

To Defer and Defuse: New Labour's Policy of Containing the Salience of European Integration

Kai Oppermann, University of Cologne

Lecturer and Research Assistant
Chair for International Politics and Foreign Policy
Gottfried-Keller-Str. 6, 50931 Koeln, Germany
Phone (+49) 221-470-2854
Fax (+49) 221-470-6732
kai oppermann@uni-koeln.de

Paper to be presented at the British Politics Group's Conference
'Britain After Blair – The Legacy and the Future'
The Gleacher Center, University of Chicago Business School
Chicago, IL
August 29, 2007

Abstract

One of the most conspicuous European policy legacies of the Blair premiership pertains to this policy field's public salience: Whereas European integration featured as a decidedly high-salience issue at the beginning of New Labour's tenure, it was transformed into a downright low-salience issue at the end of Tony Blair's period in office. Given the deeply entrenched euroscepticism in British public opinion and New Labour's relatively pro-European outlook, the decline in the salience of European policy accorded to the Blair government's electoral interests. As European policy could be expected to figure as an electoral liability for New Labour insofar as it was salient enough to become a significant dimension of issue voting, the Blair government faced a strong electoral incentive to contain the public salience of European integration. New Labour responded to this incentive by pursuing a mix of different governing strategies which were suited to contribute to the pronounced downward trend in the public salience of European integration: Specifically, the Blair government sought (1) to defuse the European policy cleavage between the two main British parties, (2) to depoliticise European policy decisions, (3) to delegate veto power to the general public and (4) to defer the making of conclusive decisions on contentious European issues.

1. Introduction

Taking stock of the Blair premiership, most analyses agree that its record in the field of European policy is at best mixed. While the Blair government has been given credit for some early successes in adopting a more positive approach to the process of European integration, it has at the same time been blamed for having missed manifold opportunities to live up to its self-proclaimed objective of turning Britain into a constructive and influential player at the centre of the EU (Smith 2005; Baker 2005). In this respect, New Labour has also been widely criticised for not sufficiently making the case for European integration in the arena of domestic politics. In what is seen as one of its most conspicuous failures, the Blair government did therefore not succeed to foster a new pro-European consensus within the British public that could have sustained the envisaged remoulding of Britain's relations with Europe (Allen 2005; Riddell 2005).

Notwithstanding the cogency of these reviews' conclusions, they have largely discounted an important dimension for assessing the Blair government's European policy legacy. This dimension pertains to the public salience of European integration in Britain, which figures both as a significant determinant of New Labour's domestic leeway to pursue its European policy objectives and as a target of its political efforts in this field. For the purpose of widening the perspective on New Labour's European balance sheet, this paper traces the broad trends of European policy's salience to the British electorate in the course of the Blair premiership and probes into the governing strategies of New Labour that have contributed to these trends. It is the paper's main contention that the Blair government both had an overall electoral incentive to contain the public salience of European integration and devised policies that were functional in this regard.

In order to develop the argument, the paper is organized in four main sections. Section two presents the conceptual framework and introduces the notion of public issue salience. In view of the British public's deeply entrenched euroscepticism, section three will move on to explore the link between the salience of European policy to the British electorate and New Labour's domestic room for manoeuvre to conduct more pro-integrationist policies. Section four will then analyse the trends in the public salience of European policy between 1997 and 2007 before section five will attend to New Labour's policies of containing the salience of European integration.

2. The Concept of Public Issue Salience

The notion of public issue salience refers to the significance and importance that the general public ascribes to a certain issue on the political agenda in relation to other political issues (Wlezien 2005: 556-561; Rabinowitz et al. 1982: 41-44). This concept captures a major dimension of electoral politics in that it points to a cognitive precondition for issue voting. Individual voting decisions and election outcomes will only be shaped by the competing parties' positions on those issues that are among the salient concerns of the public on voting day.¹ A government's balance sheet in some policy field cannot be assumed to influence the voting behaviour on part of the electorate unless voters attend to information on this policy field when deciding whom to vote for (Aldrich et al. 1989: 125-127).

Human attentiveness to external stimuli is a scarce resource, however. Due to the limited capacity of the human mind to process information, the range of political issues on which members of the general public can spend this resource will be closely circumscribed (Simon 1985: 301-302). In what has been described as the 'top-of-the-head' phenomenon (Taylor/Fiske 1978), electorates will primarily assess the performance of governments in view of that narrow subset of policies which is most accessible in memory and which can most easily be brought to mind. The higher the public salience of European issues, the more attentive an electorate will be to information about the government's policies in this regard and the more significant these policies become as a determinant of the electorate's voting behaviour, other things being equal. In cases of high issue salience, therefore, the imperatives of electoral politics impose stricter constraints on a government's decision-making than in cases of low issue salience. Should governments fail to devise policies that are in line with the preferences of a majority in public opinion, they will more likely encounter negative electoral consequences if the policy in question is of high public salience. The incentives of governments to take account of the electorate's majority preferences are thus stronger in cases of high salience than they are in cases of lower salience.

Whether or not European policies become a high-salience issue to electorates largely depends on the extent to which these policies are brought to the attention of public opinion by third actors. Members of the general public are generally not in a position to engage in the resource-intensive form of *police-patrol oversight* to obtain information about a government's stances towards European integration. Given the low utility that individual voters can realise

¹ A second precondition for political issues to become a source of issue voting is the existence of a discernible cleavage between government and opposition in this regard. Only insofar as voters are presented with distinguishable policy options and real possibilities for choice on a policy field by the competing political elites, can elections be employed to issue a verdict on the parties' respective stances on the matter in question (Butler/Stokes 1974: 276-295).

by supervising governmental policies, the material and cognitive costs of pursuing this proactive, direct and continuous type of monitoring are prohibitive. Rather, electorates have a strong incentive to minimize their monitoring costs (Downs 1968: 202-232; Weller 2000: 114-167). They therefore primarily take recourse to the reactive, indirect and selective form of *fire-alarm oversight* that relies on third parties to alert the general public of European policy decisions that contradict its preferences. This type of monitoring allows the electorate to externalise the bulk of its monitoring costs and to focus its attention on those policies that were considered significant enough to prompt a fire-alarm. As political developments on the European level and a government's policies in this respect are for the most part not directly observable by voters, their dependence on such fire-alarms being activated by third actors is even more pronounced. Notwithstanding its inherent drawbacks – e.g., the possibility of false alarms (Moe 1987: 484-486; Lupia/McCubbins 1994: 104-105) –, it is the superior cost-effectiveness which makes *fire-alarm oversight* the form of monitoring generally relied upon by general publics (McCubbins/Schwartz 1984: 165-171; Ogul/Rockman 1990: 12-14).

Thus, European policy issues will become salient concerns to general publics to the extent that they are subject to a fire-alarm being set off by third actors. The most significant and closely interrelated sources of such fire-alarms are the media on the one hand and the political opposition parties on the other. Both of these actors have an interest in monitoring a government's European policies and in bringing these policies to the general public's attention if deemed appropriate on journalistic or electoral grounds.

Firstly, the salience of a European policy problem varies with the amount of coverage it enjoys in the media. Electorates to a great extent depend on media coverage for its knowledge about European integration. The media, therefore, is an indispensable gatekeeper between governmental European policies and the electorate's awareness of these policies. It functions as the crucial agenda-setter for domestic debates about European integration and shapes the relative importance that is attributed to a European policy issue by public opinion. Due to its priming effect, the media coverage of European issues also conditions the priority that is attached to these issues in the general public's evaluation of a government's overall performance (Soroka 2003: 27-38; Miller/Krosnick 1997: 259-260). The higher the news value of European policy events and decisions is considered to be by the media, the more prominently they will feature in its reporting and the higher will be their public salience (Luhmann 1995: 25-30).

Secondly, the salience of European policy to domestic electorates will be greater when these policies are subject to electoral competition between government and opposition. The

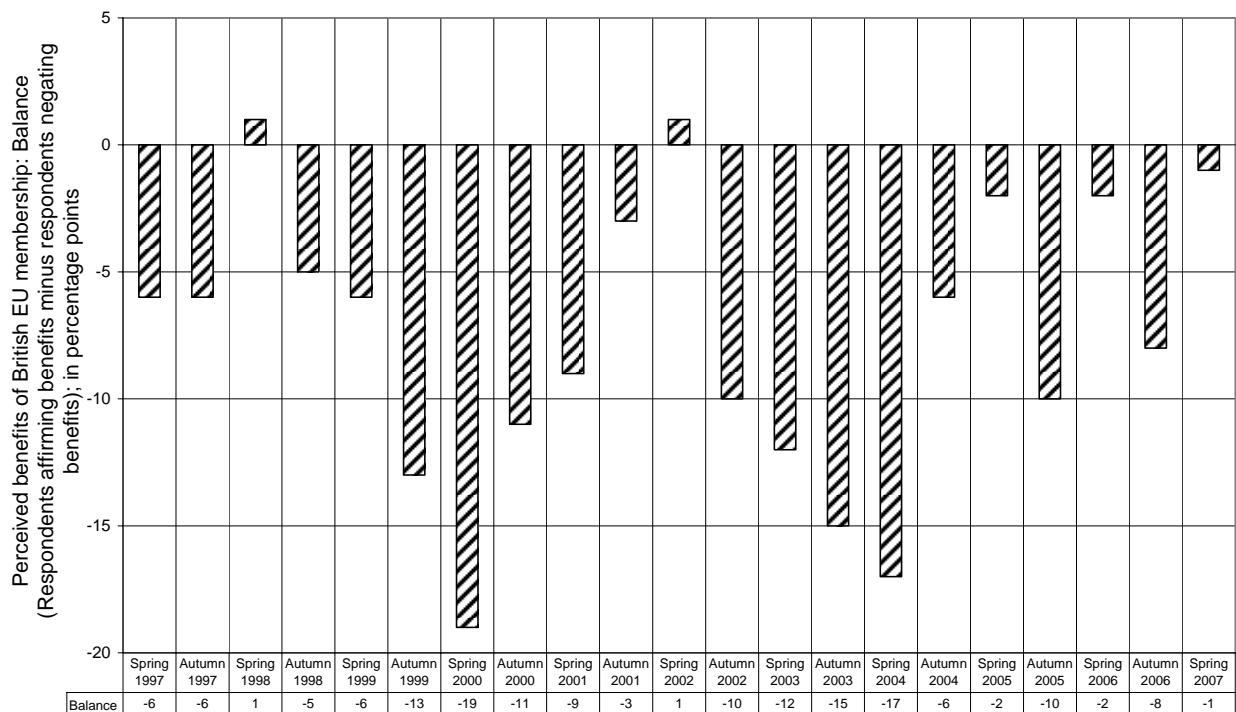
existence of an elite dissent between political parties enhances media interest in an issue and widens and polarises the domestic debate about it. The political opposition can therefore be conceived of as a potential source of fire-alarms that directs the general public's attention to those policy issues on which it has chosen to confront the government in the electoral arena (Zaller 1992: 6-22; Hagan 1995: 122; Bennett 1994: 171-183). The more a European policy event or decision is seen by opposition parties as an effective electoral weapon and the more prominently it figures in these parties' political campaigning, the higher will be its public salience.

