why he conceded it.

The significance of this, therefore, was to further weaken the institutional association between the Conservative Party and the pro-European, centre-right parties in Europe, who had traditionally been their natural allies. This view is supported by advisors to Chancellor Angela Merkel, who believe the decoupling of the UK from the EU can be traced back to the 'isolation' Cameron created for himself and the Conservative Party following their

withdrawal from the EPP-ED in 2009 (Ashcroft and Oakeshott, 2015). This moved the party further in a hard-Eurosceptic direction and made the likelihood that a future Conservative leadership would go one step further and commit to a referendum that could see the UK leave the EU, more likely than not.

This episode also signalled to Eurosceptic Conservative MPs and MEPs that, if the political circumstances were right and he could be persuaded that the decision was in the best interests of the party, Cameron could be induced to make concessions on European policy, if they applied enough pressure (Shipman, 2016). This instinct proved to be accurate, as Cameron reversed his position on an EU referendum in January 2013, following a parliamentary and external campaign by Eurosceptic Conservative MPs, having previously expressed his opposition to the idea in November 2009 and October 2011.

Lastly, withdrawal from the EPP-ED can also be argued to have had some impact on the ability of Cameron to successfully negotiate with the EU following the 2015 general election victory. Howarth (2016) argues that Cameron, and the Conservative Party more widely, fundamentally misjudged how seriously many EU member states, especially Germany and France, regarded formal pan-European political institutions such as the EPP-ED.

Consequently, when Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010, he had ‘few friends’ in other EU governments, with Angela Merkel still unhappy with Cameron for ignoring her advice that leaving the EPP-ED was a mistake.⁷ This breakdown of the relationship between the Conservative Party and the rest of centre-right political opinion in the EU would prove a hindrance to Cameron in forming the necessary coalitions that could deliver his goals for the new UK-EU relationship (Shipman, 2016). The building of alliances among member states has long been the key to individual countries advancing their national interest in the EU. These previous alliances and associations between the Conservative Party and their sister parties in Europe had deteriorated considerably by the time Coalition government was formed in 2010. The Conservative Party withdrawal from the EPP was considered a ‘disaster’ for European policy during the Coalition government by some of those who worked in the Foreign Office during the Coalition government (Private information). As one such individual explained to me:

⁷ It should be noted that in addition to Angela Merkel and her party, the CDU, the leaders of both France (Nicole Sarkozy, Les Republicains) and Spain (Mariano Rajoy, Peoples’ Party) at the time were also members of the EPP-ED.

This [the Conservative decision to leave the EPP] meant that whereas there were quite a lot of Conservative MPs who went off to Washington on a regular basis, and met Republican think-tanks, they didn't have any comparable links to the German Christian Democrats. That is a real loss. It meant that the intake that came in in 2010 arrived without any sense of politics on the continent or who our natural allies are.

As a result of this, when the Conservative Party needed to speak informally to individuals in European governments on matters of policy during the Coalition years, they would often have to rely on the Liberal Democrats' contacts, as they had no substantial networks of their own (Private information). The corrosion of these formal and informal political relationships, between Conservative politicians and their counterparts in other member states, damaged the prospect of Cameron achieving his policy goals during the UK-EU renegotiation.

The separation from the EPP-ED during the 2005-2010 parliament therefore had long-term ramifications for the relationship between the Conservative Party and the EU, the political strategy of Conservative Eurosceptic factions in the 2010-2015 parliament, in addition to Cameron's negotiation of the UK-EU relationship after the 2015 general election. It is a further example, in addition to the many other examples in the previous chapters, of how historical events and decisions by past political actors, influence future policy decisions and outcomes.

8.2 The 2010 General Election and the Coalition Government

The outcome of the 2010 general election, a hung parliament, was not the result the Conservative Party had been expecting. This is signified by the fact the party leadership had done little preparatory work on this eventuality occurring (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010). The Conservative electoral performance, despite coming first in terms of votes and seats, was also underwhelming. The 37% of the national vote achieved by the Conservative Party in 2010 was the lowest achieved by the party in elections since the 1992 election (Curtice, et al, 2010). Though the party increased their share of the vote by only 3.7%, they gained an impressive 108 seats in 2010. An achievement, in terms of seats gained by Conservative leaders at general elections, bettered only by Stanley Baldwin in 1924 and 1931 (See Table 3.1 in Clarke, 2015:37). That being said, it was insufficient to form a majority government.

In order to establish a stable government, a coalition was formed with the Liberal Democrats on May 11th 2010. The organisation and decision-making processes of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government created tensions within the Conservative Party. This, in turn, created incentives for Eurosceptic individuals and groups within the parliamentary party to put pressure on the government and Conservative leadership to change policy on Europe as will be shown below. Firstly, however, it will be shown how the negotiations towards the Coalition Agreement established this tension between the leadership and Conservative Eurosceptics, principally by removing many of the European policy commitments in the 2010 Conservative manifesto from the Coalition's programme for government.

8.2.1 The 2010 Conservative Manifesto and the Coalition Agreement

The coalition negotiations between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats themselves caused significant change to European policy. Although the Conservative Party secured commitments to prevent further powers being transferred to the EU, the introduction of an EU referendum lock, opposition to the single currency, limiting the scope of the Working Time Directive, in addition to supporting a single seat for the European Parliament and further EU enlargement (Coalition, 2010:19), a number of omissions are also notable. These included the absence of the repatriation of EU social and employment powers or gaining a full-opt out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Other policy commitments made in opposition, such as a UK Sovereignty Bill or opting out from EU crime and justice policy, were downgraded to 'reviews' and 'proposals' (Coalition, 2010:19).

These changes to policy positions on Europe were the result of concessions made to the Liberal Democrats during the coalition negotiations. The Liberal Democrats, though advocating an in/out referendum on EU membership, overall took a considerably more positive and pro-integration position on the EU in their 2010 manifesto (Liberal Democrats, 2010). The 'referendum lock' was viewed as a compromise between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos, as the Conservative Party had not advocated an EU membership referendum while in opposition or in the 2010 manifesto (Conservative Party, 2010) with the hope that it would prevent Europe becoming a major area of policy conflict for the two sides of the government (Hazell and Young, 2010; Clegg, 2016; Laws, 2016). On the question of the 'UK Sovereignty Bill', Nick Clegg did not see the need for such legislation, and as result, Hague agreed that instead the Coalition would only commit to review the idea (Wilson, 2010).

The Liberal Democrat leadership maintained they could only support a government which took a positive attitude towards relations with the EU, insisting that the words ‘positive participant with the EU’ were included in the Coalition Agreement section on European policy, to make it a less ‘negative’ section and more acceptable to the Liberal Democrats in parliament who need to approve the agreement (Laws, 2010:185). This meant that from the beginning of the negotiations the Conservative leadership were under pressure to make concessions on the content of European policy they had established over years in opposition since 1997. Though the Conservative Party achieved many of their headline European policies, many others were downgraded or dropped to reach an agreement with the Liberal Democrats.

A combination of a contingent event (the unexpected hung parliament) and the institutional requirements of forming a coalition government (the need to compromise on policy opposed by the second party) resulted in the necessity for the Conservative leadership to change European policy, in both tone and content, to one which many Eurosceptic Conservative MPs found difficult to accept.

8.2.2 The Conservative Parliamentary Party and the 2010 General Election

The circumstances of the Conservative Party entry into coalition government caused deep resentment and many Eurosceptic Conservative MPs began to put the party leadership and government under intense pressure over Europe, both inside and outside parliament. This was the consequence of a number of circumstances; the failure to win a majority in the 2010 election; the eagerness of the leadership to form a coalition government with the pro-integration Liberal Democrats, rather than form a minority government; the perception that too much of the 2010 Conservative manifesto’s policies on Europe had been dropped from the Coalition Agreement; and, finally, the view that Liberal Democrats had undue influence over the European policy of the government. Andrew Cooper (2016), Director of Strategy at No 10 Downing Street (2011-2013) during the Coalition government summarised this perception of the government by many Conservative MPs:

A lot of MPs never forgave him [Cameron] for the fact that when he did the famous rose garden thing with Clegg. They all felt he looked much too pleased about it. He was asked a question about forming a minority Conservative Party government and he basically sniffed at it and said it would be a very unifying idea. A lot of them really resented this. Then for the first few months there was lots of euphoria, with people talking about Liberal Conservative Party and

shared agendas. That made a lot of Conservative Party really uncomfortable. Throughout the parliament a lot of Tory MPs felt that the tail was wagging the dog. That Cameron either sort of let himself be rolled over, or used the Lib Dem influence as an excuse, for not having a more robust policy on Europe.

This perception, that Conservative leadership preferred being in coalition than having a narrow Conservative majority, combined with a frustration that EU reform was now being blocked for at least another five years by the Liberal Democrats. This was despite the gradual layering of more, and increasingly Eurosceptic, EU reform policies into the party policy platform during 13 years of opposition. Additionally, some suspected that Cameron was using the cover of the Liberal Democrats to conduct a more positive European policy than would have been tolerated by many of his backbench MPs had the Conservative Party won a majority in 2010 (Boulton and Jones, 2010). Graham Brady (2016), Chairman of the 1922 Committee (2010-Present) explained how difficult this was for many Conservative MPs to see this policy agenda abandoned:

If we had had a majority Conservative government in 2010 I think that it is inevitable there would have been some serious attempts at reform. Obviously, we can't predict what powers would have been brought back but I think it would have been inevitable that there would have been serious efforts to be able to demonstrate that the ratchet had been put in reverse and some powers were going back to UK control. I think it is quite likely that would have defused the tension in the UK-EU relationship. Instead of that we had an absolute lock for five years on which nothing could be done to redress the balance in the relationship, which meant that we had a greater demand for a referendum. We had a pent-up aspiration for change... I think the problem was that it was simply dropped as an issue.

The decision-making process within the Coalition also contributed to this frustration. Major government policy decisions during the 2010-2015 parliament were taken by an informal institution known as the 'Quad', comprising of Cameron, Osborne, Clegg, and Alexander, with occasional participation by other senior members of the government such as Hague, Letwin, and Laws. This informal institution did not deal with the details of policy but set the general direction of the government and attempted to resolve any disputes between Coalition ministers in Whitehall. As a result of this arrangement many Conservative MPs felt disconnected and isolated from their party leadership, as they knew no initiatives on EU reform would make it past the Liberal Democrat side of the 'Quad'. As Christopher Chope (2016), explained to me:

There was a failure in the Conservative leadership in the coalition which was a consequence of the coalition governance. The coalition governance as you will

know was that nothing could be agreed or done by anybody if it hadn't been approved by the Quad. Unless those four agreed something, nothing could happen. That created an atmosphere where MPs had no engagement with the government because there was nothing they could do to influence anything, because anything that they wanted was vetoed by the Liberal Democrats. So that added to the frustration. It also meant that there was a vacuum as people with their energies couldn't direct them to change government policy. So, they had to use parliamentary procedure to create the atmosphere in which a fundamental issue of giving the people the choice would be pursued.

The perception that pro-integration Liberal Democrats had a de facto veto on the government's European policy added to the resentment many Conservative Party MPs felt. As the parliamentary party had not been asked to formally approve the Coalition agreement, some Conservative MPs did not feel obliged to support it in Parliament, as many had been elected by their constituents on openly hard-Eurosceptic platforms (Reckless, 2017). Many Eurosceptic Conservative MPs used these local mandates as justification to oppose Coalition policy, especially on Europe.

These circumstances encouraged a significant minority of Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to work towards changing government policy on Europe by tabling motions and amendments in the House of Commons, to express their dissent and force changes in either government or Conservative Party policy. These circumstances created some of the institutional conditions within the parliamentary party and the House of Commons necessary for the campaign of dissent by Conservative MPs to attract support and momentum, that would contribute to Cameron changing party policy on an EU referendum in January 2013. Without these circumstances creating this resentment within the parliamentary party from the beginning of the Coalition, it is unlikely the Conservative leadership would have faced the necessary pressure required to convince them to change their minds on the EU referendum question.

8.2.3 UKIP and the 2010 General Election

The performance of UKIP at the 2010 general election was an improvement for the party on their 2005 general election result, but the breakthrough some in the party expected failed to materialise, and the overall results were disappointing (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). UKIP increased their share of the vote by 0.9%, to 3.1%. UKIP candidates averaged 3.5% of the vote in the seats in which they stood candidates, in comparison to 2.8% in 2005 (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010). UKIP increased the number candidates standing in 2010, in comparison with the previous general election, by 64 (Kavanagh and Cowley, 2010). Once again, UKIP did not challenge many incumbents whom they deemed sufficiently Eurosceptic.

The relevance of UKIP's electoral performance at the 2010 general election is the perceived contribution of this result to the Conservative Party failure to win a majority, despite the favourable circumstances following 2007-2008 financial crash. Philip Davies, Conservative MP for Shipley (2005-Present), explained that he and many of his colleagues believed that the UKIP vote had deprived them of a working majority at the 2010 election:

We had lost too many voters to UKIP. We had to get these people back. Unless we can get these people, who used to vote Conservative, who have now stopped voting Conservative, back, we were never going to win a majority. We've got to get these people back... Lots of people had only just crawled in... they feared that UKIP would stop them being re-elected. We had clearly lost votes because of the UKIP vote in certain areas. I think of David Heathcoat Amory, in Wells, where we lost a safe Tory seat. One of reasons we had lost was because UKIP had got such a big vote. Or sufficient enough of a vote, anyway, to beat us. There were a few other seats like that. So, if you had added these seats up together you would have got an overall majority. That was partly it. Clearly UKIP were gaining ground... we needed to do something about the UKIP issue.

