

The McVickar Essay

BRITISH DRIVERS AND FRENCH BRAKEMEN: ON
OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE ROAD TO EUROPEAN
TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

Eric S. Nguyen

It is no secret that the British and French have disagreed about everything from pastry to politics throughout their long histories. The 1904 signing of the conciliatory *entente cordiale* signaled hope on both sides that a common path could be taken after centuries of discord. Yet, following the centennial of that agreement, it is clear that significant differences still remain, especially with regard to the territorial expansion of the European Union. With so much attention focused on the costs and benefits for applicant countries, too little attention has been given to the positions of states that are already members. In their 2002 survey of the existing European Union literature, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier specifically note the lack of comparative work on member state politics (505-06). Understanding why a particular member takes its view on expansion has been limited to suppositions and narrowly-focused country studies (Tewes 120). The question of why Great Britain has encouraged EU territorial expansion in spite of public reticence, while France has delayed Turkish acceptance, propelled by the argument that Turkey's inclusion would lead to a divide between the European "core" and the accession states, still remains unanswered. In this paper, I provide a historical explanation for differing British and French perceptions of the purpose of the European Union, the first key component to understanding each nation's particular support or opposition. I then compare the two domestic electoral systems to show that British political elites have greater autonomy than the French, allowing for further divergence from public opinion—another source of variance in their approaches to expansion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the scarcity of sources that directly address the question of French and British European policy differences, there is a framework for answering it. National economic and geopolitical power interests continue to be motivating factors for all inter-state decision-making. Most of the pioneer literature on EU integration in the late 1960s placed these factors

Eric S. Nguyen is a third-year undergraduate in the Government Department at Harvard University.

at the center of neo-functional theories (Haas 313-17; Schmitter 165-66). Moravcsik has recently used the same basis to argue that territorial expansion is undoubtedly an economic net positive for all EU members, discounting the influence of history and political rhetoric on outcomes (Moravcsik and Vachudov 43). But this view that the puzzle is simply “why the existing EU-15 are willing to let [accession states] in,” ignores the fact that there is strong disagreement among those fifteen states and handicaps the comparative power of Moravcsik’s theory. Citing evaluations of current regional integration work (Friis and Murphy 213; Wallace 151), Schimmelfennig notes that while numerous studies have discussed decision-making in accession states (Dziegielewska; Etchemendy 625; Hardiman), the matter of existing member states’ policies concerning “EU enlargement has been a largely neglected issue in the theory of regional integration” (501).

Creating a framework to fill this gap, Schimmelfennig divides member states into two groups: “drivers” and “brakemen.” Countries geographically closer to eastern accession states—such as Finland, Germany and Austria—were more likely to be supportive of Eastern European enlargement. These drivers consequently gave momentum to new applicants, motivated by disproportionately high economic gains resulting from geographical proximity. Countries receiving a greater proportion of structural funds from the EU would lose the most from the incorporation of poorer states due to the diversion of subsidies; hence, “Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Ireland ... were among the brakemen” (Schimmelfennig 48). The theory is simple and intuitive: countries which are geographically closer are more likely to trust and benefit from neighboring partners. Geographic proximity increases the likelihood of existing cultural ties, a familiarity with a potential new partner, and provides more experience with trade. But these generalizations do not fully explain state behavior; as the theorists admit, it does not explain why France—which would only benefit economically—applied the breaks, while Great Britain—hardly an Eastern European neighbor—pushed for expansion. Treated as anomalous exceptions by Schimmelfennig, these cases require explanation.

To understand the domestic forces at play in the most recent expansion is to better understand how member states will position themselves with regard to Turkey and future applicants. Were it a simple question of Moravcsik’s net gains or Schimmelfennig’s geographic proximity, the future of the EU could be easily charted. Additionally, national history and domestic electoral structures are central to the motivation to be a driver or brakeman. Great Britain’s decline from imperial power after World War II led it to support a wide European union on whose economic clout England could rise again as the “European Great Power” (Packwood 8). France,

whose de Gaulle feared Anglo-Saxon domination, sought to maximize power through a tightly-knit and exclusive pact. An analysis of President Chirac's worldview today is as reflective of his Gaullist roots as Tony Blair's perspective is, strangely enough, of Churchillian, expansionist tradition. It will be shown that the results of these traditions are reinforced by domestic political systems. Facing an electoral system where niche candidates can sap votes on single issues, French politicians are more likely to go along with the public worries about expansion in an attempt to incorporate new, culturally distinct nations into the EU. With one-party opposition that cannot bank on a single issue, the British prime minister has wider latitude in pushing for what will be, as Blair put it, "of fundamental importance for the future peace and prosperity of Great Britain" before it is popularly recognized as such ("L'entrée de la Turquie dans l'UE").