3. Euroscepticism in British Public Opinion and New Labour's European Policy

The general link between the salience of European issues to electorates and the extent to which a government's decision making leeway in this regard is constrained by the electoral incentive not to devise policies that run counter to a majority in public opinion finds a specific manifestation in the context of British politics: in Britain, the level of a European issue's public salience tends to be inversely related to any British government's domestic room for manoeuvre to adopt pro-integrationist stances on this issue. Due to the deeply entrenched overall euroscepticism of the British public, European policy is likely to become an electoral liability to governments that voters perceive as having a pro-European agenda as soon as the issue is sufficiently salient to the electorate to become a significant source of issue voting.

The eurosceptic outlook of British public opinion is revealed above all by the regular Eurobarometer question about whether or not respondents consider their country as having benefited from EU membership. These data disclose that the eurosceptic trend in British public opinion which originated in the early 1990s was not reversed during New Labour's tenure (see figure 1): Whereas the balance between those who considered EU membership to yield overall benefits to Britain and those who did not discern such benefits was positive in 1990 (+10 percentage points), it was already negative at the time New Labour took office (-6 percentage points) and – with only two exceptions – remained so for the entire Blair premiership. Compared to public opinion in other EU member states, the percentages of British respondents who attested to overall benefits of the country's membership to the EU was always well below the EU average between 1997 and 2007: In each Eurobarometer since autumn 1998, Britain ranked among the three member states that featured the lowest percentages of respondents in this regard.

Figure 1: Euroscepticism in British public opinion: Benefits of Britain's EU membership?



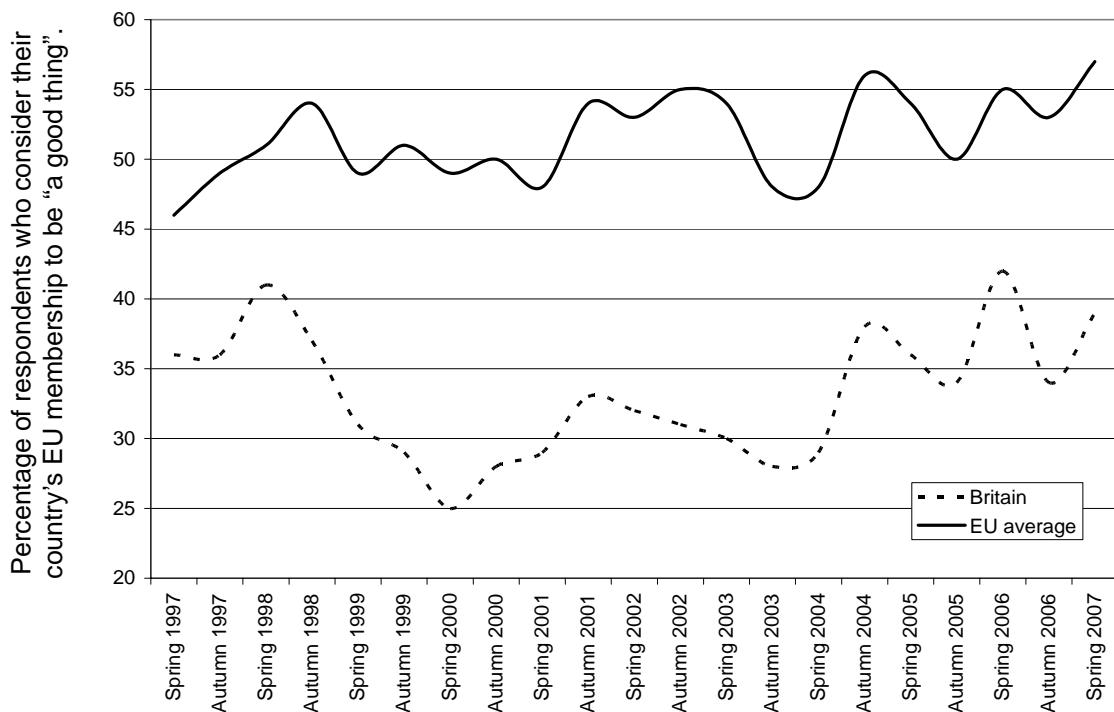
Author's figure; based on data from: Standard Eurobarometer 47 (Spring 1997) to 67 (Spring 2007).

Another telling indicator of the British public's euroscepticism is provided by the Eurobarometer data on the proportion of general publics in every member state that consider the EU membership of their country to be "a good thing" (see figure 2). That positive appraisal was on average assigned to British EU membership by only about one third of the British electorate between 1997 and 2007. Although the percentages fluctuated between a maximum value of 42% in spring 2006 and a minimum value of 25% in spring 2000, the data do not indicate a clear upward or downward trend in the British public's support for European integration during the Blair premiership: At the time of Tony Blair's resignation as Prime Minister the proportion of the British public which believed Britain's EU membership to be a good thing was about as small as it was when New Labour assumed office in May 1997. For the entire Blair premiership, the British public was far less inclined to appreciate its country's EU membership than the EU average.

From the very beginning of the Blair government's tenure, therefore, its overarching European policy aspiration to make Britain "a leading partner in Europe" (Blair 1997) was up against a deep scepticism of the British electorate regarding Britain's participation in the process of European integration. The government's stated objective to adopt a more positive approach to European integration than its Conservative predecessor and to constructively engage with its European counterparts in order to enhance British influence on the future of

the EU was thus always in danger of turning into an electoral liability for New Labour (Labour Party 1997; Hughes/Smith 1998).

Figure 2: Euroscepticism in British public opinion: Britain's EU membership as a 'good thing'?



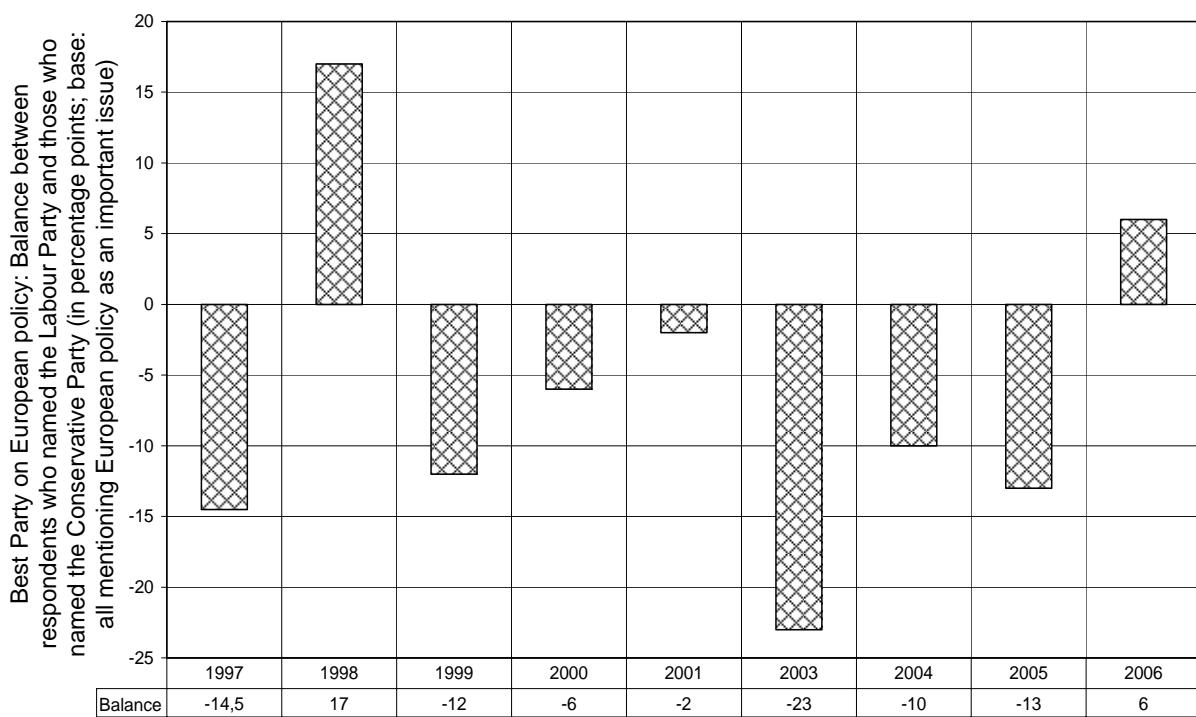
Author's figure; based on data from: Standard Eurobarometer 47 (Spring 1997) to 67 (Spring 2007).