The impact of UKIP at the 2010 general election was, therefore, perceived by the 2010 cohort of Conservative MPs in a similar way to the belief that the Referendum Party had exacerbated the scale of defeat in 1997. As was the case after the 1997 election, the solution to this problem proposed by many Conservative Party MPs after 2010 was to move to a harder Eurosceptic position, by committing the party to hold a referendum on UK membership of the EU after the next general election (Davies, 2016). In 1997 it had been ruling out UK membership of the single currency.

As was the case following the 1997 election, academic analysis is divided on whether the performance of UKIP at the 2010 election contributed to the failure to win a majority. Johnston and Pattie (2010) conclude that as there were 21 constituencies where the Conservative Party finished second by a smaller margin than the total UKIP vote, there might have been a Conservative majority if UKIP had not contested these seats. Denver (2010:14) is more definitive, concluding that 'simplistic assertions' about UKIP denying the Conservative Party a majority at the 2010 election are undermined by the fact there was 'no significant relationship' between changes in the Conservative vote share and the UKIP electoral performance. If anything, the presence of a UKIP candidate was more likely to have damaged Labour's electoral performance in 2010 (Denver, 2010:14). This being said, the regional performance of UKIP in areas of the UK where the Conservative Party have a concentration of seats (South East England, South West England, and Eastern England) was

between 4.3 and 4.5% on average, in comparison to the national average of 3.5% (Ford and Goodwin, 2014:87). This could explain why some Conservative MPs believed the impact of UKIP was greater on the 2010 election result, than it was when considering the national picture.

The perception that UKIP was a significant reason for many Conservative candidates failing to win their seats, or only winning them by the narrowest of margins, was clearly in the minds of many Conservative MPs during the early stages of the 2010-2015 parliament. The fear was that if the party did not offer a policy on the EU that was competitive with UKIP, such as the promise of a future EU referendum, the party would again fail to win a majority. It can therefore be argued that UKIP's impact at the 2010 general election created further incentives for Conservative MPs to pressurise the Coalition, and the party leadership, into taking harder Eurosceptic positions on Europe. This then contributed to the decision by Cameron to commit the Conservative Party to an EU referendum, in addition to encouraging them to attempt to legislate for it in the 2010-2015 parliament in order for the policy to be included in the 2015 election manifesto.

8.3 Ideological Composition of the Conservative Party

8.3.1 Coalition Cabinet, 2010-2015

David Cameron formed his first Cabinet, as Prime Minister of the Coalition government, on May 12th, 2010. As had been agreed during the coalition negotiations, the Liberal Democrats would have five full members of the Cabinet, including the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. If any of these members departed the Cabinet, they would be replaced by another Liberal Democrat. Cameron therefore only had direct control over the appointment of the remaining eighteen members of the Cabinet. As a result of this, the ideological composition of the Cabinet was proportionally higher, in terms those classified as 'Europhile' using the Heppell (2013) attitudinal mapping approach, than would have been expected under a Conservative majority government. This meant that the Cabinet, including both Conservative and Liberal Democrat members, was 74% 'Soft Eurosceptic' and 26% 'Europhile'⁸ when first assembled. Of the eighteen Conservative Cabinet members whom Cameron had directly

⁸ This includes all five Liberal Democrat Cabinet members, in addition to Ken Clarke.

appointed, 94% were 'Soft Eurosceptics', with the only 'Europhile' member being Ken Clarke. No 'Hard' Eurosceptics were appointed, as Cameron had stated during the 2005-2010 parliament that no Conservative MP that advocated the UK leaving the EU could serve as a minister in a Conservative government under his leadership (Heppell, 2013). This ideological composition remained stable throughout the 2010-2015 government. It was also consistent with the pre-2010 ideological composition of the Conservative parliamentary party, with 91% of Conservative MPs identified as 'Eurosceptic' (Heppell and Hill, 2009).

As a result of this ideological and party divide in the Cabinet during the Coalition, in addition to the constraints placed upon government policy by the Coalition Agreement, this institution was not an influential factor in shaping the development of Conservative European policy during this period. As the MPs of both sides of the government had divergent views on Europe, there was a determination to keep tightly to what had been agreed on Europe in the Coalition Agreement, in order to limit the chance of major quarrels on the subject between Coalition ministers (Hazell and Young, 2012). The European policy section of the Coalition Agreement had been the final section to be discussed, as it was the most sensitive, between Cameron and Clegg personally. The commitments and language were precisely chosen, leaving little room for flexibility, in an attempt to put Europe on a 'deep freeze' (Laws, 2016:238). Discussions around European policy which exceeded those already stated in the Coalition Agreement were therefore conducted outside of the Cabinet, usually between Cameron, Osborne, and Hague (Smith, 2015).

The routine business of European policy was also handled formally between the two parties during monthly meetings of the European Affairs Cabinet sub-committee, in which a Liberal Democrat was the Deputy Chair (Hazell and Young, 2012). This ensured that collective agreement on government European policy was maintained and prevented more Eurosceptic policies from being approved without the Liberal Democrats' permission. Items of business deemed sufficiently controversial were handled by the Quad, by-passing the main Cabinet (Hazel and Young, 2012).

The Cabinet during the Coalition government, due to the political divide between the two coalition parties and their commitment to respect the terms of the Coalition Agreement on such a sensitive issue, was therefore not an institution which influenced change on European policy during this period, but one which displaced its discussion into other institutional arenas. It constrained government policy on the EU, but not the changing of Conservative

policy on the EU, as can be seen in the case of the January 2013 EU referendum commitment. Changes to Conservative European policy were thus made in the context of an imagined future where the party had a parliamentary majority, not in the present where the Liberal Democrats could veto proposals, in much the same way as policy was conceived during the years of opposition post-1997.

Influence was exerted, on the side-lines of the formal Cabinet, by individual Conservative Cabinet ministers. These individual political actors within the Cabinet made important contributions to changing Conservative policy towards an EU referendum. Hague, Foreign Secretary 2010-2014, was the Conservative minister who was most closely involved with Cameron making the decision to change policy on the EU referendum question, insisting that it could no longer be avoided (Shipman, 2016). As a former party leader, who had been recruited to the Shadow Cabinet in 2005 for his leadership experience, and who had managed internal party conflict over European policy himself, it is likely his advice carried significant weight with Cameron. Duncan Smith (2016) also had private conversations with Cameron during this period, setting out his case why an EU referendum was the right policy response for the party. Again, like Hague, Duncan Smith was a former party leader with experience of managing backbench MPs.

However, what counteracts the lobbying of both Hague and Duncan Smith, is that those who were in Cameron's inner circle, Osborne and Gove, both agreed that changing policy to support an EU referendum was a potentially disastrous mistake to make for both the Conservative Party and the country (D'Ancona, 2012; Shipman, 2016). If Cameron were to be influenced by anyone's private advice, the probability would that it would be his two closest political allies. However, he rejected the advice of Osborne and Gove, suggesting the decision was likely one made by Cameron individually assessing the many internal and external pressures he and the government were under, with the potential benefits and costs. In the end, therefore, the key individual from the Conservative Cabinet ministers associated with the EU referendum policy change decision, was Cameron himself.

8.3.2 Conservative Cabinet, 2015-2016

On May 11th, 2015, Cameron appointed the first Cabinet of a majority Conservative government since 1992. Given the absence of the Liberal Democrats, the Cabinet naturally became more Eurosceptic. All but one member of the post-2015 Conservative Cabinet was 'Soft Eurosceptic', with the remaining member John Whittingdale, identified as 'Hard'

Eurosceptic (Heppell, 2013). Cameron had therefore abandoned his previous commitment in opposition to not appoint government ministers that had publicly supported the UK leaving the EU, as a conciliatory gesture to those in the parliamentary party that also took a 'Hard' Eurosceptic position. However, in this case, we have additional information on the EU attitudes of Cabinet members later in this parliament, based on whether they supported the Remain or Leave positions prior to the EU referendum in June 2016. In total five Cabinet members supported the Leave campaign: Grayling, Villiers, Duncan Smith, Patel, and Whittingdale. Others, including Javid and May, only supported the Remain campaign reluctantly.

The main area in which Conservative Cabinet ministers influenced European policy, between May 2015 and June 2016, was over the detail and policy areas included in the government's renegotiation of EU membership terms. As this concerned government policy in many areas, in which ministers and their departments had expertise and authority over implementation, it was possible for Conservative Cabinet ministers to exert influence over the process.

From inside the Cabinet, Theresa May was influential in making immigration and welfare a key part of the UK-EU renegotiation talks and shaping the discussion on these areas from the UK side of the negotiations (Oliver, 2016; Shipman, 2016). Other Cabinet ministers, such as Osborne, Hammond, and Gove, took a more liberal attitude to rising levels of immigration from EU member states, but May was adamant that numbers needed to be reduced (Laws, 2016). During the negotiations, pressure was put on Cameron and the negotiating team to get further concessions from the EU that would close loopholes in immigration rules, or May would refuse to publicly support the deal (Oliver, 2016). An additional section in Cameron's letter to European Council President Tusk in November 2015 at the beginning of the formal renegotiation period, which called for a 'crackdown on the abuse of free movement', was inserted on the insistence of May (Shipman, 2016). May was thus the most influential Cabinet minister, outside the intimate inner circle around Cameron, during the EU renegotiation between May 2015 and February 2016, when the process concluded.

8.3.3 Parliamentary Party, 2010-2016

The new intake of Conservative MPs following the 2010 general election may not have secured a working majority for Cameron, but it was significant for the party in other ways. Firstly, the 150 new Conservative MPs who entered parliament in 2010 was one of the largest

intakes of new MPs in recent history. Secondly, those who interacted with this new intake considered them to be the most Eurosceptic group in Conservative Party history, influenced by the turn to Euroscepticism by Thatcher in the late 1980s (Stourton, 2011; Wright, 2011). Thirdly, many were more ‘independent-minded’ than previous generations of MPs and were determined that their voices would be heard during the Coalition government (Seldon and Snowdon, 2016:167). These elements, combined with tensions created in the transition from opposition into the Coalition and the perceived side-lining of the Conservative European policy agenda, created the necessary conditions within the parliamentary party for dissent over Europe.

Attitudinal mapping analysis of the post-2010 election parliamentary party, however, suggests that proportionally Conservative MPs were less Eurosceptic overall, in comparison to the post-2005 election (Heppell, 2013). Overall, 76.8% of Conservative MPs following the 2010 election were classified as ‘Eurosceptic’, a substantial drop compared with the 91.4% figure for the 2005-2010 parliament (Heppell, 2013). In terms of the Soft-Hard Eurosceptic binary, 50.3% of the Eurosceptic MPs were classified as ‘Soft’ Eurosceptic, with 26.5% as ‘Hard’ Eurosceptic (Heppell, 2013). As this binary categorisation was not used in previous studies, it is difficult to make a direct comparison with previous cohorts. However, the data does indicate a significant group of Conservative MPs (81) took a directly contradictory position to Cameron on the question of UK membership of the EU.

The proportion of ‘Europhile’ MPs also decreased, continuing the historical trend since 1997, from 3.5% to 2.3%. Interestingly, the proportion of MPs identified as ‘agnostic’ on the European question increased from 5% in 2005, to 20.9% in 2010. The increase in those identified as ‘agnostic’ on Europe, as Heppell (2013) notes, could be a combination of the number of new Conservative MPs elected in 2010 and the tendency for the attitudinal mapping method to categorise these MPs as agnostic due to an understandable lack of public comment on the issue. In total 36% (54) of newly elected Conservative MPs were classified as ‘agnostic’ (Heppell, 2013). New MPs could also be less likely to want to comment publicly early on in their parliamentary careers on a subject considered divisive within the party and one which the leadership wants to be given a low profile.

The period between the May 2015 and the June 2016 EU referendum also provides data on how attitudes towards the EU developed from the early years of the Coalition to the 2015-2017 parliament. In total 52.1% (172) of the parliamentary party supported the Remain

campaign and 43.6% (144) supported the Leave campaign, with 4.2% (14) not declaring for either side (Heppell, et al, 2017). Comparing the proportion of Conservative MPs who supported the Leave campaign, with those identified as ‘Hard’ Eurosceptic after the 2010 election, Heppell et al (2017) claim that this shows ‘Hard’ Euroscepticism had evidently increased during these two periods. This may be the case. It is also equally plausible that many of those classified as ‘Soft’ Eurosceptic in previous parliaments may well have privately had ‘Hard’ Eurosceptic positions that they decided not to reveal in public, perhaps because of fears this might damage their careers and alienate them from the party leadership.

These new MPs included Stephen Baker, Mark Reckless, Andrew Bridgen, Gordon Henderson, Jacob Rees-Mogg, and David Nuttall. These individuals combined with a similar group elected at the 2005 general election, who shared their ideological position and determination, to form a core that would resist the attempt by the Coalition government to relegate European policy to a minor issue. This new generation of Hard Eurosceptic MPs from the 2005 and 2010 cohorts, in addition to others from previous generations, would form an assortment of Eurosceptic factions and tendencies that would conduct a campaign to pressurise the Conservative leadership into committing to an EU referendum. This campaign will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

8.3.4 Party Members, 2010-2016

This section examines the available data sources on the attitude of Conservative Party members to European policy during this period, and to what extent this institution within the party influenced policy change. As with the previous chapter, the data sources come from academic studies, professional pollsters, and the grassroots activists’ website *ConservativeHome*. The caveats that come with using *ConservativeHome* survey data have been previously discussed and do not need to be repeated other than to say they should be considered with appropriate caution.

