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National Debates and Actors in the Integration Process

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"Tactics or strategy? The debate on use of a referendum for British ratification of the Constitutional Treaty"

ABSTRACT

Since the early 1990s, there has been a persistent and insistent debate within the British political classes about the desirability of having a referendum on the European Union, either on the occasion of a treaty ratification or more generally on the wider issue of British membership. However, such calls failed to become the official policy of a governing party, until 2004, when Tony Blair declared his intention to hold a popular vote on the Constitutional Treaty. This paper explores the reasons behind this change of policy, in both tactical and strategic perspectives. At the tactical level, party politics was the predominant driver, both in terms of inter-party competition and of Blair's status within the Labour party. Strategically, the move was presented as an opportunity to recast the relationship with the EU and British popular attitudes towards it. It is argued that despite the shift in public debate about a referendum, so that pro-EU voices became much more important, the popular dimension was largely irrelevant in the decision. This reflects a key shortcoming not only of the debate in the UK on European integration, but also more generally on the failure of the Laeken process to address its central aim of reconnecting with the people.

"Tactics or strategy? The debate on use of a referendum for British ratification of the Constitutional Treaty"

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s there has been a persistent debate in the United Kingdom (UK) about the use of referenda as part of the treaty ratification process for modification of the European Union (EU). This can been in various different ways. Firstly, it is a reflection of the nature of the British political system, inasmuch as the Westminster model has not historically allowed for the use of popular referenda in making decisions, and the opportunities this allows political parties to make appeals to 'the voice of the people' as part of the adversarial arrangement. Secondly, it reflects the on-going unease – certainly at the popular level, but also within elements of the political elite – on the value and desirability of EU membership at all: referenda on treaties, in this context, are means to the end of exiting the Union. And thirdly, it demonstrates the uncertainty about the nature of the EU itself: is it merely a conventional (if extensive) form of intergovernmental cooperation, or does it contain more fundamental aspects of constitutional significance?

Naturally, these different views are interconnected and drive one another, which partly explains their continued existence. Moreover, the resistance to using referenda by both governments of the left and right has given the debate a slightly surprising long shelf-life. Such resistance is grounded both in the theory of Parliamentary sovereignty, but also in the basic political axiom that one only calls a referendum if one knows what the answer will be: the timetable of treaty negotiations very rarely coincides with national political cycles. Even before the various 'no' votes by the Danes, Irish, French and Dutch since the 1990s, British government figures were weary of giving way on the matter, especially given the role of precedent in Westminster and the difficulty of retreating from offering a vote.

All of which raises the interesting question of why, given all the downsides, the Labour government (or more precisely, Prime Minister Tony Blair) decided in April 2004 to allow a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, then in the final stages of negotiation. The decision came after a long period of strong argument by the government of the lack of necessity for a vote and the change in policy came at considerable political cost to Blair himself. Contemporaneous accounts (Observer, 25 April 2004, 'Britain and the EU: At the heart of Europe or out of it for good?', Sunday Times, 25 April 2004, 'Push-Me Pull-EU') and subsequent academic perspectives (See Baker & Sherrington 2005, Fella 2006, Bulmer 2008 and Oppermann 2008) point to various pressures and dynamics, which will be discussed later. However, one dimension that is largely missing from any of these views is the notion of a popular debate on the future of European integration, Britain's role therein, or the merits and demerits of the Constitutional Treaty itself.

With this in mind, the paper attempts to provide some light on two, interrelated dimensions. Firstly, it will consider how the background to the decision, in both the short- and long-terms, in order to identify points of

pressure and argument. Then it will look at the different elements at play within the debate. It will conclude by placing the British debate within the wider field of the constitutionalisation of the EU and its shortcomings.

BACKGROUND

By convention, the power to ratify treaties entered into by the British government has rested with the Crown under its prerogative powers. Parliament has been consulted is various cases, but its approval is not legally required to conclude ratification. However, since enabling legislation is sometimes required in order to give effect to a treaty (as has been the case with European Community/Union treaties ever since British accession in 1973), Parliament has held a de facto right of refusal in such circumstances. The full procedure is documented elsewhere and need detain us only in so far as it must be noted that it has never been the practice to submit any treaty ratification to a popular plebiscite.[1] Even in the case of the 1975 referendum – the first of its kind – the issue was not the ratification of a treaty, but a question of principle on continuing membership of the then European Economic Community (EEC).[2]

The 1975 experience notwithstanding, it has been the consistent position of British governments to continue ratification of European Community/Union treaties via the parliamentary path. Bills concerning referenda on the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty were both rejected by the then Conservative government, just as Lord Owen's proposed amendment to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendum Bill in 2000, which would have required a referendum on "Bills of first-class constitutional importance", was defeated by Labour.[3] The reasons for such consistency are not hard to discern. On the one hand, submitting any subject to a popular vote runs the risk of losing, something that was clear even before the Danish and Irish experiences since the 1990s. This had already been seen in large swing in public opinion that had occurred in the 1975 vote and the subsequent defeats on devolution in 1979. On the other hand, the flexible nature of the British constitution means that the precedent, once set, could become standard practice, and so erode the executive's powers. In brief, a referendum is an inefficient and relatively uncontrollable way of making public policy.