The potential of European policy to harm New Labour's electoral prospects was highlighted by two closely related findings: First, the pro-European turn of the Labour Party that got under way in the mid-1980s and the eurosceptic shift of the Conservative Party that was most accentuated under the leadership of William Hague opened up a substantial gap between the two main British parties' European policy positions (Holden 2002; Bale 2006). What is more, the European policy cleavage between the two main British parties was also perceived as such by the electorate: Prior to the 1997 general elections and even more so at the time of the 2001 general elections, voters rated the Labour Party to be far more integrationist than its Conservative opponent. The European policy positions of the Conservative Party were thus closer to the preferences of the median voter than the positions that the electorate ascribed to the Labour Party (Evans 1998: 577, Evans 2002: 99).

Second, the voters' perception of the differences between the two main parties' European policy positions came to be reflected in their evaluation of these policies. Among those voters who considered European integration to be an important issue, pluralities preferred the European policies of the Conservative Party over those of the Labour Party for most of the

Blair premiership: Between 1997 and 2006, the approval ratings of New Labour's European policies lagged behind those of the Conservative Party's policies in seven out of ten years (see figure 3). The most noteworthy exception from this pattern is to be found in the year 1998 when the overall popularity of the Blair government, the weakness of the Conservative opposition and an interim dilution of eurosceptic sentiments within the general public combined to render the European policies of New Labour temporarily more popular than those of the Conservative opposition. Both in the 2001 and 2005 elections, however, voters who ranked European issues among the important determinants of their voting decisions again preferred the Conservatives' policies on Europe over those of the Labour Party by a considerable margin of 16 and 21 percentage points respectively (Cowley/Quayle 2002: 58; Whiteley et al. 2005: 154).²

Figure 3: Best Party on European Policy: Labour vs. Conservatives



* no data available for 2002

Author's figure; based on data from Ipsos Mori Political Trends: Best Party on Key Issues, www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/trends/bpoki-europe.shtml.

Given this domestic political set-up during the Blair premiership, any electoral impact that might have emanated from European policy issues was likely to work to the detriment of New Labour. Other things being equal, the higher the salience of European issues, the more the

² This stands in contrast to the 1997 general elections when New Labour's European policies were slightly more popular among the overall electorate than those of the Conservative government (+3 percentage points) (Geddes 1997: 95).

latent potential of this policy field to harm the electoral prospects of the Blair government could be assumed to become manifest. In pursuit of its objective to implement a more positive approach to European integration, the anticipation of electoral sanctions had to weigh more heavily on New Labour's decision-making insofar as European policy was a high-salience issue than insofar as it was a low-salience issue. The Blair government's room for manoeuvre should therefore have been less constrained by electoral imperatives in case of the latter than in case of the former.

Against this background, it is plausible to assume that New Labour had an overall electoral incentive to contain the salience of European issues. As the Blair government did not seriously attempt – or at least did not succeed – to turn around the eurosceptic shape of British public opinion, trying to minimise the salience of European issues was an alternative way to enhance its decision-making leeway vis-à-vis the general public and thus to improve the prospects of fulfilling its European policy objectives without incurring prohibitive electoral costs. Before section five of this paper will assess whether and by what means New Labour indeed sought to contain the salience of European issues and thus employed a strategy of “cutting slack” (Moravcsik 1993: 28), the following section four will first trace the broad patterns regarding the salience of European policy to the British public between 1997 and 2007.

4. The Salience of European Policy to the British Public, 1997-2007

By way of empirical analysis, the concept of public issue salience can be operationalised through the data provided by public opinion polling and by media content analyses (Sinnott 1997: 6-7). Measuring the salience of European policy to the British electorate during the Blair premiership, the following analysis will resort to both of these means.

With regard to opinion polls, the most valid indicator of issue salience is provided by aggregate data on the respondents' denomination of the ‘most important issues’ on the overall political agenda. For the British public, such data is provided by the Ipsos Mori institute which more or less regularly conducts surveys on the “most important issue facing Britain today” since the late 1970s. Thus, the following account builds upon the findings of Ipsos Mori on the proportion of the British public which ranks European integration among the most important issues of the day. Crucially, this indicator is better suited to capture an issue’s salience than the widely employed survey question on the ‘most important political problems’. Since the latter question wording mingles an issue’s perceived importance with its

perceived problem status, it only imperfectly reflects on the concept of issue salience which is agnostic as to whether or not an issue is negatively evaluated as a problem (Wlezien 2005: 556-561). Moreover, the Ipsos Mori data stem from open-ended and unprompted questions that generally make for better measures of issue salience than closed and prompted questions. The latter measures in particular fail to reproduce the relative nature of issue salience that reflects the selectivity of human attentiveness and the ‘top-of-the-head’ phenomenon both of which are constitutive to the concept of public issue salience.

As regards media content analyses, assessing the amount of an issue’s coverage in the media offers indirect insights into the public salience of an issue, which can be expected to rise with the amount of media reporting on the respective issue (Epstein/Segal 2000: 66-67). In addition to public opinion polls, the subsequent analysis will also present findings on the amount of coverage of a specific European policy issue – the single European currency – in British newspapers. These findings are based on the LexisNexis database and allow for more fine-grained insights into the ups and downs of European policy’s public salience.

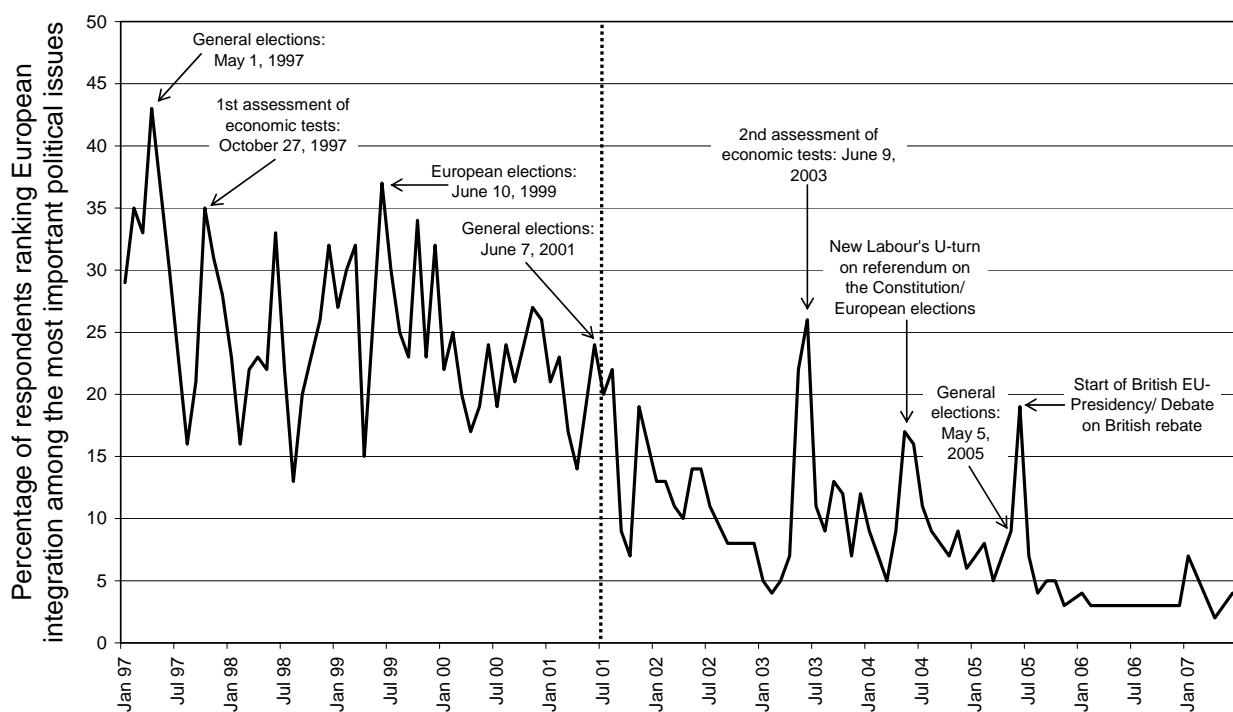
In this manner, the paper seeks to shed light on two distinct dimensions of the salience of European policy to the British electorate. For one, the analysis will identify broad trends regarding the overall level of the public salience of European policy in the course of the Blair premiership. For another, the paper will assess the volatility of European policy’s public salience in Britain. The volatility of an issue’s public salience is a measure of public opinion’s responsiveness to information on developments that are related to the issue in question. It speaks to the propensity of an electorate to switch its focus of attention to a policy field when exceptional and potentially far-reaching events and decisions take place or are to be expected. The more volatile the public salience of European policy is, the more a government therefore has to anticipate its performance in this regard to periodically attract particular interest on part of the general public even if the average level of this policy’s salience is low.