Before discussing party members views on the EU referendum question, it is important to reflect on how party members viewed Cameron and his commitment to the 2010 manifesto’s European policies. This enables the relationship between party members and the leadership on this issue to be placed in context. In the early period of the Coalition government, the majority of party members did not believe Cameron remained committed to repatriating powers from the EU back to the UK, which had been a prominent element of party policy on Europe during the 2005-2010 parliament. *ConservativeHome* (2011b) asked 1,125 party

members their view on how committed Cameron was to repatriating powers from the EU. Overall 64% of party members agreed that Cameron was ‘not very committed’ to this policy, as of October 2011, with 17% agreeing Cameron was committed to repatriating ‘a few’ powers from the EU and 18% stating that Cameron wanted to repatriate ‘significant’ powers. This indicates a lack of trust between the membership and the leader over how committed the Conservative Party actually was to the 2010 manifesto, and a realisation from party members that Cameron’s government agenda on Europe was in reality very different from that of the grassroots.

Further evidence of this divergence in views between Cameron and the party membership was on the subject of an EU referendum. In October 2011, the same month in which 81 Conservative Party MPs voted in support of a motion supporting an EU referendum, *ConservativeHome* surveyed their online members panel asking the question ‘Do you believe there should be a referendum on Britain’s continuing membership of the European Union?’. In total 77% of the 1,971 party members who responded to the survey answered ‘Yes’ with 21% saying ‘No’ (*ConservativeHome*, 2011b). A similar survey in May 2012 saw 75% of panel members agree that a bill to provide for a referendum on EU membership should be included in the forthcoming Queen’s Speech. Unsurprisingly, this policy was considerably more popular with Conservative Party members than with the general public. In the same month, YouGov (2012) found 55% of voters supported the introduction of an EU referendum bill (*ConservativeHome*, 2012). Prior to the Bloomberg speech in January 2013, it is clear that idea of holding an in/out referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU was popular with Conservative Party members, who were much more enthusiastic for this option than ordinary voters.

What this data establishes is that the idea of an EU referendum was popular with a majority of the public and a larger majority of party members. There is, nonetheless, no evidence to suggest that this was a significant internal factor that convinced Cameron, between October 2011 and May 2012, to change his position on the EU referendum question. It is more likely that Cameron, as a Conservative MP since 2001, was aware that such a policy change would be popular with most party members and he would encounter little opposition. Cameron had long regarded the ‘collective opinion’ of the Conservative Party on the European question as ‘non-negotiable’, with any attempt to ‘moderate’ it doomed to failure, which suggests he was well aware of how Eurosceptic the party membership was (D’Ancona, 2013:241). The conditions within this institution of the party were therefore conducive to such a policy, the

party membership would not seek to act as veto player and block it, but it was not these conditions themselves that were the stimulus for Cameron to make the policy change itself.

In terms of party members views on UK-EU integration, before the Bloomberg speech, *ConservativeHome* (2011a) did a survey of party members in September 2011 asking their views on the ‘future for Britain and Europe’. In total 4% agreed that UK should remain in the EU and ‘participate in further EU integration’; 7% that the UK should remain members but ‘reject further integration’ with the EU; 29% agreed that the UK should achieve a ‘substantial renegotiation’ of its position in the EU and then remain as members; 60% believed the UK should leave the EU and then complete a free trade agreement with the EU as a non-member (*ConservativeHome*, 2011a). Overall 89% of party members either wanted a ‘substantial renegotiation’ of the UK-EU relationship, or to leave the organisation entirely. From another perspective, 60% wanted to leave the EU and 40% wanted to remain, under certain conditions. Post-Bloomberg, however, Conservative Party members appeared to adopt a more pragmatic assessment. In May 2015, a YouGov/ESRC survey of Conservative Party members found only 15.3% of respondents agreeing that they would vote to leave the EU in a future referendum, regardless of the outcome of Cameron’s renegotiation of EU membership terms (Bale, et al, 2016). In total 63.3% of members agreed that their vote in the referendum ‘would depend on the terms of any renegotiation’ (Bale, et al, 2016), suggesting that a majority of party members would be prepared to support remaining in the EU if substantial change could be achieved in the renegotiation.

Later in this period, a YouGov (2015) survey in September 2015 asked 1,003 party members whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU and found 56% supported Leave and 34% Remain. Though it is difficult to make a direct comparison as the questions were different, this suggests the proportion of the party membership taking the hard-Eurosceptic position increased by only 4% between September 2011 and September 2015. This, however, was before Cameron had completed his renegotiation of certain elements of UK-EU membership, so some party members at this time might have been waiting to see the results of the renegotiation before committing to voting leave in the referendum. The May 2015 survey by Bale et al (2016) suggests this is likely to have been the case.

In what could be interpreted as a damning assessment by the party membership of Cameron’s EU renegotiation efforts between May 2015 and February 2016, in the end 69% of Conservative Party members voted Leave in June 2016 during the EU referendum vote

(Poletti, 2017). The proportion of party members voting Leave was therefore 13% higher than YouGov (2015) had found in September 2015, crucially before the outcome of the renegotiation process had been determined. This suggests many party members did not feel that the outcome of the renegotiation process went far enough and could not follow Cameron's recommendation to vote to remain in the EU.

8.4 Public Opinion

8.4.1 Euroscepticism and UK Public Opinion

Using data from *British Social Attitudes 34*, Table 8.1 shows the changes in public attitudes towards the UK-EU relationship during the 2008-2016. Table 8.1 shows that public opinion remained staunchly Eurosceptic. The proportion of the public who either wanted to 'Leave the EU' or 'Stay in the EU but reduce its powers' reached a record high in 2012, with 67% of survey respondents agreeing with the two sceptical positions (NatCen, 2016). This was 11% higher than in 2008 for the same two questions, and 15% higher than in 2005. Between 2012 and 2015, those agreeing with the two Eurosceptic survey options was maintained at between 62% and 65%. Post-referendum in 2016 this had increased to 76%, largely influenced by the referendum campaign and result, with a majority now saying the UK should leave the EU (NatCen, 2016). It is interesting to note that the proportion of respondents agreeing with the 'hard' Eurosceptic position decreased by 8% between 2012 and 2015, with the 'soft' Eurosceptic option increasing by 6% during the same period. This could be a fluctuation within the Eurosceptic side of public opinion following the Bloomberg speech, which contained a commitment to fundamentally renegotiate the UK-EU relationship before holding a referendum.

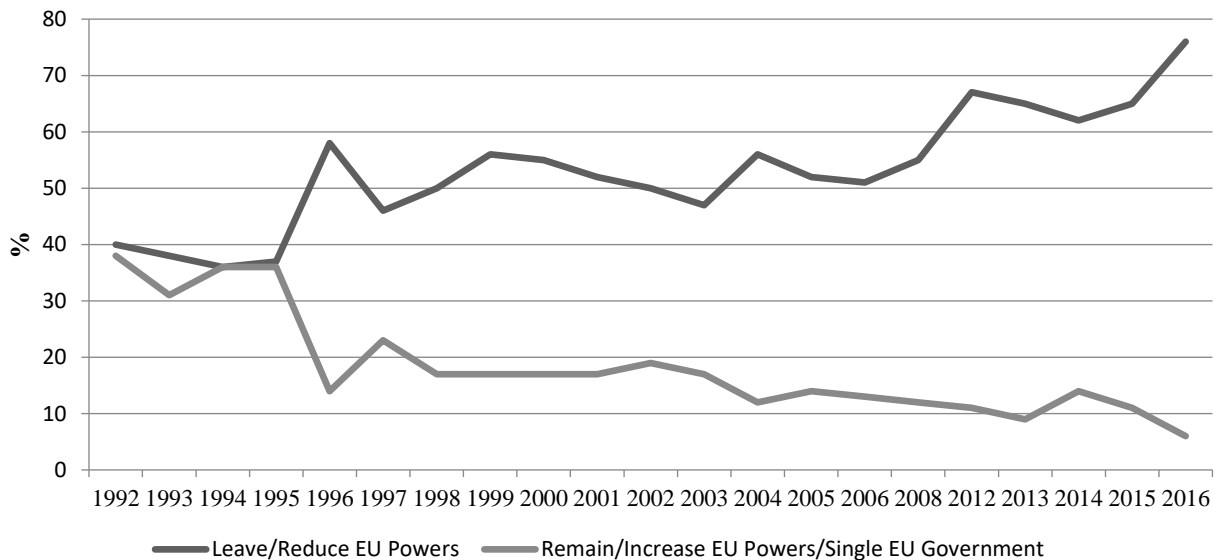
Figure 8.1 combines the two Eurosceptic and pro-European options in the *British Social Attitudes* survey question on public attitudes towards the EU, 1992-2016, to show the overall historical movement in UK public attitude towards the EU. Figure 8.1 shows that for the period in question, 2010-2016, Eurosceptic attitudes continued their historic trend by increasing to record-high levels in 2016. European policy during this period was therefore being developed in a political environment in which Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU were increasing to unprecedented levels in the UK.

Table 8.1: UK Attitudes towards the EU, 2008-2016

% Agreeing	2008	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Leave the EU	20	30	26	24	22	41
Stay in EU but reduce its power	35	37	39	38	43	35
Leave things as are	24	16	19	18	19	16
Stay in EU and increase its powers	9	9	6	10	8	4
Work for single European government	3	2	3	4	3	2

Source: British Social Attitudes 34 (2017).

Figure 8.1: UK Public Attitudes towards the EU, 1992-2016

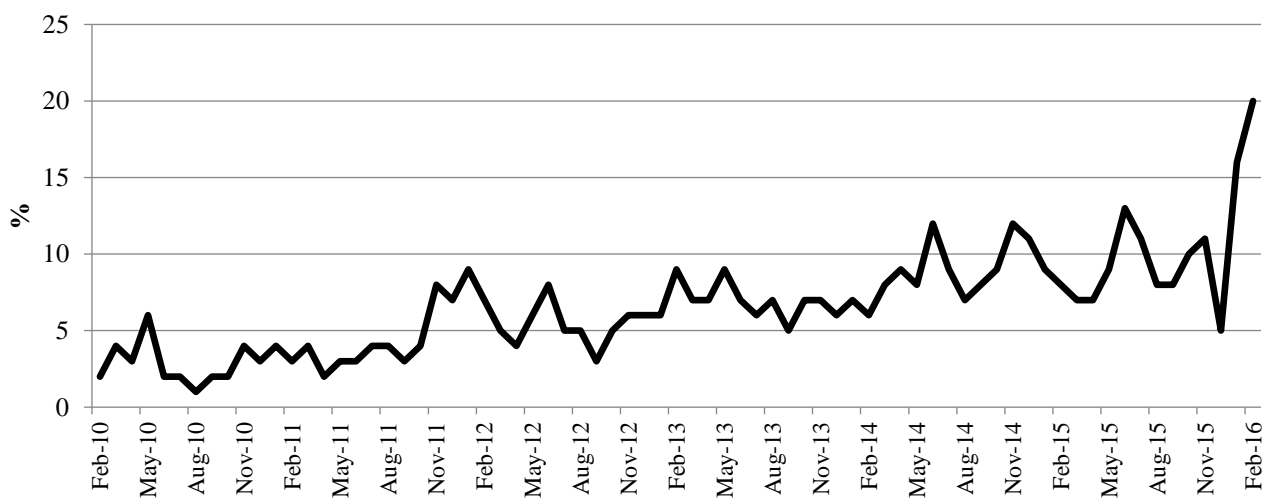


Source: British Social Attitudes 34 (2017)

Figures 8.2 and 8.3 below show data from the Ipsos Mori Issues Index on the importance of European and immigration policy to UK voters, 2010-2016. Both figures show European and immigration policy was gradually increasing in importance for UK voters during this period. The data also shows that while both were growing in importance for voters, immigration policy was given a much higher priority. As few as 1% of voters surveyed in August 2010 considered Europe to be the most important issue, reaching a high of 20% only in February 2016 during the media attention around Cameron’s EU renegotiation. On the question of immigration, voters ranked this issue as either the 1st or 2nd most important policy issue for

UK for the entire period, from a 17% low in April 2011 to a 56% high point in September 2015. In reality, and as discussed in the previous chapters, the line between Europe and immigration as separate political issues during this period is fuzzy, as the rise in concern over immigration was at least partly the result of increased migration to the UK from EU citizens from Eastern Europe and other member states. These two policy issues, and their rising importance in the minds of the public during this period, are therefore deeply connected and need to be considered as interacting with each other to produce a political environment in which the government came under intense pressure to reform the UK-EU relationship.

