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**Public Debates over Europe in Britain:  
Exceptional, Conflict-Driven and Path-Dependent?**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

This article undertakes an analysis of the British public debate over European integration through recourse to an original data-set on political claims-making. The public sphere is conceptualised as a space where citizens interact through their acts of public communication. Such public communications are seen as a potentially important source of the Europe-building process, by providing public input to the elite-led processes of European political institutional integration. Our empirical findings show that British public debates are internalised within the nation-state rather than creating links to supra- or trans-national European polities. In addition, we find relatively low levels of civil society engagement compared to that of political elites, and a high level of political competition between the two major political parties, Labour and Conservative. Overall, we argue that elite ambivalence to Britain's position within the European Union has created this climate of uncertainty, and political competition over Europe. With respect to the proposed referendum on the Constitution, we argue that it will be difficult for public actors, including the Labour government, to make the pro-European case. This is because, first, the opt-out and non-committed stance of previous governments on European integration has legitimated political Euroscepticism, and second, pro-European stances have so far made far fewer attempts to frame their arguments on this political terrain than their Eurosceptic opponents.

## Introduction

In the wake of enlargement, the European Union has embarked on a new ambitious phase of institutional reform in its common political integration project by attempting to establish a Constitution. Faced by the prospect of a European Constitution, the British Labour Government has adopted the strategy of a popular referendum which it sees as a necessary step to legitimate the proposed constitutional change. Opinion polls regularly show that the British public is more Eurosceptic than other Europeans, and despite the British tradition for strong executive government power, Labour has chosen not to risk being seen as acting without a clear public mandate, although it has been prepared to on other issues, such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The decision to hold a referendum over the European Constitution has already sparked a new phase of contentious politics within Britain over Europe, between political parties, opposed campaign groups, and in the press. This raises questions about the nature of British public debates over Europe: are they different from those in other countries, and do they allow space for public constituencies to participate in emerging the supra- and transnational politics of the European Union?

Of course, the participatory capacity of the European Union's politics has long been in dispute independently from British concerns. At the heart of the EU's so-called 'democratic deficit' is the discrepancy between the increasing competences over the lives of Europeans, on one side, and the continuing dominance of national politics as the space for public debates and as the source of collective identities, on the other. Since the early 1990s, several related developments have made this more acute: the erosion of the former 'permissive consensus' on EU integration; the decline of public trust in EU institutions; the decline of voter participation in European elections; and 're-nationalisation' tendencies within politics, marked by the upsurge of xenophobic and anti-European political parties. The paradox is that Europe is increasingly visible in everyday life, for example, in mainland Europeans' and British tourists' use of the Euro, but at the same time, there is a deficiency in the access that publics have to the EU.

In this paper, we use an original data set to address some of these questions about the participatory capacity of British public debates over European issues through recourse to empirical evidence. Our conceptual approach is on a *public sphere* for communication, that is, the public acts of political communication through which collective actors create an interactive medium and space of relationships among citizens over issues of European integration. Here we follow those authors, such as Habermas (2002) and Calhoun (2003), who have argued that such processes of 'Europeanisation' through public communications are at least as important as political institutional developments and individual perceptions in their potential for constituting a common Europe.

Although it is a common assumption in public and academic debates that Britain is 'exceptional' in its relationship to the EU when compared to other countries (see e.g. George 1992, Geddes 2003), there has so far been little research which demonstrates in what ways Britain's trajectory is different. First, we examine the British public debate in comparison to that in France, in order to bring out whether there are distinct national sets of communicative relationships, which link actors across the different levels of politics (national domestic, foreign EU, EU). Here the primary aim is to see

to what extent public acts of communication link to polities beyond the nation-state, both supranationally with the EU, or transnationally with other EU countries, or alternatively remain as national debates about Europe. Second, we examine the communicative relationships between British actors over Europe in more detail. Here we look at the extent to which there is political competition over Europe, and whether such cleavages occur between elite and civil society actors or between the two main political parties (left/right). Then we address the issue of whether there is evidence for the emergence of a 'demos' motivated form of civil society engagement operating within the European supra- and transnationalisation of politics. And finally, we examine the basis on which pro- and anti-European arguments are made.

First, we outline our conceptual approach on the public sphere.

### **Europeanisation and the Public Sphere**

Academic and public debates about the advancement of political integration in Europe have long held assumptions about the impact that such institutional developments would have on the behaviour of political actors and the public citizenry. A 'founding father' of integration theory Ernst Haas (1961: 196) saw European integration as 'the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new political centre.' Although this functionalist vision of an emerging European consensus over ideas, principles and interests now appears as outdated idealism (Schmitter 2000), many of today's scholars, although applying different approaches to European integration – neo-institutionalism (Stone Sweet, Sandholtz and Fligstein 2001), multi-level governance (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996) and network governance (Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999) - still consider that as the locus of political power shifts to the European level, domestic political actors will have to adapt themselves to this new playing field over time. The important questions here are how and to what extent politics is now spread across borders of Europe's nation-states, which actors are able to adapt and benefit most from these new opportunities, and which cognitive understandings and arguments actors apply when positioning themselves within these changing relationships.

To address these questions we propose to focus on public acts of communication, that take place in, and thereby help to create, a space of relations among citizens, namely a *public sphere* for communication over Europe. Previously, Habermas (1989) demonstrated that the emergence of the nation-state as the predominant unit of political space, superseding the formerly important local and regional levels of political organisation, was not just a question of institution-building from above, or an outcome of pre-existing identifications among the citizenry, but depended crucially on the development of a civic public sphere, as an interactive field which increasingly involves citizens in national public debates and collective action. Following these seminal insights, several authors have emphasised that public communication and the construction of a public sphere is an essential prerequisite for a meaningful process of European integration (Erbring 1995, Kopper 1997). For example, Calhoun (2003: 243) states, 'If Europe is not merely a place but a space in which distinctively European relations are forged and European visions of the future enacted, then it depends on communication in public, as much as on a distinctively European culture, or political institution, or economy, or social networks'. Furthermore, using the example of the

European Constitution, Habermas (2002) recently pointed out that the ‘inducing function’ of the construction of a ‘demos’ within Europe, with incentives for institutions, associations and citizens to mobilise collective action may prove to be the end product rather than the starting point of this interactive and dynamic process.

Such insights on the public sphere can be applied usefully to understand the possible transformation of political communication and civic participation in the European region, that may occur both in response to, and as a constitutive part of, the supra- and transnationalisation processes of European integration. It needs underlining here that this basic idea is not a functionalist position that an active participatory public sphere will occur automatically in response to the European integration of political institutions. On the contrary, to the extent that it emerges at all, a European public sphere will build itself, and be built, through the interactions of political actors who engage over European issues across and within different levels of polities. In addition, this development of an intermediary public sphere of political communication that bridges the gap between European policies and institutions and the European citizenry, will be essential to any resolution of the European Union’s much discussed ‘democratic deficit’. Often the ‘democratic deficit’ has been seen as a problem of institutional design of the European polity, or alternatively, as a problem of European citizens’ lack of interest in and identification with the EU, which is demonstrated, for example, by low turnout at European elections. Although such factors are important, we consider that the ‘democratic deficit’ is likely to be resolved more effectively by an increasing engagement of intermediary actors, such as political parties and other civil society collective actors, in acts of political communication over Europe. Such interaction will build communicative linkages between the EU elites and citizenry, which in turn may then produce a European political process that will create better political institutional arrangements and stronger forms of citizenry identification with Europe.

