



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

Debate on 31 January: Prime Minister's Speech on Europe

This Library Note provides background reading in advance of the debate to be held on 31 January on:

“the Prime Minister's speech on Europe on 23 January”

The Note provides a short history of Prime Ministerial speeches on Europe since 1970; outlines Government policy towards Europe since 2010; summarises David Cameron's speech and selected reaction to it; and considers some aspects of the proposed renegotiation and referendum. It concludes with information about trends in public opinion towards Britain's membership of the EU.

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Summary

- Manifesto commitments since 1970 have offered alternative visions of Britain's relationship with Europe. Membership of the EEC/EU has remained a commitment of each party throughout, except in 1983 when Labour was committed to withdrawal—the only party to hold this position since 1970.
- In 2010 the Coalition Government committed “to play a leading role in an enlarged European Union” but pledged “no further powers should be transferred to Brussels without a referendum”. There have since been calls for the Government to call an in/out referendum, following pressure from Conservative backbenchers, support for UKIP and continuing events in Europe, particularly uncertainty over the future of the euro.
- In his speech Mr Cameron set out a vision for a “new settlement” for the European Union, based on five principles: competition, flexibility, power flowing back to Member States, democratic accountability and fairness. This would apply to all Members and be agreed by a new treaty. In these circumstances a referendum would be triggered in Britain under the terms of the European Union Act 2011.
- Were a new treaty not possible, Mr Cameron said the Conservative Party's 2015 manifesto would seek a mandate to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the EU in the next parliament. The changes agreed would then be put to an in/out referendum. Mr Cameron would campaign for Britain to remain in the EU.
- Reaction to the speech varied. Backbench Conservative MPs were largely pleased; whereas Labour thought the referendum was undesirable. Nick Clegg expressed concerns. Others doubted whether Mr Cameron's aims were attainable, though others praised his stance. Sections of the business community welcomed the speech. Reaction across Europe suggested EU leaders were cautious about the prospect of renegotiation.
- Recent opinion polls suggest the public remains largely sceptical or hostile towards Britain's continued membership of the EU. However, there has been a drop in opposition in recent polls.

This Library Note provides background to David Cameron's speech on Europe:

- Section I outlines the positions taken by Prime Ministers on membership since 1970 and provides an overview of Government policy since 2010. It then summarises some of the alternative approaches recently expressed.

- Section 2 presents a summary of the speech made by David Cameron and the general reception the speech received.
- Section 3 considers the main issues contained in the speech: the proposed renegotiation of the UK-EU relationship and the referendum.
- Section 4 contains information about public opinion towards the EU.
- Section 5 contains suggestions for further reading.
- An Appendix to the Note contains extracts from the party manifestos at each general election since 1970.

1. Background

1.1 Timeline: Britain and Europe since 1957

- 1957 Treaties establishing European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom signed in Rome, and enter into force January 1958.
- 1961 UK, Norway, Denmark and Ireland apply to open negotiations to join EEC. French President Charles De Gaulle blocks UK's application in 1963 and all applications suspended.
- 1967 UK applies for second time to open negotiations with regard to joining EEC. Blocked again by President De Gaulle in November.
- 1970 UK, Norway, Denmark and Ireland open membership negotiations.
- 1972 Edward Heath signs the Accession Treaty. European Communities Act receives Royal Assent.
- 1973 UK, Denmark and Ireland join EEC.
- 1975 UK votes to remain in the EEC on renegotiated terms following a referendum.
- 1979 First direct elections to European Parliament.
- 1981 Greece joins EEC as tenth member.
- 1984 UK negotiates a budget rebate.
- 1986 Portugal and Spain join EEC. Single European Act signed, entering into force July 1987.
- 1990 Britain joins the Exchange Rate Mechanism.
- 1992 Maastricht Treaty signed, entering into force November 1993. Becomes European Union (EU). UK withdraws from the Exchange Rate Mechanism.
- 1993 UK Parliament passes the legislation ratifying the Maastricht Treaty, following contentious passage through the House of Commons.
- 1995 Austria, Sweden and Finland join.
- 1997 Amsterdam Treaty signed, entering into force May 1999.
- 2001 Nice Treaty signed, entering into force February 2003.

- 2002 Euro notes and coins introduced into twelve countries.
Convention on the Future of Europe opens.
European Council agrees to accession of ten new members at Copenhagen summit in December.
- 2003 Draft Constitution is published.
- 2004 Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join the EU.
Constitutional Treaty signed. In referendums that follow, Spain votes 'yes' (February 2005) but France and Netherlands vote 'no' (May/June 2005).
- 2007 Bulgaria and Romania join EU.
Lisbon Treaty signed, entering into force in December 2009.
- 2011 European Council approves accession of Croatia.
Agreement on fiscal compact treaty fails to be reached.

(Sources: House of Lords Library, *The European Union Today*, 9 February 2012, [LLN 2012/003](#); *Daily Telegraph*, '[EU Treaty: Britain and the EU—Timeline of Relations](#)', 10 December 2011)

1.2 Manifesto Commitments and Prime Ministers' Speeches on Europe since 1970

The relationship between Britain and the European Union has been, and remains, a contentious political issue. Following its establishment in 1958, both the Conservatives and the Labour Party when in government in the next decade sought to open negotiations about possible membership, without success. It was Edward Heath's Conservative Party that eventually led the UK into Europe with the passing of the European Communities Act in 1972, albeit with the help of 69 Labour MPs who defied their whip, Liberals and 20 abstentions. The manifestos of the Conservative, Labour and the Liberal/Liberal Democrat Parties have all contained a commitment to the UK's continued membership of the EEC/EU since—with varying degrees of enthusiasm—with the exception of the 1983 Labour manifesto which committed to withdrawal. The Appendix to this Note contains extracts from each Party's manifesto since 1970 and charts the various positions taken by each Party over the last four decades. Julie Smith has described the impact of EU membership on political parties over the decades as "one of division and fragmentation... divisions over 'Europe' have often been visceral, creating internal dissent, inter-party rivalry and occasional rupture" (Julie Smith, '[The European Dividing Line in Party Politics](#)', *International Affairs*, 2012, vol 88, p 1277).

At different times major statements by Prime Ministers about the UK's membership of the European Union have sought to set the agenda, capture public opinion and set the tone for

future debates. Following the signing of Britain's Accession Treaty in Brussels in 1972, Edward Heath set out his vision for the then European Economic Community (EEC):

We mark today, with this ceremony, the conclusion of arduous negotiations over more than ten years which have resulted in another great step forward towards the removal of divisions in Western Europe...

Just as the achievement we celebrate today was not preordained, so there will be nothing inevitable about the next stages in the construction of Europe. They will require clear thinking and a strong effort of the imagination. Clear thinking will be needed to recognise that each of us within the Community will remain proudly attached to our national identity and to the achievements of our national history and tradition. But, at the same time, as the enlargement of the Community makes clear beyond doubt, we have all come to recognize our common European heritage, our mutual interests and our European destiny...

These are the essential ties which today bind Europe in friendship with the rest of mankind. What design should we seek for the New Europe? It must be a Europe which is strong and confident within itself. A Europe in which we shall be working for the progressive relaxation and elimination of east/west tensions. A Europe conscious of the interests of its friends and partners. A Europe alive to its great responsibilities in the common struggle of humanity for a better life. Thus this ceremony marks an end and a beginning. An end to divisions which have stricken Europe for centuries. A beginning of another stage in the construction of a new and greater Europe. This is the task for our generation in Europe.

(Centre for European Studies, '[Speech by Edward Heath \(Brussels, 22 January 1972\)](#)' accessed 24 January 2013)

In February 1974 Edward Heath was replaced by Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. During the debate in the House of Commons on the motion to approve the Conservative Government's decision to join the EEC, Mr Wilson had set out Labour's misgivings about the terms of the accession agreed by the Conservatives. In response to questions from MPs regarding his party's plans were Labour to form the next Government, Mr Wilson explained:

What we should do... would be immediately to give notice that we could not accept the terms negotiated by the Conservatives, and, in particular, the unacceptable burdens arising out of the CAP [common agricultural policy], the blows to the Commonwealth, and any threats to our essential regional policies.

If the Community then refused to negotiate, as we should have asked, or if the negotiations were to fail, we would sit down amicably and discuss the situation with them... We should make clear that our posture, like that of the French after 1958, would be rigidly directed towards the pursuit of British interests and that all other decisions and actions in relation to the Community would be dictated by that

determination, until we had secured our terms. They might accept this, or they might decide that we should agree to part; that would depend on them. That is our position.