Figure 8.2: UK Public saying Europe No 1 Issue, 2010-2016

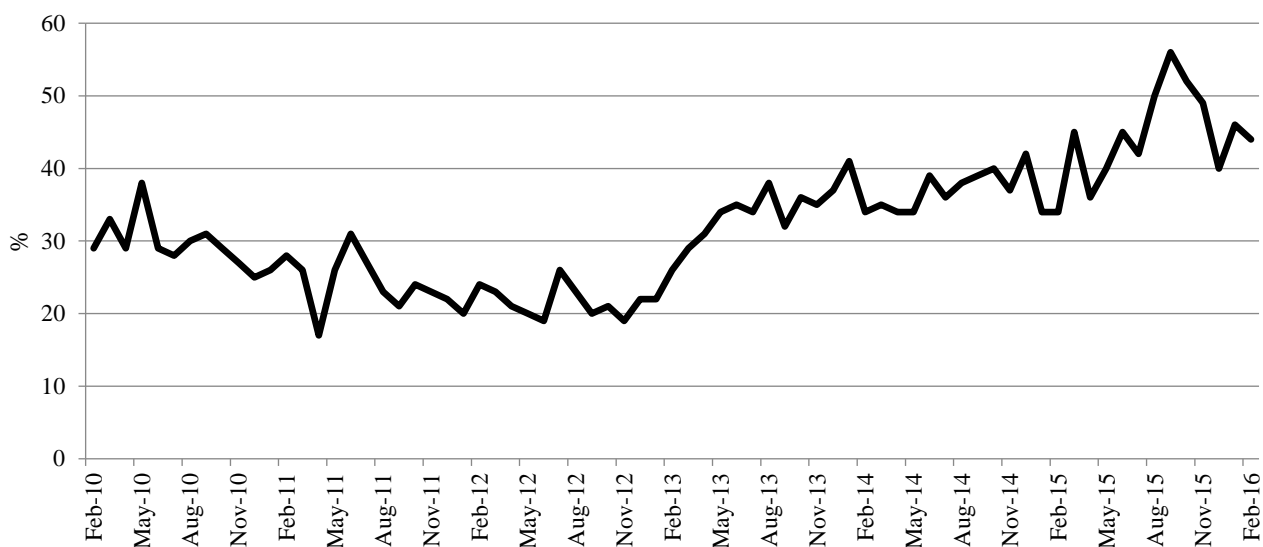


Source: Ipsos Mori (2014)

In terms of what internal and external factors contributed to Cameron changing policy on an EU referendum in the 2010-2015 parliament, Andrew Cooper, Director of Strategy at 10 Downing Street 2011-2013, suggests public opinion on ‘Europe’ specifically was not a motivating factor. As he explained to me:

‘It never came up as a particularly salient issue in that sense. It never ranked particularly highly in peoples’ lists of issues they were concerned about. Every week we used to ask a single question - ‘If you could raise one issue with the Prime Minister, what issue would you want to talk to him about?’ - It never, ever, ever featured. We did that for nearly two and a half years, every weekend, and for every weekend but one immigration was the number one issue and Europe didn’t figure.’

Figure 8.3: UK Public saying Immigration No1 Issue, 2010-2016



Source: Ipsos Mori (2014)

In combination with his role as Director of Strategy, Cooper's market research company, Populus, was also commissioned by the Conservative Party during the Coalition to undertake research into public opinion. This research suggested that Europe was not a highly salient issue for the public, and the Conservative leadership took note of this. This corroborates the Ipsos Mori data which indicated that though the proportion of the public who thought Europe was an important policy issue was rising during this period, in comparison to other issues it was still a minority concern. This largely discredits public opinion on Europe during this period as being a significant contributory factor in the EU referendum policy decision.

The issue which did influence policy thinking in the Conservative leadership was the connected area of immigration, which grew in saliency particularly from late-2012/early-2013. As Cooper explained to me, this had a much more dramatic impact on policy thinking in the Conservative Party during this time:

The more that the Home Office addressed non-EU immigration the more it became clear that EU immigration was the real problem. Certainly in terms of the vote perception of it as an issue - most people when they talked about immigration, what they had in mind was people from Poland, Romania, Lithuania coming here - not people from other parts of the world... So I think that the more that became a political pressure and the more they faced up to the fact that free movement is a problem... I think what did grow internally was a feeling that we needed to find a way to make the EU open up a proper discussion with us about how we could control that and a realisation that if we didn't we basically didn't really have an immigration policy anymore. So, if there was a policy driver of it up the agenda it was immigration rather than the EU itself.

Public opinion on immigration, specifically from the EU, was therefore an important external factor which influenced the Conservative leadership to introduce proposals to change regulations relating to EU migrants and their welfare entitlements in the UK. These are evident in Cameron's November 2014 speech on immigration policy, and his letter to Donald Tusk in November 2015 outlining the EU immigration and welfare policies the UK was seeking to renegotiate with the EU. The growing importance of this issue in public opinion does not correlate with the EU referendum policy change, as the January 2013 Bloomberg speech does not include any mention of EU immigration rules. This is supported by the data from the Ipsos Mori Issues Index, which shows immigration policy beginning to become a major concern for the public in late 2012/early 2013, after the decision to change policy had been taken. Public opinion therefore was an important external contributory factor to policy change during this period, with the rising salience of immigration more influential in shaping Cameron's policy decisions on Europe post-Bloomberg than it was in the first three years of the parliament.

8.5 Rival Political Parties

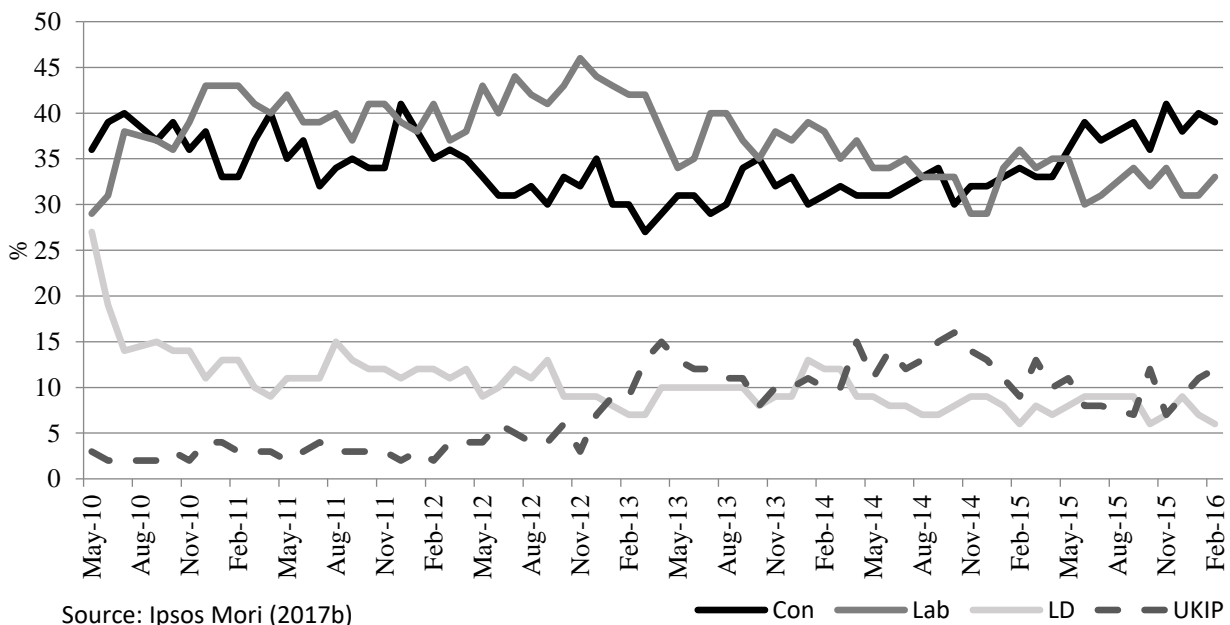
8.5.1 UKIP:2010-2015

After another poor general election campaign in 2010, the 2010-2015 parliament would finally see UKIP achieve the electoral success, mainstream recognition, and indirectly, policy goals they had been seeking since their formation in 1993. This included unprecedented gains in UK local elections, 2013 (+140), 2014 (+163), and 2015 (+202), after gaining no extra seats in the local elections in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In terms of Westminster elections, from 2013, UKIP regularly attained double digit ratings in voting intention surveys and won two by-elections in October and November 2014 after Conservative MPs Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless joined the party and triggered by-elections. The most significant electoral breakthrough came at the June 2014 European Parliament elections, where UKIP came first in terms of vote share (26.6%) and seats (24), the first time a third party had achieved this in a national election since the Liberal Party in the 19th century. At the 2015 general election UKIP increased their vote share by 9.5%, more than any other party, though they would win only a single seat. This section aims to evaluate to what extent the rise of UKIP during this period influenced the development of Conservative European policy.

Firstly, to what extent did the rise of UKIP in the 2010-2015 parliament contribute to Conservative leadership’s decision to change policy and commit to holding an in/out EU referendum? Many academic studies and journalistic accounts credit the electoral threat of UKIP in convincing the Conservative leadership to change their policy on a referendum. Additionally, a number of individuals interviewed for this thesis also credited the rise of UKIP in bringing about this policy change. It certainly made a contribution, but this should not be exaggerated. Sequencing the stages in UKIP’s rise suggest that their electoral impact, in voting intention surveys and election results, largely took place after the referendum decision was made.

Figure 8.4 below shows data from the Ipsos Mori voting intention survey for the 2010-2016 period. As can be seen, the rise of UKIP in the national election polls does not start to occur until late 2012 and early 2013. This, therefore, is after May/June 2012 when Cameron is known to have taken the decision to change party policy on an EU referendum (D’Ancona, 2013; Shipman, 2016). UKIP’s electoral success in the local, European, and Westminster by-elections, all occurred from 2013 onwards and not before the decision to change policy was made. As stated above, this is not to deny the rise of UKIP made some impact on Cameron’s

Figure 8.4: UK Voting Intention, 2010-2016



decision. It was a rival political institution which put the Conservative Party under pressure to take a more Eurosceptic position on Europe. Craig Oliver, the No. 10 Director of Communications 2011-2016, attributes the influence of UKIP as the third most important

factor in producing the Bloomberg speech, behind the parliamentary party and the ‘right-wing’ newspapers. The Conservative leadership had been concerned at the vote share UKIP candidates had achieved in Westminster by-elections since the start of the Coalition (D’Ancona, 2013). These included by-elections in Barnsley (March 2011, 12.2%) and Corby (November 2011, 14.3%), although it is unlikely Cameron was convinced to make such a significant change in policy on the basis of two by-election results, with only one in a marginal constituency. UKIP achieved more impressive results at by-elections in Middlesbrough (November 2012, 11.8%), Rotherham (November 2012, 21.7%), Eastleigh (February 2013, 27.8%) and South Shields (May 2013, 24.2%), importantly after the policy change was made in May/June 2012.

It appears that it was an anticipated, future threat of a more electorally successful UKIP, and the internal and external problems this would cause, that was the main contribution of UKIP to the EU referendum commitment in January 2013. As Cooper (2016) explained when interviewed on the thinking behind this:

We looked forward and thought you can basically predict with a high degree of confidence that when we get to the European elections in 2014, less than a year from the general election, UKIP are going to win. At which point we will be under a massive amount of pressure externally and internally, and because the PM's mind was already that this isn't a tenable position and we will have to have a referendum, the view was that it is very likely we will end up being pushed into committing to a referendum in the summer of 2014 coming off terrible European election results. If the political reality is that we are going to have to have a referendum anyway, why don't we try to approach it in a more orderly way? Set out a proper argument, think about a process for it, how to frame it and find a way to make it both more credible and coherent policy idea.

However, when sequencing the rise of UKIP before the Bloomberg speech, the argument that it was the political pressure from UKIP, at this early stage in the parliament, that was the *main* factor which led to this decision is unlikely. As Cooper (2016) suggests in the above quote, Cameron was already of a mind that the current Conservative Party position on an EU referendum was ‘untenable’ and would have to change at some point in the future. UKIP aggravated the tension in the Conservative Party over the direction of European policy, especially from 2013 onwards, but, as detailed at the beginning of this chapter, they were not the source of these tensions.

The impact of the rise of UKIP was a much more central factor in shaping European policy when combined with the growing salience of immigration in UK public opinion from 2013. Research by Dennison and Goodwin (2015) shows clearly the strong ownership over the

issue of immigration UKIP had from 2013 onwards. This contributed to Cameron introducing immigration and welfare policy to his EU membership renegotiation plans. The Conservative Party had conducted private research which indicated that UKIP voters were drawn to the party more because of their approach to immigration policy, than concerns over the relationship between the UK and the EU (Cooper, 2016). As stated previously, in the Bloomberg speech Cameron made no mention of immigration policy. It was not until November 2013, 10 months after the Bloomberg speech, that Cameron (2013a) set out new policies for reducing the number of migrants moving to the UK from EU member states, in an article for the *Financial Times*. The sequencing of these events suggests a new external or internal factor which encouraged the Conservative leadership, in the intervening period, to include migration and welfare policy as part of the EU renegotiation plan. This change in policy correlates with the notable rise in the salience of immigration among the general public, and the rise in the number of voters saying they would support UKIP at a future general election, both of which occurred during 2013. This means that it is likely that a combination of these two factors, and the concern in the Conservative leadership that growing concern over EU migration was driving more voters to support UKIP, was the external structural factor which stimulated this policy change.

Overall, as an external rival institution in the same domestic political environment, the rise of UKIP during the 2010-2015 parliament did make an important contribution to European policy change in the Conservative Party. However, when subjected to closer analysis, it appears this influence was less significant in bringing about the EU referendum commitment, than it was in encouraging the Conservative Party to change their EU renegotiation plan to include immigration and welfare policy. UKIP's influence was also amplified from 2013 onwards with the rise in saliency of immigration policy as a concern to voters, and the concern the leadership and parliamentary party had that UKIP's hard-line approach to reducing EU migration levels would reduce electoral support for the Conservative Party.