Looking at the wider context of Britain's relations with the European integration project, it is apparent that the period between 1975 and the late 1980s was a relatively calm one, at least at the level of popular debate: even Margaret Thatcher's campaign to secure a budget rebate played out primarily at the European level. It was only in the wake of Thatcher's Bruges speech of September 1988 that there was a catalyzation and crystallization of what became termed 'euroscepticism', both inside and outside of political parties (Usherwood, 2003). But in the wake of the Thatcher's repudiation of further integration and the formation of such influential groups as the Bruges Group, this did not result in a revival of the debate on the use of referenda which had died down after 1975.

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[1] See Turpin & Tomkins, 2007, p.164. Also see the Foreign Office's Treaty Section website at: http://www.fco.gov.uk

[2] See Butler & Kitzinger, 1975. While the Labour government had 'renegotiated' certain terms on specific policies, the question asked in the referendum made no reference to this, asking simply: "Do you think the UK should stay in the European Community (Common Market)?'

[3] See George, 1998: Times, 6 November 2000, 'Blair in a bind over European integration'.

In order to illustrate this, it is useful to consider the media coverage of the re-emergence of this debate. The Lexis-Nexis Professional database (www.lexis-nexis.com) holds full texts for The Guardian and The Times from 1985: for each calendar month, the number of articles making reference to "referendum" and "Europe" which also related to the UK was counted. The use of a centre-left and a centre-right (respectively) newspaper controls to a certain extent for differences in political affiliation, although in practice there is a highly significant correlation between the two in terms of the number of articles produced.[4]

Some general observations and comments can be here of relevance to the case of Blair's 2004 decision. Firstly, figure 1 shows that the volume of coverage has been very erratic over the period: bearing in mind that a figure of 25 is equal to one mention per day in a given month, then it is striking that there are only two two-month periods above that figure, firstly around the 2001 General Election and secondly at the time of the publication of the draft Constitutional Treaty in May 2003. Moreover, as indicated in figure 1, each peak of coverage can be associated with particular events, suggesting that this is little underlying structural debate on the matter, especially if it is considered that since 1990, there has been a mean figure of 10 references per month per newspaper, or roughly twice a week.

Figure 1 about here

From this data, it is apparent that it was not at the time of the Bruges speech that discussion of using referenda reappeared, but instead in late October 1990. There was a conjuncture of European and domestic politics at this point: Thatcher had agreed at the Rome European Council to the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs) that were to lead to the Treaty on European Union and she was also facing a leadership challenge. Faced with the prospect of European negotiations on a single currency and feeling that she had been manoeuvred into Sterling joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism by Cabinet colleagues who were now threatening to unseat her, she stated in mid-November: "Some people may say it would be such an enormous constitutional change, that there should be a referendum. I think that could not be ruled out" (Sunday Times, 18 November 1990, 'Fighting on to the bitter end'). However, the idea did not gain much traction, with only one Cabinet member (Nicholas Ridley) publicly supporting it. All of the leadership rivals, including the eventual winner John Major, as well as numerous other party grandees declared their opposition to the idea and in the ensuing de-Thatcherisation of the Conservative party after Major's election, the idea died back.

It was only with the impending conclusion of the IGCs in late 1991 that assorted elements within Westminster picked up once more on the idea. Former minister Norman Tebbit suggested a referendum on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as a way of strengthening Major's hand in the IGC negotiations, while Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown felt it would help stimulate a proper debate on "complex Euro-issues" (Guardian, 28 October 1991, 'Tebbit urges Major to halt 'tragic' union'; Guardian, 18

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[4] This builds on work on British media coverage of the EU, which highlights the same trends more generally in relation to the EU (Usherwood, 2007).

