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Review of Karine Tournier-Sol and Chris Gifford (eds), *The UK Challenge to Europeanization. The Persistence of British Euroscepticism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Richard Davis

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Karine Tournier-Sol and Chris Gifford (eds), *The UK Challenge to Europeanization. The Persistence of British Euroscepticism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

- 1 Few issues today occupy a more central place in British politics than that of the UK's position in, and relation to, the rest of Europe. Indeed, this debate, and the upcoming referendum on the country's continued membership of the European Union, is quite rightly regarded as having enormous consequences for the future of British society as a whole. The outcome will no doubt have an important impact on all aspects of British life and may well determine its economic and political future, perhaps even its constitution and its future as a *United Kingdom*¹. The publication of this collection of articles is, therefore, timely and likely to be of great interest to both specialists and non-specialists alike. These are also important issues for the European Union as whole.
- 2 The authors of the various chapters in this collection come from differing disciplines and backgrounds and they address these questions from various angles, using different forms of analysis. As its editors argue in their introduction, the "book embraces diversity in its multi-national authorship and its multi-disciplinary approach" (p.13). Taken as a whole this allows the book to provide an interesting variety of approaches to their common theme.

- 3 The book is structured in such a way as to take the reader in a logical progression from the roots of Euroscepticism, through its differing expressions and to its various manifestations. The first chapter begins by providing an interesting analysis of the cultural, especially religious, roots of British Euroscepticism before considering the deep-rooted and widely-held feelings in Britain of their essential difference from the European other. In chapters two and three the authors consider the interactions between the debates on Europe and that around the British state: between Euroscepticism, British national consciousness and identity, and the forces pushing towards the disintegration of the UK. Both authors here are no doubt right to emphasise the role played by the various nationalisms in the UK in British Euroscepticism. Chapter four gives an excellent summary of the historical background to today's Euroscepticism from 1945 onwards and usefully sets the current Euroscepticism in the context of the intellectual debate going back to Hume and Burke. The place of Euroscepticism within the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties is dealt with in the following chapters: how they have tried to manage the impact of Eurosceptic forces among their own members and supporters, and how they have reacted to both the Eurosceptic forces coming from outside their ranks and to the challenge to them from UKIP. Part three of the book then considers Euroscepticism in civil society: in the media, with an analysis of the reactions to David Cameron's Bloomberg speech, and in various Eurosceptic pressure groups. Part four approaches the questions of the Eurozone crisis and role of finance. In chapter ten Catherine Macmillan uses an interesting political discourse analysis to convincingly show how, over time, a dominant Eurosceptic discourse was set down, that has reinforced the sense of otherness and difference between Britain and Europe. As Macmillan and several of the other authors here argue, today's politicians operate within this same broadly Eurosceptic framework, one that limits and conditions the whole European debate. The final chapter brings in a further transatlantic dimension highlighting, as some of the earlier chapters also do, the inconsistencies and contradictions in both the Eurosceptics' arguments and also in some of the decisions taken by successive British governments when confronted with a choice between European and US policy options.
- 4 The overall impression here is that the authors regret the extent and depth of Eurosceptic feelings in the UK. There is, therefore, an underlying sense of criticism, perhaps even condemnation, of the British governments, politicians and the majority of British opinion for their reluctance to engage positively with the rest of Europe and with the EU; that the British are somehow bad Europeans for not adhering to the European project. The views of the Eurosceptics themselves are absent from this collection of articles. There is, therefore, no real confrontation of ideas or any attempt to present the arguments put forward by the Eurosceptics themselves to justify their campaign (either leave the EU entirely, for the hard Eurosceptics such as UKIP, or to reform (perhaps transform) it as David Cameron and his supporters are currently negotiating. Clearly Euroscepticism is widespread and deeply entrenched in British politics and society. The authors of this collection put forward several examples, past and present, to back this up. No doubt British politics today is conducted in largely Eurosceptic terms and the British people seem as unsure as ever as to their position in Europe. The EU and its institutions certainly have few friends in the UK. Yet there are other, contrary, arguments suggesting a Europeanization of British culture, particularly in recent years. The impact of European players and coaches on football in the UK, perhaps the most popular of all British cultures, the popularity of Scandinavian TV series or of European cuisine come to mind.