(*HC Hansard*, 28 October 1972, cols [2103–4](#))

In spite of the fact that Harold Wilson implied withdrawal was a possibility, at the February election in 1974 Labour stood on a manifesto of renegotiation and a referendum as a means of endorsing the agreed settlement. In April 1974 James Callaghan, the new Foreign Secretary, made a statement to the Council of Ministers in which he spelt out the required areas of renegotiation. These included changes to the common agricultural policy, the budget, assurances over economic and monetary union, reemphasis of the sovereignty of parliament and guarantees over harmonisation of value added tax (*Renegotiation of the Terms of Entry into the EEC*, 1974, Cmnd 5593). In the general election that October, Labour was returned once again. Following the conclusion of the negotiations, the Government commended the terms it had negotiated to parliament. Mr Wilson told the House of Commons:

... my judgment, on an assessment of all that has been achieved and all that has changed, is that to remain in the Community is best for Britain, for Europe, for the Commonwealth, for the Third World and the wider world. All of us, whatever our approach, recognise that this debate and the decision to be taken in June is of a unique and historic character. But during this period, whatever may divide us on Europe, we shall all of us in the House be false to all we believe in if for one moment we fail to proclaim that our survival, our standard of living, the future of our children, the future of our country and its influence in the world all depend in the last resort, on how we respond as a nation to a challenge which is part external, part internal—the challenge to the resolve and resource of the people of Britain.

(*HC Hansard*, 7 April 1975, cols [837–8](#))

The referendum took place in June 1975. British membership of the EEC was endorsed with 67 percent of the votes cast for staying in. Divisions in the party over the issue resulted in Harold Wilson allowing members of the Government to campaign on either side of the argument. The Conservatives, then led by Margaret Thatcher, supported a 'yes' vote.

The Conservatives were returned to Government in 1979 on a manifesto that stated: "If we wish to play our full part in shaping world events over the next few critical years, we must work honestly and genuinely with our partners in the European Community. There is much we can achieve together, much more than we can achieve alone" (Iain Dale (ed) *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900–1997*, 2000). Mrs Thatcher's Government were leading advocates of the creation of the single market, passing the Single European Act in 1986. However, by 1988 Margaret Thatcher's enthusiasm for the direction of the Community was beginning to wane. In a key speech, she set out her view of European integration. The following passage was seen, in particular, as a rebuke to comments by Jacques Delors, the then President of the European Commission, who had proposed a

deepening of integration through economic and monetary union and social legislation. She said:

My first guiding principle is this: willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states is the best way to build a successful European Community.

To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality. Some of the founding fathers of the Community thought that the United States of America might be its model. But the whole history of America is quite different from Europe. People went there to get away from the intolerance and constraints of life in Europe. They sought liberty and opportunity; and their strong sense of purpose has, over two centuries, helped to create a new unity and pride in being American, just as our pride lies in being British or Belgian or Dutch or German.

I am the first to say that on many great issues the countries of Europe should try to speak with a single voice. I want to see us work more closely on the things we can do better together than alone. Europe is stronger when we do so, whether it be in trade, in defence or in our relations with the rest of the world. But working more closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy. Indeed, it is ironic that just when those countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction.

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels. Certainly we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries.

(Margaret Thatcher Foundation, '[Speech to the College of Europe \(The Bruges Speech\)](#)', 20 September 1988)

By 1991, however, John Major sought to consolidate the Conservative position. Four months after becoming Prime Minister, Mr Major said in a speech that his Government sought to put Britain "at the heart of Europe". He told the Conservative Central Council that such a partnership in Europe would "never mean passive acceptance of all that is put to us". He added:

No-one should fear we will lose our national identity. We will fight for Britain's interest as hard as any Government that has gone before. I want Britain to inspire and to shape Europe as decisively as we have over the Single Market programme.

Then we will fight for Europe's interests, too. But not from the outside where we would lose. From the inside where we will win.

(John Major, '[Mr Major's Speech to Conservative Central Council](#)', 23 March 1991)

Demands were soon generated within the Conservatives for a referendum, as concern grew in the Party over the general direction of European integration. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty (despite opt-outs negotiated by Mr Major) was unpopular with Conservative MPs and rebellions were staged over the subsequent legislation.

From the late 1980s the Labour Party had gradually begun to embrace EEC/EU membership. The election of Tony Blair's Labour Party to Government in 1997 represented a change in emphasis from the previous Conservative Government. In 2005, Tony Blair, ahead of the UK presidency of the Union, used an address to the European Parliament to set out his ambitions for Europe. He said he was "a passionate pro-European" and it needed to be recognised that the issue facing Europe was "not between a 'free market' Europe and a social Europe, between those who want to retreat to a common market and those who believe in Europe as a political project". He explained he believed in Europe "as a political project", arguing that:

I believe in Europe with a strong and caring social dimension. I would never accept a Europe that was simply an economic market. To say that is the issue is to escape the real debate and hide in the comfort zone of the things we have always said to each other in times of difficulty. There is not some division between the Europe necessary to succeed economically and social Europe. Political Europe and economic Europe do not live in separate rooms. The purpose of social Europe and economic Europe should be to sustain each other. The purpose of political Europe should be to promote the democratic and effective institutions to develop policy in these two spheres and across the board where we want and need to cooperate in our mutual interest.

He warned that Europe needed to reform to continue to meet the challenges of today:

If Europe defaulted to euroscepticism, or if European nations, faced with this immense challenge, decide to huddle together, hoping we can avoid globalisation, shrink away from confronting the changes around us, take refuge in the present policies of Europe as if by constantly repeating them we would by the very act of repetition make them more relevant, then we risk failure. Failure on a grand, strategic, scale. This is not a time to accuse those who want Europe to change of betraying Europe. It is a time to recognise that only by change will Europe recover its strength, its relevance, its idealism and therefore its support amongst the people. And as ever the people are ahead of the politicians. We always think as a political class that people, unconcerned with the daily obsession of politics, may not understand it, may not see its subtleties and its complexities. But, ultimately, people always see politics more clearly than us.

(Number 10, '[Speech to the EU Parliament \(23 June 2005\)](#)' accessed 24 January 2013)

Controversy over Europe returned when Gordon Brown's Government ratified the Treaty of Lisbon in parliament, without a referendum (as the Conservatives wanted). The Treaty was contentious, as some claimed it was the same as the EU Constitution rejected in referendums in France and Holland previously. In 2008 Gordon Brown sought to set out his own vision of a "Global Europe". He explained that the EU was important to the UK's future prosperity:

My vision of Europe moving forward is global Europe—not just an internal single market that looks inwards but a driving force of the new fast-changing global market place. An open, outward looking, flexible global Europe competing on and prosperous because of its skills, its innovation and its creative talents.

In this way the enlarged Europe moves forward from its original objective of preserving the peace to its future achievement—widening and deepening opportunity and prosperity not just for some but for all...

What is clear is that at this time of global economic uncertainty, we should not be throwing into question—as some would—the stability of our relationship with Europe and even our future membership of the European Union—risking trade, business and jobs. Indeed, I strongly believe that rather than retreating to the sidelines we must remain fully engaged in Europe so we can push forward the reforms that are essential for Europe's, and Britain's, economic future.

(Number 10, [Speech on Business Priorities for a 'Global Europe'](#) (14 January 2008) accessed 24 January 2013)

1.3 Government Policy Since the 2010 General Election

The Conservative Party fought the General Election in 2010 on a manifesto that stated: "We believe Britain's interests are best served by membership of a European Union that is an association of its Member States. We will never allow Britain to slide into a federal Europe". It said that "in future, the British people must have their say on any transfer of powers to the European Union" and committed to amending the 1972 European Communities Act "so that any proposed future Treaty that transferred areas of power, or competences, would be subject to a referendum—a 'referendum lock'". The manifesto also committed the Conservatives to a renegotiation of powers, stating that "a Conservative Government would "negotiate for three specific guarantees—on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, on criminal justice, and on social and employment legislation... powers that we believe should reside with the UK, not the EU. We seek a mandate to negotiate the return of these powers from the EU to the UK" (Conservatives, *An Invitation to Join the Government of Britain*, 2010, pp [113–4](#)).

The Liberal Democrats, with whom the Conservatives would enter into coalition, stood on a manifesto that set out its belief "that European co-operation is the best way for Britain to be strong, safe and influential in the future". The Liberal Democrats would "ensure that Britain maximises its influence through a strong and positive commitment". However, the manifesto also said that "just because Europe is essential, that doesn't mean the European Union is perfect", stating that the Party would "continue to campaign for improved accountability, efficiency and effectiveness". It also remained "committed to an in/out referendum the next time a British Government signs up for fundamental change in the

relationship between the UK and the EU” and a referendum on Euro membership, were a Liberal Democrat Government to propose it (Liberal Democrats, *Change That Works for You*, 2010, pp [66–7](#)).

Following the negotiations between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that followed the election, the two parties agreed in *The Coalition: Our Programme for Government* that “Britain should play a leading role in an enlarged European Union, but that no further powers should be transferred to Brussels without a referendum”. The agreement set out a list of commitments with regard to Europe. This agreed approach, the paper stated, “strikes the right balance between constructive engagement with the EU to deal with the issues that affect us all, and protecting our national sovereignty” (HM Government, *The Coalition: Our Programme for Government*, May 2010, p 19, [para 13](#)).