November 1991, 'Tories and Labour deride call for referendum on EC'). These comments served as a prelude to Thatcher's famous description of EMU as the "conveyor belt to federalism" (Hansard, 20 November 1991, Column 294) and the introduction of a Private Member's Bill called for a referendum by Tory backbencher Richard Shepherd on the basis that "I could not vote for anything which takes away or diminishes our rights to change laws under which we live and the accountability of our ministers for those laws without specifically seeking the affirmation of each citizen", just a few days before the Maastricht European Council (The Times, 5 December 1991, 'MPs get chance for referendum vote'). Alongside this Conservative discourse, the former leader of the 1975 'No' campaign, Tony Benn, was also pushing within Labour for a referendum, although he refused to join forces with "nationalists" such as Thatcher or Tebbit (Guardian, 25 November 1991, 'Labour to back greater power for EC parliament').

It is important to detail this point in the debate, because it highlights a number of important features of relevance to Blair's change of policy 13 years later. Firstly, by the time of the European Council in Maastricht, there were elements within all the major British parties supporting the idea of a referendum, so even at this point it could not be considered to be an inter- or an intra-party issue. Secondly, all three parties lacked a unified position on the matter, suggesting that the party leaderships were unable or unwilling to contain the issue (as became so vividly the case with the Conservatives during the 1990s). Thirdly, all of the basic arguments for having a referendum were rehearsed at this stage: integration as a constitutional matter; the use of a referendum to stop 'federalism' (in the British party political sense of the word, i.e. a European state); the opportunity to educate, inform and bring onside the British public. Fourthly, and finally, even at this stage and notwithstanding the arguments just mentioned, there is a strong element of party politics at work: Thatcher's unhappiness at British European policy forcing her to reassert herself and her ideas against Major; Ashdown's sensing of an opportunity to get in early on an issue that could prove embarrassing to the government. Indeed, the most principled position appeared to be that of Benn, although even he had chosen not to raise the matter in any public way during the previous 16 years.

Figure 2 about here

In the period since then, the most remarkable feature was the persistence of the issue of using referenda. Looking at the same data used in figure 1, but on an annualised basis (figure 2) there would appear to be some grounds for claiming the existence of a protracted life-cycle of the issue. This stretches from a rapid growth in the early 1990s (as discussed), through peaks for each of the subsequent treaties to the TEU, before a big collapse in 2006 and only a partly recovery since. How can this persistence be best understood? Four factors would seem to be in play here. The first was the long and painful ratification of the TEU, which set up the contentious nature of the integration process, both in Westminster and in the wider public. Secondly, the Conservative party endured very visible and painful divisions on the issue of the EU, especially after the 1992 General Election, which left Major's government holding on to a very small majority in the Commons. These divisions continued long into the period of opposition from 1997, until the

eurosceptics gained general dominance of the party and chose not to make it a touchstone of policy (pace David Cameron's position on the Lisbon Treaty). Thirdly, all the main parties have been prepared to use the issue as a means of making life difficult for the others, even if they also have recognised the risks of pushing for a referendum. Finally, there has been an associated high level of public interest in European integration, driven by the party political debates, the on-going development of the EU and the extended periods of uncertainty of the 'wait-and-see' and 'prepare-and-decide' positions on Euro membership pursued by Conservative and Labour governments respectively: this can been in figure 3, which shows the IPSOS-Mori data of those thinking integration is an important issue.[5] In particular, the Euro discussion fostered not only a sense of openness about any decision, but also the idea of a decision at all, from which a referendum logically flows.

Figure 3 about here

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[5] As can be seen in comparison with figure 1, this follows a very similar track, which has a highly significant correlation (http://www.ipsos-mori.com). The working assumption is that public interest is driven by media coverage and political debate, rather than the other way around.

THE SOURCES OF PRESSURE FOR A REFERENDUM

Since 1997 the Labour government has seen fit to use referenda in a wide range of other policy fields, most notably on devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.[6] The government's justification of such a procedure is that such matters affect the structural framework of government and so require popular approval: "there should be a referendum in circumstances in which there is a proposal to alter fundamentally the Government's constitutional arrangements".[7] In response to Opposition criticism that the Constitutional Treaty represented just such an alteration, the government's line was that it does not change the relationship between the EU and the member states in any fundamental manner.[8] This was, for several years, the government's and Blair's position. But against whom was it used? In this section, the range of voices calling for a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty will be considered.

What is apparent is that despite the long-term discussion of the use of referenda in relation to the EU, until mid-2003, that discussion was conducted almost exclusively in relation to British membership of the Euro, since all political parties had committed themselves to such a vote in the run-up to the 1997 General Election.[9] The shift from the Conservative's policy of 'wait-and-see' to Labour's 'prepare-and-decide' was rightly seen by many as an important step towards preparing the ground for a referendum, even if the Chancellor Gordon Brown's 'five tests' essentially parked the subject until at least the second term of the Labour government (Howarth, 2004). Thus in the calendar month following the Laeken European Council of December 2001, which launched the process that was to lead to the Constitutional Treaty, there was not a single instance of anyone calling for a referendum on the final outcome.[10] In part, this was a reflection of the openness of the Laeken Declaration, and in part a coincidence of timing of the introduction of the Euro notes and coins at the start of 2002, which triggered renewed debate in the UK about the possibility of using this manifestation of the single currency to build support for membership.