In this paper, I consider each country's historical perspective and electoral politics in order to explain the British driver and French brakeman, in addition to their likely paths forward.

THE FRENCH WORLDVIEW TODAY

For all its critiques, realism captures a fundamental principle of international relations: national leaders are interested in gaining power (Carr 103-05). In France, "politicians have long seen the European Union as an extension of French power, a deeply political project steered mainly from Paris, with Germany as the junior partner" (BBC News 28 October 2004). The French are deeply interested in presiding over a deep, truly integrated EU, whose superstructure will include governance over a progressive social policy and cultural harmony—something not possible if a cultural and social outlier, such as Romania or Turkey, were to become a full partner:

With the expansion of Europe to 25 members, and Turkish membership under discussion, all that has changed. There are fears that the French vision of a politically-integrated, socially-minded Europe is being threatened by a looser, Anglo-Saxon-led liberal economic model, an EU which risks turning into little more than a free-trade area. (BBC News 28 October 2004)

This obsession with the preservation of a French-inspired European culture and the promotion of French power through a tightly-knit European Union, avoiding "emasculatation by enlargement," as it has been dubbed, is the most dominant theme in President Chirac's governing party today (Giry 13).

The French people are also concerned about the effects of enlargement. In a November 2002 poll, a majority of the French agreed that “a larger European Union will inevitably be more remote from citizens” (Eurobarometer 47). As such, they voiced the strongest support for determining the final borders of the EU before continuing with any further enlargement. More than most countries, France felt that something less than EU citizenship should be granted to new applicants. A majority also believed that horizontal extension would lower the standard of social welfare within the Union (Eurobarometer 65). Equally as important from the perspective of French influence, “diplomats and politicians fear that [expansion] has diluted not only French influence but even the use of French as an EU language” (BBC News 28 October 2004).

These opinions are important, but their impact on public policy must be explained to illustrate their significance. The official positions of the French government on EU expansion are rooted not only in elite opinions, but also by historical experience and political institutions.

FRANCE: TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS ON INTEGRATION AT THE EXPENSE OF EXPANSION

French political elites, once considered the driving engine of EU development, have become cautious and pessimistic about European expansion and the European Constitution that will tie new and old members together. Laurent Fabius, former prime minister and a current leader of the French Socialist Party, railed against adopting the Constitution, saying that it is not based on the ‘social’ model the Socialists would like for Europe because it does not guarantee enough protection or rights to Europe’s workers (BBC News 28 October 2004). The social model was the center of Jacques Delors’ European model for decades. Fabius and a significant number of members of the National Assembly put a great deal of pressure on President Chirac to reconsider the wisdom of territorial expansion and the European Constitution. While expansion was certainly seen as a means to economic improvement, it would not permit what the French felt was the true function of the EU: tightening *cultural* and *social* ties—not creating economic linkages—within an exclusive group of nations (Eurobarometer 52-4). Even in 1951, Jean Monnet, the architect of France’s long-term European vision, had seen the Franco-German economic agreement as only a stepping stone to a deeper, cultural unification.

This idea that horizontal expansion excludes the possibility of deeper integration has gone relatively unchallenged, and its validity is not taken up here (Grabbe and Hughes 1998). However, a *belief* in its validity—and

therefore in the fact that France's historical view of the Union could not be realized in the face of wide inclusiveness—was a prime motivation for those siding with Fabius. When pushed on his opposition to the draft Constitution, and in particular to expansion, Fabius told the French daily newspaper *Le Figaro* that they presented insurmountable challenges:

The challenge of numbers: how to efficiently advance the agenda of 25 countries, soon to be 30? The challenge of power: how, facing the United States, China, India, to come up with a true political union encompassing economics, diplomacy, and common defense? The challenge of solid and lasting development: how to steer our union toward lasting employment, society, culture, and development. (Qtd. in Sauvage, *Le Figaro* 11 October 2004)

While other nations might have been calculating their net gains from expansion, the French were supremely concerned about what kind of lasting society was being created in Brussels. In any case, a strong traditional sense of the history of the EU's purpose remains behind many political elites' strong opposition to expansion.