In October 2011, the House of Commons debated a backbench motion tabled by David Nuttall, Conservative MP for Bury North, calling for a referendum on UK membership of the EU. The debate on the motion highlighted the strength of feeling, particularly on the Conservative backbenches, about the need for a referendum. Opening the debate Mr Nuttall said the motion reflected “the wishes of the hundreds of thousands of people who have signed petitions calling for a referendum on the United Kingdom’s future relationship with the European Union”. He said that “opinion polls clearly show that millions of others agree with them: in fact, the vast majority of the British people want a vote in a referendum”. He argued that one of the reasons people were concerned about the UK’s membership of the EU was “the growing sense that this country, indeed this parliament, is becoming ever more impotent as more and more decisions are taken in Brussels and then passed down to the United Kingdom to implement, whether we like it or not” (HC *Hansard*, 24 October 2011, col [46](#)). He added that it had been 36 years since “anyone had the chance to have their say on this crucial matter” and that “a staggering 84 percent... have never voted in favour of Britain’s continued membership of the European Economic Community” (col 47). Other Conservatives raised further points. John Baron contended that the EU was no longer just the free trade area people thought they had signed up to (col 62); Douglas Carswell was unhappy with the effect of EU policies on fishing and regulation (col 118) and several MPs referred to the negative effect of membership on parliamentary sovereignty (cols 107 and 128). William Cash, Conservative Chairman of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee, argued that: “If ever there was a time to tackle the issue in principle, it is now, and that is what the motion is about: whether there is a case for renegotiation or for leaving the European Union” (cols 86–7).

However, Douglas Alexander, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, opposed the motion. He told MPs a referendum would not help:

I urge opposition to the motion because I do not believe that Britain’s national interest would be served by spending the coming months and years debating the case for Britain leaving the world’s largest single market. Recent figures have revealed that there has been zero growth in the economy since last autumn. Unemployment is rising again and has reached a 17-year high. Almost 1 million young people are unable to find work. Amid all the passion generated by this debate, no one can dispute the enduring significance of European markets to Britain’s economic prospects.

(col 60)

Responding, William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, said he recognised that “disillusionment with the European Union in this country” was “at an unprecedented level”. Mr Hague said that the Government had brought about “a major change in European policy” by enacting the European Union Act 2011 that required further transfers of power to the EU to be put to referendum; by negotiating “far harder and far more effectively on the European Budget” and by making the case “at every opportunity” for the expansion of “opportunities for trade both within Europe and beyond” (cols 52–5). He added:

It is my view and the Prime Minister's view, and the position of the Conservative Party, that we will use future opportunities to bring further powers back to the United Kingdom—to repatriate powers to the United Kingdom in those areas where we believe European integration has gone too far.

(col 55)

However, there were six reasons why the Government did not support the motion. Mr Hague told MPs the eurozone was “clearly in crisis” and to “pile on that uncertainty the further uncertainty of a referendum on leaving the European Union, when half the foreign direct investment into Britain comes from the rest of the European Union, and half our exports go out to the rest of the European Union, would not be a responsible action for Her Majesty's Government to take” (col 55). He said that the Conservative manifesto was “very clear about the referendum legislation that we would introduce and that, in a coalition, we have now passed into law” (col 56). This “comprehensive legislation” set out in “minute detail the circumstances in which a referendum will be held” and there was, he suggested, “a serious danger” that by holding a referendum “we would lose important opportunities to protect or to further our national interest in the meantime. On all those areas where we need the agreement of others—from the shape of the EU budget up to 2020, to agreement on our requirements for any treaty change—it could be harder, not easier, to get our way” (col 57).

Mr Hague said there were also problems with the three-way referendums the motion proposed, adding “there is a reason why a referendum is normally held on a specific proposition with a yes or no answer, and I believe that any future referendum must be held on that basis, not as a multiple choice among vaguely defined propositions” (col 57). Finally, the Foreign Secretary said he did “not believe that most people in Britain want to say yes to everything in the EU or no to everything in the EU; I believe that they want to know that no more powers will be handed over to Brussels without their explicit consent, which is what we have provided for in our Act” (col 58).

The motion was defeated 483 votes to 111, with 81 Conservatives voting against the Government. Julie Smith has remarked that it was notable that Conservative candidates in 2010 were still “wedded to the idea of a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty”, and with the threat of UKIP to the Party, euroscepticism had become the “dominant discourse among the 2010 Conservative intake” (Julie Smith, [‘The European Dividing Line in Party Politics’](#), *International Affairs*, 2012, vol 88, p 1289). The referendum debate occurred against a backdrop of uncertainty with regard to the future of the euro. The following month David Cameron refused at a European Council to endorse an EU-wide treaty that sought to address Member State budget problems. Mr Cameron said he wanted a protocol allowing London to opt out of proposed changes to financial services (BBC News website, [‘David Cameron Blocks EU-Wide Deal to Tackle Euro Crisis’](#), 9 December 2011).

Problems continued in European economies throughout 2012, with agreement on the creation of a European Stability Mechanism to provide financial assistance to Eurozone members. Following these developments, David Cameron said, at the end of the European Council meeting in November 2012, that he wanted a “new settlement” for Europe. He explained:

I support our membership of the European Union but I don't support the status quo. I believe that we need a new settlement. I think the opportunities for that new settlement will grow as the countries of the single currency are clearly going to have to do more things together, to change their arrangements. So I think there will be opportunities for us to seek that fresh settlement. I think there will then be opportunities to then have fresh consent for that settlement. So I have a positive vision of what I want us to achieve in Europe.

(Number 10 website, '[Prime Minister Press Conference at End of European Council](#)', 23 November 2012)

The following week, UKIP came second in by-elections in Middlesbrough and Rotherham, and finished third in Croydon North, the three seats being held by Labour. Nigel Farage, UKIP's Leader, asserted: “the political establishment is just going to have to wake up to the fact that UKIP is here and here to stay as a significant and rising mainstream part of British politics” (BBC News website, '[By-elections: Labour Retains Three Seats](#)', 30 November 2012).

In November 2012 Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat Leader, set out his views on Britain and the EU in a speech to Chatham House. He opened by arguing that “a grand, unilateral repatriation of powers might sound appealing... but, in reality, it is a false promise, wrapped in a Union Jack”. It was, he argued, “wishful thinking to suggest we could—effectively—give ourselves a free pass to undercut the single market... only to then renegotiate our way back in to the laws that suit us. The rest of Europe simply wouldn't have it”. He added: “What kind of club gives you a full pass, with all the perks, but doesn't expect you to pay the full membership fee or abide by all the rules? If anyone else tried to do it... if the French tried to duck out of the rules on the environment or consumer protection... if the Germans tried to opt out of their obligations on competition and the single market... we would stop them—and rightly so”.

Mr Clegg considered the idea of the UK modelling itself on Norway or Switzerland. However, this was dismissed: “these countries sit and wait for bills and directives from Brussels... duly paying their bit, changing their laws... but with absolutely no say over Europe's rules: no political representation; no national voting rights; no voice at all”. These countries, he suggested, were examples of “fax democracy: you find your instructions on the machine in the morning, and you follow them. They have no meaningful sovereignty in the EU”.

The Deputy Prime Minister contended that “the best—and most realistic—choice for the United Kingdom” was “to stand tall in our European hinterland; for the sake of our security, our prosperity and our place in the world. Standing tall means asserting ourselves when we need to protect the nation's interests. But also cooperating with our neighbours when it is for the good of the British people”. He argued this meant taking a strong line on the EU

budget negotiations; protecting and advancing the single market and engagement with cross-border initiatives on law and order. He concluded:

You cannot do any of those things from the edge. You cannot deliver for British citizens when you're halfway out the door. Europe is changing—yes. But rather than go into retreat, now is the time to confront those changes head on. We need to make a decision about who we will be in the new Europe. And I say we need to be strong, loud, present.

(Nick Clegg, '[A Vision for the UK in Europe](#)', Chatham House, 1 November 2012)

In January 2013 the Government released [The Coalition: Together in the National Interest](#), its mid-term review of progress made on the commitments set out in the Coalition agreement. At the press conference in support of its launch, Mr Cameron reiterated his position on Europe and his hopes for a new settlement, following the next election:

Now at the next election I'll be putting forward what I've spoken about, a new settlement and fresh consent for that settlement for the United Kingdom. I think that is right for Britain. I think the opportunity to get that is opening up and so that's something I'm looking forward to setting out in my speech in January. But I do believe, as I've said many times—including at the weekend—I think Britain's interest is to stay in the single market, to stay committed to that.