This absence of calls for a referendum persisted through the majority of the lifespan of the Convention on the Future of Europe, until the point where it became evident that the Convention's Chair, Valerie Giscard d'Estaing, had been successful in producing a single document with near-complete support from the members. In the calendar month leading up to the production of the Convention's Draft Treaty in July 2003, the Conservatives had refocused their attentions. This came not only from the party leadership, with Iain Duncan-Smith declaring that "Parliament "has no right" to lay Britain's sovereignty at the feet of a foreign constitution" (Times, 11 July 2003, 'Duncan Smith aims to halt 'EU steamroller''), but also political commentators such as William Rees-Mogg (Times , 7 July 2003, 'Headlong into Europe: and no questions asked') and, notably, the Daily Mail, which had organised a referendum on having a referendum, to

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[6] The pro-referendum Vote 2004 group notes many such instances at: http://www.vote-2004.com/whatwebelieve/whyreferendum.asp
[7] Tony Blair, 18 June 2003, Hansard, Column 351.
[8] Cf. Tony Blair's reply to Iain Duncan-Smith, 5 November 2003, Hansard, Column 793-4.
[9] See Butler & Kavanagh, 1997: a key driver in this commitment was the concern about the potential impact of Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party, which ultimately came to very little.
[10] This section is also based on same methodology and analysis of the two newspapers, The Guardian and The Times, used previously.

overwhelming support for the idea (see Guardian, 13 June 2003, 'Critics round on Daily Mail's EU 'referendum'', for a critical account). However, outside of Conservative circles and the Daily Mail's referendum notwithstanding, the idea did not have any noticeable public or political purchase.

Similarly, in the run-up to the next important stage of the debate in September 2003, it was once again only Conservative figures (including the soon-to-be party leader, Michael Howard) that were making the running on the issue. Even then, it was in much reduced volume to the summer, with the Euro once again drawing most attention in the wake of the Swedish 'no' vote on membership that month. One mark of this lack of focus was that the event that was to prove of arguably most significance in the following year's developments was largely unremarked by either the media or the politicians. In late September, the Liberal Democrats held their annual party conference in Brighton, where their leader Charles Kennedy announced that the party would also be pushing for a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, as a means of making a "positive European case" (see Guardian, 2003). The shift was important since the Conservative and Liberal Democrat members of the House of Lords would be able to amend any legislation ratifying the Treaty to include a provision for a referendum, so raising the political cost to Labour of overturning it (assuming no backbench rebellion on the matter). However, with the Italian Presidency of the EU struggling to pin down the institutional details of the Treaty during late 2003, this seemed a distant concern.

As a result, when Blair's decision came, in late April 2004, it was to some extent a surprise, with even Cabinet members claiming to have been out of any discussions on the matter until after the change was made (see Observer, 25 April 2004, 'Britain and the EU: At the heart of Europe or out of it for good?' and Sunday Times, 25 April 2004, 'Push-Me Pull-EU', for contemporaneous accounts of events). Against this must be set the evidence that pressure for a referendum had both spread to all parties and the volume of pressure had increased markedly in the weeks beforehand.

In terms of the spread, by late March, comments in favour of a vote were coming not just from the Conservative party and press and the Liberal Democrats, but also from several new sources. Firstly, the centre-left press had joined with the Liberal Democrats in arguing the need for a reaffirmation of the public's support for the integration process (see Guardian, 31 March 2004, 'The people must decide'). Secondly, Labour MPs were also starting to express their doubts more vocally, be it publically, as in the case of backbenchers such as Kate Hoey (Times, 27 March 2004, 'Tories will use constitution to challenge Blair') , or privately, as was found in the Cabinet. Both the Chancellor Gordon Brown and the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had been concerned for some time about the Constitution process, particularly in the face of the on-going criticism of the mismatch between referenda on domestic matters and on the EU, leading them to press Blair to change position (see Guardian, 19 April 2004, 'Blair's head on the block over referendum' and Observer, 25 April 2004, 'Britain and the EU: At the heart of Europe or out of it for good?'). Thirdly, pressure groups outside of political parties were starting to form, most notably Vote 2004, which described itself as '"pro-democracy coalition calling for a referendum on the European Constitution" (Sourcewatch,