FRENCH POLITICS

Not every French politician is antagonistic to territorial expansion. President Chirac, who fashions himself a neo-Gaullist, initially gave strong support to Turkey's application for entrance into the EU. He is, however, wary that Eastern European states that saw the United States as a strong ally against the Soviet Union, will be opposed to a different kind of unity—that of establishing a European counterweight against American power (“Chirac pleads”). In spite of this concern, Chirac was one of the original champions of Eastern European accession, even describing Turkey as a “necessary” and “absolutely positive” candidate for joining (“Interview with President Chirac”). Yet, even with a strong proponent of expansion in a leading position in the French government, France still became a brake-man when it came to advancing the applications of recent accession states.

The fact that the elected President of the Republic was only mildly successful in promoting his original position of support for eastern expansion illustrates that, despite the image of an autonomous “heroic leader” (Hoffmann 68), the French president is “constantly held in check by the ruled” (Hoffmann 69). The semi-majoritarian system of the Fifth Republic grants the executive enormous nominal power, but it also exposes him to constant opposition on every issue. It is impossible to dissociate French elite

decision-making from the nature of the French political system (Hoffmann 66). In the case of European expansion, this necessitates that the president shift his positions in response to dominant public opinion—what Churchill had decried as the tendency to “follow public opinion rather than to form it and lead it” (Meacham 32).

The type of electoral system a nation has affects the degree of policy autonomy its political leaders possess. In what is called a strictly consociational electoral system, parties are elected through proportional representation; power is directly related to the number of votes a party receives (Lijphart 35). Hence, narrow political positions may earn representation, but they are not likely to dominate. Coalitional cabinets are patched together from smaller parties with competing ideologies. The prime minister is *expected* to employ a guiding vision above that scattered fray. The prime minister can also reform the governing coalition to strengthen support for particular policies—hence the recent survival of Ariel Sharon’s withdrawal plan in Israel, despite cabinet defection. On the other hand, a strictly majoritarian system reduces electoral choice to two competing parties whose platforms must be comprehensive (Lijphart 13). The opposition party cannot afford to attack the party in government on only one issue for risk of showing no plan to lead on other matters. Due to the fact that his party and cabinet are evaluated on a host of policy matters, the president is allowed greater autonomy on each policy given general public satisfaction with the others—this is displayed by the continued dominance of the Labour Party in Great Britain, despite the unpopularity of the most recent war in Iraq.

France’s electoral system combines elements of both prototypes. The president is given the type of overarching power typical of majoritarian governments: he chooses cabinet members, acts as the official voice of foreign policy, and has the power to dissolve the national assembly in the case of gridlock. Yet, for all this power, he is limited by constant attacks from multiple opposition parties. Why does the largely majoritarian French system involve so many parties? It is because the system encourages many parties to run in a preliminary round of elections—where one “votes with one’s heart”—before the top two parties advance to a second round, where one “votes with one’s head.” Unlike under pure majoritarianism, therefore, voting for a third or fourth party in the French system is not the same as jeopardizing the chances of one’s preferred “serious” candidate. If this system had been in place in the United States in 2000, people could have felt free to vote for Ralph Nader in the first round before choosing between George W. Bush and Al Gore in the runoff.

Had there been two rounds of voting in the US in 2000, however, surely more parties would have entered the race, using it as a platform to

make narrow criticisms of the major parties. This is exactly what has occurred in France. With so many parties splitting first-round voters who often decide based on single issues, the chance of a fringe party making it to the second round is not insignificant. Harping on the evils of Socialist immigration policy in 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right party made it to the final round with only eighteen percent of the vote. So, while nominally possessing majoritarian power, French leaders are not shielded from narrow attacks on their policies—attacks which threaten their ability to make it past the first round of voting.