(Number 10 website, '[David Cameron and Nick Clegg Press Conference: Launch of Mid-Term Review](#)', 7 January 2013)

Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, in an interview with [BBC Radio 4's 'World at One'](#), warned against such a renegotiation. He said it would be a mistake “to overestimate our own negotiating position”. Mr Cable added, in a subsequent speech, that British business did not need the uncertainty surrounding UK-EU relations: “Uncertainty matters. Business wants certainty. Certainty to invest and create jobs. Any reopening the whole question of British membership creates additional uncertainty at a time when there is already fragile economic confidence in the wake of the financial crisis. This uncertainty is potentially driving away investors and the jobs they create” (Vince Cable, '[Vince Cable Speech: The EU](#)', 21 January 2013)

1.4 Other Views

In November 2012, Ed Miliband, the Labour Leader, spoke to the CBI's annual conference about the future of Britain's membership of the EU. He told the conference membership of the EU was now in doubt and that he did not want to see Britain leaving:

For around three decades, our membership of the European Union has seemed to be a settled question. But you will have noticed, it is not any more. Public scepticism about European Union has been on the rise for some time. Some Cabinet Ministers in this government now openly say that we would be better off outside the EU. And many of our traditional allies in Europe, frankly, are deeply concerned, because they think Britain is heading to the departure lounge. Those of us, like me, who passionately believe that Britain is stronger in the European Union cannot be silent in a situation like this. I will not let Britain sleepwalk toward exit from the European

Union. Because it would threaten our national prosperity. Because it would make it far harder to build the One Nation economy that I believe in. But above all it would be a betrayal of our national interest.

Mr Miliband then set out the reasons he believed discontent with Europe had grown:

There are real failures. And I think that's what the pro-European side often needs to come to terms with. There are twenty five million people without jobs across Europe today. Five million young people across Europe looking for work. The failures of the Euro shakes people's confidence in the whole European Union. So do failings in the EU Budget, that often seems to match the priorities of the 1950s, not the 21st century. And while enlarging the EU was good for Britain's strategic interest, frankly, the way that we handled immigration without transitional controls increased scepticism here in Britain. Given all this, I don't think it is surprising that some people feel unhappy, even angry with the European Union.

Mr Miliband said that the UK needed to fight for a flexible Europe "where some countries pursue deeper integration and others don't". He continued:

We need to build alliances to ensure mutual respect between those inside the Euro and those on the outside. And we know what that means: Protect our voting influence. Ensuring that we are part of the decision-making process that affects us. And above all, ensuring a successful European economy.

In respect of whether a referendum should be part of that approach, Mr Miliband was clear:

My answer to that is no. As your businesses strive to come out of the worst economic crisis of our lifetime to spend our time now debating whether to exit the European Union would threaten recovery. At this moment—when you are facing some of the most difficult economic circumstances of our lifetime—this is not the time for it. Think about a business considering coming to Britain. What would they think if there was a referendum now? They would put investment in Britain on hold as they waited to see. There would be instability in our economy. And neither does it reflect the priorities of the British people. Their jobs, living standards and prosperity.

The Government's current strategy was the wrong one for Britain:

Britain needs to keep its eyes on the prize: Fighting for economic change and for influence in a changing Europe. We cannot afford to use up our energies and alliances on negotiations that will not deliver. Like seeking to opt out on Justice and Home Affairs to keep the sceptics happy. And then opting back in to the European arrest warrant. Just as with the veto that wasn't last December. Increasing frustration and the drive to the exit of those at home, as people claim betrayal of what was promised. And undermining our status abroad as they write off Britain as a serious player. Taking us closer to the departure lounge.

(Labour Party, '[One Nation in Europe—Ed Miliband](#)', 19 November 2012)

In January 2013, the Fresh Start Project, backed by a number of backbench Conservative MPs, published its *Manifesto for Change: a new vision for the UK in Europe*. It advanced an argument for the UK to renegotiate aspects of its relationship with the EU. The introduction stated:

The status quo in the European Union is no longer an option. The Eurozone is facing up to the inevitable consequences of the financial crisis, and is moving towards fiscal and banking union. This is not a path that the British people will go down, and together with other non-Euro members of the EU, we must articulate and negotiate a new and different relationship for ourselves whilst remaining a full member of the EU... Our ambition is to build on the success of the single market. We want to ensure the EU institutions protect and deepen the single market. We also want to protect British sovereignty, ensuring that the British parliament can decide what is best for Britain. We do not share the vision of 'ever closer union' as set out in the EU treaties... Our success in the negotiation will mean a new and sustainable position for the UK within the EU.

(Fresh Start Project, *Manifesto for Change: a New Vision for the UK in Europe*, January 2013, p 3)

The *Manifesto* highlighted a number of areas for renegotiation, including: Trade; Regional Development Policy; Common Agricultural Policy; Common Fisheries Policy; Policing and Criminal Justice; Immigration; and Defence. The group described the *Manifesto* as “not about ‘cherry picking’; its goal is rather to articulate the necessary reforms that would lead to a more sustainable relationship for the UK in the EU” (p 4).

2. David Cameron's Speech

On 23 January 2013, at Bloomberg in London, Mr Cameron made his speech on Europe, following its postponement on 18 January 2013 due to the events that had unfolded in Algeria (the speech is available at Number 10, '[EU Speech at Bloomberg](#)', 23 January 2013).

The Prime Minister opened by reminding his audience that the Europe of seventy years ago “was being torn apart by its second catastrophic conflict in a generation”. He said that “while we must never take this for granted”, the first purpose of the European Union was to secure peace and that tribute should be paid to the EU and NATO that that had “been achieved”. Now the “over-riding purpose” of the European Union however was “not to win peace, but to secure prosperity”. The purpose of his speech, he said, was to speak “with urgency and frankness about the European Union and how it must change—both to deliver prosperity and to retain the support of its peoples”.

Mr Cameron explained that Britain was an “island nation”, which had provided it with a distinctive character and view of Europe:

For us, the European Union is a means to an end—prosperity, stability, the anchor of freedom and democracy both within Europe and beyond her shores—not an end in itself. We insistently ask: How? Why? To what end? But all this doesn't make us somehow un-European. The fact is that ours is not just an island story—it is also a continental story. For all our connections to the rest of the world—of which we are rightly proud—we have always been a European power—and we always will be.

Britain had “made her own, unique contribution to Europe” during wartime and helping to “keep the flame of liberty alight”. More recently Britain had led Europe on the single market and enlargement. He then set out his vision of Britain’s relationship with Europe:

I never want us to pull up the drawbridge and retreat from the world. I am not a British isolationist. I don’t just want a better deal for Britain. I want a better deal for Europe too. So I speak as British Prime Minister with a positive vision for the future of the European Union. A future in which Britain wants, and should want, to play a committed and active part.

Mr Cameron acknowledged that Europe was “in the midst of a deep crisis” and support in Britain for the EU was “already so thin”. However, his speech was necessary in order to respond to three problems:

First, the problems in the Eurozone are driving fundamental change in Europe. Second, there is a crisis of European competitiveness, as other nations across the world soar ahead. And third, there is a gap between the EU and its citizens which has grown dramatically in recent years. And which represents a lack of democratic accountability and consent that is—yes—felt particularly acutely in Britain.

He argued if these were not addressed “the danger is that Europe will fail and the British people will drift towards the exit”; he did “not want that to happen. I want the European Union to be a success. And I want a relationship between Britain and the EU that keeps us in it”.

Having elaborated on the nature of each of these problems, the Prime Minister argued the status quo would not do: “more of the same will not secure a long-term future for the Eurozone. More of the same will not see the European Union keeping pace with the new powerhouse economies. More of the same will not bring the European Union any closer to its citizens. More of the same will just produce more of the same—less competitiveness, less growth, fewer jobs”. He said the EU needed “fundamental, far-reaching change”. He then spelt out his “vision for a new European Union, fit for the 21st Century”, based on five principles, which he believed provided “the right approach for the European Union”:

- Competitiveness: “creating a leaner, less bureaucratic Union, relentlessly focused on helping its member countries to compete”;
- Flexibility: “We need a structure that can accommodate the diversity of its members—North, South, East, West, large, small, old and new. Some of whom are contemplating much closer economic and political integration. And many others, including Britain, who would never embrace that goal”;
- Power back to Members: “power must be able to flow back to Member States, not just away from them”;
- Democratic accountability: “we need to have a bigger and more significant role for national parliaments. There is not, in my view, a single European demos. It is national parliaments, which are, and will

remain, the true source of real democratic legitimacy and accountability in the EU”;

- Fairness: “whatever new arrangements are enacted for the Eurozone, they must work fairly for those inside it and out”.

He then explained what this approach meant for Britain. Public disillusionment with the EU was “at an all-time high” for a number of reasons. For example, people felt “that the EU is heading in a direction that they never signed up to”, as many believed Britain had agreed to join a common market. He added that people felt the EU was “now heading for a level of political integration that is far outside Britain’s comfort zone”. Ignoring these issues would not “make it go away”, and “those who refuse to contemplate consulting the British people, would in my view make more likely our eventual exit”. That was the reason why he supported a holding a referendum:

Simply asking the British people to carry on accepting a European settlement over which they have had little choice is a path to ensuring that when the question is finally put—and at some stage it will have to be—it is much more likely that the British people will reject the EU. That is why I am in favour of a referendum. I believe in confronting this issue—shaping it, leading the debate. Not simply hoping a difficult situation will go away.

However, he ruled out holding a referendum immediately as it would not be to the benefit of either Britain or Europe: “A vote today between the status quo and leaving would be an entirely false choice”. He explained:

Now—while the EU is in flux, and when we don’t know what the future holds and what sort of EU will emerge from this crisis is not the right time to make such a momentous decision about the future of our country. It is wrong to ask people whether to stay or go before we have had a chance to put the relationship right.