8.5.2 *The Labour Party and European Policy, 2010-2015*

Under Ed Miliband's leadership, Labour maintained the pro-Europeanism of the Blair/Brown governments (Hertner and Keith, 2017). European policy was not a high priority issue for Labour, with Miliband choosing to focus on more salient policy areas like health and the economy, making vague references to EU reform in his speeches (Hertner and Keith, 2017.) Those that were more specific, such as introducing a warning system for national parliaments

to express concern over EU legislative and regulatory proposals and cutting the EU budget, appeared to closely shadow the soft Eurosceptic positions of the Conservative Party. In policy terms, Labour reacted to Conservative policy changes when it was necessary to do so, rather than coming forward with new policies that would put the Conservative Party under pressure to adapt or change their own positions. For example, the Labour leadership acted reactively to the Bloomberg speech, embracing the idea but only through a beefed up ‘referendum lock’ legislation, which required an in/out EU referendum if further powers were transferred from the UK to the EU. As such, Labour did not create much political pressure for the Conservative Party to change their European policy during the 2010-2015 parliament, as they were, up to a point, mirroring the soft Eurosceptic policy positions of the Conservative Party.

In Parliament, however, Labour did play a role in exacerbating tensions in the Conservative Party and put the leadership under parliamentary pressure to take a more Eurosceptic line on Europe. In a similar way to which Conservative MPs had worked with the Labour opposition to put pressure on the government on key votes during the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, members of the Labour leadership also forged relationships with Eurosceptic campaigners on the Conservative backbenchers for the same ends. This took place on a series of motions tabled in the House of Commons during this parliament, some only tangentially connected with the EU, such as the vote on IMF contributions in July 2011 in which 31 Conservative Party members voted against the government. The most substantial vote was a motion in October 2012 which supported a real term cut in the EU budget, which both the Labour Party and many Eurosceptic Conservative MPs supported. Mark Reckless (2017), a leading Eurosceptic Conservative MP, co-operated with Labour frontbenchers Chris Leslie and Ed Balls on the language in his EU budget motion to ensure that rebel Conservative MPs and opposition Labour MPs could combine to defeat the government.

This co-operation between Labour and backbench Conservative MPs produced a defeat for the government by 307 votes to 294, the first defeat on a government motion of the parliament, which forced Cameron to change position and take a harder line with his EU counterparts, calling for a rise in the budget only in line with inflation (Watt, 2012). Many other Conservative MPs, who did vote for the motion, made it clear they would support future amendments if Cameron did not take a more Eurosceptic position later (Watt, 2012). Reckless (2017) explains that this was significant as it showed the Conservative leadership

that Labour, and backbench Conservative MPs, could work together and dictate the political agenda:

I think that the impression that the government is in charge and in control, that the Prime Minister is showing leadership, was heavily undermined by the prospect of parliamentary defeats...they hadn't seen that level of co-operation between Tory Eurosceptics and Labour, and the fact that I was able to agree a motion and get Labour support for it, and deliver a majority in the House of Commons, could mean that it could happen again at unpredictable points in the future on EU or EU-related issues. Which is what we tried to explain when the Coalition was set up in 2010, that in the same way they needed to agree certain things to keep the Lib Dems on board to get their programme through, they also needed to agree on an in/out referendum if they were to be a sustainable government that could get their business through the Commons.

This parliamentary co-operation between the Labour opposition frontbench, and Eurosceptic Conservative MPs, presented a real threat to Cameron and the Coalition government's ability get their legislative agenda through Parliament. The unpredictability of this co-operation meant the Conservative leadership had to consider closely the views of Eurosceptic MPs when developing policy. As such, and as was the case following the 2012 EU budget defeat, Cameron was incentivised to take European policy in a harder Eurosceptic direction to avoid further embarrassing defeats.

8.6 Domestic Political Context

This section considers how the domestic political context of the 2010-2016 period influenced changes in Conservative European policy over the same period. For much of the Coalition government's time in office, if not the entire period, the state of the economy and public finances dominated the political agenda (Cowley and Kavanagh, 2015). The Coalition implemented a controversial programme of spending cuts and tax rises to reduce the deficit created by the 2007-2008 financial crash. The Coalition also implemented unpopular programmes of reform to the NHS and university funding, both of which increased tensions in government. Legislation to reform the House of Lords, led by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, generated strong opposition from Conservative MPs, with 91 voting against the proposals in July 2012.

The Labour Party, with new leader Ed Miliband, developed noteworthy leads in voting intention surveys from 2012 onwards, before falling behind the Conservative Party in early 2015. Despite struggling to hold sustained leads over Miliband in the leadership satisfaction

ratings, the Conservative Party did maintain a lead over Labour in terms of economic competence and the best potential Prime Minister (Cowley and Kavanagh, 2015). The Coalition's domestic policy programme, and the opposition this generated, created a domestic political context for the Conservative Party in which many were pessimistic about the party winning a majority at the next election and unhappy about the Liberal Democrat influence over the government agenda.

With this political context in mind, two events added to this tension and created incentives for Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to put parliamentary pressure on the Conservative leadership over Europe; the proposed changing of constituency boundaries and the introduction of same-sex marriage legislation.

The re-organisation of parliamentary constituency boundaries, instigated by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 but introduced in July 2010, was a Conservative-led initiative to cut the cost of politics by reducing the number of MPs by 50 and ensure that nearly all MPs represented roughly 70,000 constituents, with some exceptions for geographical reasons. The reduction in the number of MPs would mean many Conservative MPs would have to compete with each other for the new constituencies if their current seat were abolished. David Nuttall, Conservative MP for Bury North 2010-2017, believes this incentivised many Conservative MPs to support the backbench business motion on an EU referendum in October 2011, which the leadership strongly opposed. As he explained to me:

So, knowing what we know about the Eurosceptic nature of Conservative Party members, the question you have to ask yourself is how many MPs were thinking, 'if I'm in a selection battle before members of the local Conservative association, I want to be able to say that I have voted for having a referendum. If the guy or lady next to me didn't it might give me one up on them.'

A member of the Liberal Democrats (Private interview), who worked closely with many Conservative MPs during the Coalition, recalls a Conservative MP expressing a similar view on the connection between the willingness of his colleagues to defy the party leadership on Europe, and anxiety over the constituency boundary review:

[A Conservative MP] once said to me when discussing this that, 'Well you have to understand that what holds us all back. We are expecting...', this was before we sabotaged the redistricting, '...the redistricting of constituency boundaries

and we will all have to compete with each other for the new seats. When we go before these retired Telegraph readers, who are the constituency's executive, they will say to us if there was one law you could repeal...if we don't say the 1972 European Communities Act, they won't select us. That's why we are all so hesitant about it.

This underlines how the apprehension surrounding the review of constituency boundaries amongst Conservative MPs contributed to the domestic political pressure on the Conservative leadership to take more hard-Eurosceptic positions, and to change party policy on an EU referendum, evidenced dramatically in October 2011⁹ when 81 Conservative Party MPs supported an EU referendum motion. This reflects how an external structural factor, the domestic political context, can contribute to producing the institutional conditions in which policy change is more likely to take place.

The announcement in December 2012 that the Coalition government, with the strong support of Cameron, would introduce a bill in 2013 to legalise same-sex marriage in England and Wales, caused widespread concern and opposition from grassroots Conservative members, in addition to many parliamentarians. The difficulty this created between Conservative MPs and their constituency members also created incentives for Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to be seen to stand up to the government on issues of high concern to activists. One of these important issues, of course, was hostility to the EU. As Desmond Swayne (2017), Parliamentary Private Secretary to Cameron 2005-2012, described when interviewed:

There was another factor added to that which spooked many Tory MPs - the huge protest in terms of correspondence over gay marriage...the number of people who didn't renew their membership and the huge correspondence that members received from Conservative supporters about that issue. I found that very difficult to deal with myself, being a libertarian... Nevertheless, that was a factor. That added a significant ingredient to the mix. Making Tory MPs feel jittery. Making them want to be seen standing up to the coalition, polishing their credentials as Eurosceptics, in line with the true believer.

Others interviewed for this thesis suggest the same-sex marriage controversy in the Conservative Party, and the boost this gave to UKIP who opposed the legislation, contributed to the EU referendum policy change. However, the sequence of events does not fit this explanation, as the decision to change policy on the EU referendum position was made in early summer 2012 and the government announcement on same-sex marriage was not made

⁹ If not for significant levels of pressure on backbench Conservative MPs by government whips not to support the motion, the number could have been as high as 150 (Shipman, 2016).

until December 2012. While it is difficult to connect the opposition to same-sex marriage in the Conservative Party with any one policy change, it appears clear that some Conservative MPs felt incentivised to push for a more Eurosceptic agenda towards the EU, in order to placate anger at the grassroots level over same-sex marriage.

The domestic political context, therefore, was one in which initiatives such as constituency boundary reforms, same-sex marriage legislation, and House of Lords reform, created incentives for Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to stand up to the Coalition and Conservative leadership, providing a policy area in which they could assert their views. It also created incentives for the Conservative leadership to placate them by moving to a more Eurosceptic agenda, in order to maintain a semblance of unity between the leadership, parliamentary, and grassroots institutions of the party.

8.7 International Political Context

When forming the Coalition in 2010, Cameron had on a number of occasions expressed a hope that Europe would be a low-key area of government policy (Seldon and Snowden, 2016). This hope, however, did not last long. From 2009 to early 2010, fears started to spread that a number of Eurozone countries had unsustainable levels of sovereign and bank system debt. Those most strongly implicated were Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain. The crisis became a political issue during the 2010 election campaign, when protests and demonstrations took place in Greece after government austerity measures were announced on May 1st, 2010. This highlighted the issue of UK national debt, which had been made a central part of the Conservative election campaign. The Eurozone crisis dominated EU affairs between 2010 and 2014, with Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Cyprus, all needing a variety of financial relief and bailouts from EU and international organisations. This propelled the EU affairs, and how the UK government should respond as a non-Eurozone EU member, up the political agenda in Parliament. However, as the Ipsos Mori Issue Index suggests, it was low among the political concerns of the public.

In raising the salience of EU related issues in Parliament, the Eurozone crisis provided a window of opportunity for Conservative MPs to argue that the institutional architecture of the EU and Eurozone was a drag on the UK economy and finances and that the UK would be better to have a more separate relationship (Nathaniel and Copsey, 2014). More importantly, however, it provided a window of opportunity for Conservative MPs to raise EU-related

issues on the floor of the House of Commons and organise to put parliamentary pressure on the government and party leadership over Europe. For example, there were Conservative rebellions on EU economic governance (November 2010), UK participation in financial assistance to Eurozone countries (February, March, May, and October 2011), and the increase in contributions to the IMF¹⁰ (July 2011).

The international context of the Eurozone crisis also interacted with the domestic context of UK politics, and the Coalition programme of financial austerity. Conservative MPs used the unpopularity of reductions in government spending at home as an argument in favour of opposing both further UK financial assistance to the Eurozone and closer economic/financial integration with the EU. As Reckless (2011) stated when speaking in support of an amendment opposing potential liability for UK tax-payers in further Eurozone bailouts in May 2011:

If they believe that we need to put a stop to these bail-outs and say, “Enough is enough, it is our money, we did not join your currency, and we want our money back”, then vote no to the amendment.

The EU’s response to the sovereign and banking debt crisis is therefore an example of an external institution, this time in the international political environment, interacting with the domestic political context in the UK, to provide the conditions that would encourage policy change on Europe in the Conservative Party. It is an important structural factor that provided Conservative MPs with a window of opportunity in which to vote against the government and put more pressure on the Conservative leadership to move policy in a more ‘hard’ Eurosceptic direction.

8.8 Factions and Tendencies

During the 2010-2015 parliament, a collection of factions and more informal groups of individuals, which Rose (1964) describes as tendencies, worked within parliament from the Conservative backbenches to change party and government policy in a more Eurosceptic direction. This type of highly organised, formal parliamentary insurgency had not been experienced inside the Conservative Party since the 1990s, when a faction of Conservative MPs worked within parliament to try to delay and defeat the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. The Pro-European/Pro-Euro tendency in the parliamentary party after 1997 was

¹⁰ That could potentially be used by the IMF in financial bailouts for Eurozone countries.

disorganised and docile and did not make a notable contribution inside or outside parliament. With the transition from opposition to government, Conservative MPs now had the window of opportunity they had been waiting for to pressurise and gain access to colleagues in positions of power in government. They did this through a number of actions, organising in parliament to defeat and oppose the Coalition on EU related issues, utilising the influence of outside pressure groups, organising letter writing campaigns, and the direct lobbying of government ministers and leadership figures. The leaders of these groups worked cross-party, much like in the 1990s, with colleagues in the Democratic Unionist Party and the Labour Party (Nuttall, 2016). This sustained pressure on the party leadership, in combination with the other factors discussed in this chapter, is the foremost internal factor which explains the policy changes seen on Europe during this parliament. This section firstly explains in detail how these Eurosceptic factions and tendencies organised and co-operated with each other.

8.8.1 Organisation and Co-operation

The collection of Conservative MPs, who organised to change party and government policy on Europe from within parliament, did so through a network of Eurosceptic factions and more loosely constituted tendencies of like-minded individuals. These groups co-operated with each other, but had their own identities and leaders, and conducted their own separate initiatives without necessarily consulting the other groups. The general principle was to pressurise the government into taking policy in a more Eurosceptic direction, but as Mark Reckless (2017) explained to me, the main goal of his more formal group was to extract a commitment to hold a referendum on EU membership:

I formed with Douglas Carswell, we called it the Tuesday Breakfast Club, a group of several Eurosceptics including myself, Douglas, Steve Baker, Phillip Hollobone, Christopher Chope, who were there pretty reliably, and a few others who at least came some of the time. We were looking, really from the beginning of the 2010-2015 parliament, to put pressure on the government, with a view to ensuring we got an in/out referendum on our EU membership. That was our objective. From the beginning, we campaigned for that and chose a series of differing but related issues to gradually increase our strength and get influence on the government.