In the past fifty years, the French president has reacted through cohabitation and conformation: appointing a leader from the main opposition as prime minister and tethering himself closely to public opinion. Hoffmann does not exaggerate when he articulates that the leader is “constantly held in check” (72). Battling far-right parties and seeing a strong rise in public opposition to territorial expansion, President Chirac had little choice but to put the brakes on what had previously been his strong hopes for territorial expansion. He had dreamed of French influence in Eastern Europe but changed his political rhetoric to be actively critical of the ten accession candidates. In a telling and well-publicized tirade, Chirac suggested that Eastern European support for Britain and America—divergence from “core European positions”—jeopardized accession (“Chirac Ruffles”). On Turkey, glowing support turned to a more pessimistic outlook; accession would require that “Turkey will go ahead with everything we’d like to see. In other words, that it will change its values, its ways of life, its rules” (“Interview with President Chirac”). Rather than settle the matter by executive order, Chirac further surrendered power to the electorate, announcing that the questions of expansion and the European Constitution would be subject to a national referendum. Forced into being a pessimistic European by domestic politics, Chirac focused his explanation for French reticence towards territorial expansion back on the historical argument:

The European Union is about more than just a large market, common policies, a single currency and free movement,’ he said. ‘It is more importantly about a collective ambition, shared disciplines, firm solidarity and naturally looking to the European family. (“Speech by M. Jacques Chirac”)

For this vision of Europe, more than for economic consideration or geographic positioning, France was a brakeman and will continue to be stand-offish unless a gradual shift in public opinion occurs.

THE BRITISH WORLDVIEW TODAY

The British, like the French, would like to be in a position of power. Unlike the French, however, they desire to be a fully sovereign entity acting in conjunction with European allies—not as a leading member of a deeply-integrated, unitary Europe. Prime Minister Blair emphasized the importance of a growing Europe in helping Britain, saying that “Britain has a tremendous opportunity because Europe is enlarging and the countries coming into Europe share our view of Europe as a Europe of independent nation states working together” (Lyon). Furthermore, the accession states “shared the British view” that the EU’s future rests on “a liberal, competitive economy” (BBC News 30 April 2004). Rather than a source for common culture, Europe is seen by the British as an economic market and security force. Summarizing the reasons for his support of territorial expansion, Blair said simply, “It is a good thing in terms of our security, it is a good thing in terms of our trade and our commerce and our jobs” (Lyon). At first glance, the British motivation for driving eastern expansion is in line with Moravcsik’s theory: the net economic benefit made European expansion a clear choice.

While net benefits might have made supporting the accession states the *right* choice for Britain, it might also have made the same decision right for France. The theory does not explain what motivates political leaders to make that choice—that is, simply being the right choice does not make something politically feasible. As much as the French citizenry, the British public was skeptical of what Blair was espousing; Blair himself conceded that “admitting 10 new countries was bound to cause uncertainty and concern” (Lyon). In the Eurobarometer survey, no populace was less convinced that the territorial expansion would bring cultural enrichment than the British (69). Opposition leader Michael Howard hounded the prime minister for months with questions about the illegal immigration, crime, and drug trafficking that could result from expansion, concluding, “We don’t want to be part of a country called Europe” (BBC News 30 April 2004). Eventually, a majority of the British public shifted toward Blair’s position, even supporting the consideration of countries beyond the forecasted 30 for membership in the EU.

The British have staked out a policy path different from their French counterparts. Still, their support for territorial expansion in the European Union is similarly a result of its historical perspective on the EU’s purpose and institution factors that have made such support tenable. How much of this popular support is a result of the British being more aware of expan-

sion's economic benefits than the French is important to investigate.