Mr Cameron said that the EU that would emerge from the Eurozone crisis was going to be “a very different body. It will be transformed perhaps beyond recognition by the measures needed to save the Eurozone”. He said only once this process had concluded could a “real choice” be offered, which would be:

Between leaving or being part of a new settlement in which Britain shapes and respects the rules of the single market but is protected by fair safeguards, and free of the spurious regulation which damages Europe’s competitiveness.

A choice between leaving or being part of a new settlement in which Britain is at the forefront of collective action on issues like foreign policy and trade and where we leave the door firmly open to new members. A new settlement subject to the democratic legitimacy and accountability of national parliaments where Member States combine in flexible cooperation, respecting national differences not always trying to eliminate them and in which we have proved that some powers can in fact be returned to Member States.

In other words, a settlement which would be entirely in keeping with the mission for an updated European Union I have described today. More flexible, more adaptable, more open—fit for the challenges of the modern age.

Mr Cameron said his “strong preference” was “to enact these changes for the entire EU, not just for Britain” through a new treaty. He said that were there to be “no appetite for a new treaty for us all” then “of course Britain should be ready to address the changes we need in a negotiation with our European partners”. He then spelt out this would entail a manifesto commitment followed by a referendum:

The next Conservative Manifesto in 2015 will ask for a mandate from the British people for a Conservative Government to negotiate a new settlement with our European partners in the next Parliament. It will be a relationship with the Single Market at its heart. And when we have negotiated that new settlement, we will give the British people a referendum with a very simple in or out choice. To stay in the EU on these new terms; or come out altogether. It will be an in-out referendum.

Legislation will be drafted before the next election. And if a Conservative Government is elected we will introduce the enabling legislation immediately and pass it by the end of that year. And we will complete this negotiation and hold this referendum within the first half of the next parliament.

Mr Cameron said it was “time for the British people to have their say” and to “settle this European question in British politics”. People would need to think carefully about the issue:

I say to the British people: this will be your decision. And when that choice comes, you will have an important choice to make about our country's destiny. I understand the appeal of going it alone, of charting our own course. But it will be a decision we will have to take with cool heads. Proponents of both sides of the argument will need to avoid exaggerating their claims. Of course Britain could make her own way in the world, outside the EU, if we chose to do so. So could any other Member State. But the question we will have to ask ourselves is this: is that the very best future for our country?

Mr Cameron ruled out the idea that Britain could model itself on Norway or Switzerland:

I admire those countries and they are friends of ours—but they are very different from us. Norway sits on the biggest energy reserves in Europe, and has a sovereign wealth fund of over 500 billion euros. And while Norway is part of the single market—and pays for the principle—it has no say at all in setting its rules: it just has to implement its directives. The Swiss have to negotiate access to the Single Market sector by sector. Accepting EU rules—over which they have no say—or else not getting full access to the Single Market, including in key sectors like financial services. The fact is that if you join an organisation like the European Union, there are rules. You will not always get what you want. But that does not mean we should leave—not if the benefits of staying and working together are greater.

Mr Cameron said that other countries in Europe should work with Britain to achieve this new EU. He argued: “it does not seem to me that the steps which would be needed to make Britain—and others—more comfortable in their relationship in the European Union

are inherently so outlandish or unreasonable. And just as I believe that Britain should want to remain in the EU so the EU should want us to stay". He concluded by saying he would fight for a better outcome for Britain:

With courage and conviction I believe we can achieve a new settlement in which Britain can be comfortable and all our countries can thrive. And when the referendum comes let me say now that if we can negotiate such an arrangement, I will campaign for it with all my heart and soul. Because I believe something very deeply. That Britain's national interest is best served in a flexible, adaptable and open European Union and that such a European Union is best with Britain in it. Over the coming weeks, months and years, I will not rest until this debate is won. For the future of my country. For the success of the European Union. And for the prosperity of our peoples for generations to come.

(Number 10, '[EU Speech at Bloomberg](#)', 23 January 2013)

2.1 Reaction

Political

Conservative backbench MPs responded positively to the speech. Bernard Jenkin, Chairman of the Public Administration Committee, said the speech represented "a watershed". Mr Cameron's "commitment to a referendum is historic—a pledge to re-engage the British people with the question of our EU membership". He said that Britain's EU partners must now "decide whether to accommodate our legitimate wishes for democratic self-government while we remain signatories to all the EU Treaties up to and including Lisbon, or if the repudiation of the 'ever closer union' means a new treaty between the EU and the UK, based purely on 'trade and political cooperation'". He said that this was "what the British people want and should be the mandate for renegotiation contained in our 2015 manifesto". Andrea Leadsom, a signatory of the Fresh Start Manifesto, said that David Cameron was "right to say that Europe must change and the EU needs to serve the interests of the British people much better". She said that the status quo in Britain's relationship with the EU was "no longer an option, and the Prime Minister seeks to negotiate a deal that promotes our national interest. It is also right to seek fresh consent from the British people". She added: "I believe the country will unite behind this approach and we can focus our efforts on a robust but achievable renegotiation" (*Conservative Home*, '[What Did You Think of David Cameron's Europe speech?](#)', 23 January 2013).

At Prime Minister's Question Time, Ed Miliband, the Labour Leader, said that his party did not support a referendum (HC *Hansard*, 23 January 2013, col [305](#)). In a statement released in advance of the speech, he argued the proposals would define David Cameron "as a weak Prime Minister, being driven by his party, not by the national economic interest". He noted that in October 2011, the Prime Minister had "opposed committing to an in/out referendum because of the uncertainty it would create for the country. The only thing that has changed since then is he has lost control of his party and is too weak to do what is right for the country". Mr Miliband added:

Everyone knows that the priority for Britain is the jobs and growth that we need. We have had warning after warning from British business about the dangers of creating years of uncertainty for Britain. This speech will do nothing for a young

person looking for work, for a small business worried about a loan, for the family whose living standards are squeezed. Britain needs a Prime Minister who is making change happen now in Europe, ensuring that we put jobs and growth ahead of austerity and unemployment.

(Labour Party, '[Tomorrow's Speech by Cameron will Define him as a Weak Prime Minister—Ed Miliband](#)', 22 January 2013)

Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat Leader, responded that “of course there is the right time and the right place for a referendum”, but referred to the fact that the current Government had legislated for referendums to take place where further powers were proposed to be transferred to the EU. Mr Clegg stated that “we should always be governed by what’s in the national interest” and explained that his view “was that years and years of uncertainty because of a protracted, ill-defined renegotiation of our place in Europe is not in the national interest because it hits growth and jobs” (BBC News website, '[David Cameron Speech: UK and the EU](#)', 23 January 2013).

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP for Brighton Pavilion, supported the referendum but for different reasons to the Prime Minister. She said she had “consistently supported a referendum on our membership of the EU—not because I am anti-EU, but because I’m pro-democracy. It’s right people should have a say on an issue of such importance to their everyday lives” (Caroline Lucas, '[Comment: YES to a Referendum, YES to a Better Europe](#)', *Left Foot Forward*, 23 January 2013).

Nigel Farage, the UKIP Leader, asserted that the speech had “defined the national debate about our place in the European Union. No longer can the case for British withdrawal be confined to the margins. The genie is out of the bottle”. He said however that his Party disagreed with the basis on which Mr Cameron would present the choice and was the only party offering withdrawal: “Our job will be to point out that argument for the Single Market, is just the same as one used for the Common Market years ago. We will campaign for a trade deal with Europe, to cooperate and to be good neighbours but we do not want membership of a political union” (UKIP, '[The Genie is Now Out of the Bottle](#)', 23 January 2013).

Press

The *Times* praised the speech, saying it served a number of domestic purposes for Mr Cameron but also several of more lasting significance: “first, he was offering the public their first direct say on Britain’s relationship with Europe in almost half a century. Second, he was cementing this country’s role as the champion of an alternative to the accepted rhetoric of the European project. Finally, and most importantly, he was reminding the eurozone nations that they cannot defer putting their own house in order for ever, nor defer addressing the wider consequences of doing so”. It agreed that a referendum now would be “nonsensical” but thought it was a gamble that negotiations would yield an EU “more attractive” rather than “a traumatic departure that would be costly in terms of stability and global influence”. The blame for an exit however would not be just Mr Cameron’s “failure but that of the entire EU. Mr Cameron has not caused a problem, but elucidated one” (*Times*, ‘In or Out’, 24 January 2013).

The *Guardian* thought it was hard to disagree with Mr Cameron's opening statements about Europe. However, "dig down and this promising topsoil gives way to dust". It noted that "explicitly" Mr Cameron "said next to nothing to explain how his new Europe would create recovery", because the speech's real concern "was not economics but politics—the politics of a restive Tory backbench, an insurgent UKIP and a mostly Europhobic press". It said that the Prime Minister hoped European partners would provide "something tangible for him to sell". The paper warned Mr Cameron of the reaction in Europe: "he should not underestimate the hostile fury he will draw the UK's way by gratuitously instigating a fresh crisis when the existing one is exhausting enough" (*Guardian*, '[In-Out EU Referendum: Cameron's Hokey-Cokey](#)', 24 January 2013).