In terms of the overall level of European policy’s salience to the British electorate, the Blair premiership can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase broadly covers New Labour’s first term in office between May 1997 and June 2001 and is marked by a very high level of the issue’s public salience (see figure 4). When the Blair government came to power, the share of respondents naming European policy as one of the most important issues facing Britain was at an all-time high of 43%. During New Labour’s first term, 24.5% of respondents on average included European policy on their list of the most important issues on the political agenda. Furthermore, European policy was amongst the foremost concerns of voters both at the 1997 and the 2001 general elections. In 1997, it was only health policy and education

policy that were assigned even higher priorities by the electorate. According to the findings of a June 2000 opinion poll, a total of 48% of respondents opined that they would certainly, very likely or fairly likely not vote for their otherwise preferred party in the next elections if that party adopted a stance on Europe that they disagreed with.³ In the 2001 general elections, the importance attached to European issues was second only to health policy. In retrospective, 13% of voters named European policy as the single most important determinant of their voting decisions in those elections (Denver 2003: 102; Clarke et al. 2004: 90).

The high public salience of European issues at the time of the 1997 and 2001 elections is also reflected by their broad media coverage: In the second half of the official 1997 election campaign, 15% of all media reporting on the election was about European policy, more so than on any other issue (Turner 2000: 209; Wring 1997: 74). Similarly, the European issue enjoyed a larger amount of media coverage in the 2001 general election campaign than any other single issue area (Deacon et al. 2001: 106-107; Geddes 2002: 151).

Figure 4: The salience of European integration to the British public, 1997-2007



Author's figure; based on data from Ipsos Mori Political Monitor: Long Term Trends. The Most Important Issues Facing Britain Today. Unprompted, combined answers to the questions: „What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?“ and „What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?“, www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/trends/issues.shtml.

³ See Ipsos Mori Attitudes Towards Europe, 25 June 2000, www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2000/notw000623.shtml.

In contrast, the second phase, which spans the second and third term of the Blair premiership, features a significantly lower level in the public salience of European policy. Between July 2001 and June 2007, this policy field was considered to be among the most important political issues of the day by an average of only 8.6% of respondents. The average level of European issues' public salience during the second phase thus corresponds to only about one third of the average level during the first phase. In terms of electoral politics, European policy was almost a non-issue in the 2005 general election campaign (Whiteley et al. 2005: 154).

Moving on to the second dimension of European policy's public salience, the attention of the British electorate to European issues was highly volatile for most of the Blair premiership. The data on both the first and the second term of New Labour's tenure give evidence to the potential of European integration-related events and developments to induce stark and abrupt upswings in the public salience of European policy. This potential was most notable with respect to New Labour's policies on the single European currency. Thus, the two most significant turning points in this regard – the statements of Chancellor Gordon Brown on the Treasury's assessment of the five economic tests in October 1997 and in June 2003 – both entailed pronounced increases in the overall public salience of European integration. As the Euro was by far the single most contentious European policy issue during the 1999 European election campaign and in the 2001 general elections, the upswings of European policy's salience that accompanied these events also have to be largely attributed to the controversies over the single currency.

Albeit to a lesser extent than the Euro, the European constitution stands out as another issue that prompted a conspicuous rise in the public salience of European integration: This issue attracted particular public attention in the wake of New Labour's endorsement of a referendum on the constitution prior to the 2004 European elections which were dominated by debates on the pros and cons of the proposed constitutional treaty. The most recent upswing in the public salience of European policy took place at the beginning of Britain's 2005 EU Presidency and can assumingly be attributed mainly to the negotiations on the British rebate which was the one issue on the presidency's agenda that generated by far the most intense media interest and inter-party debate (Oppermann 2006a). In contrast to these high-salience issues but equally telling, the data also show that some European bargains that did not prompt significant increases in the importance ascribed to European policy by the British public. It is in particular the Amsterdam Treaty (June 1997) and the Nice Treaty (December 2000) but also the seminal Lisbon summit on economic reform (March 2000) that stand out in this regard.

Although starting out from a much lower base level during its second term than during its first term, the Blair government in both terms had to pursue its European policies in the shadow of the anticipated possibility that these policies may turn into salient concerns of the general public and therefore into a significant dimension of electoral politics. It is not until New Labour's third term that the data indicate both a low average level of European policy's public salience and a low degree of volatility in this policy field's salience: Since the Blair government's third general election victory in May 2005, the attention of the general public to European issues did so far not display any distinct upswings but constantly remained very low. Conspicuously, this finding also covers the recent negotiations on a slimmed down substitute for the abortive constitutional treaty in June 2007 and the ensuing British debate on whether or not the new EU treaty should be subject to a referendum. Whereas a comparable dispute over holding a referendum on the original text of the European constitution sufficed to spark a marked upswing in the public salience of European integration in May 2004, no such effect was discernible in June 2007.

These insights into the broad trends of the overall level and volatility of European policy's salience to the British electorate can be further corroborated by an analysis of the amount of press reporting on the single European currency in selected British newspapers.⁴ Thereby, indirect inferences can be drawn on the public salience of that specific European issue which stands out as having shown the greatest capacity to enhance the general public's attention to European policy in general. Particularly during New Labour's first term, voters tended to view the overall European policy cleavage between the Blair government and the conservative opposition mainly through the lens of the two parties' diametrically opposed stances on the Euro (Evans 2002: 102-103). In the 1999 European elections and in the 2001 general elections, moreover, the debate on the single currency came to acquire a considerable electoral significance: Prior to the 1999 European elections, 33% of respondents to an Ipsos Mori poll named the parties' positions on the Euro as a very important determinant of their voting decisions.⁵ According to an ICM poll, 40% of respondents put the single currency on their list of important considerations in deciding whom to vote for in the 2001 general

⁴ The selected newspapers are the *Guardian*, the *Times/Sunday Times*, the *Daily/Sunday Mirror* and the *Daily/Sunday Mail*. Thus, the sample includes (1) broadsheets and tabloids as well as (2) relatively pro-European and Labour friendly papers (*Guardian*, *Daily/Sunday Mirror*) and more eurosceptic and conservative papers (*Times/Sunday Times*, *Daily/Sunday Mail*). The *Sun* could not be selected for analysis, because it was not covered by the LexisNexis database prior to the year 2000.

⁵ See Ipsos Mori, European Parliament Elections 1999: Public Attitudes, February 16, 1999, www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/1999/eu990208.shtml.

elections.⁶ The findings on the level and volatility of the amount of press reporting on the Euro broadly replicate the insights drawn from opinion poll data on the salience of European integration in general (see figure 5):

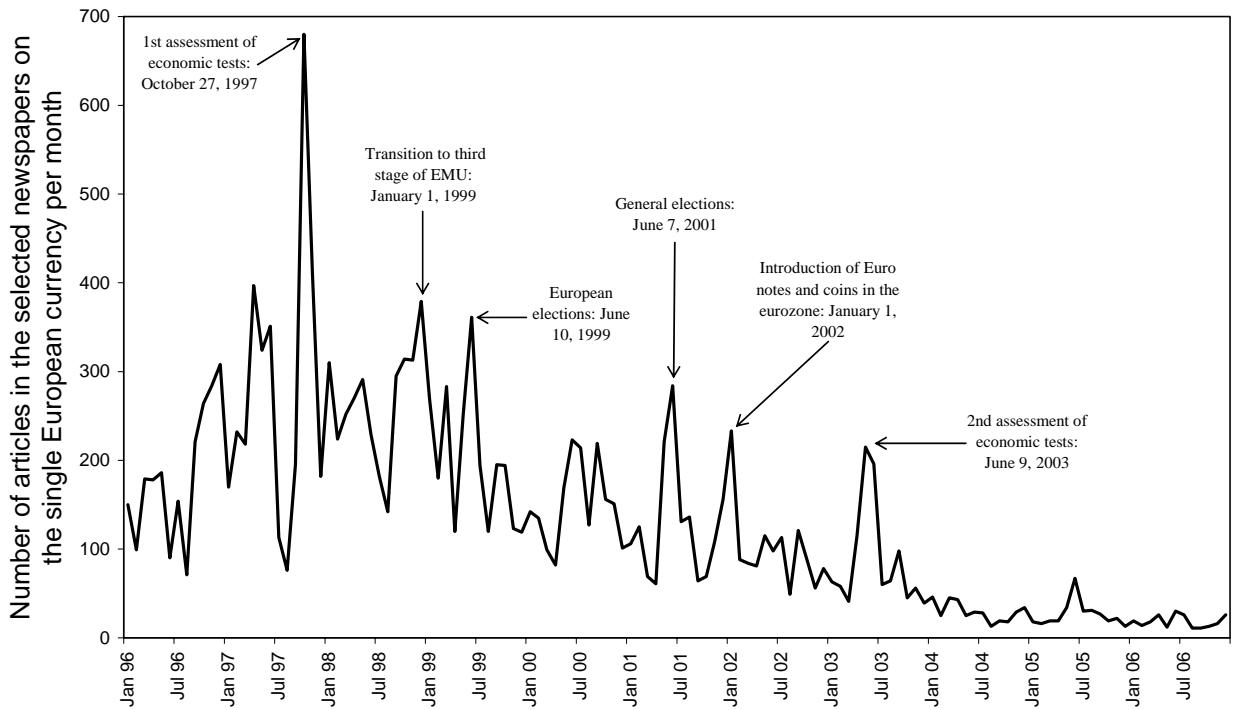
First, the amount of press coverage with respect to the Euro was on a much higher average level during the early years of New Labour's tenure than later on: The average monthly number of articles on the issue in the selected newspapers was about four times higher during the Blair government's first term than after New Labour was re-elected in June 2001. The downward trend in the amount of press reporting on the single currency already began in 1999 and culminated in very low levels of press coverage since mid-2003.