Numerous British writers and film-makers, still more British journalists, can certainly be found to express the underlying sense of suspicion towards Europe but these could perhaps be contrasted with other more Europhile viewpoints. Of course it needs to be recognised that the central theme of this book is Euroscepticism, and its central position in British politics and culture today. But this should not be taken as being the only side to the European debate in the UK.

- 5 The authors are nevertheless surely right in concluding that the majority of British people can be regarded as Eurosceptic, although the question here is surely “what does it take for someone, a group or a party, to be defined as ‘Eurosceptic’?” Is it, as Anthony Forster has argued (cited p.78), someone who holds “a negative point of view towards the EU” and who sees it as undesirable? Or who simply doubts the European project’s utility or its viability? (Alexandre-Collier, cited p.78) Fitzgibbon takes it as “encompassing a range of critical positions on European integration, as well as outright opposition”.² Definitions are thus central to this particular study of Euroscepticism and to the wider debate as a whole. Part of this concerns the distinction made by the authors between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ varieties of Euroscepticism. If the former is easily identified, as for example in UKIP, this is not so easy for the latter. Equally, if we accept the definitions of Euroscepticism given above, then it could be argued that the overwhelming majority of British people, perhaps the majority of all Europeans, are, at least to some degree, Eurosceptics. After all, who has never had some doubts about, or issue with, some aspect of the European Union as it exists today? Perhaps scepticism of any institution or political project is healthy? The very definition of what constitutes Euroscepticism is, therefore, open to considerable debate and this is reflected in several of the chapters here.
- 6 As the authors argue, the current debate in the UK on all of these questions is being conducted very much in Eurosceptic terms while the Europhiles’ arguments are by and large absent. The role of the media, and the political elite’s inability, or refusal, to go against its frequently vehemently Eurosceptic position, is important here. The authors are surely right to argue that beyond the overtly anti-EU media there is an underlying Euroscepticism that runs throughout British politics and British society and which conditions the whole debate. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 outline how, over the past decades, support for, or pragmatic acceptance of, a constructivist European project has given way to a Eurosceptic discourse. They also show how this has accelerated in recent years, to the point where this Eurosceptic discourse has come to occupy a hegemonic position, across all major political parties, and to the point where, as Crowley (p.89) argues, even the “case for remaining in Europe... must... be formulated in the Eurosceptic idiom.” His example of the ‘extra grade’ ‘regulation cucumber’, whose curvature is controlled by the EU, shows the ease with which Eurosceptics are able to seize on almost anything in their ‘crusade’ against the EU. As the other authors point out, the Eurosceptics’ arsenal is stocked with much more than a simple vegetable (or is it a fruit?). Their arguments, frequently populist and often contradictory, have, nonetheless, proved increasingly effective.
- 7 The historical context to the European debate in the UK today is a key element to understanding how Eurosceptic ideas have come to play such a key role and this aspect is drawn out by several of the authors here. As they point out, their roots need to be traced back over several centuries. At the same time the argument that the origins of the concept of Euroscepticism “can be traced back to articles in... *The Times* in 1985 and 1986” (p.2) needs to be questioned. This may well have been true for the first use of the term

itself but surely the concept must, as other authors here show, be traced back much earlier. Opposition to Europe and to the European Union and its precursors did not begin in the mid-1980s. In fact, by looking at the history of Britain's relations with the rest of Europe since the beginnings of the European Union in the post-1945 era, the authors show how the debates currently animating the British political scene are very much recurrent themes. The questions being asked today, and which are at the heart of this collection of articles, have frequently been asked in the past. They will probably continue to be asked in the future, no matter what the outcome of the upcoming referendum.