SEEING EUROPE AS A MARKETPLACE

During World War II, France saw that competition with its neighbors could lead to catastrophe. It is understandable that post-war national policy was geared not only towards reestablishing French power, but also towards solidifying a deeper bond with surrounding states to prevent another fall of Paris. The British, however, were concerned that they had again become entangled in “the continent’s problems” and sought to benefit economically from the rebuilding of Europe without making commitments to integrate. As John Major said about the Maastricht Treaty, “some colleagues [the French] won’t sign without the social chapter, I won’t sign with it” (“Politics – Maastricht”). A *New York Times* article on British “Euro-skepticism” points out that it is not insignificant that, unlike on the continent, “Britain had no shameful World War II past, the specter of which” pro-integrationists could use to insist on deeper understandings, not merely economic deals (Cadwell). Many pro-expansion MPs remain Euroskeptic, insisting that insist that the current French model of a core Europe bound by culture and only peripherally surrounded by newer states overlooks the original purpose of Britain’s joining the EU: the territorial expansion of trading possibilities. Said Nigel Farage, a British Member of the European Parliament, “[we seek] an amicable divorce from the European Union and its replacement with a free-trade agreement, which is what we thought we voted for in the first place” (Cadwell). This historical perspective helps to reconcile British reluctance to harmonize its social and environmental policies with the population’s desire to see the Union expanded to a greater number of countries.

The claim that the Union was first seen primarily for economic, not social, benefit is not merely the rhetoric of the fringe. Leading the government for more than a decade, Margaret Thatcher asserted that “the Treaty of Rome itself was intended as a charter for economic liberty” (Wistrich 15). Under Harold MacMillan the British remained standoffish to the grander proposal of integration, stressing an Anglo-style free trade area—which was rebuffed by the existing core of European states and would later push de Gaulle into vetoing British entry into the EU (Coxall and Robins 121-22; Wistrich 30-33; Thomson 13). Even leaders of the Labour Party felt that their country’s power lay in maintaining firm independence from the European Community, while gaining strength from the pooled economic resources of a larger Union. Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps said, “Participation in a political federation, limited to Western Europe, is not compat-

ible either with ... our obligations as a member of the wider Atlantic community or as a world power” (Coxall and Robins 121; Robins 21).

Cripps believed that world power could only be manifest through expanded trade agreements and defense pacts, not through a limited list of social understandings. The same European Constitution that some French Socialists had seen as too lean on cultural ties was considered by the British to be too *much* of a social framework for primarily economic interactions. The British government’s cautious support for the Constitution has only been possible with the drawing of “red lines” to prevent it from becoming a social charter. There is no contradiction between driving toward territorial expansion and supporting a Constitution less concerned with cultural affinity. If anything, it reaffirms that the British support EU expansion over the deepening envisioned by the French.

Schimmelfennig attributes British enthusiasm for expansion to Euroskeptical parties who believed “that an extensive ‘widening’ of the Community would prevent its further ‘deepening’ and might even dilute the achieved level of integration” (Schimmelfennig 53; Hayward 148; Grabbe and Hughes 5). This theory, which itself is debatable, leaves unanswered the question of why expansion would be a better option than Britain simply staying out of the European Community entirely. The answer lies, naturally, in national interest. More accurately, it is a particular conception of national interest that has been molded by historical perspectives on how to best advance British power and on the central purpose of the European Union.

BRITISH POLITICS

Just like President Chirac, Prime Minister Blair was much warmer to the growth of the European Union than his skeptical public. Also like Chirac, Blair was forced to be cautious with his promotion of EU territorial expansion. From the time he had grown to be a prominent MP in 1992 (as Shadow Home Secretary) through his rise to power in 1997, Blair’s strategy was not to touch the European issue at all. Rather, he wanted to solidify tacit support for expansion within the new Labour Party and proceed to gradually turn the public around on the issue. It took nimble politicking, but after Blair’s defeat of John Major in 1997, he was slowly able to gain support for a more engaged position on Europe (Young 484-88). Soon after his election victory, Blair wanted to ensure that European development would take the British way forward. Visiting leaders across the continent, he asked them to abandon the social Europe of Jacques Delors, or at least minimize its place in the big picture (Young 490). Making it clear at home

that he supported a limited, economic kind of union, Blair was still running against the public on the issue of a common currency as well as expansion (Young 507). Why, then, was Blair able to lead in front of public opinion, rather than remain tethered to it as Chirac had?