So far, many contributions on this subject have been largely speculative, normative and theoretical, due to an absence of sufficient empirical evidence within which to ground them (for exceptions, see Gerhards 1992; Eder and Trenz 2002). However, most existing literature is in accord that whatever form ‘Europeanisation’ of the public sphere takes, that it will not simply replicate the experience of the nation-state at the supra-national level, to form a supranational European public sphere. In the virtual absence of a transnational Europe-wide mass media system, and with the predominance of national ones, it is clear that the most likely location for ‘Europeanisation’ trends will be within national public spheres (Schlesinger 1995). In this paper, we shall attempt to empirically map the public communication over Europe which occurs in the British public sphere. Our aim is to reach a better understanding of the emergent paths of Europeanisation trends, and the transformation of relationships between political actors which is occurring through Europeanisation. We now provide more details on our political claims-making approach.

## **The Public Sphere and Political Claims-making over Europe<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This conceptual approach draws on insights that have been developed within the framework of a large cross-national comparative project Europub.com that was funded with the EU Framework Five programme. Important texts on this topic produced within this collaborative endeavour are Koopmans and Statham (2001), Koopmans and Pfetsch (2003), Koopmans (2003), and Statham and Guiraudon (2004). For more information on this ongoing project, visit <http://europub.wz-berlin.de> .

Following the theoretical discussion, we see the public sphere both as a channel for citizen participation and the expression of citizenship identities, and as an arena in which EU institutions can be held accountable, and where their legitimacy is at stake. From a ‘top-down’ perspective, public debates and political mobilisation can serve as an input in the European policy process in the form of information on the demands, opinions and interests of the citizenry, and may thereby increase the responsiveness and legitimacy of policies and institutions. From the ‘bottom-up’ viewpoint of the citizenry, information on, and critical evaluation of EU institutions provided by public actors such as interest groups and social movements are crucial to ensuring the accountability of policymakers. Moreover, the public sphere offers citizens possibilities for active participation in public debates and collective action concerning the EU’s policies and institutions, and may thereby serve to strengthen their identifications with Europe.

In comparison to the large amount of research on the impact of European integration on national institutional politics and policymaking, and elite actors and interactions, (e.g., Dyson and Goetz 2002; Boerzel 2002; Green Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001), there has been relatively little on the possible ‘Europeanisation’ trends with respect to civil society and the public sphere (for an important exception, see Imig and Tarrow 2001). The scant empirical evidence which is available shows that there has been a small rise in the number of transnational protest events as European integration advanced in the mid nineties, but that these were mostly directed at national domestic political arenas rather than targeting supranational European ones (Imig and Tarrow 2001; della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht 1999). Between the networks and institutional arenas of political elites, on one side, and occurrences of public protest, on the other, there are a wide range of public arenas, a wide range of civil society actors, and a wide range of action forms which may be used to publicly mobilise political demands over European issues. So far there have been very few systematic attempts to study this type of political action, and those empirical studies which do exist tend to be case studies from which it is problematic to draw generalised findings (e.g. Risse and van de Steeg 2003). This is an important omission, not least because of the feedback effects which the mobilisation of public constituencies may themselves potentially have on the course of European integration.

Our approach is to focus on visible public opinion that is produced when collective actors make purposeful political demands, which are often targeted at institutional addressees, and carried by the mass media. Following the social movements and contentious politics tradition (e.g. Tilly 1978, Tarrow 1994), we refer to this collective participatory action as political ‘claims-making’. We decided against looking at public opinion at the individual level of perceptions and identities of European citizens, because the questions used in surveys such as the Eurobarometer are not of sufficient depth or precise enough to answer our specific research questions. Additionally, survey data gives information only on general aggregated individual opinions and does not relate to collective action and political participation, which is essential for our purpose of studying the active citizenry.

Much previous research on contentious politics has focussed on claims-making by collective actors within the nation-state, both for single country (e.g. Tilly 1978, Tarrow 1989), and cross-national comparative studies (e.g. Kriesi et al. 1995, Kitschelt

1986). In this study, we propose to look at the extent to which claims-making by different types of collective actors crosses political and geographical boundaries, thus producing a supra- or trans-nationalisation of politics. Such approaches have been successfully applied in the past, for example, to study the extent of ‘postnational’ and ‘transnational’ forms of claims-making by migrants in Germany and Britain (Koopmans and Statham 1999a, 2003), and with respect to protest over Europe (Imig and Tarrow 2001). We now plan to use this claims-making approach to assess another form of political globalisation, the extent to which there is evidence for a ‘Europeanisation’ of the active public sphere.

We define an instance of claims-making as a unit of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion or demand by way of verbal or physical action, irrespective of the form which this expression takes (statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc.), and irrespective of the type of the collective actor (governments, social movements, NGOs, etc.) (Koopmans 2002).

First, acts of claims-making communicatively link different political levels (EU supranational, European transnational, EU foreign, national domestic) and different types of actors (e.g., elites/civil society; left/right) and express different purposeful views on European integration (pro-/anti-) in different ways (political, economic, cultural). These communicative links may construct a *vertical* relationship between the domestic nation-state and the supranational European institutions, for example, when a national Prime Minister or pressure group makes a demand on EU institutions with respect to a concern about European policy, or alternatively, when a European institution demands that a national government or other actor, changes its policy with respect to a European issue. Second, these communicative linkages may constitute a *horizontal* relationship between actors within different EU member states, for example, when the French government criticises the British for their lack of commitment to the European Constitution. Another form of communicative linkage is *national*, those cleavages over Europe which remain within the boundaries of the nation-state. Here for example, the British Conservative Party may criticise the Labour Party over its pro-European stance, or alternatively, British farmers may demand that their national government protects their subsidies in European negotiations. Lastly, one might find evidence for EU supranationally contained patterns of claims-making within a national public sphere. An example of this *supranational* relationship is when EU lobby groups make demands in Brussels on EU institutions, or vice versa.

A first aim of this paper is empirical and descriptive, to identify the structure of ‘political claims-making’, i.e., the political demands and expectations which citizens and their political representatives mobilise about the European Union. At stake here, is the chain of linkages of political communication, between political institutions (EU, trans-European, foreign EU, national domestic) and their citizens, as a channel for making political decision-makers responsible and accountable, and their decisions visible and thereby open to legitimation by the public. By comparing the structure of political claims-making of Britain to France<sup>2</sup>, we aim to see whether the extent and form of claims-making over Europe that we find relates to their differing degrees of

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper we focus explicitly on the British case, but reference is made to previous systematic comparative work on Britain and France (Statham and Guiraudon 2004), in order to give information on the specificities of the British case of claims-making over Europe.

institutional integration into Europe. Here the contrast is between France, a founder member of the European project, and Britain, a latecomer, who has not joined integrative projects, such as the abolition of border controls by the Schengen group of EU members, and more recently European monetary union.

A second aim is to give explanatory insights on the type of actors (elite versus civil society; left versus right political party) who make claims over Europe, the relationships between them (competitive/consensual, opponents/allies), and the public positions which they propose on issues relating to European integration (pro-European versus anti-European) and how the arguments which they use frame a relationship to Europe (political, economic, cultural). Here we hypothesise that cross-national differences in political institutions (e.g., degree of centralisation, nature of the electoral system), and differences in elite approaches to European integration (e.g., cross-nationally, from Euroscepticism in the UK to a relatively strong pro-European tradition in France, and internally within a national political elite, such as party political divisions between the Labour and Conservative Party) are important determinants of the degrees and forms of 'Europeanisation' trends that we find in national public spheres.

Before turning to the analysis, we first briefly provide some historical and contextual background on these issues.