This was a conscious change of tactics, following the transition from opposition to government, that aimed to ‘radicalise the parliamentary party’ by creating opportunities to debate and vote on the issue in Parliament (Carswell, 2017). If the Conservative leadership were constantly protected from losing votes on Europe by Liberal Democrat MPs, this would

further radicalise the parliamentary and membership sections of the party, putting additional pressure on Cameron not to be seen to always take the pro-EU position (Carswell, 2017). This faction, led primarily by Carswell and Reckless, had a clear objective of extracting a commitment to an EU referendum, or forcing the circumstances in which Cameron would find it difficult to deny one.

Three other more established groups, representing the Thatcherite-Eurosceptic wing of the parliamentary party, also participated in organising against the Coalition and Cameron's low-key position on Europe. No Turning Back, Cornerstone, and the 92 group all began meeting on Wednesday nights together to discuss 'strategy, debates, motions, amendments' (Private interview). They also co-operated to help ensure Eurosceptics were elected to select committees and the 1922 Committee, by producing 'sound slates' of candidates supported by the main groups (Private interview). Each group essentially had the same outlook on Europe but were essentially different 'brands' for the various senior MPs (Edward Leigh, John Redwood, and Gerald Howarth) to discuss Eurosceptic activities.

During key votes, such as the October 2011 EU referendum motion and the October 2012 EU budget amendment, the operation to encourage colleagues to vote against the Coalition was as organised as it had been during the Maastricht Treaty ratification. As one member of this group (Private interview) explained to me when discussing this:

They would mobilise their own shadow whipping operation, so they would choose two people, or three people, to mobilise the vote, send out emails saying, 'Vote against the government on this amendment because it is really important because of X, Y, and Z'. On the day they provided unofficial whips, shadow whips, basically their own people to get people through the right lobby.

This was key to ensure a sufficient number of MPs would support these groups on important votes, as the greater the number they could mobilise, the more pressure it would put on Cameron to not ignore their position. In the 2010 to 2012 parliamentary session, for example, 93 Conservative MPs, 30% of the total parliamentary party, voted against the government on 29 separate pieces of EU related business (Lynch and Whittaker, 2013). It is important to recognise the role of attrition in this campaign, with Eurosceptic factions attempting to force concessions from Cameron via constant pressure on Europe in parliament (Private interview). To this extent, the policy change seen in this parliament is a combination of all these incidents. However, the following section will look at a series of key parliamentary events that more directly contributed to policy change.

8.8.2 The 81 Rebellion – October 2011

The circumstances surrounding the backbench rebellion in October 2011, when 81 Conservative MPs defied a three-line whip to vote in favour of an EU referendum, was the direct result of a series initiatives by the Eurosceptic factions identified above. Following the 2010 election a new committee was formed, the Backbench Business Committee, which had the power to allocate debates in the House of Commons on issues of interest to backbenchers. There were low levels of awareness about the powers this new committee had, and few MPs had shown interest in applying to be members (Davies, 2016). This was identified by a group of Conservative MPs as being a powerful tool in getting time on the floor of the House to debate the EU without the government having the power to block them (Nuttall, 2016). Peter Bone, Philip Davies, and Phil Hollobone were elected to the committee of seven, meaning they needed only one member to support them to get a debate scheduled. David Nuttall, a fellow Eurosceptic colleague, applied to have a debate on the question of EU referendum, which was granted by the committee (Nuttall, 2016).

Both sides of the Coalition publicly rejected the idea as the debate grew closer and the government realised there was substantial support for the motion amongst Conservative MPs. Cameron took a firm line and ordered an ‘industrial-scale operation’ to reduce the number of Conservative MPs willing to vote for the motion (Shipman, 2016). Cameron and Hague personally saw MPs in their parliamentary offices to convince them to support the government or abstain (Nuttall, 2016). The supporters of the motion responded with their own ‘military operation’ behind the scenes to counter this (Private interview). The scale of the rebellion, 81 Conservative MPs voted for the motion, was the biggest in post-1945 Conservative Party history.

The evidence suggests that it was this event, and the scale upon which so many of his own MPs had defied his authority so early on in the parliament, that was the key internal factor in convincing Cameron to change policy on an EU referendum between May and June 2012 (Clegg, 2016; Laws, 2016; Shipman, 2016). A separate follow-up campaign, organised by Conservative MP John Baron, which delivered a letter personally to Cameron from the parliamentary party from over 100 backbenchers on June 30th 2012, calling for an EU referendum in the current parliament, is also likely to have contributed (Baron, 2016). However, an advisor to Cameron credits the October 2011 rebellion as the critical juncture, as it was clear the parliamentary party would not accept anything other than a commitment on

an EU referendum before the 2015 election (Shipman, 2016). There were also genuine fears of a leadership challenge, by a more Eurosceptic MP who would be willing to commit the Conservative Party to a referendum, if Cameron had not changed his mind (Oliver, 2016). The parliamentary campaign, by a collection of Eurosceptic factions and individual actors, directly resulted in the most significant European policy change of the parliament. Though other factors contributed, as detailed elsewhere in this chapter, the October 2011 rebellion was the critical juncture which produced this policy change.

8.8.3 The EU Budget – October 2012

In October 2012, as part of the campaign to put the Coalition under pressure over Europe, Conservative MPs attempted to amend a government motion on UK contributions to the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, the EU budget framework for the next seven years. The government's position was to negotiate with the EU for a rise in the budget in line with inflation. An amendment, introduced by Reckless, called for a real term cut in the budget. Carswell had used the same issue to initiate a backbench rebellion in October 2010. In total 35 Conservative Party had supported the Carswell amendment. This had been 'a huge shock for the whips and the government' and was the first indication to the party leadership of the strength of backbench opinion on the issue (Reckless, 2017). In October 2012, after two of years of austerity, the Labour Party supported the Reckless EU budget amendment and the government was defeated 307 to 294, with 51 Conservative MPs voting against the Coalition. This was an even bigger shock for Cameron, as it indicated that Conservative MPs could and would work with Labour to defeat the government when their political interests aligned. This directly influenced a change in policy, as Cameron subsequently negotiated for a cut in the seven-year EU budget after October 2012, achieving this in February 2013 (Waterfield and Kirkup, 2013). Conservative MPs had indicated there would be further parliamentary defeats if Cameron did not change policy on the EU budget (Watt, 2012).

As with the October 2011 EU referendum, the organisation of Conservative MPs in parliament, in this case by Reckless, was the primary influence on Cameron changing his policy position and moving to the harder Eurosceptic position popular with Eurosceptic backbenchers. The rebellions in question relied upon a strict policy of not discussing plans with those outside a small trusted circle until the last possible moment (Carswell, 2017; Reckless, 2017). This ensured that government whips had less time to organise against amendments, and potential converts on the backbenches would not be put off by seeing

rebellions bragged about in the newspapers before they had been discussed with colleagues privately (Carswell, 2017; Reckless, 2017). This had been the case in previous parliaments and was counter-productive (Carswell, 2017; Reckless, 2017). This change in tactics, at least by one influential group, was an internal factor that helped to produce these policy changes on Europe.

8.8.4 The Queen's Speech Amendment – May 2013

The final key example of the activity of Eurosceptic factions producing direct policy change came in May 2013, before and after the Queen's speech. This initiative was led by John Baron. The objective on this occasion, as Baron explained to me, was to put pressure on Cameron to support a private members' bill for an EU referendum in the 2010-2015 parliament (Baron, 2016). He and other like-minded colleagues did not accept that the Bloomberg speech was enough, as Cameron had not committed to bringing forward legislation to make it law (Baron, 2016). As discussed previously, Conservative MPs were deeply suspicious of Cameron's promises on Europe and did not trust him to deliver on them. In the Spring 2013, Baron had asked a Cabinet member at a 1922 Committee meeting whether it was likely they would support a private members' bill, if they could not get Liberal Democrat approval. They said they could not support it (Baron, 2016). Eurosceptic Conservative MPs did not accept this, and Baron decided to try and amend the Queen's Speech to express 'regret' that it had not included legislation on an EU referendum.

Despite attempts to avoid a 'rebellion' by announcing that Conservative MPs would not be whipped to vote against the amendment, and avoiding the heavy-handed tactics administered to deter rebels in October 2011, 114 Conservative MPs voted in favour of the Baron amendment (Watt and Wintour, 2013). Again, as in the other examples, organisation among a faction of Conservative MPs in parliament had directly changed party policy on Europe. On July 4th 2013, with leadership encouragement, James Wharton MP introduced a private members' bill to legislative for an EU referendum in the 2010-2015 parliament.

8.9 Individual Actors

8.9.1 David Cameron

Although they are not the only individual actors that shape policy, the party leader in the Conservative Party policy-making structure certainly has the final say. This gives them a critical role in the explanation of why party policy changes, when, and under what circumstances. Cameron as an individual actor must be factored into any analysis of European policy change during his period as Prime Minister. As this section will set out, certain characteristics of Cameron's personality arguably made him more susceptible to be influenced by the internal and external pressures discussed previously in this chapter.

Most, if not all, political leaders have complex characters that defy one-dimensional assessments of their personality. Cameron is no different in this regard, and therefore, many aspects of his character contributed to his willingness to change position on European policy during this period. A number of those interviewed for this thesis, who themselves had many interactions with Cameron over Europe, suggests that it was a contradictory mix of hubris, an overconfidence in his own ability to win a political argument, but also complacency and an acute sensitivity to criticism and political pressure (Private interview).

One Conservative MP (Private interview) explained to me how he saw the contribution that Cameron's character made to policy change on Europe during this period:

I think his personality goes to the core of this. A more cautious person, a less confident person would not have made the undertakings that he did. A more ideological person, someone who was more committed to the EU, I suspect that they would have been more reluctant to essentially gamble with British membership of the EU on a referendum. So, he lacked ideology and he had a huge self-confidence to deliver the verdict that he needed...Cameron, I'm afraid, was the unwitting aider and abettor of this. Contrary to what he wanted. Without him this wouldn't have happened. That is almost a truism, but you know a more diffident person would not have made the commitments that he made and would not have blundered into the referendum that he did and probably wouldn't have lost it. A lot of it had to do with his complacency, his self-belief, his sense of historic mission, maybe.

Cameron's natural tendency to be confident that he can change the political weather and win the argument, as arguably he did in making the Conservative Party electable again during the 2005-2010 parliament, contributed to his decision to change position on an EU referendum in 2012 and commit his party to a 'fundamental' renegotiation of the UK-EU membership terms (Cameron, 2013a).

These characteristics, complacency and overconfidence, may also have contributed to the perceived lack of success Cameron achieved in his EU renegotiation strategy. One individual

(Private interview), a Conservative MEP during this period, argues that it was self-confidence, bordering on arrogance, during the renegotiation that contributed to its ultimate failure. Cameron was not willing to invest the required time to get the outcome he needed and rushed the process to get it finished quickly (Private interview). Conservative MEPs did try and contribute ideas, but no one directly involved in the process at Westminster was interested in engaging constructively with them (Private interview). Furthermore, Cameron had a limited understanding of how EU institutions worked and relied naively on his relationships with EU leaders such as Mark Rutte, the Dutch Prime Minister, who did not share many of his views on EU reform (Private interview). This approach decreased the chances of Cameron securing the renegotiation deal that he had set out to achieve.

Another Conservative MP (Private interview) suggests that, alternatively, it was Cameron's private insecurities about his own position during his premiership and his sensitivity to conflict, rather than hubris, which encouraged Cameron to make changes to European policy:

He was actually thin-skinned, lacking confidence...It was a bravado of confidence that hid this lack of confidence. I remember once when he was going to Brussels, it was a very weak moment in his premiership, and he is suggesting a policy which I can't recall, but I leaked something to one of the political blogs about certain names being put in, certain names asking for him to go...I leaked an exaggerated number of names to this blog, knowing full well that he checked these blogs on his Blackberry constantly, all the time. Like Major used to read the newspapers. Behold, within 12 hours the policy had changed because he was at a particularly weak moment, reading the blogs, and responded to the blogs. You don't do that if you're confident.... I know of MPs that were being sacked, or didn't get a job, that would throw a tantrum or burst into tears and he would buckle.

This suggests that it was a mixture of overconfidence in public, but also insecurity about his own position in private, which combined during this period to incline Cameron to move to a more Eurosceptic position on Europe, including conceding the internal party demand for an in/out EU referendum.

8.9.2 Angela Merkel

An important part of Cameron's approach to European policy during this period was the belief that winning the support of German Chancellor Angela Merkel was the key to success during negotiations with the EU. As one advisor to Cameron put it, 'The strategy was always: schmooze the pants off Merkel, get that locked down and then everyone else will fall in

behind' (Shipman, 2016:11). Merkel was therefore the EU leader Cameron most consulted on EU relations during the Coalition and following the 2015 election, to the detriment of his relationship with other EU leaders. This meant Merkel was a critical individual actor on the development of Conservative European policy as her view on whether a reform proposal was workable could shape policy before it had even been formally introduced to other EU member states. This role was enhanced, in comparison to other EU leaders, due to the weight Cameron and his aides themselves placed on her opinion and influence in the EU.

As a result, Merkel was a critical individual actor in the development of the Conservative Party EU renegotiation policy, her influence directly changing policy. In November 2014 Cameron gave a speech on Europe, specifically around EU freedom of movement and welfare entitlements. When developing the policy proposals to be included in the speech, Cameron had wanted to propose a quota mechanism to limit the number of EU migrants coming to the UK in the future (Shipman, 2016). This idea was subsequently leaked to the Sunday Times, and privately and publicly rejected by Merkel as non-negotiable (Shipman, 2016). Cameron dropped the proposal as a direct result of Merkel's veto, suggesting an 'emergency break' mechanism as an alternative, also later dropped from the speech on the understanding Merkel would not support this either (Shipman, 2016).