The *Daily Telegraph* said that the speech was "well judged, elegantly phrased, persuasively argued and expertly delivered". It thought that Mr Cameron "may not be able to bring enough other leaders to share it, but the leverage granted by the prospect of a referendum will give us a far better chance of securing a settlement we can live with". Some of the arguments deployed by Mr Cameron echoed Mrs Thatcher's Bruges Speech, but it observed; "What even she did not offer, however, was to let the people decide whether they wanted to stay in. In proposing that they should, Mr Cameron has taken an audacious and momentous step, and one deserving of the highest praise" (*Daily Telegraph*, '[At Last, Voters are Trusted to Choose Britain's Future](#)', 24 January 2013).

The *Independent* described the speech as a "desperate gamble", observing that "the mistake David Cameron made was in promising a speech on Europe at all. With the eurozone convulsed by crisis and euroscepticism leaching away political support at home, such a pledge could only raise expectations". It thought: "Hopes of a fudge to come are, at best, cold comfort. Five years of uncertainty on so fundamental an issue would be damaging at any time. With the economy flatlining, they are potentially catastrophic. That the Prime Minister's latest move is so at odds with his avowed intention for Britain to be a hub for global investment only underlines his desperation" (*Independent*, '[Editorial: David Cameron's Desperate Gamble with Britain's Interests](#)', 24 January 2013).

The *Sun* argued that Mr Cameron had finally answered who should decide on Europe by offering a referendum: "Some will fear the PM's big speech could yet turn out to be a cynical stunt—a promise he won't deliver. But Mr Cameron insisted yesterday that he will keep his pledge. If he does, one thing is clear—in or out, it WILL finally be our shout" (*Sun*, '[It's EUR Shout](#)', 24 January 2013). The *Daily Mail* feared the speech would be full of "deceptive rhetoric" and on a referendum Mr Cameron would be "careful not to be too specific". However, the paper noted "to his enormous credit, he delivered the absolute clarity this paper called for last week" (*Daily Mail*, '[At last, a Straight Choice on Europe](#)', 24 January 2013). Kevin Maguire, in the *Daily Mirror*, said of the speech: "the desperate plan unveiled yesterday was unprincipled party politics. It is really about holding together war-torn Conservatives". He urged Labour to match the referendum, saying it "would expose Cameron's attack on jobs as an issue, not Labour's refusal on a vote" (Kevin Maguire, 'David Cameron has set a Trap for Ed Miliband with Desperate Referendum Pledge', *Daily Mirror*, 24 January 2013).

Commentators

Mats Persson, Director of Open Europe, supported Mr Cameron's speech, saying it "offered a clear course towards precisely the type of slimmed down Europe that most people and

MPs in his party have been calling for". He added that the Prime Minister was "right to say that doing nothing is no longer viable for the UK, given increasing Eurozone integration and the increasing risk of the UK public demanding an exit from the EU, if there is no change. He was also right to stay clear of a specific 'shopping list' of powers that he wants back, this far in advance" (Open Europe, '[Open Europe Responds to David Cameron's Speech on Europe](#)', 23 January 2013).

The *Spectator* praised the speech, saying if David Cameron was returned to Number 10 "the question of British sovereignty will finally be decided by the British people. It now falls to the hierarchy of the European Union to give us their best offer". It argued that the strategy would strengthen the Prime Minister's hand in negotiations: "Every directive passed, every deal at every summit, will now have to meet with the approval of the British public, when the big vote comes". This would "focus minds in Brussels" (*Spectator*, '[David Cameron's Europe Speech: The Spectator's Verdict](#)', 23 January 2013).

Writing in the *Guardian*, Timothy Garton-Ash thought that the speech "was as clear, eloquent and forceful an argument for Britain staying in the EU, on clear-sighted, hard-nosed Palmerstonian grounds of national interest, as you could hope to hear from a leader of today's Conservative Party". Nevertheless, he was concerned about the uncertainty the next five years would now bring. He argued that "history had dealt Britain an amazing hand" in international affairs: "Who but an idiot would throw away one of his (or her) strongest suits? And we Brits are not idiots, are we? Are we?" (Timothy Garton-Ash, '[From Outside, it's Clear Why Britain has to Stay in Europe](#)', *Guardian*, 24 January 2013).

Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, said the speech "made many optimistic assumptions and was riddled with ambiguities". He added that although "the necessities of party management" lay behind much of the speech it was "much more thoughtful than many pro-Europeans expected". Mr Grant agreed with the Prime Minister that "much in the EU needs to change; that the Union should accept the principle that powers can flow not only from member-states to institutions but also the other way, too; and that national parliaments should become more closely involved in EU decision-making". Asking for reforms that "benefited all member-states", he thought, was "wise". However, Mr Cameron would have to "resolve the ambiguity over whether he merely wants to reform the EU, or engineer a significant repatriation of powers from it". The first objective would be possible but it would "not satisfy hard-line Conservative eurosceptics". The second objective would be more difficult to accomplish as "any treaty change requires unanimity and Britain's partners have no intention of granting Britain-specific opt outs". The mood in Europe had changed on this and "most EU governments now see no need for a big treaty revision". He asked: "If Cameron did ask for opt outs, as many in his party hope, but failed to secure them, how would he handle a referendum? (Charles Grant, 'Cameron's optimistic, risky and ambiguous strategy', Centre for European Reform, 24 January 2013).

Business

A number of business groups also supported the speech. A letter to the *Times* signed by 56 business leaders expressed support, saying it was "good for business and good for jobs in Britain" (*Times*, 'Business backs PM's call for mandate on Europe', 24 January 2013). John Cridland, CBI Director-General, said that while the EU single market was "fundamental to Britain's future economic success", closer union of the Eurozone was "not for us". The Prime Minister, he added, "rightly recognises the benefits of retaining membership of what

must be a reformed EU and the CBI will work closely with government to get the best deal for Britain” (CBI website, [‘David Cameron’s Europe Speech: CBI Chief John Cridland Responds’](#), 23 January 2013).

John Longworth, Director General at the British Chambers of Commerce, was also supportive:

The vast majority of businesses across the UK want to stay in the Single Market, but on the basis of a revised relationship with Europe that promotes trade and competitiveness. It is of critical importance to business and to Britain’s national interest that we have access to the European market, but not at any cost. On this basis, the Prime Minister’s determination to negotiate a new settlement for Britain is the right course of action.

He said Britain started “with a strong negotiating position. We run a trade deficit with the EU, so it is not in Europe’s interest to see the UK go”. As Mr Cameron would now be taken seriously in Europe, Mr Longworth wanted “a cross-party consensus and the outline of a deal during this Parliament”. While EU membership was “not the biggest issue facing businesses in a world filled with uncertainty”, this speech “would help firms across the UK remain confident while negotiations take place” (British Chambers of Commerce, [‘BCC: Prime Minister is Right to Renegotiate Britain’s Place in Europe, but Pace and Ambition are Required’](#), 23 January 2013).

Simon Walker, Director General of the Institute of Directors, described the speech as “realistic and pragmatic”. A referendum would be the “best way to affirm Britain’s participation in a free market Europe”. He added that British business was “resilient”, “flexible” and “can cope with change—or uncertainty. The Eurozone crisis is the source of far more uncertainty than a referendum” (Institute of Directors, [‘IoD Verdict on Prime Minister’s EU speech: ‘Realistic and Pragmatic’](#), 23 January 2013).

Not all the business sector shared this view. EEF, the manufacturers’ organisation, supported the speech’s ambition but noted there were risks: “If the door to a UK exit from the Union is open it will diminish our ability to influence the reforms that Europe needs. It is far from certain, moreover, that the outcome of negotiations will be clear cut, meaning that greater uncertainty about UK membership—particularly for business, will prevail” (EEF, [‘EEF Comments on the Prime Minister’s Britain and Europe speech—a Compelling Vision of How Europe Needs to Change’](#), 23 January 2013).

Ahead of the speech, Sir Roger Carr, Chairman of Centrica, the company that owns British Gas, said: “For inward investors who look to Britain to be the bridge into Europe, it is a reason to think twice, and I think none of that is good for the British economy. It is about jobs, it is about investment, it’s about confidence, confidence for those who look to Britain to be a place to invest as outsiders, confidence from those who run businesses in Britain. Anything that can undermine the potential for growth—and I think total destabilisation by a stark in/out referendum decision could do that—is an anti-growth position” (ITV News website, [“‘Total Destabilisation’ of the Economy? A Strong Warning on the Risks of EU Referendum... and Some Support’](#), 21 January 2013).

Lord Browne of Madingley, the former Chairman of BP, concurred with this view, stating that “those looking to invest in Britain will find world-class higher education, internationally

renowned R&D and a revered legal and regulatory environment. But it is easy to forget that we are also viewed by many as a gateway to the European Union. Uncertainty is the enemy of investment, and we should be wary of doing anything which tarnishes Britain's reputation as a home of choice for human and financial capital" (*Guardian*, '[UK Bosses Reveal Worries about David Cameron's Stance on Europe](#)', 17 January 2013).