ND), bringing together MPs from all parties with trade unions and other interest groups. Finally, there were also reports that Rupert Murdoch, owner of News International, had contacted Blair to express unhappiness about the lack of a referendum, with the implicit threat that The Sun would not support Labour during the imminent European Parliament elections. [11]

Similarly, there had been a noticeable increase in the volume of media pieces discussing and/or advocating a referendum: in the last week of March and the first week of April, there were as many newspaper articles (each with different political actors cited) as in the entire month before the publication of the Draft Treaty in July 2003. This arguably reflected two key developments. Firstly, after the Madrid bombings and change in the Spanish government in mid-March, the negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty had become unblocked (Norman, 2005). This had the double effect of making an agreement seem highly likely and of making the political horizon of any decision on ratification draw much closer than had previously been anticipated. Secondly, it was a consequence of a perceived moment of opportunity to force Blair's hand by other political actors. Blair's approval ratings had been in sharp decline since the run-up to the Iraq war in 2003 (www.ipsos-mori.com; also see figure 4) and the European Parliament elections represented an opportunity to encourage voters to express any frustrations with the Labour government (as has typically happened in second-order elections of this type (Rief & Schmidt, 1980; Marsh, 1998)).

Figure 4 about here

Notwithstanding, this increased pressure, it is worth considering the popular dimension to this. As can be seen from figure 3, the salience of the European issue in the British electorate had been in long-term decline since the turn of the decade (i.e. roughly the time at which imminent membership of the Euro faded away). Looking more closely at the period from the 2001 General Election (figure 4), apart from the blip in mid-2003 around the publication of the Draft Treaty, that long-term downward trend continued. It was argued at the time (Observer, 25 April 2004, 'Blair's allies are the angriest') that from late 2003 there had been an association between the EU and immigration in focus groups being conducted for the Labour party. However, this does not seem to be borne out particularly by the Mori-Ipsos data, which show no correlation. In brief, there does not appear to be any particular pressure in relation to popular concerns for Blair to change his mind in April 2004.

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[11] See Observer, 25 April 2004, 'Britain and the EU: At the heart of Europe or out of it for good?' and Independent, 25 April 2004, 'The Referendum: One word from Murdoch and the PM panicked. That word was Traitor', although this account is challenged in Sunday Times, 25 April 2004, 'Push-Me Pull-EU'.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In September 2003, Tony Blair told the Labour party conference that he had "no reverse gear" (Times, 1 October 2003, 'Trust me, trust me, trust me') in relation to his leadership style. Less than seven months later, he was engaged in what the Sunday Times referred to as a "handbrake turn" (Sunday Times, 25 April 2004, 'Push-Me Pull-EU') and the Daily Telegraph noted was a situation where he had "found his reverse gear, only to lose his steering wheel" (23 April 2004, 'Confused signals at the crossroads'). In the short term, the main consequences of the decision were increased unhappiness within the Cabinet - partly about the lack of consultation and partly about the challenge to Labour's European policy – and accusations from across the political spectrum that Blair was loosing control of his government. However, in the longer term the change broadly achieved its objectives of neutralising the issue in the European Parliament elections that summer and of allowing Blair to attempt to reclaim the high ground, by saying that the Conservatives only wanted a vote in order to withdraw from the EU. It might also be argued that the decision generated its own escape clause, by making it impossible for French President Jacques Chirac to avoid a referendum, a vote that in 2005 effectively put paid to the Constitutional Treaty in its then form (Hainsworth, 2006). The subsequent disruption and the re-presentation of the text as the Lisbon Treaty offered an opportunity for the Brown government to avoid holding a referendum, in common with many other EU member states, and an opportunity for the Conservative opposition to push for such a vote.

The key feature that emerges from the episode is that referenda and calls for referenda are only rhetorically about giving power to the people. Instead, they should primarily be understood as political tools. For those seeking a vote to get a 'no' they represent a means to overcome the structural inertia of a political system by using the trump card of 'democracy'. In this context, it is interesting to note that while there has been consistent discussion of the need to involve people in decisions that have an impact on how their political system runs, this has not translated into a generalised desire to engage in a form of direct democracy: the referendum is a selective tool. Likewise, those who seek a vote in order to secure a 'yes' see it less as a device relating to the specific issue and more as a means of affirming the process as a whole. Hence Blair's subsequent attempts to make the referendum about EU membership in general, rather than the Constitutional Treaty in particular, and the use of a general question in the 1975 campaign.