### **Britain's relationship to Europe: Political Context and Background**

Britain's trajectory within Europe has led many scholars to refer to Britain as an 'awkward' or 'reluctant' partner in European integration, and to British 'exceptionalism' (George 1990; Geddes 2003) relative to more integration-minded states such as France, Germany and Italy. Marked differences exist between Britain and these 'core' EU member states, both in terms of Britain's more limited participation in Europe's institutional development and in terms of its politicians' more sceptical attitudes to Europe. Under John Major's Conservative government from 1990-1997, the British government negotiated a number of opt-outs from the European integration process - in particular from the single currency, from the Schengen process to dismantle internal frontier controls, and initially also from the Social Chapter<sup>3</sup>.

While in government British political elites have typically taken an ambivalent, 'wait and see' stance regarding European integration, which has served to reinforce and deepen Britain's reluctant partner status. Even when governments have been avowedly pro-European, such as the current Labour administration, it is usual for them to refer to European integration in pragmatic terms, focusing on 'what Europe can do for us' and placing emphasis on the importance of the national interest, rather than presenting European integration as an ideal or a goal in itself. Conservative Party politicians in particular have seen Europe in terms of the material benefits it can bring to the national economy, adhering to a market-oriented view of Europe as a free trade area. This contrasts with the attitudes of political elites to the European project in EU states such as France and Germany, where it is common for politicians to refer to European integration in terms of cultural and historical ideals. Unlike France and

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<sup>3</sup> The Social Chapter was subsequently signed up to by the incoming Labour government in 1997.



Germany, Britain was not occupied during the Second World War, and other historical attachments, such as the Empire and Commonwealth, occupy a much more entrenched position in the British national imagination than the post-war drive to unify Europe.

A major consequence of successive British governments' ambivalence with regard to Europe has been the creation of a nationally specific climate of uncertainty over the issue. In the absence of a strong elite lead on Europe, political competition has ensued where Europe is strongly contested in the public domain by political parties, campaign groups and the media, and the prevailing balance of public opinion is Eurosceptic. The Conservative Party, scarred by destructive infighting over the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s and the pound's crash out of the ERM in 1993, which wrecked the party's reputation for economic management, now takes a Eurosceptic position, its current leader Michael Howard pronouncing at the launch of the party's European election campaign in June 2004 that Britons do not want to live in 'a country called Europe'. In contrast, Labour under Blair has claimed to be 'fully engaged with and committed to Europe'<sup>4</sup>, but nonetheless has sometimes failed to make a strong pro-European case in the public domain. In the current climate of rising public discontent and visible political contention over Europe, it will be extremely challenging for Labour to win support for a 'yes' vote in a national referendum on the European Constitution, since as Forster (2002: 7) identifies, incumbent governments find it much more difficult to manage the process of conflict over Europe in the public arena than in the parliamentary arena, in which its own MPs can be persuaded to be loyal to the party line.

### **Method: Political Claims-making<sup>5</sup>**

To investigate political claims-making, we use data drawn from content analyses of national daily newspapers. In contrast to many media content analyses, we are not primarily interested in the way in which the media frame events. On the contrary, our focus is on the news coverage of mobilisation, public statements and other forms of claims-making by non-media actors. Taking a cue from 'protest event' analysis in the study of social movements (Tarrow 1989, Olzak 1989, Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhardt 1998), our unit of analysis is not an article, but an individual instance of claims-making.

We define an instance of claims-making as a unit of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion or demand by way of verbal or physical action, regardless of what form this expression takes (statement, demonstration, court ruling, etc.), and regardless of the nature of the actor (governments, NGOs, etc.). Claims are broken down into seven elements, for each of which a number of variables are coded (see Koopmans 2002 for details):

1. Location of claim in time and space (WHEN and WHERE is the claim made?)
2. Actor making claim (WHO makes the claim?)
3. Form of claim (HOW is the claim inserted in the public sphere?)
4. Addressee of claim (AT WHOM is the claim directed?)

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<sup>4</sup> Speech by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, 'Labour engaged in Europe: the Tories are in fantasy land', Foreign Policy Centre, London, 27 August 2003.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed exposition on this method, see Koopmans and Statham 1999b.

5. Substantive issue of claim (WHAT is the claim about?)
6. Object actor: who would be affected by the claim if it were realised (FOR/AGAINST WHOM?)
7. Justification for claim (WHY should this action be undertaken?)

Our data includes the whole spectrum of claims-making acts related to six selected policy fields (monetary politics, agriculture, immigration, troop deployment, retirement and pensions, and education)<sup>6</sup> and the general field of European integration, irrespective of the actors involved. Coded actors include civil society groups, such as employers and trade unions, NGOs, and European campaign organisations, and also political parties and state actors, such as the courts, legislatures, governments and supranational institutions. Acts were included in the data if they involved demands, criticisms, or proposals related to the regulation or evaluation of events in relation to European integration. Regarding territorial criteria, we included acts in the United Kingdom (and France, respectively, for the comparative case) and those in the European Union/EEC, even if they were made by foreign or supranational actors or addressed to foreign or supranational authorities.

In this paper, we use data drawn from a sample of editions of *The Guardian* and *The Times* (and *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* for the French comparative case).<sup>7</sup> These papers were chosen because they are newspapers of public record with an encompassing coverage of the specific issues of interest. When using newspapers as a source one has to deal with the problem of selection (not all events that occur receive coverage) and description bias (events may get covered in a distorted way) (McCarthy et al. 1996). We have tried to minimize the problem of description bias by explicitly basing the coding only on the factual coverage of statements and events, and leaving out any comments and evaluations made by reporters or editors. Quality newspapers are useful in this respect because they have to protect their reputation and cannot afford to consistently and deliberately misquote the claims of third parties. Secondly, that our interest here is in *public* claims-making makes selection bias less problematic than in some other contexts, because acts of claims-making become relevant, and potentially controversial, only when they reach the public sphere. Nonetheless, we have used two newspapers per country with different (left/right) political affiliations as sources in order to control for possible bias in the selection of reported events.

Our sample is taken from five years 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002. We decided to retrieve our cases of claims-making over European integration from a sample determined by specific days that were selected in advance at regular time intervals

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<sup>6</sup> Our selection of the six policy fields was strategic in that we took two where EU competences had extended furthest (monetary, agriculture), two intermediary (immigration, troop deployment) and two where nation-states retain autonomous control (retirement/pension, education).

<sup>7</sup> Data were coded from Lexis-Nexis versions of the newspapers by trained coding assistants on the basis of a standardised codebook. All articles in the home news section of the newspapers were checked for relevant acts, i.e. the search was not limited to articles containing certain key words, for selected days. For some of the main variables in the analysis (actors, addressees, aims, etc.) open category lists were used. This allowed us to retain the detail of the original reports in the analysis. In addition, copies of the original articles were stored to allow us to go back to the original reports if information was needed that had not been captured by the variables and categories included in the codebook. Conventional inter-coder reliability tests were undertaken both for the selection of articles and coding, and in addition, coders participated in regular discussions about difficult cases.

within each year.<sup>8</sup> This retrieval strategy was considered to be preferable to sampling around key events of European debate –e.g. the controversy around Haider in Austria, or the launch of European Monetary Union. Our findings will therefore have more chance of representing general trends regarding the Europeanisation of political claims-making in the public sphere, instead of telling us about specific event-driven occurrences whose importance, though significant, may be limited within a specific policy field or event, or within a contingent time period.<sup>9</sup>

### **Mapping Political Claims-making**

In the empirical part of this paper, we investigate the nature of public debates and collective mobilisation over European issues in Britain. We examine our data-set in order to test some of the hypotheses on the possible paths of ‘Europeanisation’ that may occur in the public sphere as a consequence of the claims-making acts by collective actors over European issues. First we wish to examine whether and how the structure of claims-making in Britain is similar to, or different from, that of another European country, France, which has been more deeply involved in and committed to the project of European political integration. Thus we compare the structure of claims-making in the two countries over European issues. We then focus on the relationships between state and civil society actors, and between political parties, in acts of claims-making over Europe within Britain, before looking in more detail at how political parties frame their pro- and anti-European positions.