Second, the scope of reporting on the Euro in the selected newspapers was highly volatile especially during New Labour's first term but also during the first half of its second term. In this period, the number of articles on the issue repeatedly featured stark and abrupt upswings which reflected significant turning points in the process of European Monetary Union (EMU) or in the British domestic debate about whether or not to participate in this process. The most pronounced rise in press coverage occurred prior to New Labour's first assessment of its five economic tests on October 27, 1997 when there was a ninefold increase in the monthly number of articles on the single currency between August and October 1997. Other upswings in the amount of press reporting on the Euro were induced by the start of EMU's third stage on January 1, 1999 and the introduction of Euro notes and coins on January 1, 2002,⁷ by the 1999 European elections and the 2001 general elections as well as by New Labour's second assessment of its five economic tests on June 9, 2003. To this day, however, the June 2003 assessment was the last event to spur a significant increase in the amount of press reporting on the Euro. Since then, not only the average amount of press coverage on the Euro but also this amount's volatility remained very low.

⁶ See ICM Research, *Guardian Campaign Poll*, May 3, 2001, www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2001/guardian-campaign-poll3-may-2001.htm.

⁷ The intense reporting of the British press on the introduction of the Euro notes and coins in the eurozone is also highlighted by Julia Firmstone's analysis of the leading articles in selected British newspapers on the days before and after the changeover: About 12% of all leading articles that were published in the selected newspapers between December 15, 2001 and January 31, 2002 in some way or another dealt with the single European currency. The Sun even devoted leading articles to the issue on seven consecutive days starting with January 1, 2002 (Firmstone 2003).

Figure 5: Coverage of the Single European Currency in selected British newspapers



Author's figure; based on the LexisNexis database; full-text search in *Guardian*, *Daily Mail/Sunday Mail*, *Mirror*, *Times/Sunday Times*; search terms: „EMU“ and „Single Currency“.

Against this background, the public opinion poll data on the importance attached to European issues and the data on the press coverage of the Euro reinforce each other and point to the same conclusions: For one, the overall level of European policy's public salience was very high when New Labour first came to office but gradually declined since the beginning of the Blair government's second term. For another, the salience of European policy to the British public was highly volatile during New Labour's first two terms in office but ceased to be so during its third term. In the course of the Blair premiership, therefore, European policy was turned from a high-salience issue which was prone to become subject to stark and abrupt increases of the general public's attention into a low-salience issue which was no longer marked by significant upswings of the electorate's interest in it. In order to move towards an explanation of this pattern, the following section seeks to assess in how far and by what means the Blair government actively and deliberately contributed to it by pursuing a policy of containing the public salience of European integration.

5. Containing the Salience of European Integration

Attending to possible causes of the empirical findings on the public salience of European integration in Britain, it would be overly simplifying to attribute these findings solely to the

policies of the Blair government. Rather, it has to be carefully distinguished between those factors which indeed emanate from these policies and those which are independent from New Labour's European policy decisions.⁸ With respect to the latter, two aspects are of particular importance.

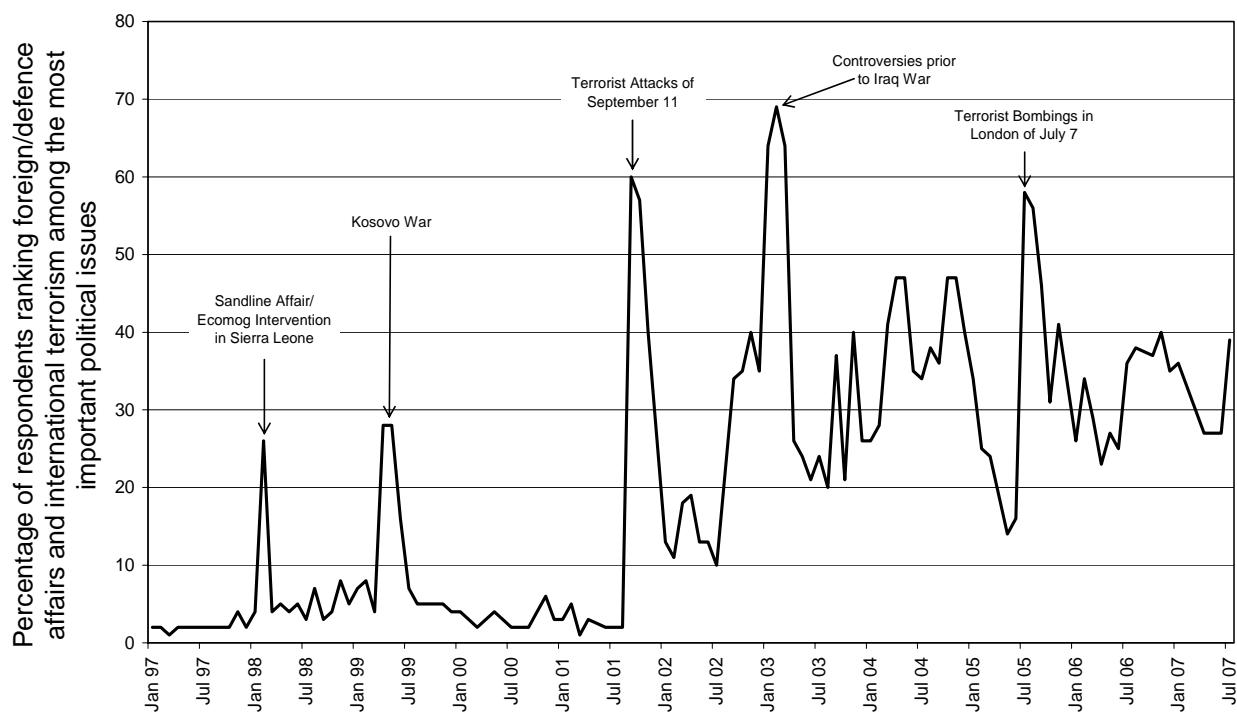
First, the potential of European policy to become a highly salient issue to domestic electorates partly depends on the calendar of the integration process. Contingent on the dynamics of that process and irrespective of a single government's policies, the European-level agenda will to a greater or lesser extent provide for focal points which might spur the domestic-level politicisation of European issues. The public salience of European policy can thus be expected to be higher, the more often significant European-level events and developments take place that qualify as focal points for domestic-level debate. From this perspective, it is above all the timetable of EMU which was more likely to prompt a higher salience of European policy to the British electorate in the first half of the Blair government's tenure than later on. This is most evident with respect to a stipulation of the Maastricht Treaty's protocol on 'certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom' that obliged the British government to notify its European partners by the end of 1997 if it intended to participate in the launch of the third stage of EMU on January 1, 1999. In the immediate aftermath of New Labour's assumption of office, this provision aroused intense domestic debate and speculation on the new government's intentions regarding the Euro. It was not the least this debate and the ensuing political pressure to clarify its position on the single currency which made for the immediate rationale behind New Labour's high-profile policy statement on the five economic tests on October 27, 1997 (Peston 2006: 197-216; Gowland/Turner 2000: 329-332). Similarly, the January 1999 onset of EMU's third stage and the January 2002 introduction of Euro notes and coins represent further significant European-level focal points for domestic debate on the issue which were predetermined by the agenda of European integration. Irrespective of New Labour's policies, therefore, the timetable of EMU tended to spark less domestic debate on European issues during the second half of the Blair premiership and can thus be assumed to having contributed to the decline of European policy's salience to the British electorate in the course of New Labour's tenure.

A second factor that should have added to the overall decrease in the public salience of European integration after the Blair government's first term while being unrelated to New Labour's European policy is the contemporaneous increase in the general public's attention to

⁸ It is methodologically infeasible, however, to isolate the effects of different factors on the public salience of European policy and thus to pinpoint the exact contribution of New Labour's policies to the decline of this issue's salience.

defence issues in general and international terrorism in particular. Except for the marked upswings at the time of the 1998 Sierra Leone crisis and the 1999 Kosovo war, the latter issues were of very low salience during New Labour's first term in office, but they were transformed into decidedly high-salience issues in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the 2003 Iraq war and the July 7, 2005 bombings in London (see figure 6). Given the relative nature of the concept of issue salience and due to the selectivity of the human mind, the stark increase in the importance attached to defence issues and terrorism by the British public should to a certain extent have crowded out its attention to other (foreign policy) issues on the political agenda, including European policy.

Figure 6: The salience of foreign/defence affairs and international terrorism to the British public, 1997-2007



Author's figure; based on data from Ipsos Mori Political Monitor: Long Term Trends. The Most Important Issues Facing Britain Today. Unprompted, combined answers to the questions: „What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?“ and „What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?“, www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/trends/issues.shtml.

However, the empirical findings of a significant reduction in the level and volatility of European policy's public salience during the Blair premiership are not to be ascribed solely to factors beyond the reach of New Labour's policy making. Rather, the Blair government employed various political strategies that should also have contributed to these findings. New Labour cannot only be assumed as having had an overall electoral incentive to contain the salience of European issues, but it also devised policies that were functional in this respect.

The main thrust of these policies was to minimise the extent to which European issues became subject to fire-alarms being set off by the conservative opposition and the media. Generally speaking, New Labour sought to keep European policy off the arena of inter-party competition and to neutralise this policy's repercussions on electoral politics. For this purpose, it was careful to provide as few focal points as possible for political attacks on part of the Conservative party and the eurosceptic press. Specifically, a review of the Blair government's European policy points to four closely interrelated mechanisms or governing strategies by the means of which New Labour contributed to the containment of the public salience of European issues: These strategies consist of the attempts of the Blair government (1) to *defuse* the European policy cleavage between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, (2) to *depoliticise* its decision-making on European issues, (3) to *delegate* the final responsibility for decision-making to the public and (4) to *defer* controversial decisions to some future date. The following points shall serve to briefly map and exemplify these four means to contain the public salience of European policy.