8.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explain a series of policy changes experienced by the Conservative Party during the 2010-2016 period. Firstly, the difference between the European policy of the 2010 Conservative manifesto and the Coalition Agreement was the combination of influence from the pro-EU Liberal Democrats and a willingness from the Conservative Party leadership to drop commitments made in opposition to repatriate or radically renegotiate areas of EU competence, such as social and employment policy. As such, a contingent event, like the 2010 general election hung parliament, had an important impact on policy change at this point. Secondly, on the question of the change in position on participation in EU justice and criminal policy, this has been difficult to find direct evidence for. However, this was likely the result of a combination of political pragmatism (opting in to the most important and opting out of the less beneficial measures to save face) and the influence of Theresa May in Cabinet.

The decision to change policy on an EU referendum, and the commitment to legislating in the current parliament, was the result of a series of endogenous factors and the sequence in which they occurred. 1) The failure to win the 2010 general election and the abandoning of much of the Conservative European policy commitments in Coalition Agreement caused deep resentment among Eurosceptic Conservative MPs towards Cameron; 2) This helped stimulate, and sustain, a parliamentary campaign from a network of Conservative MP Eurosceptic factions which aimed to win concessions from the party leadership on Europe; 3) A critical juncture took place in October 2011 when 81 Conservative MPs voted against the government to support a referendum, which ultimately convinced Cameron that policy had to change, or he risked losing control of the government agenda.

This thesis has argued that UKIP played a less significant role in this than usually credited, as the sequence of events suggests Cameron made his decision to change policy in early 2012 before UKIP's political and electoral rise. The contribution they did make was more the anticipation of their electoral significance later in the parliament, at the 2014 European elections and at the next general election. UKIP were more successful at influencing the Conservative Party to introduce EU immigration and welfare reform as part of the renegotiation and referendum, which took place in November 2014 following the UKIP victory at the European elections in May 2014 in EU migration had been their main campaign issue. The rise of immigration as the most important issue to UK voters also contributed to this change in policy during the 2010-2015 parliament. However, during the negotiations themselves after the 2015 election, the role of a powerful individual political actor – German Chancellor Angela Merkel - was the most important exogenous factor in causing Cameron to adjust his proposals for a new UK-EU relationship.

The new institutionalist framework, as set out in Chapter 3, has made a central contribution to the analysis in this chapter and has guided the discussion. It has shown how the role of individual actors, the influence of historical legacy (actions, events, and ideas), the impact of internal/external institutions and groups, the structural environment, path dependency and the sequencing of events has contributed to the development of European policy during this period in the history of the Conservative Party.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explain the development of European policy in the Conservative Party, 1997-2016. The intention has been to explain how European policy has changed during this period, and what causal factors have most contributed to these changes. The objective of this conclusion is to provide a summary of the preceding chapters main findings and contributions, in addition to emphasising throughout the original contribution this thesis makes. It is structured in the following manner. In the first section, the exogenous and endogenous causes of European policy change in the Conservative Party are considered in context. This section also considers the contribution these findings make to literature on policy change in political parties. The second section considers the thesis findings in the context of the new institutionalist theoretical approach. The third section looks at other examples in which this approach could be applied. Lastly, this conclusion looks at how the development of policy during this period contributed to Brexit, and what the implications of this thesis means for future research into the development of European policy in the Conservative Party following the Brexit referendum.

9.1 Endogenous and Exogenous Causes of Policy Change in Context

This thesis has drawn extensively on the quantitative and qualitative literatures that reflect on policy change, as well as general change, in political parties. The development of these literatures, as examined in Chapter 2, has made an important contribution to our understanding of how and why political parties change. However, there has been a tendency within this literature to consider different exogenous and endogenous factors in isolation of each other, and to downplay the significance of some factors such as political leadership and intra-party pressure groups. As such, the literature on the Conservative Party and European policy has also tended to limit the explanation of policy change to an isolated range of factors, most notably somewhat vague references to the rise of ‘Euroscepticism’, which has limited our understanding of other possible explanations and provided insufficient analysis. In applying an approach that systematically considers the contribution of both exogenous and endogenous factors, and the interactions between them, this thesis provides a blueprint for a more detailed, flexible, and wide-ranging analysis of policy change in a political party.

It has drawn a number of broader conclusions which are relevant to the future consideration of policy change in political parties. Firstly, as the previous chapters have established, the role of the party leaders and political leadership has been an influential in contributing to party change. This therefore supports the conclusions of Bale (2012), in his general study of policy change in the Conservative Party, that party leaders were central to changes in the direction of policy. This thesis however would expand upon this, in context of European policy 1997-2016, to also include political 'leaders' in the party such as Shadow Foreign Secretaries 1997-2005 (Howard, Maude, and Ancram) and Foreign Secretary William Hague (2005-2010, 2010-2014). Each individual, in their own capacities and to different extents, were influential in both instigating and influencing policy change during this period. This was especially the case during the opposition years, as Shadow Secretaries were given considerable autonomy over the technical details of new policy. This finding points to the need to not narrow 'political leadership' to only concern the role of the party 'leader', but to expand it to consider the influence other individual political 'leaders' have over policy change in political parties.

Secondly, the findings of this thesis have broader considerations for the role that factions play in contributing to policy change in political parties. As examined in Chapter 2, the literature tends to down play the role party factionalism has on policy change in political parties. This thesis has concluded that party factionalism can contribute to policy change, as evidenced in Chapters 5 and 8, with the impact more acute in periods where the party is in government rather than opposition. As suggested in some of the elite interviews, this is likely to be the result of a strategic consideration on the part of individuals and groups as to the right moment to apply pressure on the party leadership to change policy. In opposition, the potential costs of being seen to undermine the party leadership and damage the chances of returning to government are not counter-balanced with the opportunity to directly change government policy. This acts to decrease potential for active party factionalism. However, once in government, the opportunity to change party, and therefore government policy, potentially exceeds the costs. Following the 2010 general election and the formation of the Coalition with the pro-EU Liberal Democrats, and after 13 years of Eurosceptic opposition, the necessary internal and external conditions were there for factions to have the political space to have an influence on policy.

Thirdly, this thesis highlights the role of leadership elections on policy change during this period. This, as with the role of party factionalism, has in general not been previously considered in the literature on policy change in political parties as being particularly influential. This thesis has shown that in the competitive environment of leadership elections policy positions can be established by candidates with long-term ramifications for policy change. The 1997 leadership election produced the ‘two-parliaments’ policy on the single currency, a triangulated position between the anti and pro-single currency wings of the parliamentary developed by Hague and his campaign team to attract the support of moderate Conservative MPs. The 2005 leadership election would prove fundamental in seeing the idea that Conservative MEPs should withdraw from the EPP grouping, a policy which had long been a goal of many Eurosceptic MPs and MEPs, became established party policy when Cameron committed to it under the perception that this would give him a competitive edge over Davis. This commitment, as developed in Chapter 8, would have long-term implications for European policy when the party returned to government and needed to work with continental European allies which they previously have been seen to reject. As such, a conclusion of this thesis is that more consideration needs to be made for the potential that leadership elections have to be arenas in which the origins of future policy change can be established.

Finally, a conclusion of this thesis is that while the empirical chapters of this thesis have highlighted a number of prominent factors which have been the causes of policy change at different times, a consideration also needs to be made of how change has been produced through a continuous interaction between the institutional, structural, and agential elements of the exogenous/endogenous causal factors of policy change. As was developed in Chapter 2, this is a dialectical relationship in which individual agents, institutions, and structural factors interact and react to each other to produce policy change over time.

This interaction has been evident when considering the Conservative Party, policy change, and Europe during the 1997-2016 period. The rise in Euroscepticism in institutions of the Conservative Party since 1997 has interacted with the growth in Eurosceptic attitudes within the general public opinion to produce a structural political environment which has incentivised individual actors to change policy in a Eurosceptic direction. The rise of Euroscepticism in the UK from the 1990’s onwards also created an environment in which there was political space for rival ‘Eurosceptic’ political parties to emerge and put the Conservative Party under pressure to move European policy further in a Eurosceptic

direction. It was the perceived success of these rival political parties at elections by individual actors within the party, most notably the Referendum Party in 1997 and UKIP from 2013 onwards, which additionally contributed to both external and internal pressure on the party leadership to incorporate some of their positions on European policy in order to neutralise them as electoral competitors, most prominently with regards to referenda and EU immigration. Providing wider structural context has been what this thesis has called the domestic and international political contexts, events in the UK or abroad which indirectly or directly have contributed to the stability or instability of European policy at different times. These have been additional layers of the structural environment which have shaped the direction of European policy by requiring individual actors to react to developing events and adjust their actions accordingly. Prominent examples have been the EU reform treaties 1997-2009 and the Eurozone crisis 2010-2014.

Following the transition from opposition party to government in 2010 a network of connected but independent groups used the mechanisms of Parliament and parliamentary procedure to defeat the government on the floor of the House of Commons and persuade Cameron that the inclusion of a promise to hold a future in/out referendum on UK membership of the EU could no longer to be resisted. These structural and institutional factors contextualised the policy options open to the party leadership during this period, both constraining and enabling them to act on policy change depending on the circumstances. This thesis has shown that the interpretation of these structural and institutional circumstances by the party leaders has been fundamental to the content and direction of policy change on Europe in the Conservative Party during this period. Therefore, this thesis considers that the agency and actions of the party leaders, leadership, and other prominent individuals must not be neglected in future research into policy change in political parties.

9.2 Contribution of the New Institutional Approach

To answer the research questions this thesis has used a number of different academic literatures. As the above section indicates, the literature on change in political parties, and the specific literature on policy change in political parties, has made a considerable contribution. In addition, this thesis has also used the new institutional theory literature to develop a more sophisticated explanation of European policy change in the Conservative Party that adds additional factors and mechanisms that are missing or underemphasised in the party change

literature. This has enabled the explanation to better understand policy change as a complex process that develops overtime, with institutions, the structural environment, and individual agency interacting with contingent events and critical junctures to produce change.

This period, 1997-2016, started with a critical juncture which established a new Eurosceptic path dependent dynamic to European policy in the Conservative Party. In 1997, with the election of a majority Eurosceptic parliamentary party and party leadership, European policy in the Conservative Party established itself as hostile to further European integration for the UK and in favour of a greater independent role for national governments in the EU. This created positive feedback for the party leadership. This meant that after each step the party leadership took European policy in more a Eurosceptic direction, however abrupt or incremental, they gained positive feedback from the internal institutions of the party and elements the external structural environment. This both made each further step in this direction more likely and the costs of attempting to challenge this path more severe.

With the internal institutions of the party and the public opinion in the UK seeing Eurosceptic attitudes incrementally increase, this created incentives for policy to move in a gradually harder Eurosceptic direction. It also created constraints to changing the direction of policy, as positions became entrenched and the political costs to reversing the trend increased. As a result, when Cameron formed the coalition in 2010 with the Liberal Democrats and attempted to put the European policy developed by the party of the previous 13 years in 'deep freeze', the political costs included a parliamentary campaign of pressure by MPs that eventually led to the January 2013 EU referendum pledge. European policy had developed incrementally in which Eurosceptic policies were built up over each parliament and leadership. Over the course of the period existing policies were adjusted, and new policies added. The overall Eurosceptic trend continued, with European policy expanding into new areas such as welfare entitlement and immigration. These developed in a sequence over time, with each development and contingent event along the path influencing the next, for example the unexpected failure to win the 2010 general election storing resentment among Eurosceptics that would at least partly be released during the parliamentary campaign for an in/out EU referendum. Critical junctures such as the 1997 general election and the October 2011 parliamentary rebellion by 81 Conservative MPs made significant contributions, but as this thesis has shown, policy change was influenced at least as much by a linked sequence of smaller contingent events and individual actions.

The historical legacies of previous policy decisions and events influenced the actions of future individual agents, most importantly the party leaders. For example, the historical legacy of the Referendum Party, and the impact it made at the 1997 general election, made the parliamentary party and leadership particularly sensitive to the rise of UKIP during the 2010-2015 parliament and the question of referendums on future European integration. This impact was 'huge' (Finkelstein, 2018). As Daniel Finkelstein (2018), political advisor to William Hague 1997-2001, has recently stated on the 2001 general election and the legacy for the Referendum Party:

The threat of a Referendum candidate polling a big vote pushed Tory candidates towards a harder line against the euro and shifted the whole of the right towards support for a referendum.

The persistence of historical legacies, such as the Referendum Party, to influence the thought process of individual agents shows the power history has to shape future policy change in political parties many years after the event.

The historical legacy of ideas, not only events and actions, has also played a role in the development of European policy. The persistence of historical ideas has been important to policy change, as party leaderships have often resurrected ideas from previous periods and introduced them as if they were new ideas. For example, the question of whether the Conservative Party should withdraw its MEPs from the EPP grouping in the European Parliament, or at least fundamentally change the relationship, was a persistent idea throughout the period. History has therefore been used by the policy-making elites within the Conservative Party as fertile ground for the rediscovery and redeployment of historic ideas around Europe, as means of addressing a present political or policy dilemma.

The new institutionalist theoretical framework, as set out in Chapter 3 and applied throughout the rest of thesis, has aimed to establish an integrated approach to the analysis of policy change in political parties. This integrated approach has aimed to introduce a theoretical toolkit of mechanisms and concepts which are missing or underplayed in current literature on policy change in political parties that can be applied to other examples in future research.