### **The Structure of Political Claims-making over Europe**

Although ‘British exceptionalism’ over Europe is a well established myth in academic and public debates (see e.g. Geddes 2003), there is relatively little comparative research which allows us to establish to what extent and in what way British collective actors react differently from or similarly to their European counterparts in their claims-making over Europe. Here we draw from previous research (Statham and Guiraudon 2004) to show comparative differences between Britain and France, though our main aim is to bring out the specificity of the British case. The reader should bear in mind that initial examinations of cross-national similarities and differences with our collaborative project show that Britain is distinctly different from the other EU countries studied (Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands) which are much closer to the French pattern (see Koopmans 2003). Hence the differences that we find for Britain here, in reporting the strict comparison with France, appear on existing evidence also to hold generally in comparison to other EU countries.

A first important way of analysing public debates over Europe is to look at how the political claims mobilised by collective actors link the different levels of politics (supranational, foreign national, domestic national). A prime concern here is the extent

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<sup>8</sup> In total we selected a sample from 52 days for 1990 and 1995, 104 days for 2000, 2001 and 2002. Thus the opportunities for claims were overrepresented for the more recent years of our data-set 2000, 2001 and 2002, compared to 1990 and 1995, by a ratio of 2:1. Note that we have not adjusted the tables to account for this bias, but this should nonetheless be borne in mind when reading the tables. We decided to include claims with a European scope from six policy fields, so that our sample did not simply focus on issues in the narrower field of European integration and institutional change.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of an alternative strategy see van de Steeg and Risse (2003), whose case study of the Haider affair attempts to make general statements about Europeanisation on the basis of a contingent and policy specific event.

to which claims extend beyond the geopolitical boundaries of a nation-state, and the nature of the linking properties which they produce. We have already pointed out that claims-making acts which link different levels of polities are important carriers of Europeanisation processes for national public spheres, and specified four general forms of possible Europeanisation processes for national public spheres (vertical, horizontal, national, supranational). Here our aim is to map the *communicative links* between different levels of polities that are produced by claims-making acts. We will do this by aggregating the different forms of claims-making that are present in the British and French public spheres and comparing them. This bird's-eye picture of the structure of political claims-making will give important empirical information on the extent to which public debates over Europe have emerged and which forms of 'Europeanised' claims-making are most evident, both in response to and as a form of participation within the institutional political changes brought by the advancement of European integration.

Figure 1 shows nine possible types of claims-making relationships that may occur between collective actors across three different levels of polity. It does this by relating claims-makers from three political levels (national domestic, foreign, supranational) to their addressees, the institutional actors on whom demands are made, from three political levels (national domestic, foreign, supranational). Each of the nine cells describes a possible communicative relationship between political actors that carries a specific form of Europeanisation.

-Figure 1 about here-

An important distinction to make is between those types of claims-making which involve a national domestic actor as either a claims-maker or an addressee, and those which are 'external' to the receiving public sphere and which are communicative interactions between collective actors who are outside the domestic nation-state. We propose here to focus principally on the five claims-making relationships in which national domestic actors are actively engaged as claims-makers or addressees ((a), (b), (c), (d), (e)). Such types of claims-making can be expected to have a more transformative impact as carriers of Europeanisation trends on the domestic national public sphere, because they purposefully engage national domestic actors in the politics over Europe. Conversely, the four 'external' types of claims-making are simply the reporting of supranational and transnational interactions of others (foreign and supranational actors) which appears in the national domestic public sphere (cells in italics).

The five types of claims-making involving national actors are:

(a) *National claims-making over Europe* – Here national actors mobilise demands over European issues on other national actors. This is evidence for 'internalised' national political debates over European issues, including contestation, as a form of Europeanisation.

(b) *Horizontal claims-making by foreign actors from European member states on domestic actors* – In this case it is actors from other EU members who are entering national domestic politics to demand responses over European issues from national

domestic actors. This contributes to Europeanisation by linking two or more national polities.

(c) *Horizontal claims-making by national actors on other EU member states* – This is the reverse of (b). Here demands are mobilised by national actors on actors from other EU member states over European issues. These horizontal types of claims-making ((b) and (c)) depict a Europe of nation-states whose politics are being more closely communicatively interwoven with one another, by conflict over or collaboration within the European project.

(d) *Top-down vertical claims-making by EU/EEC institutions on national actors* – Here supranational European political institutions are the driving force behind Europeanisation by calling for a political response from national domestic actors over issues of European integration. This creates a top-down vertical Europeanising relationship from the supranational to the national domestic polity.

(e) *Bottom-up vertical claims-making by national domestic actors on EU/EEC institutions* – This is the reverse of (d), where political claims-making is by national actors, who call on EU/EEC supranational institutions to respond to a demand over Europe which leads to Europeanisation.

Of these five types of claims-making relationships, the horizontal and vertical ones carry a stronger form of Europeanisation, because their claims-making acts create links from the domestic nation-state to polities that are beyond national borders, by linking horizontally to one or more other EU national polities, or vertically to the supranational EU/EEC polity. Conversely, national claims-making over Europe represents a weaker variant of Europeanisation, because the communicative interaction between actors remains constrained within the national polity and does not substantively link actors across borders. Here, following the position of those historians who emphasise the importance of political contestation in the building of the nation-state (especially Tilly 1978), the idea is that increasing conflict and contestation over European issues within a country, and the increasing reference to Europe that occurs, is a form of Europeanisation.

Tables 1a and 1b show distributions across the nine different possibilities for claims-making from our retrieved samples for Britain and France respectively.<sup>10</sup> In addition to giving the share of each type of claims-making as a percentage, we also show a score for the mean valence position over the issue of European integration. This mean valence position ranges from -1 to +1, which was scored by coding each claim, and then working out the mean for each category of communicative relationship. A -1 score was attributed to a claim that is against a deepening of the European integration process, or implies restrictions in the rights and position of European institutions and regulations (or a rejection of improvements). Conversely, +1 was given for a claim in

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<sup>10</sup> The French data is systematically comparative to the British, but at the present time is only available for three years 1990, 1995, and 2000. However, the systematic comparative analysis from which the French table is taken (Statham and Guiraudon 2004), shows that there are no significant differences in the British table for five years, when compared to that of three years. In Tables 1a and 1b we have included only those cases where there was both a claims-maker and an addressee, as this constitutes a communicative relationship. Not all claims-making acts have an addressee, and such cases were excluded from these two tables.

favour of deepening European integration, or for the extension of the rights and positions of European institutions and regulations (or a rejection of restrictions). Thirdly, a 0 score indicates claims that are neutral or ambivalent in this respect. The mean valence position per type of claims-making is reached by aggregating the position scores of the claims of that type. Such position scores can also be aggregated by actor type. By comparing the mean positions of different types of claims-making, and by different collective actors, it is possible to give a first qualitative indicator for whether specific types of claims-making produce a position that is generally in favour or against European integration. When comparing different types of collective actors, it can determine which actors are closer together in their positions, and who are allies and opponents, in the politics over European integration (see below).

-Tables 1a and 1b about here-

A comparison of tables 1a and 1b reveals important similarities and differences in the structure of claims-making over Europe in Britain and France. We start by looking at evidence for the strongest forms of Europeanisation, which occur when national actors are involved and communicative links are made across different levels of polity ((b), (c), (d), (e)).