(1) New Labour's policy to defuse the differences between its own European policy stances and those of the Conservative party goes back to the time before the Blair government assumed office in 1997. In contrast to the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Labour Party deliberately repositioned itself as a distinctly pro-European alternative to the increasingly eurosceptic Conservative government (Holden 2002: 63-93; Daniels 1998: 74-82), New Labour since the mid-1990s resorted to a more defensive posture (Oppermann 2006b: 187-193). Although it did not repudiate its European policy review of the late 1980s and essentially maintained its moderately pro-integrationist outlook, New Labour increasingly fell back on a strategy of downplaying and diluting the policy differences between the two main British parties on the issue of European integration. This strategy of adjusting its European policy positions to those taken by the Conservative Party became evident both on a rhetorical and a more substantive level.

For one, the Labour Party sought to avert the electoral impact of Conservative onslaughts on its pro-integrationist position by increasingly couching its European policy statements in terms of standing up for the national interest and defending British sovereignty. One of the earliest and most telling examples of New Labour's attempts to defuse the publicly perceived European policy differences between the two main parties on a rhetorical level is provided by an article of Tony Blair in the starkly eurosceptic *Sun* shortly before the 1997 general elections:

„New Labour will have no truck with a European superstate. We will fight for Britain’s interests and to keep our independence every inch of the way. [...] I am a British patriot. Anyone who thinks I would sell my country short has not listened to a word I have said in the past three years.” (Sun, March 17, 1997: 2).

For another, New Labour also approximated some of the Conservative Party’s European policy stances in substance. In particular, it tended to mirror presumably popular Conservative policies on European issues which could be expected to potentially become highly salient concerns of the electorate. Obvious and early cases in point are the support of the Labour Party for the Major government’s highly disruptive policies in the BSE crisis of spring 1996 and its outright matching of the Conservative Party’s April 1996 referendum pledge in regard of the single currency in November 1996 (Fella 2002: 84-87; Carter 2003: 2). When New Labour was in government, the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations set the tone for its balancing act of adopting a more positive and constructive overall approach to the process of European integration than the Major government, while at the same time minimising the gap between government policy and the positions of the conservative opposition on some of the more contentious European policy issues. Whereas the Blair government’s more integrationist outlook was notable with regard to its support for the Amsterdam Treaty’s employment chapter and for ending the British opt-out from the social protocol (Pollack 2000; Fella 2006: 625-627), its policies on most of the other prominent issues on the negotiation agenda were close to the positions taken by the conservative opposition: this holds for the relationship between EU and WEU and for the realm of Justice and Home Affairs as well as for the Treaty’s flexibility clauses and the overall pillar structure of the EU (McDonagh 1998: 111-182; Fella 2002: 128-212). Similarly, New Labour deflected the conservative party’s overall rejection of the Anglo-French declaration of St Malo in that it explicitly tied up to prior initiatives of the Major government and strived to forestall the opposition’s main concerns. Consequently, the St Malo defence initiative entailed many provisions which should have mitigated conservative criticisms, e.g. the purely intergovernmental character of the envisaged Anglo-French defence cooperation, the rejection of a European army or the explicit reference to NATO as the superordinate institution within the European defence architecture (Howorth 2005; Biscop 1999).

Thus, New Labour’s policy of defusing the inter-party European policy cleavage reduced the scope for attempts of the Conservative Party to capitalise on its eurosceptic position by pushing the public salience of this policy field. This governing strategy tended to transform European policy from a *position issue* on which inter-party competition coalesced around the parties’ different stances regarding the process of European integration into a *valence issue* on which inter-party competition was relegated to the question of which party was seen as more

competent to defend the British national interest on the European level (Stokes 1992; Clarke et al. 2004: 50-64). Along these lines, the Blair government's more positive and constructive approach to European integration was framed less in terms of a change in the ends of British European policy than in terms of a new and more effective means to achieve these ends:

„We will stand up for Britain's interests in Europe after the shambles of the last six years, but, more than that, we will lead a campaign for reform in Europe. [...] But to lead means to be involved, to be constructive, to be capable of getting our own way. [...] We will give Britain the leadership in Europe which Britain and Europe need” (Labour Party 1997).

The more successful this strategy of New Labour was and the fewer opportunities the Conservative Party could therefore dispose of in order to accentuate positional differences between a pro-integrationist government and a eurosceptic opposition, the weaker should have been the effect of inter-party dissent as a fire-alarm on the public salience of European policy.

(2) The second means employed by the Blair government to contain the salience of European integration can be referred to as the politics of depoliticisation, which has been defined as “the process of placing at one remove the political character of decision-making” (Burnham 2001: 128). At its core, this governing strategy aims at depicting governmental decision-making as a technocratic and rule-based rather than a political and discretion-based exercise. Its main rationale is to evade political responsibility for governmental decisions and to shield a government from criticisms against its policies. Insofar as it is successful, the strategy of depoliticisation helps to contain an issue's public salience by keeping it out of inter-party competition and by dispelling political controversies about it.

In various shapes, the governing strategy of depoliticisation has been singled out as a conspicuous feature of the Blair government's record in office, most notably in regard of its commitment to explicit rules for fiscal stability and the granting of operational independence to the Bank of England (Burnham 2001: 136-144; Buller 2003: 14-18; Grant 2003: 267-270). In the field of European policy, New Labour's attempt to depoliticise its decision-making was most palpable with respect to the single European currency. This attempt became manifest above all in the five economic tests to which the Blair government tied its policy on the Euro.⁹ On the one hand, the tests were ambiguous and vague enough to provide New Labour with broad political discretion as to whether or not Britain should join the eurozone. On the other hand, they worked as a smoke-screen which camouflaged the political character of the government's decision-making by attributing these decisions to seemingly apolitical,

⁹ For a comprehensive statement of the five economic tests see: HM Treasury 1997.

objective and authoritative criteria. New Labour's policy on the single currency was thus framed less as a discretion-based expression of the government's political will to which it was to be held accountable but more in terms of a rule-based and impartial implementation of economic prudence.¹⁰ However, the effects of the five economic tests on the public salience of European policy appear to be ambivalent: Although they should have depleted the overall level of domestic political controversies and speculation on the government's approach to the single currency, at the very moments of their official assessments these tests have also occasioned stark upswings in this policy field's salience to the British electorate (see figures 4 and 5).

Apart from the single currency, the Lisbon process of economic reform makes for a second example in which New Labour has contributed to the depoliticisation of European policy. The reform programme which was agreed upon by the March 2000 Lisbon European Council ranks among the most significant early successes of the Blair government in its effort to exert decisive influence on the process of European integration and to shape the EU's economic policies according to British interests (Rosamond 2003: 57-59). Beyond its substantive provisions, the Lisbon process above all introduced the "open method of coordination" (Lisbon European Council 2000) as a new means to achieve the EU's objectives, which was strongly pushed and supported by the British government. By virtue of its focus on the external validation of policies by the means of quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks, monitoring devices and peer review processes, this new method is not the least a way of depoliticising the member states' policies to implement the Lisbon strategy.

(3) Moreover, New Labour resorted to the instrument of the referendum to delegate the final responsibility for taking the decision on the two arguably most contentious European policy issues during its tenure – the single currency and the European constitution – to the general public.¹¹ In both cases, this strategy dissociated the political parties' positions on the

¹⁰ The strategy of depoliticising its decision-making on European integration by resorting to a list of apparently objective criteria is not without precedent in the history of the Labour Party's policies on Europe: Under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, the party in 1962 devised five touchstones which were meant at the time to guide the party's positioning on the question of Britain's accession to the EC. These touchstones were equally vague and ambiguous as New Labour's 1997 economic tests regarding British membership of the eurozone. In 1962, this strategy mainly helped the party leadership to commit the party to a policy of opposing entry into the EC without provoking a rebellion of the party's pro-European wing (Gowland/Turner 2000: 131-132).

¹¹ Like the politics of depoliticisation, the Blair government's recourse to the instrument of the referendum was not restricted to the realm of European policy but was part of its broader governing strategy: Apart from European policy, New Labour repeatedly used this device to implement its programme of devolution. By any historical standard, the Blair government's period in office thus saw an unusual accumulation of referendum pledges and actual referendums which are traditionally rather alien to the British constitution. Moreover, the only historical precedent for a referendum on a European issue in Britain also goes back to a Labour government: The

respective issues from the arena of electoral politics and sidelined inter-party electoral competition on them. The Blair government's referendum commitments elevated the electorate to the status of veto players and thus mitigated the potential of the Euro and the European constitution to become important dimensions of issue voting in general elections. In anticipation of their power to directly decide on these European policy issues in a referendum, voters were free to ignore the competing parties' stances on them when deciding whom to vote for in a parliamentary election without incurring any political costs. Therefore, the Blair government's policy of delegating veto power to the general public worked to the detriment of opposition strategies to reap electoral benefits by drawing the public's attention to the inter-party dissent on the Euro and the European Constitution and by pushing these issues' salience (Sherrington 2006: 69-70; Forster 2002: 120-126).