- 8 Here again we come back to what exactly Euroscepticism is, especially when we come to consider the 'soft' Eurosceptics. If their ambition is not, as is the case for the 'hard' Eurosceptics, to 'leave Europe' or to bring about the destruction of the EU and the whole political project for the future of the continent, but rather to reform it then the question that needs to be asked is not 'Europe, yes or no?' or 'should the UK be in or out of the EU?' but 'what sort of Europe do we want?' and 'what sort of Europe is best for the UK and for Europe as a whole?' Indeed, these were the very questions raised by British politicians in the past. Already in 1965, for example, Harold Wilson was speaking of the 'right sort of Europe'.³ Successive British leaders from Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown to David Cameron today have been asking very much the same questions and have been campaigning for a fundamental reform of the EU along lines that correspond to British thinking and the British vision of just what the 'right sort of Europe' is.⁴
- 9 There is, therefore, a need to qualify British Euroscepticism, particularly its more moderate branch, and to place this alongside the pragmatism of both the leading British political parties and of a large part of British public opinion. The majority of post-war Conservative and Labour Prime Ministers, perhaps all of them, may be regarded as being, to some degree, Eurosceptics. Yet they have consistently tempered this by their sense of political and economic realism. The out and out Euroscepticism of UKIP, and their ability to adopt a whole-hearted and consistent criticism of Europe and the European project in all its manifestations, is made all the easier by the fact that they are not in a position of responsibility, of decision making. Rather they remain on the fringes of power. This is not the case for those, like David Cameron, who actually occupy positions of power.
- 10 If the answers to the debates being addressed here are ambiguous the reason no doubt lies in the difficulties in precisely defining the terms of these debates. What exactly Euroscepticism is remains one of the key issues usefully addressed by the authors here. The case put forward by 'hard' Euroscepticism is relatively easily understood. Their arguments are clear and their case coherent. Nevertheless, they are, as shown here, inherently populist. Nor do their claims stand up to close examination. What is perhaps of greater interest, in so far as their ideas are more widely held, including by the mainstream of British politics and at the centre of the British political establishment, is the extent and influence of 'soft' Euroscepticism. Here, the authors' analyses of the fundamental inconsistencies and paradoxes of the soft Eurosceptics' position is one of the main interests of this collection. How, they ask, can these 'soft' Eurosceptics reconcile their undeniably critical and sceptical attitude towards the present EU, and perhaps towards the whole European project as outlined by its founding fathers in the 1940s and 1950s and more recently by certain key political leaders on the continent - most particularly in Germany and France, and yet simultaneously claim to want to remain part of this European grouping? This is the basic paradox of the 'soft' Eurosceptic case.

Sentimentally it is opposed to both the European project and to many aspects of the EU, in fact to nearly all of them with the exception of the commercial side of the EU as a common market, as a commercial entity. At the same time most 'soft' Eurosceptics understand, however unwillingly, that there is no other viable alternative. They may not like the EU but life for the UK outside may be even less comfortable than remaining inside, whatever the discomfort and disadvantages that come with EU membership or the unwelcome restrictions that this imposes on the UK in the form of its rules and regulations. Equally, the only logical solution is to reform the EU, the only form of Europe that is currently on offer, and that can only be done from within. Leaving the EU would definitively sideline the UK from the key decision-making processes, decisions that would then be taken by others who do not share the British vision of Europe but who would, nonetheless, have a significant impact on Britain itself. At the same time can the 'soft' Eurosceptics in Britain hope to win the debate inside the EU and to achieve the reforms they want? The most likely outcome, as the authors here suggest, is that the British will continue to be awkward partners in Europe, unable to break away and thus reluctantly stuck to the EU, in an unsatisfactory and tetchy relationship that will inevitably remain Eurosceptic in nature. Unable either to throw in their lot with the other Europeans or to play the European game as a fully-fledged member of the EU, and unable to entirely turn their backs on Europe, the British seem likely to hold onto their present half-in half-out position, sentimentally Eurosceptic but pragmatically European.