#### *Vertical Europeanisation?*

Starting with top-down claims-making where EU supranational actors call for responses from British and French actors (d), we find very little evidence for this (Britain 5.3%, France 2.5%), although unsurprisingly this type of claims-making is the most pro-European overall (Britain +0.50, France +0.58). This finding underlines the limited role of the EU/EEC as a visible political actor in national public spheres, and shows that the EU/EEC produces very little in the way of claims-making that would initiate a vertical political relationship with national actors. We thus find very little of the type of top-down communication that one would be indicative of the EU acting as a supranational 'super-state', at least not to the extent that it appears on the public domain. Indeed, as a claims-maker, the EU/EEC appears as a poor communicator within national public spheres, though another reason for this might be that the media are poor in picking up EU/EEC demands. One example of this type of claims-making is the criticism made by European Central Bank's President Wim Duisenberg in November, 2000, who with regard to Chancellor Gordon Brown's five tests for British single currency entry made clear that there would be 'no special deal for the UK'.

Conversely, we see that claims-making by national domestic actors targeting demands on the supranational level at the EU (e), are three times more prevalent in Britain (18.4%), and ten times more so in France (26.6%). In both cases, this bottom-up vertical claims-making on the EU/EEC is anti-European compared to other forms of claims-making, and especially so in Britain where it is by far the strongest position against Europe (Britain -0.13 compared to overall +0.16; France +0.29 compared to overall +0.36). In cross-national comparison, the higher level of bottom-up claims-making by French actors than British is evidence for the impact of the deeper institutional integration of France than Britain, which leads to more actors perceiving the EU/EEC institutions as the target for their demands. In addition, although both sets of national actors are critical when they address the supranational polity, the British actors are so negative in their stance over European issues, that we see that their

political claims-making is more strongly Eurosceptic in its ideological orientation. A relevant example here is City economists criticising European policymakers and the European Central Bank in April, 2000, for their handling of the single currency's slide against the dollar and the pound.

Overall, vertical relationships between the nation-state and the supranational EU/EEC are much more the product of claims-making by national than European actors.

#### *Horizontal Europeanisation?*

In contrast to the vertical types of claims-making (Britain 23.7%, France 29.1%), there is much less evidence for horizontal claims-making between national domestic actors and foreign EU member ones ((b), (c)), which taken together account for only a twentieth of claims-making in both countries (Britain 4.4%, France 5.4%). This shows that cross-national interactions between actors in different European member states exist, but that foreign EU actors are not very prominent as either protagonists or recipients of demands, when compared to national domestic or supranational European ones. So far it appears that political participation over European issues has not progressed very far down the path of producing the type of transnational communication that would be indicative of a European Union of interacting nation-states.

#### *Europeanisation through national interaction?*

The final type of claims-making where national domestic actors are involved is that where communication is 'internalised' within the nation-state (a). Here we find a striking difference between the two countries. In Britain this type of claims-making accounts for a third of all claims-making (32.8%) and is roughly three times more prevalent than in France (12.6%). This finding is illustrative of Britain's internal national conflict over its relationship to Europe, which is the defining characteristic of the structure of claims-making in Britain. Examples of this are extremely numerous; one illustrative instance of internal conflict over Europe in Britain is in the debates over the Nice Treaty in December 2000, when prominent Conservatives criticised Chancellor Gordon Brown claiming that he was willing to abandon the national veto. Here we see that national political competition and contestation is the prevalent way in which British political actors have responded to and participate in European integration. Europe has been subsumed as an issue within national politics, more than it has transformed the structure of communicative relationships between different levels of the polity. In contrast, French actors made more demands vertically on the EU/EEC than they did on actors within their own country (26.6% compared to 12.6%), which demonstrates a stronger form of Europeanisation and more active engagement in Europe than the British.

#### *Europeanisation from 'external' supra- and transnational sources?*

A last point worth mentioning from Tables 1a and 1b concerns the claims-making which is 'external' to the domestic public sphere and that does not engage national actors. Of particular interest here is the strong presence that we find for claims-making by supranational European actors which is also directed at the EU/EEC level (i) (France 26.4%, Britain 14.4%). Here we see that claims made by actors at the EU/EEC

supranational level tend to remain enclosed within the domain of supranational EU affairs. An illustrative example occurs when the new European Commission President Jacques Santer makes a speech to the European Parliament in January 1995 that calls for a reaffirmation of 'our shared values and the noble objectives that underlie European integration'. Overall this underlines our earlier finding about the limited engagement of EU actors making demands on national actors and demonstrates the relative self-containment of interaction within the supranational polity, compared to the possibility of interaction with nation states. This presence of 'external' supranational politics within national public spheres is indicative of a form of Europeanisation, but not one which engages national domestic actors. It suggests a European supranationalisation that occurs within national public spheres.

### *Different national paths?*

Overall this comparison of the structures of claims-making in the two public spheres has served to demonstrate the basic similarities and differences in the types of claims-making over Europe. The major difference is that in France processes of Europeanisation are most likely to occur through vertical claims-making by national domestic actors on the supranational level, whereas in Britain the weaker form of Europeanisation through internalised national contestation was more prominent.

### **British Actors' Claims-making over Europe**

The first two columns in Table 2 show the shares and positions among different types of national domestic actors.<sup>11</sup> In addition to showing the overall categories of state actors and civil society actors, we give the shares and positions of different sub-categories of collective actors. Their position on European integration gives an impression of which actors are closer together and likely allies in the public debates, and which are opponents.

-Table 2 about here-

A first important point to make is that state and political party actors account for three quarters of claims-making over Europe (73.0%), which is indicative of an elite dominated public debate. In addition, we see that state and civil society actors hold similar positions on European integration (state and political party -0.01, civil society +0.05). This shows that the cleavages over Europe that exist appear to cross-cut both political institutional actors and civil society actors. Political contention over Europe in Britain does not run along a cleavage line of state versus civil society. Indeed we find that political contention over Europe occurs within the institutional political arenas. Legislative and political party actors (-0.18) are the most opposed to European integration from any type of actor, and their aggregated impact is to provide a Eurosceptic challenge to the government, although government and executive actors (+0.08) themselves hold a position that is only neutral or ambivalent with respect to the merits of European integration.

This stance of the national political elites over European integration will have an important impact in shaping the opportunities that are available in the national public

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<sup>11</sup> The sample in Table 2 includes cases of claims-making acts where no addressee was specified.



domain for claims-making by civil society actors. Looking at the type of interest groups and organisations who make demands about European integration, they are employers and trade unions, economic actors and experts from the scientific community. This is indicative of Europe as a highly institutionalised and technocratic field of politics. We find very little evidence for the type of citizens' initiatives and social movements that would be indicative of a participatory 'demos-driven' civil society demanding engagement in Europe. In fact, the major evidence that we find for a social movement turns out to be a dedicated European campaign sector<sup>12</sup>, which accounts for a twelfth of claims-making with an aggregated impact which is strongly anti-European (8.1%, -0.11). On this evidence it appears that civil society actors have perceived relatively few opportunities for becoming active in the politics of European integration, and of those who have, the majority has been motivated to oppose Britain's involvement in the European project.