As regards the Euro, these effects were most notable in the 2001 general elections. In an attempt to play to one of their few remaining electoral strengths, the Conservative Party under the leadership of William Hague adopted a decidedly Euro-centred campaign strategy prior to these elections and tried to place the debate on the single currency at the top of the electorate's concerns (Carey/Burton 2004: 628; Geddes 2004: 206-208; Cowley/Quayle 2002). The public resonance of this strategy, however, was severely reduced above all by the prospect of a future referendum on the issue. In view of this prospect, the Conservative *Save the Pound* campaign got stuck in the rather awkward position of trying to convince the electorate that the government would somehow rig the promised referendum so that the election would be its last reliable means to prevent the adoption of the Euro (Geddes 2002: 149-153). Even more successfully, the commitment of New Labour to give the general public the final say on the proposed European constitution forestalled efforts of the Conservative Party to turn the issue into an important dimension of electoral politics. The Blair government's renunciation of its previous rejection of a referendum on the constitutional treaty in April 2004 countered the Conservative Party's strategy to make its opposition to the constitution the overarching theme of its 2004 European elections campaign (Conservative Party 2004) and helped to keep the issue off the agenda before the 2005 general elections.

It is important to note, however, that New Labour's policy of delegating decision-making authority to the general public can only be expected to contain the public salience of European policy as long as the envisaged referendums are not imminent. Rather, the intense polarisation and politicisation of domestic debate that comes with referendum campaigns is certain to spur an upswing in the public salience of the issue in question (Gray 2003: 4-12). The utility of

1975 referendum on the terms of Britain's membership to the EC was called by the Wilson government and primarily served as an instrument of intra-party management (Forster 2002: 48-62).

referendum pledges as a means to contain the salience of European policy is thus contingent upon a fourth governing strategy which New Labour has employed to this end, i.e. the policy of deferring controversial European policy decisions.

(4) The final plank of the Blair government's policy of containing the salience of European issues has been aptly described as "delayism" (Aspinwall 2003: 363). Its main rationale is to evade the making of contentious decisions and the political controversies that may come with them by way of indefinitely deferring these decisions. This governing strategy can be expected to reduce an issue's public salience in that it denies the domestic debate adequate focal points around which it could coalesce. As the expectation of an imminent governmental decision on an issue is a prime catalyst for political disputes, a strategy of avoiding and deferring such decisions tends to deplete the number of occasions which could spark public debate on the issue and thus arouse the electorate's attention.

Similar to its policy of delegating decision-making authority to the public, New Labour's strategy of deferring contentious decisions to some future date is inextricably linked to the instrument of the referendum and has thus been employed with regard to the Euro and the European Constitution. In both cases, this policy emanated from the government's control over the processes leading to the referendums and from its discretion in setting the dates for them (Hug/Tsebelis 2002: 465-467, 480-484).

With respect to the now abortive European constitution, New Labour could employ this discretion to the effect that it sidestepped the requirement of ratifying the constitution altogether. Its policy of delayism thus benefited from the negative referendum outcomes in France and the Netherlands and the ensuing disruption of the Europe-wide ratification process (Whitman 2005). The Brown government can now expect to conduct the negotiations on a slimmed-down version of the original constitution in a domestic political context in which European policy has become a low-salience issue. It should thus feel less impelled than the Blair government to resort to governing strategies of containing the salience of European integration. Accordingly, it has already prepared the ground for not holding a referendum on the new European treaty, provided the treaty meets certain conditions (Times, June 18, 2007: 2; Financial Times, June 21, 2007: 11).

As regards the Euro, New Labour's policy of deferring a conclusive decision on the issue is closely interwoven not only with its policy of delegating the final responsibility of decision-making to the public but also with its strategy of depoliticising this decision. Specifically, the Blair government's policy of delayism in this case rests on the five economic tests which are

employed by New Labour to control the triggering of a referendum and thereby to defer the making of a decision. At the same time, the five tests mask New Labour's political discretion in setting a date for the referendum and thus serve to depoliticise the government's policy of delayism. Furthermore, the Blair government's strategy of delayism not only refers to the decision on whether or not to join the eurozone per se, but extends to the decision on when to conduct a third encompassing assessment of the five economic tests, which is a necessary precondition for holding a referendum. Thus, in its 2003 assessment of the five economic tests New Labour announced that a further assessment would only be carried out if the government's annual budget report testified to a change in the overall macroeconomic setting which would make such a step worthwhile (Brown 2003: cols. 413-415; Baker/Sherrington 2004: 348-355). Since New Labour in none of its subsequent budgets discerned such a change, the Blair government up to now deferred a third assessment of the tests and thus barred a potential focal point for domestic debate on the Euro from the political agenda (Riddell 2005: 372-373; Smith 2006: 166-167).

All in all, the Blair government pursued a mix of different governing strategies which were meant to reduce its electoral vulnerability to eurosceptic campaign strategies of the Conservative Party. In that New Labour's policies mitigated the electoral incentives for the opposition to put special emphasis on European policy, it contributed to this policy field's loss of significance for the overall political agenda of the Conservative Party. Although the European policy cleavage between a moderately pro-integrationist Labour Party and a eurosceptic Conservative Party did not wither away during the Blair government's tenure, the conservative opposition acted as a fire-alarm which focused the public's attention on European issues to a lesser extent in the second half than in the first half of the Blair era (Bale 2006: 388-391). The reduced prominence of European policy in the context of inter-party competition which was precipitated not the least by the governing strategies of New Labour has to be considered as one of the major explaining factors for the overall decline in the level and volatility of European policy's salience to the British electorate in the course of the Blair premiership.

6. Conclusion

The Blair government's main European policy legacy may pertain less to this policy's substance than to its public salience. Whereas New Labour's balance sheet with respect to its

self-proclaimed objective of implementing a more positive and constructive approach to the process of European integration is uneven, the change in the salience of European policy to the British electorate in the course of the Blair premiership is clear-cut: The data unambiguously reveal a pronounced downward trend in both the overall level and the volatility of European integration's public salience in Britain between 1997 and 2007. European policy was thus transformed from a decidedly high-salience issue at the beginning of the Blair government's tenure into a downright low-salience issue at the end of Tony Blair's period in office.

Furthermore, this decline in the public salience of European issues appears commensurate with the Blair government's overall electoral interests. Due to the conspicuous and deeply entrenched euroscepticism in British public opinion, New Labour's relatively pro-European outlook tended to figure as a liability for the government's prospects in its electoral competition with the starkly eurosceptic conservative opposition. This liability could be expected to be more severe, the higher the public salience of European policy was and the more significance the policy therefore obtained as a dimension of issue voting. The Blair government could pursue its pragmatically pro-integrationist agenda on the assumption of a lesser risk of incurring electoral costs when the public salience of European issues was low rather than high. Thus, New Labour faced strong electoral incentives to contain the salience of European policy to the British public.

The Blair government responded to these incentives by pursuing a mix of at least four distinct governing strategies: Specifically, it employed policies that were meant (1) to *defuse* the European policy cleavage between the two main British parties, (2) to *depoliticise* European policy decisions, (3) to *delegate* veto power to the general public and (4) to *defer* the making of conclusive decisions on contentious European issues. Although the marked decline in the public salience of European policy cannot solely be ascribed to these governing strategies, they have lessened the extent to which the fire-alarm of inter-party dissent on this policy aroused the electorate's attention and thereby most likely helped to contain the salience of European integration to the British public. Since trying to mitigate the salience of European integration follows a rather different logic than trying to persuade the general public of the merits of European integration, this pattern of governing strategies may also go some way in accounting for the Blair government's notable failure to bring about a pro-European shift in public opinion.

Against this background, the Brown government in 2007 faces very different conditions when devising its European policies than the Blair government did in 1997. Above all, its decision-

making in this respect is far less in the public eye than it was the case in 1997 so that the Brown government should be less compelled to tailor its European policy to the imperatives of electoral politics. It remains to be seen in which way the Brown government will make use of its leeway that comes with the lack of public attention to European issues and whether or not the low salience of European integration will become a permanent and robust feature of British politics.

7. References

- Aldrich, John H./Sullivan, John L./Bordiga, Eugene (1989): "Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates 'Waltz Before a Blind Audience?", *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1), 123-141.
- Allen, David (2005): "The United Kingdom: A Europeanized Government in a non-Europeanized Polity", in: Simon Bulmer/Christian Lequesne (Hg.): *The Member States of the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 119-141.
- Aspinwall, Mark (2003): "Odd Man out: Rethinking British Policy on European Monetary Integration", *Review of International Studies*, 29 (3), 341-364.
- Baker, David (2005): "Islands of the Mind: New Labour's Defensive Engagement with the European Union", *The Political Quarterly*, 76 (1), 22-36.
- Baker, David/Sherrington, Philippa (2004): "Britain and Europe: Europe and/or America?", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57 (2), 347-365.
- Bale, Tim (2006): "Between a Soft and a Hard Place? The Conservative Party, Valence Politics and the Need for a New 'Eurorealism'", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59 (3), 385-400.
- Bennett, W. Lance (1994): "The Media and the Foreign Policy Process", in: David A. Deese (ed.): *The New Politics of American Foreign Policy*, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 168-188.
- Biscop, Sven (1999): "The UK's Change of Course: A New Chance for the ESDI", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 4 (2), 253-268.
- Blair, Tony (1997): "Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet", November 10, 1997, www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page1070.asp.
- Brown, Gordon (2003): *Statement on Economic and Monetary Union*, June 9, 2003, House of Commons Debates, Hansard Volume 406, cols. 407-415.
- Buller, Jim (2003): *The Disadvantage of Tying One's Hands: The Rise and Fall of the Europeanisation of British Monetary Policy*, Paper presented to the ESRC Seminar Series on the Europeanisation of British Politics, University of Sheffield, September 19, 2003.
- Burnham, Peter (2001): "New Labour and the Politics of Depoliticisation", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3 (2), 127-149.
- Butler, David/Stokes, Donald (1974): *Political Change in Britain: The Evolution of Electoral Choice*, 2nd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Carey, Sean/Burton, Jonathan (2004): "Research Note: The Influence of the Press in Shaping Public Opinion towards the European Union in Britain", *Political Studies*, 52 (3), 623-640.