What unites the two sides is a belief that a referendum is desirable, because they both think they know what the answer will be. However, this encounters one basic problem, namely the voters. As can be seen from figure 4, most people do not rate the issue of European integration particularly highly: indeed, in the period since 1985 there has only been one month (June 1999) when it was the most important issue; over the period as a whole, it has been roughly eighth, after bread-and-butter issues, such as employment, health, crime and education (www.ipsos-mori.com). Thus, the issue salience has never been particularly high, certainly over any extended period of time. In addition, as the 1975 vote demonstrated, most people's preferences are shallow: that campaign turned a two-thirds 'no' into a two-thirds 'yes' in a few months (Butler & Kitzinger,

1975). While any contemporary campaign would not be able to count on the same broad 'yes' consensus that existing in political, media and business circles that dominated in 1975, nor the same large imbalance in spending (see Baimbridge, 2007), it is clear that any referendum would touch on the issue of membership, and withdrawal remains both politically and technically highly problematic. This would make it hard for more centrist elements in the 'no' camp to push too far.

The 'people problem' also speaks to another key problem for the integration process. In all of this, the British public has been treated as a passive object, to be shaped to different political actors' advantage. At one level, this is a rational approach, given the widespread apathy of that public. However, it also is a poor reflection on the original aims of the Laeken process, namely of bringing the EU's citizens closer to the Union (European Council, 2001): in many cases, as in the UK, member states choose to hold referenda as a substitute for more structural debate and where those referenda did take place, they were characterised by domestic, first-order concerns (Taggart, 2006). This persistent failing on the part of the Union and its member states is not a new phenomenon, but the Constitutional Treaty exposed it in a particularly brutal fashion at three points. The first came with decisions like Blair's to choose the path of a referendum-based ratification, which was more about political exigency than democratic principle. The second came in the 'no' votes in France and the Netherlands, where the substantive content of the Treaty only played a marginal role. The third came after the reflection period and the resurrection of the text as the Lisbon Treaty, where the EU and national governments have dissembled to argue it is nothing more than a tidying-up exercise, which has simply confirmed many voters' views on the transparency and democracy of the integration project. Even if a Conservative government where to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in 2010, it is difficult to imagine that this impression will change, for that vote too would be about several things, but probably not the Treaty itself.