Regarding this campaign sector over European integration we find sixteen different named organisations. The most prominent was the pro-European Britain in Europe which appears thirteen times, the anti-European Business for Sterling group which appears seven, and the anti-euro group the No Campaign which appears five times. Others were New Europe, Labour Common Market Safeguard Committee, the European Foundation, the European Research Group, the Conservative European Reform Group, The Bruges Group, the Metric Martyrs and Subjects Against the Nice Treaty (Sanity), which make claims against European integration, and Business in Europe, the Action Centre for Europe, Positive Europe Group, and the Conservative Group for Europe, which are pro-European. A substantial amount of the demands by these organisations were made over issues relating to the prospective consequences of Britain joining or not joining the Euro currency. The decisions of the Labour government, and its Conservative predecessor, not to make a definitive party policy on a timetable for joining monetary union, has created a climate of uncertainty and provided the conditions for this emergent field of extra-parliamentary politics. Single-issue campaign groups have emerged making their bidding on European issues. Claims such as those by the cross-party Britain for Europe campaign are typical: 'Britain cannot stand like a latter-day King Canute, holding back the tide. Whether we like it or not, the euro exists and British companies are being forced to deal with it.' A characteristic counter claim is that by Business for Sterling, who publicly point out that the year 2000 'is the 10th anniversary of Britain joining the ERM, which cost 100,000 business bankruptcies, 1.75m homes in negative equity and a doubling of unemployment.'

In the second and third columns of Table 2 we show the shares and positions of collective actors engaged in national claims-making over Europe ((a) from Figure 1), and in the third and fourth columns, that by actors in bottom-up vertical claims-making on the EU/EEC ((e) from Figure 1). This allows us to compare the two types of communication. A first point is that British claims-making targeting the European institutions is very much dominated by elite actors (state and political party actors 84.6%). It appears that civil society actors perceive Europe's supranational institutions (15.4%) to be a less relevant target for receiving their demands about Europe than their

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<sup>12</sup> It is of course debatable whether the strange assortment of NGOs, often elite-led, which campaign over Europe should be classified as a social movement, as they are characterised by relatively little bottom-up grass roots participatory activity. Here we use the term 'campaign sector' to group together those organisations whose purpose of existence is to campaign over issues of European integration.

domestic polity (29.7%). In fact, the only civil society actor addressing European institutions with demands to any degree were research institutes and think tanks (5.8%) working on Europe, such as the Centre for European Reform, the Foreign Policy Centre, the National Institute for Economic and Social Research and the Institute for Public Policy Research. This underlines the remoteness of European institutions as a potential new opportunity for civil society activism.

Another important difference comes from the share of types of elite actors in national claims-making over Europe compared to bottom-up claims-making on the EU/EEC. Here we see that four-tenths of claims-making within Britain was by legislative and political party actors (42.2%) who produce an overall position that is Eurosceptic (-0.08) compared to the government (+0.24). This is evidence that within Britain there is strong political competition within the institutional arena over European issues, with legislative and political parties challenging the government. National legislative and political party actors have much less occasion to make demands on European institutions, but when they do so it is in a very strongly anti-European way (-0.58). Instead bottom-up claims-making on Europe appears to be principally a way in which the British government represents national interests that are mobilised on the EU/EEC.

To examine the political competition over European issues in more detail we now focus on the shares and position of collective actors with a party political identity. Political parties play an important intermediary role linking the citizenry to political institutional power, and since we have found very limited evidence for extra-parliamentary civil society engagement over Europe, it makes sense now to address party political differences. Table 3 shows the shares and positions of political parties across the time intervals of our period.

-Table 3 here-

The most striking finding from Table 3 is that we find an overall left/right cleavage over Europe between the two main political parties, Labour (49.1%, +0.21) and the Conservatives (47.4%, -0.26). This difference in their stances over Europe remains distinct over time, but while the Conservatives remain strongly Eurosceptic, the Labour party's position ranges from neutral to mildly pro-European.

This political competition over Europe is partly facilitated by the British party system, which produces single party governments with significant majorities and strong executive power, which do not need to moderate their stance in order to gain the support of other parties. It is also noteworthy that the Conservatives, both as the party of government (1990, 1995) and the party of opposition (2000, 2001, 2002) have taken up anti-European positions. As a party of opposition (1990, 1995), Labour were rather and silent and neutral towards Europe, but as a party of government (2000, 2001, 2002) were pro-European in 2000 with positive claims regarding the single currency and the Nice Treaty, before drifting back toward a more ambivalent stance.

We now address the contents of this party political cleavage by analysing how the Conservative and Labour party actors constructed their arguments over European integration.

## Party political framing of European issues

A final important feature of political claims-making over Europe is the arguments about Europe that are made in public debates. When political actors make claims about Europe in the British public domain, they seek to give meaning to Britain's relationship to Europe by focusing on certain aspects of that relationship and excluding others. In doing so, they give a specific interpretation and understanding of the situation, in an attempt to convince other political actors of their claim's validity, and to mobilise public support for their cause. Actors' framing attempts in the public sphere try 'to make their definition into a public definition of the problem, to convince as many groups and people as possible by their framing of the situation, to create support for their cause, and to motivate others to participate' (Klandermans 1988).

Here we distinguish three sets of conceptual lenses through which political actors may hypothetically construct the relationship of the British nation-state to Europe in their claims-making: first, *political*, second, *economic*, and finally, *cultural-historical*<sup>13</sup>. When actors frame Britain's relation to Europe as a political concern, they emphasise key political elements of the relationship, for instance by evoking the British traditions of parliamentary democracy and sovereignty as reasons to oppose further European integration on the grounds that it downgrades both. Other actors selectively construct Britain's relationship to Europe as a matter of economics, for example, making the case for European integration by claiming that Britain's future depends on strengthening economic ties with Europe. Third, political actors may elect to frame the nation-state's relationship to Europe in terms of cultural identities and historical precedents, for instance by arguing that eastward enlargement will make Britain more secure and prosperous by reuniting Europe across the Cold War divide.

In Table 4 we show how British political parties have framed Europe, concentrating on two dimensions: across the two main political parties (Labour versus Conservative party), and positions over Europe (Eurosceptic versus pro-European). Conservative Party politicians made the bulk of Eurosceptic claims, with there being few by Labour claims-makers. Of the Eurosceptic Conservative claims, three fifths (60.3%) opposed Europe on political grounds. These constructions focused particularly on the issues of sovereignty, federalism, democracy and EU centralisation. Typical examples include Shadow Foreign Secretary Francis Maude's claim in December 2000 that the proposed 2004 Inter-Governmental Conference was 'yet another staging post on the route to a European superstate', or then Defence Secretary Michael Portillo's speech to the Tory Party Conference in October 1995 in which he accused Labour of endorsing 'withdrawal, retreat and surrender to European federalism'.

While Eurosceptic Conservative Party actors have concentrated heavily on the political arguments, pro-Europeans from both parties have tended to make the economic case for Europe. Half of the pro-European claims made by Labour politicians framed European integration in economic terms, on the grounds that EMU in particular would lead to economic stability and growth and be good for foreign investments. An example of this is ex-Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers' claim in July, 2000, that not joining the euro 'puts at risk investment in the United Kingdom'. Some pro-European actors from both major parties have also stressed the political case for

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<sup>13</sup> We also distinguish a fourth category of 'other' frames. This category includes claims that cannot be easily categorised as a political, or economic or cultural vision of Europe.

Europe, with Labour politicians in particular often framing this in terms of the greater international political influence Britain can gain as a fully engaged member of the European Union. For example, in a Mansion House speech in November, 2000, Tony Blair argued that 'it is part of our interests to be a key partner in the world's major alliances' such as the EU. Many of the claims made by pro-European Conservatives regarding the political nature of European integration have been attempts to refute Eurosceptic Conservatives' claims about Europe, such as then Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's argument in June 1990 that European foreign policy integration is 'not eroding sovereignty, it is using it'. In spite of these counterframing efforts, Eurosceptic actors have seized on the political arguments against Europe to a much greater extent than pro-European actors have managed to make the political arguments for British participation in the EU. A final point that stands out from the data is that few party politicians on either side of the debate attempt to construct Europe in terms of its cultural or historical meanings. This finding supports Helen Wallace's argument that the 'symbolic dimensions' of European integration such as culture, history and identity, much-debated in France and Germany, are largely absent from the British debate (Wallace 1997: 685).

