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The UK Challenge to Europeanization: The Persistence of British Euroscepticism

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The UK was for the dominance of a free trade regime in Europe in the aftermath of World War II. Therefore, she approached the European Union integration hesitantly from the very beginning primarily because of her jealousy about sovereignty and she even tried to undermine the success of the project by forming her own alternative free trade model. Under the influence of external and internal factors, the UK changed her mind very quickly and sought for the EU membership in 1961. It takes more than a decade for the UK to achieve the EU membership due to her well-known previous sceptical positioning towards the EU project. The Euroscepticism of the UK wasn't disappeared all of a sudden after the EU membership of the country in 1973. The UK has always paid effort in order to change the rules of the game or to block the further steps taken at the expense of the sovereignties of the EU member states. As a result, this high level of Euroscepticism forced other members of the EU to give some concessions to the UK in order to achieve a higher level of integration for the sake of policies such as common currency and Schengen visa-free regime.

The book titled "The UK Challenge to Europeanization: The Persistence of British Euroscepticism" deals with the unrest of the UK about her EU membership. The issue was elaborated by considering the Brexit debate and the withdrawal referendum in the horizon. The book is composed of twelve chapters approaching to the issue from different perspectives and these chapters were grouped under four main parts, namely "Nation and National Identity", "Party Politics and Euroscepticism", "Eurosceptic Civil Society" and "Eurosceptic interests".

The Cameron government couldn't stay aloof to the rising Eurosceptic tendencies in the British society and gave a promise for a referendum about the EU membership of the UK in case of an election victory of his party by 2015. This process was presented in the introduction part of the book as a part of a general unrest observed in all the EU member states in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis without denying the historical tendency of the UK to see Europe as a other.

The first chapter emphasizes the importance of the comparisons with Europe in the formation of UK's national identity and identifies the EU membership as a first UK attempt for trying to be European. The tendency to focus on the differences from Europe is presented as a long-established tradition of the UK.

The second chapter defines the decision of the referendum as the end of UK's awkward partnership status. It is also mentioned that the UK has changed a lot by integrating with Europe and the UK's resistance has had an undeniable role in the formation of the current EU.

The third chapter looks at the existence of Euroscepticism at the sub-state level by considering Scottish, Irish and Welsh attitudes towards the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.



The chapter highlights the positive correlation between the stronger English identity and stronger Euroscepticism.

The fourth chapter provides an account of the process through which the marginal Eurosceptic tendencies has gained central positions, as the EU lost its political reason for the UK.

The fifth chapter is about the Euroscepticism within the Conservative Party of the UK. The chapter stresses that the Euroscepticism has turned into official stance of the party towards the EU with the changing nature of the EU and changes in the organizational structure of the party. The chapter describes the rising Euroscepticism of the Conservative Party as a populist policy.

The sixth chapter is about the pro-EU parties in the UK, primarily the liberal democrats and labour. The opposition of the pro-EU parties to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU is labelled as weak and ambivalent in the chapter.

The seventh chapter deals with the election victories of the UK Independence Party, which is the most EU rejectionist party in the UK, in recent years by transforming itself from a single-issue party to a catch-all party. The chapter establishes a similarity between the electoral success of the UK Independence Party and the rise of the rightist parties in the other EU member states.

The eight chapter is about the dominant position of the hardliner Euroscepticism in the UK newspapers after the Euro Crisis. The chapter takes the coverage of the Cameron's Bloomberg Speech in 2013 by the newspapers as an example.

The ninth chapter takes the attention of the reader to the non-party based Euroscepticism in the UK. The chapter mentioned the existence of 24 extra-parliamentary Eurosceptic groups in the UK, which have been carrying out activities in order to form an unfavourable public opinion about the EU in the UK and focused on four of them, namely Burges Group, Business for Sterling, Campaign for a Referendum and I Want a Referendum.

The tenth chapter is about the dilemma faced by the UK in conceptualizing the EU. The chapter puts forth that the EU has been seen in the UK both as a threat for national sovereignty and as a necessity for big power status and economic gains by underlining the UK's ongoing choice for an intergovernmental EU.

The eleventh chapter touches upon the issue of the New EU Treaty (Fiscal Pact) as a factor that has made the disagreements between the UK and other EU member states visible. The chapter argues that as long as the divergences between the UK and other EU member states continue, the UK can lose its capacity to influence the design of Europe in future.

The last chapter is on the US attitude towards the UK's withdrawal possibility from the EU. The chapter mentions that while the US has been for a stronger UK within the EU both for the UK's and the EU's success in the future, the UK has seen the EU as a threat for her special relations with the US.

The book is basing on the general assumption of that the Euroscepticism is very widespread in the UK and it tries to provide various insights about the root causes of this tendency. It is a very valuable source of information especially for those who want to have a detailed knowledge about the Euroscepticism in the UK.

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