9.3 Applying the Approach to other Examples

During the course of this research it has become apparent that this approach could be applied to a number of other cases related to the development of European policy in UK political parties, that would benefit from an in-depth analysis of the causes of policy change. There are

many opportunities here for further research that are both historical and contemporary in perspective, but also comparative. This includes the political party that has been the focus of this thesis, the Conservative Party, but also the Labour Party. This section briefly sets out two of these examples.

- Conservative Party and Labour Party: European Policy Post-Brexit, 2016-Present

As discussed in Chapter 1, the result of the June 2016 referendum that saw the UK electorate vote to leave the EU but not on what terms, has meant European policy for the Conservative Party has entered a new phase. The question has now changed from how to modify the UK-EU relationship and reform the EU institutions (pre-Brexit), to how to negotiate the UK leaving the EU and the degree of association that should remain once the UK has left (post-Brexit). The latter, if not the former, also applies to the Labour Party in the post-Brexit era. The post-Brexit European policy of the Conservative Party and Labour Party are in a state of limbo. The manifestos presented at the 2017 general election providing only vague details and the inconclusive election result adding to the confusion in each party of what direction to take. Each party, at present, is still developing their positions on what the future UK relationship should be with the EU with regards to trade and economic co-operation, immigration and citizens' rights, security and defence, in addition to the status of Northern Ireland. This provides an excellent opportunity in which to apply the approach of this thesis to studying policy change on Europe comparatively, during a new phase in the history of the UK-EU relationship.

- Conservative Party and Labour Party: Policy Change and Europe, 1945-1997

Both the Conservative Party and Labour have had evolving policy positions on European integration since the beginning of the 'European project' in the post-World War Two era. The approach of this thesis could be applied to this to provide an in-depth, comparative analysis of the drivers of policy change on Europe during this period. This is currently lacking in the literature on British political parties and European integration, which tend to focus on narrative accounts of the period. This historical approach would also benefit from the potential availability of archive material, which is more difficult to access in studies which focus on contemporary periods. In addition, it would also be interesting to see whether the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee exerted more collective influence as an intuition during this period on policy change and Europe. As opposed to

the contemporary period, in which this thesis found little evidence to suggest it acted as an institution to change policy.

These examples would provide helpful comparisons with the analysis of policy change and Europe contained in the 1997-2016 period that this thesis has studied. It would be interesting to compare and contrast whether or not the same, or different, endogenous and exogenous causal factors contributed to policy change during the separate historical periods. In addition, they would also provide additional tests of whether the new institutionalist theory insights could be applied to enhance the explanation, or whether the approach would need to be adjusted to compensate for the different historical and political circumstances.

9.5 Conservative European Policy 1997-2016 and Brexit

Since the June 2016 EU referendum a number of studies have attempted to provide an analysis of why a majority of those who participated voted to leave the EU and how the UK had found itself at this historical crossroads to begin with. Most of these studies have focused on a combination of the EU referendum campaign itself, political and demographic trends in public opinion leading up to the vote, the rise of UKIP, and short histories of the UK and EU (Ashcroft, 2016; Mosbacher and Wiseman, 2016; Clarke, et al, 2017; Evans and Menon, 2017; Taylor, 2017).

This thesis makes its own contribution to our collective understanding of the UK path towards Brexit. This is because how the UK has reached this point is as much about the politics of the Conservative Party with regards to European policy over the last twenty years, as it has been about long-term changing economic and social trends, though these are of course connected. This thesis has set out how Conservative policy on European integration moved in an incrementally more Eurosceptic direction between 1997-2016 and provided a theoretically and empirically informed interpretation of why policy changed the way that it did. In this concluding chapter, therefore, it is necessary to consider briefly to what extent the analysis in the preceding chapters helps to explain the present situation the UK finds itself in regarding Brexit.

In the years following the 1997 general election, and sustained under each preceding leadership and parliamentary cohort, the Conservative Party position became more hostile to the question of UK-European integration and more supportive of referendums as a policy mechanism to oppose it. The party strongly opposed all three EU reform treaties

(Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon) between 1997-2009 and proposed national referendums to prevent their ratification in Parliament by the Labour government. During this, as set out in Chapter 4, the European policy increasingly included areas of EU policy competence which the Conservative Party wanted to see reduced and returned to UK control, or at least fundamentally renegotiate.

This put the party position at odds with the majority of centre-right parties in continental Europe and the general direction of the EU member states with regards the future of European integration, while being popular policies with a majority of Conservative MPs, MEPs, and party members. While in opposition, the party leadership were in a position to obfuscate when the question of how these positions on Europe were compatible with continued UK membership of the EU, as the other member states, EU institutions, and treaties presently understood it. This reality would be much harder to avoid when in government. The formation of the Coalition government in May 2010, and argument that the Liberal Democrats would prevent any of the more radical policies on Europe being implemented, did not satisfy many in the parliamentary and grassroots sections of the party who expected more extensive action to be taken after 13 years in opposition.

The reaction to this response, especially from the campaign by Eurosceptics in Parliament to destabilise the government but also from the build-up of Eurosceptic attitudes and policy in the party during the previous 13 years, was the January 2013 in/out EU referendum pledge by Cameron. From this point, and with the path dependent nature of European policy as set out in this thesis, it can be argued that it was a question of when, not if, a future majority Conservative government would be compelled to legislate for a referendum on UK-EU membership.

The methods of managing dissent in the party on this issue (candidate selection, patronage, discipline, allowing low-cost dissent, compromise and delayed decisions, treaty referendum pledges, and issue suppression), as identified by Lynch and Whitaker (2013a), produced increasingly diminished returns over the 1997-2016 period as more determined, Harder Eurosceptic, more independent, and more organised Conservative MPs resistant to compromise on this issue were elected to Parliament believing that the only way to remove the UK from the EU was through a referendum. Cameron, understanding that previous methods of suppressing dissent on the European question were no longer effective, saw the 2013 in/out EU referendum pledge as the only hope to contain, and perhaps resolve, the issue

for a generation. As with the other methods of managing the ideological divisions over Europe in the Conservative Party adopted by previous leaderships, this ultimately also failed.

9.6 Implications for Future Research

This thesis has made an important contribution to the academic literature on the Conservative Party and European policy, British politics and European integration, in addition to literature on political parties and policy change. It has used a significant amount of original qualitative data from 36 interviews with party elites, many of whom had key roles in the policy making process, in combination with an in-depth analysis of multiple secondary qualitative and quantitative data sources. It has also shown that insights from a new institutionalist theoretical approach can be used to help enhance the explanation of policy change as a process over time. However, there are number of limitations to this research that could be improved upon, in addition to implications for future research in the post-Brexit era.

Firstly, and has been commented previously in the empirical chapters, there remains limited academic sources on the views of contemporary Conservative Party members on European integration, and what impact this might have had on the selection of Eurosceptic parliamentary candidates. Academic survey data on the attitudes of party members would have been helpful in determining to what extent party members were in sync with the attitudes of the parliamentary party and current policy. The thesis concluded that party members were a limited influence on policy change, but more robust quantitative data would have helped to draw more firm conclusions. This will be important to any future research on the Conservative Party and Europe in the post-Brexit era.

Secondly, the result of the June 2016 EU referendum brings into question to what extent the categorisation of ‘soft Eurosceptic-hard Eurosceptic’ or ‘pro-EU’ any longer has any application to future research into the Conservative Party and European policy in the UK, as it is currently understood in the party-based Euroscepticism literature. It is difficult to see how, logically, members of the parliamentary party could be classified as ‘pro-EU’ if they still support the UK leaving the EU, however close the relationship afterwards. Or, for that matter, a party currently in government being categorised as ‘soft Eurosceptic’ as they negotiate a UK withdrawal. It will be necessary to construct a new categorisation approach, on a spectrum between ‘Soft Brexit’ and ‘Hard Brexit’ during the negotiation and transition

phase. Beyond this will depend on what future political and economic relationship evolves between the UK and the EU, and how the present and future Conservative Party reacts to these continually changing circumstances.

Appendix: List of Interviewees

1. Ancram, Michael. Marquess of Lothian. Conservative MP for Devizes, 1992-2010. Deputy Leader, 2001-2005. Interview 11/05/2016.
2. Baron, John. Conservative MP for Basildon and Billericay, 2001-Present. Interview 25/10/2016.
3. Brady, Sir Graham. Conservative MP for Altrincham and Sale West. Shadow Minister for Europe, 2004-2007. Chair, 1922 Committee, 2010-Present. Interview 11/05/2016.
4. Cash, William. Conservative MP for Stone, 1997-Present. Shadow Cabinet 2001-2003. Chair, European Scrutiny Committee, 2010-Present. Interview 27/10/2016.
5. Carswell, Douglas. MP for Clacton, Conservative 2005-2014, UKIP 2014-2017. Interview 22/11/2017.
6. Chope, Sir Christopher. Conservative MP for Southampton Itchen, 1983-1992, and Christchurch, 1997-Present. Interview 22/09/2016.
7. Collins, Tim. Conservative MP for Westmorland and Lonsdale, 1997-2005. Shadow Cabinet 2001-2005. Interview 14/03/2016.
8. Cooper, Andrew. Lord Cooper of Windrush. Conservative Party Director of Strategy, 1997-1999, 2011-2013. Interview 02/03/2016.
9. Davies, Phillip. Conservative MP for Shipley, 2005-Present. Interview 17/10/2016.
10. Duncan-Smith, Iain. Conservative MP for Chingford, 1992-Present. Shadow Cabinet 1997-2001. Leader, 2001-2003. Cabinet, 2010-2016. Interview 25/10/2016.

11. Goodman, Paul. Conservative MP for Wycombe, 2001-2010. Editor, ConservativeHome, 2010-Present. Interview 02/11/2016.
12. Grieve, Rt Hon Dominic. Conservative MP for Beaconsfield, 1997-Present. Shadow Cabinet 2008-2010. Cabinet 2010-2014. Interview 28/10/2016.
13. Hollobone, Phillip. Conservative MP for Kettering, 2005-Present. Interview 09/09/2016.
14. Howard, Michael. Lord Howard of Lympne. Conservative MP for Folkstone, 1983-2010. Shadow Cabinet 1997-1999, 2001-2003. Leader, 2003-2005. Interview 01/03/2016.
15. Howarth, Christopher. Special Advisor to Shadow Minister for Europe, 2007-2010. Interview 03/03/2016.
16. Howarth, Sir Gerald. Conservative MP for Aldershot, 1997-2017. Interview 27/10/2016.
17. Kwarteng, Kwasi. Conservative MP for Spelthorne, 2010-Present. Interview 19/10/2016.
18. MacGregor, Mark. CEO, Conservative Central Headquarters, 2002-2003. Interview 17/03/2016.
19. Mackay, Andrew. Conservative MP for East Berkshire and Bracknell, 1983-2010. Shadow Cabinet 1997-2001. Parliamentary/Political Advisor to David Cameron, 2005-2009. Interview 01/03/2016.
20. Maclean, David. Rt Hon Baron Blencathara of Penrith. Conservative MP for Penrith and The Borders, 1983-2010. Shadow Cabinet 2001-2005. Interview 26/10/2016.
21. McMillan-Scott, Edward. Conservative MEP, 1984-2009, for Yorkshire and the Humber. Leader Conservative MEPs, 1997-2001. Interview 14/04/2016.

22. Mitchell, Andrew. Conservative MP for Sutton Coldfield, 2001-Present. Shadow Cabinet 2005-2010. Cabinet 2010-2012. Interview 15/3/2016.
23. Nuttall, David. Conservative MP for Bury North, 2010-2017. Interview 22/10/2016.
24. Private interview, 24/10/2016.
25. Private interview, 19/10/2016.
26. Private interview, 18/10/2017.
27. Reckless, Mark. MP for Rochester and Strood. Conservative 2010-2014, UKIP 2014-2015. Interview 13/11/2017.
28. Rifkind, Rt Hon Sir Malcom. Conservative MP for Edinburgh Pentlands, 1974-1997, and Kensington, 2005-2015. Defence Secretary, 1992-1995. Foreign Secretary. 1995-1997. Interview 25/02/2016.
29. Sherbourne, Stephen. Lord Sherbourne of Risby. Chief of Staff to Michael Howard, 2003-2005. Interview 27/04/2016.
30. Spelman, Dame Caroline. Conservative MP for Meriden, 1997-Present. Shadow Cabinet 2001-2010. Cabinet 2010-2012. Interview 16/03/2016.
31. Spicer, Michael. Rt Hon Lord Spicer or Crophorne. Conservative MP for South Worcestershire, 1974-1997, West Worcestershire 1997-2010. Chairman, 1922 Committee, 2001-2010. Interview 14/09/2017.
32. Spring, Richard. Rt Hon Baron Risby of Haverhill. Conservative MP for Bury St Edmunds, 1992-1997, and West Suffolk, 1997-2010. Opposition Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, 2000-2004. Interview 16/04/2016.

33. Swayne, Sir Desmond. Conservative MP for New Forest East, 1997-Present. PPS to David Cameron, 2004-2012. Interview 18/10/2016.
34. Van Orden, Geoffrey. Conservative MEP for East England, 1999-Present. Interview 12/10/2016.
35. Wharton, James. Conservative MP for Stockton South, 2010-2017. Interview 18/10/2016.
36. Widdecombe, Rt Hon Anne. Conservative MP for Maidstone, 1987-2010. Shadow Cabinet 1998-2001. Interview 29/02/2016.

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