Unions

Frances O'Grady, the General Secretary of the TUC, described the speech as a "distraction". In a statement she said:

We need a government that focuses all its efforts on jobs, growth and living standards—the problems that face ordinary families every day of the week. The Prime Minister's call for a possible referendum in four years' time is a distraction, creating uncertainty for business investment and making recovery even more difficult. It's clear that he wants the UK to remain in the EU but on the basis of scrapping vital protection for workers. Yet all of Europe's most successful economies—in or out of the EU—have better rights at work. Instead Ministers need to find the time to 'think more deeply' about getting the economy moving.

(TUC, '[Call for an EU Referendum is a Distraction, says TUC](#)', 23 January 2013)

Lord Monks, the former General Secretary of the TUC, feared the new settlement would mean the UK would opt out of Europe's social protection legislation. Writing on the *Guardian* website, he said:

The EU's employment laws are bulwarks against more raids by the Government. That is why the Conservatives hate them so venomously. These laws are not making the UK less competitive. In fact, by raising standards, they're a spur to higher productivity, investment and skills. Without them, our future could be a race to the bottom in the single market.

Cameron's manoeuvre is unworthy and mean-spirited. EU employment rights, like the EU itself—even with all its flaws—deserve the determined support of British working people. They're a cause worth fighting for. His vision of a UK without significant protections for employees, and competing not on quality but on cheapness and vulnerability, would be a disaster.

(John Monks, '[Cameron's Europe Speech will Gun for Workers' Rights—They Must Be Defended](#)', *Guardian*, 22 January 2013)

3. Main Proposals

3.1 Renegotiation

One of the central questions about David Cameron's plans for a "fresh settlement" for Britain is the extent to which it is possible. There appears to be doubt among prominent figures across Europe that renegotiation is conceivable. Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, has previously said that Europe did not need "as much treaty

change as people think. We can deliver on deepening economic and monetary union within the treaties". He added that "for those ideas where treaty change is needed there is simply no consensus. So the possibility of having treaty changes in the near future or present is not very high" (*Times*, 'Herman Van Rompuy: Cameron has Little Chance of Treaty Change', 10 January 2013).

The initial reaction of European Union Members was also doubtful. Guido Westerwelle, the German Foreign Minister, said: "Not all and everything must be decided in Brussels and by Brussels... We do indeed differentiate, but cherry-picking is not an option" (*Bloomberg*, '[UK 'Cherry Picking' in EU Won't Do, Germany's Westerwelle Says](#)', 23 January 2013). Laurent Fabius, the French Foreign Minister, said that while Europe wanted Britain it was clear "you can't do Europe à la carte". He added: "I'll take an example which our British friends will understand. Let's imagine Europe is a football club and you join, but once you're in it you can't say let's play rugby" (BBC News website, '[David Cameron Speech: UK and the EU](#)', 23 January 2013). Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, the Spanish Foreign Minister, stated: "What Cameron has to understand is that you can't put the brakes on that train" (*Daily Telegraph*, '[Angela Merkel: We will Seek EU Compromise with Britain](#)', 23 January 2013).

It was reported that only one Member State expressed support for the speech. Petr Necas, the Czech Prime Minister, said he shared Mr Cameron's desire for the EU to be "more flexible, more open" (*Times*, 'Business backs PM's call for mandate on Europe', 24 January 2013). Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, suggested a need to achieve compromise: "We are prepared to talk about British wishes but we must always bear in mind that other countries have different wishes and we must find a fair compromise. We will talk intensively with Britain about its individual ideas but that has some time over the months ahead" (*Daily Telegraph*, '[Angela Merkel: We will seek EU Compromise with Britain](#)', 23 January 2013).

Campaign group Open Europe has suggested that there are a number of factors in favour of David Cameron being able to successfully negotiate the outcome he wants:

Future treaties and fundamental changes: Though EU leaders will want to see various elections behind them before embarking on institutional changes, talk of EU treaty changes will almost certainly re-emerge before too long. There are currently seven broad proposals floating around for more Eurozone integration—most of which need EU treaty changes to be fully completed. Fears that the Eurozone can circumvent the UK through inter-governmental treaties or "enhanced cooperation" are valid but overstated, as Germany, in particular, is nervous about ad hoc-arrangements lacking firm constitutional grounding.

An economic asset: If the UK were to leave, the single market would shrink by 15 percent, with £261.4 billion in annual European exports (up from £165.25 billion in 2001) potentially facing extra costs, while the EU budget would be some €14 billion light. At a time when the Eurozone is searching for sources of external growth, the UK's annual trade deficit with the EU of £52 billion remains important.

Balance of power in favour of freer trade: Without the UK in the EU, the Northern, liberal bloc would lose its blocking minority in the Council of Ministers, radically tipping the balance of power in favour of the Mediterranean—more protectionist—bloc. For example, if the UK left, Germany could find it very difficult to block

proposals for “reciprocity” to be included as a tenet of EU trade policy—which could seriously hurt its exports.

Global reach and ‘hard’ power: The UK, along with France, is one of the EU’s two major military powers and has a global network of diplomatic contacts. The UK accounts for 24 percent of all EU spending on defence, more than any other member state.

(Open Europe, ‘[Open Europe Responds to David Cameron’s Speech on Europe](#)’, 23 January 2013)

There is also the example of the previous renegotiation of terms achieved by the Labour Government elected in 1974. However, according to David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, in their study of the 1975 referendum, among the reasons other Member States were willing to negotiate at that point was that:

- On the budget and other issues “the Community was already moving in the directions on which the Labour Government sought to insist or was poised to move that way once the balance of forces within had shifted as a result of British accession”;
- There was still “lively enthusiasm and idealism of those inspired by the European idea, who felt that without Britain Europe would forever remain incomplete and less than her proper self”;
- That it was “bad for any club’s image... if one of its most prominent members chooses to resign”.

(David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, 1996, pp 43–5)

For further information about the mechanics of renegotiation see the House of Commons Library Note, *The UK and Europe: Time for a New Relationship?* (24 July 2012, [SN/IA/6393](#)).

3.2 Referendum

Robin Niblett, Director of Chatham House, has suggested there could be a number of risks attached to David Cameron’s commitment to hold a referendum:

The first risk he runs is that other EU members will call his bluff. In which case, when he calls the referendum—because he will probably promise a referendum—rather than arguing in favour of staying inside the EU under a new deal, he will be forced to campaign against staying inside the EU.

The second risk he runs is that even if he gets some of what he wants, he’ll never get 100 percent of what he wants. So let’s say he goes ahead and renegotiates, and he manages to convince his party that it’s enough, and then when it comes to the next parliament, he holds the referendum. At that point maybe the British economy isn’t doing particularly well. People may vote against staying inside the EU just as a way of voting against Cameron. In other words, he runs a risk that the vote is never about

whether we stay in the EU or not; it becomes a mixture of people who want to leave the EU and people who want to punish Cameron.

The third risk is that all the talk about a referendum—the fact that the UK would even be talking about holding a referendum about whether it should or shouldn't stay in the EU, which no one else in the EU is talking about at this particular time—has already damaged the UK's standing with other EU Member States and potentially the US. Even if we win a referendum, people will not feel that the UK really is committed to Europe the way everyone else is, and that we will be surely pushed to the side-lines.

(Council on Foreign Relations, ['Interview: Bracing for a 'Brixit?'](#) 17 January 2013)

Further questions have been raised with regard to the position Mr Cameron would take were the renegotiation not to be as successful as he wished. For example, Open Europe has asked: "If he doesn't get concessions, is he willing to recommend 'Out' in a referendum in 2017?" (Open Europe, ['Open Europe Responds to David Cameron's Speech on Europe'](#), 23 January 2013). At Prime Minister's Question Time, Ed Miliband pressed Mr Cameron on this, asking whether, should Mr Cameron not achieve the renegotiation he wanted, would he then campaign for withdrawal from the European Union in a referendum. Mr Cameron replied: "I answered his question very clearly. I want to see a strong Britain in a reformed Europe. We have a very clear plan. We want to reset the relationship. We will hold that referendum" (HC *Hansard*, 23 January 2013, col 304). James Forsyth, writing in the *Spectator*, suggested that Mr Cameron could recommend withdrawal in this scenario:

Cameron made clear earlier in the speech that his strong preference and inclination is for Britain to stay in the EU. This seems to apply even if he can't get everything he asks for in the renegotiation. As he put it: 'You will not always get what you want. But that does not mean we should leave—not if the benefits of staying and working together are greater'.

But I'm informed by those familiar with Cameron's thinking on the issue that he is not saying that Britain will stay in come what may. It was explained to me that if the rest of the EU refused to reasonably address the concerns that Cameron outlined, then the Conservative leadership would take this as a sign that Britain's position in the EU is not sustainable.