The British electoral system makes the prime minister much less vulnerable on any single issue than the French system makes its president. The British electoral system falls very close to the majoritarian prototype. A “first-past-the-post” voting system means that the winner of a plurality receives full representation, a method quite contrary to the proportional representation found in the French National Assembly. Unlike in the French system, voting for a third party highly jeopardizes the chances of one’s preferred major party winning. The increased incentive to vote for one of the major parties helps solidify a strong two-party system. The rise of the Liberal Democrats has not seriously altered the main competition between the Conservative and Labour parties (Coxall and Robins 198). At election time, voters cannot align along narrow interests to support fringe candidates like Le Pen: it would be throwing votes away. Voters choose between two broad platforms, of which EU policy is only one small part. The British prime minister is certainly attacked by the opposition as much as the French president, but there is less threat that one issue, or one opposition group, could undermine the government.¹

This gave Blair latitude in dealing with expansion. Aligned more closely with the public on social spending and the economy, Blair could be forgiven for his divergent enthusiasm for expansion. If John Major, Ian Duncan-Smith, and Michael Howard could not defeat Blair on Labour’s most visible policies—education and health care—the public would not be moved by the “Europe question”.² Facing reelection in 2001, the prime minister had no reason to be preoccupied about fringe candidates compelling him to abandon the idea of territorial expansion: in a winner-take-all system, few vote for fringe candidates. As long as his broad agenda finds public favor, the British leader does not need to conform to public sentiment on every issue. Perhaps no prime minister has used this to his advantage like Tony Blair. Deflecting criticism on major policies by emphasizing the success of his broader agenda, Blair is occasionally referred to as “Teflon Tony” by the press. It is this degree of insulation that Churchill thought would allow a prime minister to “form and lead” public opinion in Britain.

Churchill would not have been disappointed with Blair, who saw Europe as a basis for greater power and took the initiative in making that case to the public. Blair set out to “align the island,” saying again and again in the House of Commons that Britain’s strongest position would be in lead-

ing a larger group of European allies. He charted steps toward bringing the country around:

The first was the work of persuasion. A government united in a sense of Euro-realism would set about demystifying—better, dis-inflaming—the question. The discourse would become sober, rather than perpetually contentious. ... The teaching process was gradually beginning. It was already plausible to believe that, deprived at last of a government it thought it could overturn, the Euro-skeptic minority was being set back. (Young 514)

This concept of “teaching” the public suggests that the particular leader in power also has a large influence on the policy outcome—something seen much less with heroic, but impotent, French leaders.

Schimmelfennig and Moravcsik argue about the importance of a particular leader’s rhetoric in effecting a desired outcome on the EU. To Moravcsik, rhetorical flourishing comes only after the state makes a decision based on national interest. Such a theory suffers from the assumption that the public is able to discern what is in the national interest, that there is some consensus about that decision, and that the government is willing and able to go ahead with that decision. This theory does not account for British support for expansion where the public has been “socialized” to the idea that expansion is in the national interest. In a slightly different context, Schimmelfennig describes the *causal* force of socialization as “rhetorical action.” Moravcsik puts forward the idea that rhetoric is an afterthought; Schimmelfennig, on the other hand, asserts that it is a necessary precondition. From the British case, it appears that rhetoric is an important factor in cases where political elites wish to change the mindset of the public. “National interest” may in fact be the reason why Blair favored expansion, but it is not a sufficient explanation for why he was able to push for it publicly. The persuasion of voters permitted by the prime minister’s electoral insulation helped position Britain as a driver of eastern expansion.

OBJECTIONS TO “HISTORICAL PURPOSE” AS A PREDICTIVE VARIABLE

It must be acknowledged that there are counterarguments to be made against the aforementioned snapshots of the British and French historical perspectives. If post-war conceptions of “national purpose” are so important, why do MacMillan and Thatcher’s worldviews hold more weight than Churchill’s vision of a United States of Europe, a European family?³ Similarly, given that Monnet felt the only first step toward integration the

French public would accept was an economic one, why is that consideration less important than Monnet's deeper ideal of a more encompassing integration? Given unquantifiable measures like "purpose" and "history," they may seem weak explainers of the French position as a brakeman and British role as a driver.