- 11 This point is underlined by the editors of this collection who argue (p.13) that "British Euroscepticism is marked by incompatibilities and contradictions that are profoundly systemic". Various examples are given in the following chapters. Both FitzGibbon (p.175) and Macmillan (p.197) conclude that it is ambivalence as much as Euroscepticism that marks British attitudes towards the EU, on the one hand regarding European integration as a threat to British sovereignty and to British identity and on the other as an economic and geopolitical necessity. On the specific, and central, question of the Eurozone crisis Macmillan (p.204) points to the confusion between the ways in which most Conservative and Labour leaders simultaneously recognize "the need for further integration within the eurozone in order to overcome the crisis, a lack of desire for Britain to participate in such integration, and a fear that, as a result, Britain will be excluded from taking part in making important decisions which could affect its well-being." Likewise, Vincze (p.235) points to the UK's complaints "about the lack of sufficient European military capabilities and willingness to take on more responsibilities" while simultaneously doing "everything in its power to prevent any meaningful European operation from being launched under the EU flag... under the pretext that it would precipitate the US disengagement from Europe." Vincze is also surely right to highlight (p.241) the inconsistency between the UK's reluctance to pool its sovereignty in any European project while accepting a perhaps even greater loss of sovereignty by consistently, and dogmatically, tying itself into a very imbalanced relationship with the US.
- 12 This mixture of short-term political pragmatism, confused thinking and inconsistencies in the long-term approach to Europe and Europeanization is, of course, nothing new. Indeed they have been the hallmarks of British attitudes and policies for over half a century. These have been evident from Churchill's famous remark that Britain was "with Europe, but not of it", Macmillan's timorous attempts to enter the Common Market that were hedged around with provisos and conditions and without ever reconsidering the ties that bound the UK to the US in the so-called 'special relationship', Heath's push into

Europe without fully working out the details of the relationship that would ensue, Thatcher's support for the European single market and the free circulation of goods and capital alongside her vehement and vitriolic opposition to any form of political or monetary union, John Major's paralysis when faced with the almost impossible task of reconciling pro- and anti-European supporters within his own party and government, Tony Blair's promise of greater participation in the European project (and even to play a leading role there, via the St Malo agreement on European defence with France and to enter the Eurozone when the time was right) and his ultimate lack of political courage to realise these ambitions, up to David Cameron's current attempts to sophisticatedly portray himself as both pro-Europe, in so far as he is advocating the UK's continued membership of the EU, and as the defender of a form 'soft' Euroscepticism. This seems likely to continue well into the future, no matter what the outcome of the in-out referendum in 2016 or 2017.

- 13 In conclusion this collection of articles is a welcome addition to the literature on this highly topical question. The debate around Britain's future relationship with Europe and with the EU cannot be reduced to a debate about Euroscepticism alone. Nor should Euroscepticism be necessarily equated with Europhobia, although the two do often merge into one. It is, however, as this book makes plain, an essential aspect of this debate and one which is becoming ever more prevalent as we approach the in-out referendum. Whatever the outcome the debates around this never-ending story will continue to deserves our attention.

NOTES

1. Tony Blair and others in favour of continued British membership of the EU have warned that a 'no' vote may lead to a renewed call in Scotland for a second referendum on Scottish independence should a majority of voters in Scotland vote in favour of EU membership while their English counterparts vote against.
2. Quoting Szczerbiak and Taggart, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*. Oxford: OUP, 2004, p.3.
3. For Wilson this meant 'the effective working unity of Europe within an Atlantic framework', creating a Europe that would be 'genuinely outward-looking, and not autarkic' (Public Record Office, PREM 13/306. Michael Stewart Note for Harold Wilson, 3 March 1965).
4. Ralf Dahrendorf's conclusion was that 'Britain entered the European Community too late, and when it entered, it was the wrong Community for Britain.' (Ralf Dahrendorf, *On Britain*. London: BBC Publications, 1982, p.151).

AUTHORS

RICHARD DAVIS

Université de Lille