- Carter, Nick (2003): "Whither (Wither) the Euro? Labour and the Single Currency", *Politics*, 23 (1), 1-9.
- Clarke, Harold D./Sanders, David/Stewart, Marianne C./Whiteley, Paul F. (2004): *Political Choice in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Conservative Party (2004): *Putting Britain First. The Conservative European Manifesto*, London.
- Cowley, Philip/Quayle, Stuart (2002): "The Conservatives: running on the spot", in: Andrew Geddes/Jonathan Tonge (eds.): *Labour's second landslide: The British general election 2001*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 47-65.
- Daniels, Philip (1998): "From Hostility to 'Constructive Engagement'. The Europeanisation of the Labour Party", in: Hugh Berrington (Hg.): *Britain in the Nineties: The Politics of Paradox*, London: Frank Cass, 72-96.
- Deacon, David/Golding, Peter/Billig, Michael (2001): "Press and Broadcasting: 'Real Issues' and Real Coverage", in: Pippa Norris (ed.): *Britain Votes 2001*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 102-114.
- Denver, David (2003): *Elections and Voters in Britain*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Downs, Anthony (1968): *Ökonomische Theorie der Demokratie*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Epstein, Lee/Segal, Jeffrey A. (2000): "Measuring Issue Salience", *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (1), 66-83.
- European Commission (1997-2007): *Standard Eurobarometer 47 (Spring 1997) to 67 (Spring 2007). Full Reports*.
- Evans, Geoffrey (2002): "European Integration, Party Politics and Voting in the 2001 Election", *British Elections and Parties Review*, 12, 95-110.
- Evans, Geoffrey (1998): "Euroscepticism and Conservative Electoral Support: How an Asset Became a Liability", *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (4), 573-590.
- Fella, Stefano (2006): "New Labour, Same Old Britain? The Blair Government and European Treaty Reform", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59 (4), 621-637.
- Fella, Stefano (2002): *New Labour and the European Union. Political Strategy, Policy Transition and the Amsterdam Treaty Negotiation*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Financial Times (June 21, 2007): *Red-line summit leaders face a fight over Europe's future shape and powers*, 11.
- Firmstone, Julie (2003): '*Britain in the Euro?*': *British newspaper editorial coverage of the introduction of the Euro*, European Political Communication Working Paper Series 5/03, Centre for European Political Communications.
- Forster, Anthony (2002): "Anti-Europeans, Anti-Marketeers and Eurosceptics: The Evolution and Influence of Labour and Conservative Opposition to Europe", *The Political Quarterly*, 73 (3), 299-308.
- Geddes, Andrew (2004): *The European Union and British Politics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Geddes, Andrew (2002): "In Europe, Not Interested in Europe", in: Andrew Geddes/Jonathan Tonge (Hg.): *Labour's Second Landslide: The British General Election 2001*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 144-163.
- Geddes, Andrew (1997): "Europe: Major's nemesis?", in: Andrew Geddes/Jonathan Tonge (eds.): *Labour's landslide. The British general election 1997*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 85-97.
- Gowland, David/Turner, Arthur (2000a): *Reluctant Europeans. Britain and European Integration 1945-1998*, Harlow: Longman.

- Grant, Wyn (2003): "Economic Policy", in: Patrick Dunleavy/Andrew Gamble/Richard Heffernan/Gillian Peele (Hg.): *Developments in British Politics 7*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 261-281.
- Gray, Emily (2003): *Waiting for the Starting Signal: The UK's Pro- and Anti-Euro Campaigns*, European Political Communications Working Paper Series, 3/03, Centre for European Political Communications.
- Hagan, Joe D. (1995): "Domestic Political Explanations in the Analysis of Foreign Policy", in: Laura Neack/Jeanne A. K. Hey/Patrick J. Haney (eds.): *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 117-143.
- HM Treasury (1997): *UK Membership of the Single Currency. An Assessment of the Five Economic Tests*, October 1997, London.
- Holden, Russell (2002): *The Making of New Labour's European Policy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howorth, Jolyon (2005): "The Euro-Atlantic Security Dilemma: France, Britain, and the ESDP", *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 3 (1), 39-54.
- Hug, Simon/Tsebelis, George (2002): "Veto Players and Referendums Around the World", *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 14 (4), 465-515.
- Hughes, Kirsty/Smith, Edward (1998): "New Labour – New Europe?", *International Affairs*, 74 (1), 93-104.
- Labour Party (1997): *New Labour – Because Britain Deserves Better, Labour Party Manifesto 1997*, London.
- Lisbon European Council (2000): Presidency Conclusions, 23-24 March 2000, www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1995): *Die Realität der Massenmedien*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Lupia, Arthur/McCubbins, Mathew D. (1994): "Learning from Oversight: Fire Alarms and Police Patrols Reconstructed", *The Journal of Law, Economics & Organization*, 10 (1), 96-125.
- McCubbins, Mathew/Schwartz, Thomas (1984): "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarm", *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1), 165-179.
- McDonagh, Bobby (1998): *Original Sin in a Brave New World. The Paradox of Europe. An Account of the Negotiation of the Treaty of Amsterdam*, Dublin: Institute of European Affairs.
- Miller, Joanne M./Krosnick, Jon A. (1997): "Anatomy of News Media Priming", in: Shanto Iyengar/Richard Reeves (Hg.): *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 258-275.
- Moe, Terry M. (1987): "An Assessment of the Positive Theory of 'Congressional Dominance'", *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 12 (4), 475-520.
- Moravcsik, Andrew (1993): "Introduction. Integrating International and Domestic Theories of International Bargaining", in: Peter B. Evans/Harold K. Jacobson/Robert D. Putnam (Hg.): *Double Edged Diplomacy. International Politics and Domestic Bargaining*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 3-42.
- Ogul, Morris S./Rockman, Bert A. (1990): "Overseeing Oversight: New Departures and Old Problems", *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 15 (1), 5-24.
- Oppermann, Kai (2006a): "Die britische Ratspräsidentschaft 2005: Zwischen europäischen Erwartungen und innenpolitischen Restriktionen", *Integration*, 29 (1), 23-37.

- Oppermann, Kai (2006b): "Der europapolitische Wandel der Labour Party", in: Sebastian Berg/André Kaiser (Hg.): *New Labour und die Modernisierung Großbritanniens*, Augsburg: Wißner, 175-207.
- Peston, Robert (2006): *Brown's Britain*, London: Short Books.
- Pollack, Mark A. (2000): "A Blairite Treaty: Neo-Liberalism and Regulated Capitalism in the Treaty of Amsterdam", in: Karlheinz Neunreither/Antje Wiener (Hg.): *European Integration after Amsterdam: Institutional Dynamics and Prospects for Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 266-289.
- Rabinowitz, George/Prothro, James W./Jacoby William (1982): "Salience as a Factor in the Impact of Issues on Candidate Evaluation", *Journal of Politics*, 44 (1), 41-64.
- Riddell, Peter (2005): "Europe", in: Anthony Seldon/Dennis Kavanagh (Hg.): *The Blair Effect 2001-5*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 362-383.
- Rosamond, Ben (2003): "The Europeanization of British Politics", in: Patrick Dunleavy/Andrew Gamble/Richard Heffernan/Gilian Peele (Hg.): *Developments in British Politics 7*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 39-59.
- Sherrington, Philippa (2006): "Confronting Europe: UK Political Parties and the EU 2000-2005", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 8 (1), 69-78.
- Simon, Herbert A. (1985): "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science", *American Political Science Review*, 79 (2), 293-304.
- Sinnott, Richard (1997): *European Public Opinion and Security Policy*, Chaillot Paper 28, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies.
- Smith, Julie (2005): "A Missed Opportunity? New Labour's European Policy 1997-2005", *International Affairs*, 81 (4), 703-721.
- Smith, Michael (2006): "Britain, Europe and the World", in: Patrick Dunleavy/Richard Heffernan/Philip Cowley/Colin Hay (Hg.): *Developments in British Politics 8*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 159-173.
- Soroka, Stuart N. (2003): "Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy", *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 8 (1), 27-48.
- Stokes, Donald (1992): "Valence Politics", in: Dennis Kavanagh (Hg.): *Electoral Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 141-162.
- Sun (March 17, 1997): *I'm a British patriot*, 2.
- Taylor, Shelly E./Fiske, Susan (1978): "Salience, attention, and attribution: Top-of-the-head phenomena", in: Leonard Berkowitz (ed.): *Advances in experimental social psychology: Vol. 11*, New York: Academic Press, 249-288.
- Times (June 18, 2007): *Brown joins drive to stave off referendum on future of the EU*, 2.
- Turner, John (2000): *The Tories and Europe*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Weller, Christoph (2000): *Die öffentliche Meinung in der Außenpolitik: Eine konstruktivistische Perspektive*, Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Whiteley, Paul/Stewart, Marianne C./Sanders, David/Clarke, Harold D. (2005): "The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005", in: Pippa Norris/Christopher Wlezien (Hg.): *Britain Votes 2005*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 146-161.
- Whitman, Richard (2005): "No and After: Options for Europe", *International Affairs*, 81 (4), 673-687.
- Wlezien, Christopher (2005): "On the Salience of Political Issues: The Problem with 'Most Important Problem'", *Electoral Studies*, 24 (4), 555-579.

Wring, Dominic (1997): "The media and the election", in: Andrew Geddes/Jonathan Tonge (eds.): *Labour's landslide. The British general election 1997*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 70-83.

Zaller, John R. (1992): *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.