These objections are important, but they only emphasize the motivation behind this paper: no single factor like Moravcsik's "national interest" or Schimmelfennig's "geographical proximity" is sufficiently clear to explain differences in policy. Predominant original national views on the EU need not be applied to every citizen in a country, and historical positions may not be a *sufficient* causal factor behind the ultimate decision to support or oppose territorial expansion. But it was the case that the desire for an economic union was dominant in Britain in the 1950s—Churchill was to shift to a "United States of Europe plus Britain" position upon re-taking power⁴—and that the average Frenchman saw a pressing need to create deeper links with Germany. This did not *cause* the ultimate policy decisions taken by leaders in each country. Rather, historical perspectives formed a basis for the public's idea about what the proper role of the European Union should be. At the same time, geographical proximity and national interest mold the preferences of political elites who must consider what is best for the future of their country. The study of the *political mechanism* thus explains why a French leader must conform to the brakeman mentality of the public and why a British prime minister has wider latitude in leading public opinion toward his position.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The assumption that state behavior is invariably guided by rational calculations of national interest perpetuates the problem of, as Stanley Hoffmann has described it, "being content to look at the state as if it were a black box." The particular historical and political internal dynamics of a state are very influential in determining the outcomes of its policies; the British and French decisions on European expansion are no exception. Moravcsik certainly understands that a calculation of net benefits contributes to leaders' personal support for territorial expansion, but he fails to observe that domestic factors affect whether that support becomes the public policy of a nation. In the case of France, a historical view of the European Union as an exclusive, culturally homogenous club forms a base of public opinion from which the president, constrained by the French electoral system, cannot stray too far. When it came to expanding the EU from fifteen to twenty-five members, the French were brakemen. In the case of Britain, however, the

half-century old view that an expanding economic zone would boost economic power formed a different base of public opinion. Given the prime minister's comparatively greater degree of electoral insulation on European policy, the British prime minister was able to mold that base—and Britain was a driver.

The paper's discussion of historical perceptions of Europe has focused on opinion polls and select public statements from French and British leaders. Whether they have accurately reflected the environment after World War II can certainly be disputed. These statements were argued over even among key figures even immediately after the end of the war. What is clear, however, is that the traditional national perceptions of Europe's future continue to impact how each country's citizenry feels about the EU today. Studying economic policymaking in Britain, Peter Hall found that most literature fails to consider that historical developments might have more than a one-time influence on policy. These developments become a part of culture, the unspoken framework and desires that are passed on from generation to generation. While not chart a direct course, history does pave a path of least resistance. Paralleling Hoffmann, Hall laments the lack of attention to "policy legacies," saying that "the state at which we are now looking largely remains a black box" (Hall 275; Gourevitch 903).

There are also unanswered questions about the electoral politics that take a central role in this discussion. It can be argued that the French president actually has greater insulation at his disposal; with changing coalitions, he can eject groups that oppose expansion, replacing them with allies. Yet in reality, the fact that his government must make policy in so many other areas makes it too costly to build a cabinet solely on one policy. It can conversely be argued that the British prime minister has less autonomy than suggested—consider the fact that losing one single-issue referendum often results in the leader's resignation. Referenda, however, are still the tool of the party in power. Blair has the discretion to move any referendum on the EU to a date of the government's choosing. One can expect that he will push it back until after he feels the country has turned sufficiently toward his view. In the meantime, holding European policy close while trumpeting success on the economy and social services, he will remain insulated from his main opposition in a way that Chirac would not.

Above all else, two very different views of Europe have emerged. On the continent, France remains committed to creating an *espace social*, inhibiting further territorial expansion to the east. Across the English Channel, Britain sees an expanded market in the East, and power in greater numbers. What history and domestic policy cannot predict is which vision will take root in the coming years. For accession candidates like Turkey, the

greatest hope is that Europe drives on the left with Britain and Blair rather than on the right with France and its governing coalition. Despite all the focus on the member states' collective attitude toward Turkey, there is a great deal of national variation that makes the question of who drives and who brakes more tangled than it has been treated in the past. Understanding divergences in history and electoral systems is a first step toward unraveling the knot.

¹Thatcher, for example, remained in power with consistent popular support of about 40 percent. The public voted for her broad agenda—despite opposition to policies on the welfare state—in opposition to fractured opposition parties that narrowed in on welfare policy and management of the economy.

²The war in Iraq was Blair's other serious vulnerability, which was largely neutralized by the Conservatives' initial support for the conflict.

³Outlined in a speech at the University of Zurich, 19 September 1946.

⁴Contrary to popular opinion, Thatcher, too, reaffirmed a commitment to being a part of the European Community, but stressed that the legacy of EU would be found in an association of free-trading states.

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