Pro-European party politicians face a more difficult task in communicating Europe to the public than their Eurosceptic counterparts do. This partly relates to it being difficult to win public hearts and minds on the basis of economic arguments, which is what the pro-Europeans have principally sought to do in recent years. It also relates to the point that the political arguments that are likely to resonate most powerfully with the public are on the Eurosceptic side, because they evoke the idea of national political belonging. The political arguments against Europe that Conservative Eurosceptics have voiced so strongly - loss of sovereignty, independence and national control - make appeals on the grounds of concepts that are strongly embedded in the British national tradition and popular imagination. In contrast, the pro-European political arguments, such as increased influence for Britain in world affairs as a fully engaged EU member, do not have as strong a popular appeal.

The pro-European economic arguments have also suffered from low perceived credibility in the recent period, since the British economy has been relatively buoyant in comparison with the eurozone, making the arguments in favour of joining EMU less persuasive than they would have been if Britain were faring badly economically relative to the rest of Europe. Over this period, Conservative Eurosceptics have repeatedly been able to reiterate the negatively framed arguments that Britain stands to lose politically from further European integration - by being dissolved into a 'superstate', handing over sovereignty to the EU and surrendering to federalism - without significant concerted attempts by pro-Europeans to discredit such claims. These differences hold significant implications at a time when contention over Europe in Britain has moved firmly on to the deeply political issue of the European Constitution. While Eurosceptics have been making the political arguments against Europe for years, pro-Europeans have not been making the political justifications for European integration to the same extent, and are now struggling to put their case forward in a context where public opposition to the EU has become more entrenched, which is demonstrated by more Eurosceptic MEPs being voted into the European Parliament in the 2004 elections. Thus British agreement to further European integration in a referendum on the Constitution looks a very difficult battle for Tony Blair's government to win.

We have already noted the emergence of a specific Eurosceptic and pro-European campaign group sector in British politics. The pro-European campaign groups have tended to follow the discursive lead set by pro-European Labour elites in recent years, with the single currency advocacy group Britain in Europe, for example, having framed its case in largely economic terms. In contrast, the Eurosceptic groups have added an additional dimension to the debate by framing European integration in the economic terms that are infrequently used by Conservative Party Eurosceptics. While Conservative elites typically put forward the political arguments against Europe in the public domain, Eurosceptic campaign groups such as Business for Sterling and the No Campaign have framed their opposition to the single currency as both an economic and a political case. The poor performance of many eurozone economies relative to the British economy in recent years has lent credibility to the Eurosceptic groups' arguments against European economic integration.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this paper we have made a first empirical attempt to address the important questions regarding the types of political communication which are emerging in the intermediary public sphere in Britain over the issue of European integration. Although there is still much research to be done, we consider that the political claims-making approach, offers a new type of evidence that is able to demonstrate findings on the interactive dimension of the public sphere, a topic on which there has previously been much speculation and little data. Our theoretical discussion emphasised that public communication in the public sphere can have a transformative impact on the nature of politics in the European region. Although in the past research has tended to focus on perceived institutional deficiencies, or a lack of identification by Europe's citizens, as the key components of the EU's so-called 'democratic deficit', for us the location of any perceived or real 'democratic deficit' is to be found in the public sphere, the space of relations among citizens, which is created by and the medium of their public acts of communication over European issues.

Our substantive findings with regard to British public debates over Europe deserve underlining. First, our comparison with France demonstrated that the two countries have distinct patterns of communication over European issues. French debates exhibit a stronger channelling of vertical linkages to the European supranational polity, and this relationship is largely produced by the 'bottom-up' claims-making of French actors. By contrast, British debates are characterised by national 'internalisation', a weaker type of Europeanisation trend that is indicative of internal competitive relationships over Europe that do not directly link the nation-state in a relationship to the supranational European polity. Here it appears that the greater institutional engagement of France in the European integration project is reflected by its pattern of political communication in the public sphere, which is more interactive with the EU polity than the British. Preliminary findings on four other EU member states in the overall *Europub.com* study show that Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain, have patterns that are closer to France than Britain (Koopmans 2003). This evidence indicates that the trajectory of British political communication in response to, and constitutive of, European integration processes follows an 'exceptional' path. However, it would be interesting in this respect also to have data on EU members, such as Denmark, which like Britain have also opted out of some steps of institutional

integration. Rather than British 'exceptionalism' it could be that there are different blocks of countries that participate differently in the integration process.

Secondly, we examined the differences in claims-making by different types of British actors. This served to show that public debates over Europe are dominated by elite actors. Our finding with respect to the possible emergence of a participatory engagement by civil society actors in European integration was largely negative. The civil society actors who appeared in our sample were mainly economic and labour interest groups, technocratic bodies, experts and research organisations and not the types of NGOs or demos-motivated citizens' initiatives that would be indicative of participatory engagement. In fact, the only exception to this was a sector of campaign organisations dedicated to the issue of Europe. However, these had an overall impact that was relatively Eurosceptic, communicated in a way that was competitive and internalised within Britain, and had virtually no engagement with the supranational European level. Contrary to the image of new possibilities being opened up for civil society engagement by the emergence of supranational polities, for example through European human rights discourses, British civil society actors so far do not appear to have transformed their political engagement to any great extent to a locus beyond the nation-state. Nor does British civil society appear to be particularly enthusiastic about any new opportunities that may arise from Europeanisation processes. Overall civil society actors were no more pro-European than their elite counterparts. Most of the demands made on the EU/EEC were by the British government. This shows that for the moment at least, British civic actors see Europe as an issue of national concern to be dealt through the normal channels of interaction with the national government, rather than as a new relationship to a supranational polity. The latter type of trend may emerge in the future, but from the actor relationships that are prevalent in the political communication over Britain's place with European integration, it seems that it has a lot of emerging to do before it becomes a significant trend.

Another important finding of our research concerned political party competition over Europe. Here we were able to demonstrate that whereas Labour Party has shifted between positions of ambivalence to modest support for the benefits of European integration, the Conservatives have been consistently and strongly more Eurosceptic. Regarding the ways that political party actors tried to frame the relationship of Britain to the project of European Union, we found that pro-European stances of both parties were more likely to appeal to an economic reasoning, than a political or cultural one. Conversely, Eurosceptic claims, largely the preserve of Conservative actors, were predominantly pitched as political arguments. Here it seems that the mostly Labour pro-European arguments about the potential economic benefits of European integration compete against Conservative ones which focus on European integration as the potential loss of sovereignty and the national political community. In June 2004, Gordon Brown became the longest serving British Chancellor and has presided over the longest sustained period of post-war economic growth. This economic success has been achieved during a period when Britain has remained outside of monetary integration and the Euro. Such a climate has not been particularly favourable for Labour's attempts under Tony Blair to frame the pro-European stance through economic arguments in a way that can be convincing to the British public. Unless the Labour party develops a rhetoric arguing for a Britain within Europe that engages on the political territory of issues of sovereignty and national political belonging, it is difficult to see how a convincing case can be made for a 'yes' vote in the proposed

referendum on the European Constitution, which after all is an explicitly political and non-economic issue. It means that if the Labour government wishes to support a 'yes' vote, they will have to engage on political territory where Conservative Euroscepticism currently holds court.