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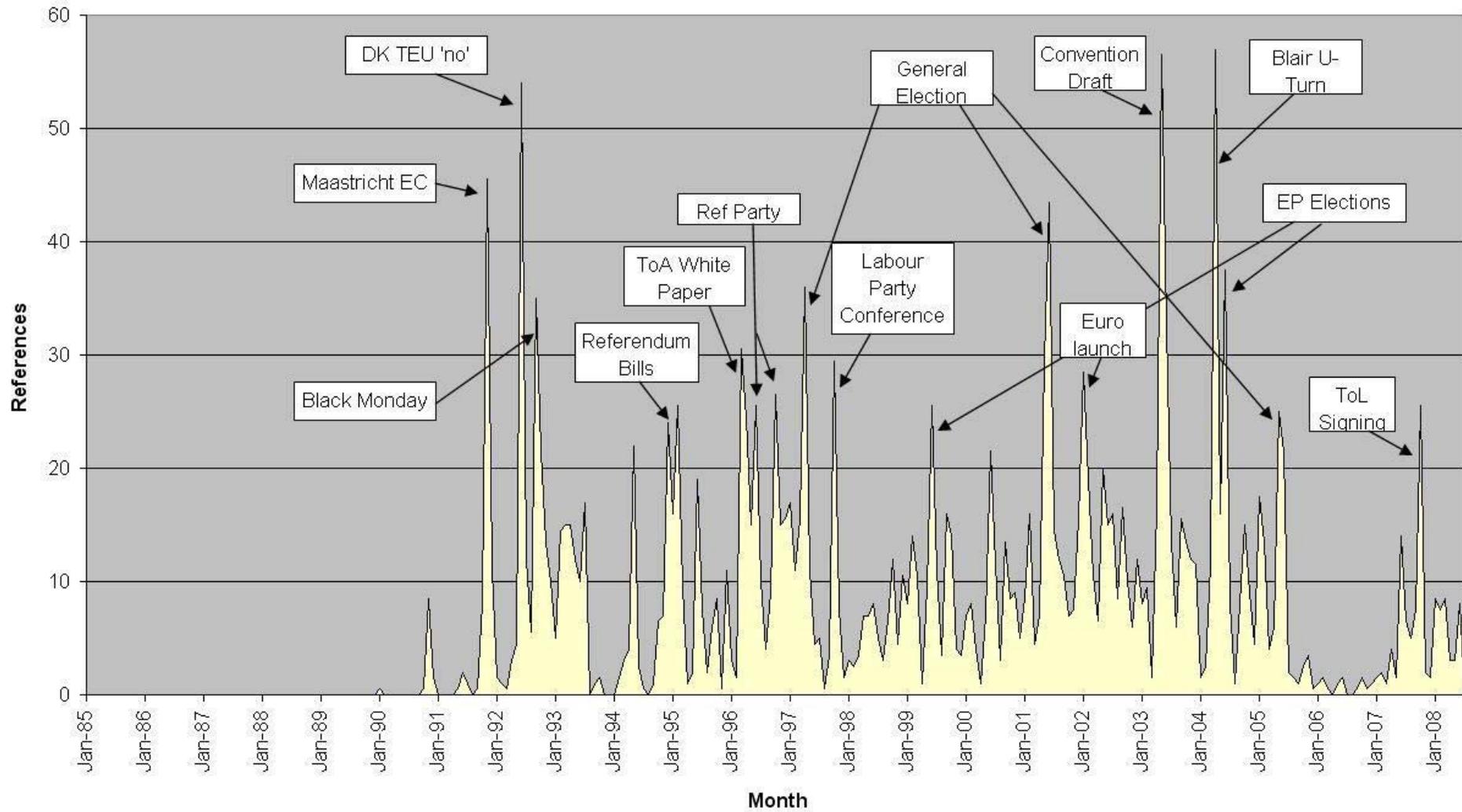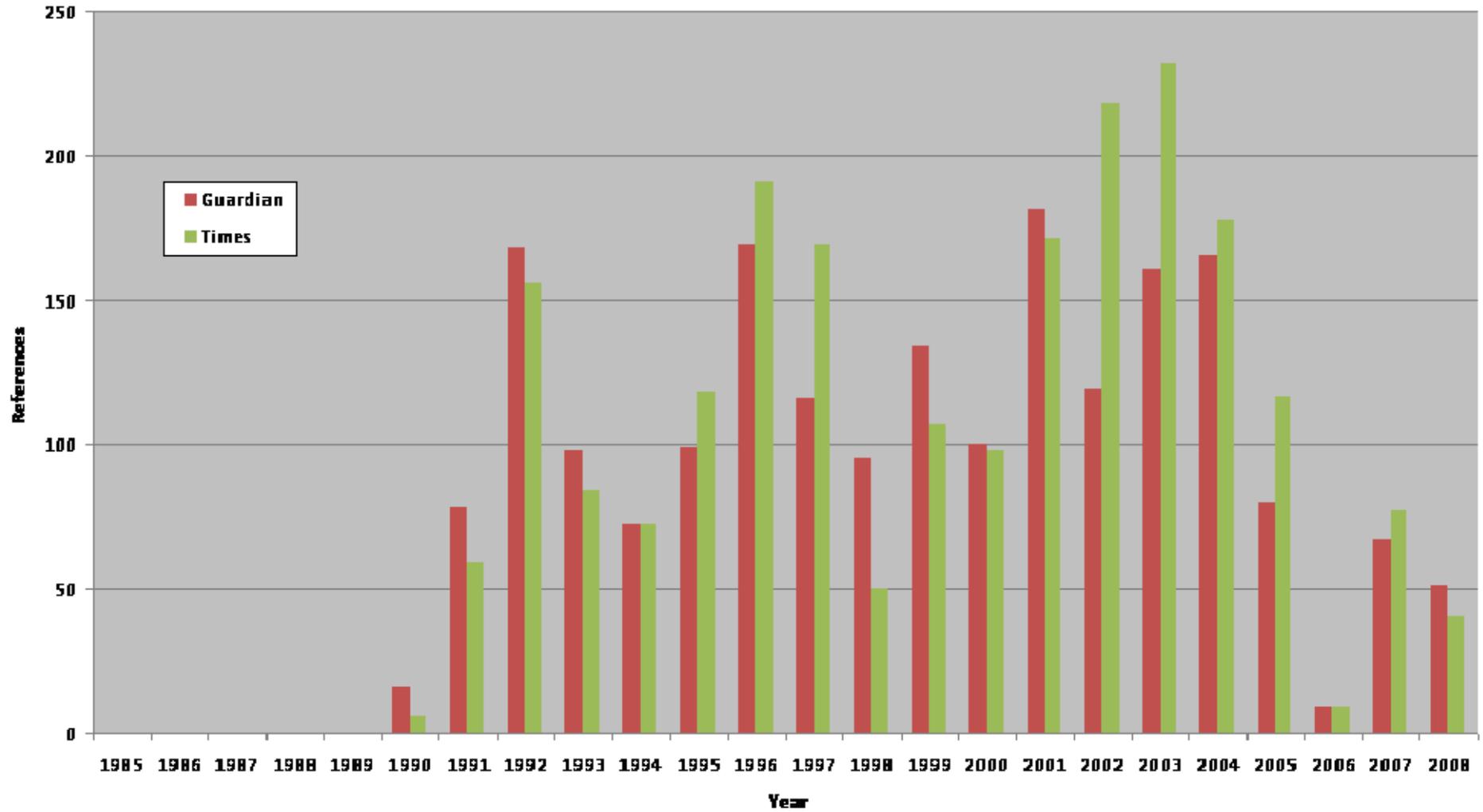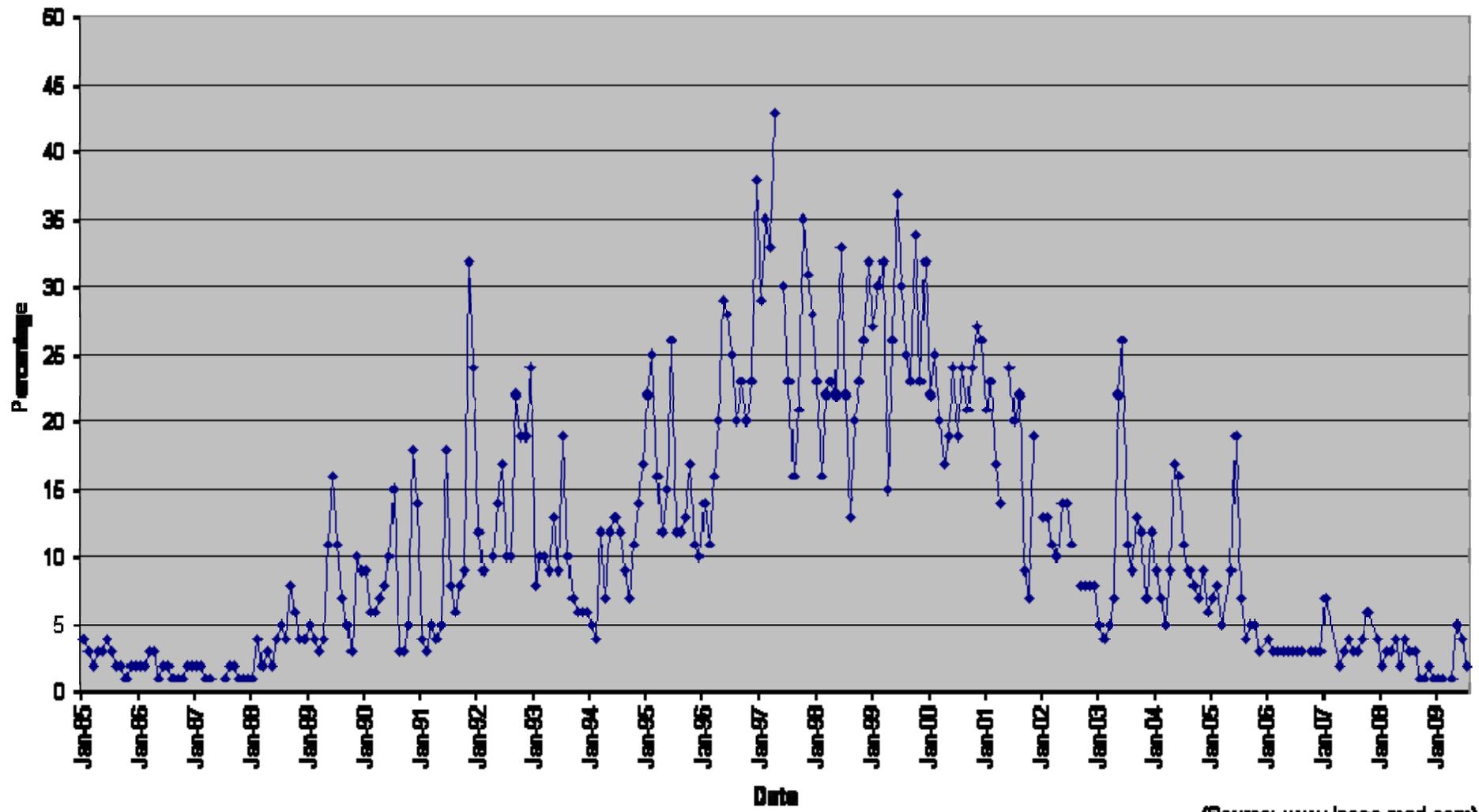Figure 1: Mean Monthly References, Jan 1985- Jul 2009

Figure 2: Annualised Totals of Newspaper References to "Referendum + Europe", 1985-2008

Figure 3: EU as Most Important Issue, 1996-2004

(Source: www.ipsos-mori.com)

Figure 4: Issue Importance and Blair's Popularity, 2001-4

(Source: www.ipsos-mori.com)