Overall the British governments' tradition of diffidence or political scepticism towards European integration –characterised by the sceptical 'wait and see' Conservative approach under Major, and the mildly more enthusiastic 'wait and see' Labour approach under Blair- appears not only to have resulted in limited institutional integration into Europe compared to other member states, but it has also provided the conditions for Europe to become a highly contested party political issue. In a sense it appears that Britain's position over Europe has become 'path dependent'. Elite divisions have been strong, publicly expressed, but overall enclosed within the range of opinions from ambivalence to outright Euroscepticism. Such conditions have provided very few resources of legitimacy for stances by other public actors that could potentially construct an interactive political relationship to Europe instead of questioning the value of European integration *per se*. Thus to the extent that it exists, Britain's European democratic deficit is at least in part produced by national political elites, who have failed to open up a debate over Britain's relationship to Europe that would engage the public in a meaningful way. Of course, the same could be said of national political elites across the Union. However, as the new debates are set to shift from the economics (Euro) to the politics (Constitution) of European integration, the British government will have a harder job than their European counterparts in convincing their publics of the benefits of a European political community, because they are starting out from a position which has already legitimated and practised an opt-out and at best ambivalent stance as a benchmark for political involvement in Europe.

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**Figure 1: Possible types of claims-making over European issues in national public spheres**

	<b>National Domestic Addressee</b>	<b>Foreign Addressee from other EU country</b>	<b>EU/EEC Supranational addressee</b>
<b>National Domestic Claims-maker</b>	(a) National claims-making over Europe  (domestic actors target domestic actors)	(c) Horizontal claims-making on foreign EU actors (domestic actors target actors from other EU states)	(e) Bottom-up vertical claims-making on EU/EEC  (domestic actors target EU)
<b>Foreign Claims-maker from other EU country</b>	(b) Horizontal claims-making by foreign EU actors  (actors from other EU states target domestic actors)	<i>‘External’ transnational horizontal claims-making between actors from foreign EU states in domestic national public sphere</i>	<i>‘External’ bottom up claims-making on EU/EEC actors in national domestic public sphere</i>
<b>EU/EEC Supranational Claims-maker</b>	(d) Top-down vertical claims-making by EU/EEC  (EU actors target domestic actors)	<i>‘External’ top-down claims-making by EU/EEC on actors from foreign EU states in domestic national public sphere</i>	<i>‘External’ supranational claims-making between EU/EEC in domestic national public sphere</i>

Types in which national domestic actors are either a claims-maker or an addressee are in normal type, those which involve actors ‘external’ to the national domestic public sphere appear in italics.

**Table 1a: Britain: types of communicative links in claims-making over Europe (%) and position on European integration (+ for, - against)**

	<b>British addressee</b>	<b>Addressee from other EU state</b>	<b>EU addressee</b>	<b>All addressees</b>
	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>
<b>British claims-maker</b>	<b>32.8</b> <b>+0.07</b>	<b>1.2</b> <b>N/A</b>	<b>18.4</b> <b>-0.13</b>	52.5 0.00
<b>Claims-maker from other EU state</b>	<b>3.2</b> <b>+0.39</b>	6.4 +0.28	16.1 +0.30	25.7 +0.30
<b>EU/EEC claims-maker</b>	<b>5.3</b> <b>+0.50</b>	2.1 +0.08	14.4 +0.35	21.8 +0.36
<b>All claims-makers</b>	41.3 +0.15	9.8 +0.20	48.9 +0.15	100.0 +0.16
<b>N</b>	276	55	233	564

**Table 1b: France: types of communicative links in claims-making over Europe (%) and position on European integration (+ for, - against)**

	<b>French Addressee</b>	<b>Foreign Addressee</b>	<b>EU/EEC Supranational Addressee</b>	<b>All Addressees</b>
	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+/-)</i>
<b>French Claims-maker</b>	<b>12.6</b> <b>+0.39</b>	<b>3.1</b> <b>+0.40</b>	<b>26.6</b> <b>+0.29</b>	42.3 +0.32
<b>Claims-maker from other EU state</b>	<b>2.3</b> <b>+0.27</b>	5.2 0.00	16.7 +0.25	24.2 +0.19
<b>EU/EEC claims-maker</b>	<b>2.5</b> <b>+0.58</b>	4.5 +0.41	26.4 +0.54	33.4 +0.52
<b>All Claims-makers</b>	17.5 +0.40	12.8 +0.24	69.7 +0.38	100.0 +0.36
<b>N</b>	85	62	338	485

**Table 2 Share and Position of Actors in British Claims-making over Europe, by actor type**

	All claims-making by British actors over Europe		Internalised British claims-making over Europe (type (a))		Bottom-up claims-making by British actors on EU (type (e))	
	Share (%)	Position	Share (%)	Position	Share (%)	Position
<b>British state Actors</b>	<b>73.0</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>+0.05</b>	<b>84.6</b>	<b>-0.18</b>
Government	43.1	+0.08	24.3	+0.24	62.5	-0.08
Legislative, politicians and political parties	25.4	-0.18	42.2	-0.08	18.3	-0.58
Other state actors	4.5	+0.12	3.8	+0.14	3.8	N/A
<b>UK Civil Society</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>+0.05</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>+0.13</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>0.19</b>
Employers and businesses	5.9	+0.21	5.9	+0.36	1.0	N/A
Unions	2.5	+0.14	4.9	+0.11	1.0	N/A
Scientific and research experts	3.2	+0.17	2.2	N/A	5.8	+0.33
Economic experts	3.8	0.00	3.8	0.00	3.8	N/A
Pro- and anti-European campaign organisations	8.1	-0.11	9.2	-0.06	1.0	N/A
Other national civil society	3.4	+0.05	3.8	+0.14	2.9	N/A
<b>All British National Actors</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+0.01</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>+0.07</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-0.13</b>
<b>Number of Cases (N)</b>	555		185		104	

N/A used for positions towards Europe where there are 5 cases or fewer

**Table 3 Share and position of British political parties in claims-making over European issues**

	<b>All</b>		<b>1990</b>		<b>1995</b>		<b>2000</b>		<b>2001</b>		<b>2002</b>	
	Share	Pos.	Share	Pos.	Share	Pos.	Share	Pos.	Share	Pos.	Share	Pos.
<b>Conservative</b>	47.4	-0.26	66.7	0.00	95.2	-0.35	30.6	-0.42	36.8	-0.21	21.8	-0.29
<b>Labour</b>	49.1	+0.21	25.4	+0.06	4.8	0.00	66.7	+0.36	63.2	+0.04	73.1	+0.14
<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	3.1	+0.55	7.9	+0.80	-	-	1.9	0.50	-	-	5.1	0.25
<b>Other parties</b>	0.3	N/A	-	-	-	-	0.9	N/A	-	-	-	-
<b>N</b>	350		63		63		108		38		78	

**Table 4**      **Frames used by Conservative and Labour Parties in British public debates on Europe**

		Conservative claims				Labour claims			
		Pro-European	Neutral/ambiv.	Eurosceptic	Total	Pro-European	Neutral/ambiv.	Eurosceptic	Total
<b>Type of frame</b>	<b>Political</b>	8.8	19.1	<b>32.4</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>16.1</b>	14.3	1.8	<b>32.1</b>
	<b>Economic</b>	11.8	2.9	5.9	20.6	<b>25.0</b>	16.1	3.6	<b>44.6</b>
	<b>Cultural-historical</b>	7.4	2.9	7.4	17.6	7.1	10.7	1.8	19.6
	<b>Other/general</b>	0.0	1.5	0.0	1.5	1.8	1.8	0.0	3.6
<b>Total (%)</b>		27.9	26.5	45.6	100.0	50.0	42.9	7.1	100.0
<b>N</b>		19	18	31	68	28	24	4	56