(James Forsyth, ['Cameron Doesn't Want Britain to Stay in the EU Come What May'](#), *Spectator*, 23 January 2013)

4. Public Opinion

4.1 Long-Term Trends

One of the key questions is how the electorate would vote in a referendum. Since 1977 Ipsos MORI has conducted a survey of voting intentions based on the question: 'If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the European Union, how would you vote?'. The trends in responses to this question are contained in the table on page 31. In his analysis of available polling on public opinion towards Europe, YouGov's Anthony Wells has said:

Support is the most basic and simple to measure level of public opinion, and in the case of Europe is relatively straightforward. The British public tend to have a negative impression of the European Union—asked to rate their feelings towards it on a scale of 0 to 10, 38 percent say 0–3, 33 percent 4–6, 19 percent 7–10. 45 percent of people think that Britain's membership of the EU is a bad thing, compared to 22 percent thinking it is a good thing. 50 percent think membership has had a negative effect on the UK, 29 percent a positive effect. While the figures are different depending on the questions asked, the same rough pattern normally emerges—putting it very crudely around a quarter of people are generally positive towards the EU, around half are suspicious or negative towards it.

When YouGov have asked people directly about Britain's relationship with Europe they've found around 10 percent of people who support a more integrated Europe, 13–17 percent happy with the status quo, 33–40 percent supporting a less integrated Europe with more powers returned to the UK, 23–29 percent in support of total withdrawal from the EU.

On a forced choice between staying in or getting out, those who support a less integrated Europe tend to come down on the side of get out, meaning straight YES/NO polls on British membership of the EU tend to show much higher figures in favour of withdrawal—around 50 percent—and questions on how people would vote in a referendum on EU membership tend to show a big lead for withdrawal (for example, 27 percent stay, 51 percent go here.) Asked how people would vote in a three option referendum, people prefer renegotiation to withdrawal—15 percent would stay, 47 percent renegotiate, 28 percent go.

Polls on attitudes towards Europe have become increasingly anti-EU in recent years, but this is not a long term trend. Looking at long term trackers from MORI, attitudes towards the European Union and its predecessors have ebbed and flowed over the years—the peak of opposition towards Europe was in the early 1980s, its nadir in the late 1980s and early 90s (while I'm on the subject of changing attitudes towards Europe, it's probably also worth noting the experience of the 1975 referendum. Before the campaign started polls showed a majority in favour of withdrawal, eventually people voted 2–1 in favour of staying in—so don't assume that because polls currently suggest people would vote to leave the EU that they actually would in practice).

(Anthony Wells, '[Public Opinion on Europe](#)', *UK Polling Report*, 23 October 2011)

4.2 Recent Polling

More recent polling by Angus Reid suggested that “people in Britain continue to believe that the European Union has been harmful for their country, and almost half would vote to take the United Kingdom out”. The poll found:

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 2,004 British adults, 54 percent of respondents believe that EU membership has been negative for the United Kingdom, while only one third (33 percent) deem it positive.

A majority of Britons have expressed negative views on the EU in five separate surveys conducted by Angus Reid Public Opinion since December 2010.

Almost half of respondents (46 percent) say they would vote against the UK remaining a member of the EU if a referendum on this matter were held tomorrow, while just 29 percent would vote to keep the UK in the EU.

The proportion of Britons who would be willing to adopt the euro as the national currency remains in single digits (6 percent), while four in five (81 percent) would vote against any change.

Respondents aged 18 to 34 are more likely to believe that EU membership has been positive for Britain (45 percent) than middle-aged respondents (31 percent) and those over the age of 55 (24 percent). Still, the notion of joining the Eurozone is rejected by sizeable majorities in all three age demographics.

(Angus Reid, '[Animosity Towards European Union Continues in Britain](#)', 14 August 2012)

However, a survey conducted by YouGov in January 2013 found that “the proportion of the British public who say they would vote to leave the EU if a referendum were held has fallen, while the percentage of people who say they would vote for Britain to stay in the EU has risen”. A statement by YouGov revealed:

Asked how they would vote in an in/out referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union, 42 percent say they would vote to leave, 36 percent would vote to stay and the rest are either unsure (17 percent) or wouldn't vote at all (4 percent).

In November, 51 percent of Britons said they would vote to leave the EU, but that number fell to 46 percent in a poll conducted 2-3 January and now stands at 42 percent. In the November poll the percentage of people who said they would vote for Britain to remain an EU member stood at 30 percent, but rose to 31 percent in the earlier January survey and now sits at 36 percent.

YouGov also asked people questions based on speculation Mr Cameron would seek renegotiation of powers and then hold a referendum. It found:

- 48 percent think that Britain should renegotiate our relationship with Europe, and then hold a referendum on whether to approve the new relationship or leave totally
- 22 percent think that Britain should hold a referendum on whether to stay in the European Union as it is or leave totally
- 17 percent think there should not be any sort of referendum on Europe
- 3 percent don't know

Asked to imagine if David Cameron renegotiated the UK's relationship with Europe and said that Britain's interests were now protected, and recommended that Britain remain a member of the European Union on new terms, 50 percent say they would vote to stay in the EU, while 25 percent say they would still vote to leave, and the rest are either unsure

(20 percent) or wouldn't vote at all (5 percent) (YouGov, '[Public Divide on EU Narrows](#)', 17 January 2013).

Commenting on the results, Joe Twyman, YouGov Director of Political and Social Research, said the key finding from all YouGov's recent polls was that "when it comes to our relationship with Europe, the British electorate does not support the status quo". However, "what most people want is for Britain to stay part of the EU, but on what they regard as more favourable, renegotiated terms". In addition, the public wanted a referendum to decide, although Mr Twyman noted that "when we ask people if they want a referendum on almost any subject the answer is virtually always 'yes'". When people were given a straight in/out choice, public opinion was currently "strongly towards withdrawal, and when given the option of staying in the EU on renegotiated terms there is still only 50 percent support" (ibid).

In his blog Peter Kellner, President of YouGov, warned that any movement in public opinion on Europe should be treated with caution:

As always with sharp movements in public attitudes, we shall not know for some time whether we are seeing a blip or a trend. Britain and the EU has been the top domestic political news story for the past fortnight. Maybe, when it recedes from the headlines, views about the EU will revert to their normal 'peacetime' default position in which the centre of gravity lies somewhere between scepticism and hostility.

On the other hand, if a referendum IS held at some point in the next few years, then Europe will become a headline issue once again; and our latest results confirm the pattern of the past four decades—that when Europe lurks at the backs of peoples' minds, we would rather keep our distance; but when the talk turns to a decision to withdraw, we start to contemplate the prospects of life outside the EU and fear that this might not be so attractive after all.

(Peter Kellner, '[EU Vote: Stay in 40 Percent, Leave 34 Percent](#)', YouGov, 21 January 2013)

Table 1: Ipsos MORI Survey Data on EU Referendum Voting Intentions Since 1977

Q If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the European Union, how would you vote?

Base	All			All Expressing an Opinion	
	Stay in	Get out	Don't know	Stay in	Get out
	%	%	%	%	%
October 1977†	47	42	11	53	47
24 May 1978†	43	48	9	47	53
29 March 1979†	32	60	8	35	65
March 1980†	26	65	8	29	71
19–23 March 1981†	33	58	9	36	64
March 1983†	36	55	9	40	60
7–8 June 1984†	45	44	11	51	49
12–16 September 1987†	47	39	13	55	45
1989†	60	29	11	67	33
November 1990†	62	28	9	68	32
21 June 1991†	63	27	10	70	30
4–5 December 1991‡	60	29	11	67	33
5–6 June 1992‡	52	35	13	60	40
10–13 June 1992*	53	32	16	62	38
21–25 October 1993*	46	39	15	54	46
11–30 April 1994	52	36	12	59	41
23–26 May 1996**	44	39	17	53	47
27–29 November 1996**	44	40	16	52	48
15 April 1997**	40	40	19	50	50
25–28 April 1997	44	41	15	52	48
2–3 October 1997**	44	37	19	54	46
13–14 November 1997**	49	35	16	58	42
25–30 June 1998**	47	40	13	54	46
21–24 May 1999	44	39	17	53	47
10–11 June 1999	41	37	22	53	47
13–14 October 1999	51	41	8	55	45
27–29 October 1999	42	45	13	48	52
22–27 June 2000	53	32	15	62	38

29–30 September 2000	43	46	11	48	52
24–25 November 2000	49	44	7	53	47
15–21 March 2001	39	42	19	48	52
30 April–1 May 2001	48	43	9	53	47
22 May 2001	43	41	16	51	49
20–22 June 2003	49	41	10	54	46
20–22 September 2007	51	39	10	56	44
22–24 October 2011	41	49	10	46	54
10–13 November 2012	44	48	8	48	52

†Asked as “...stay in or get out of the Common Market...”

‡Asked as “I would like to ask you about Britain’s role in the European Community. If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the European Community, how would you vote?”

*Asked as “...stay in or get out of the European Community (Common Market)...”

**Asked as “...stay in or get out of the European Union (Common Market)..”

Base: c 500–2,000 GB adults aged 18+ except 1981 (Base: 1,990 GB adults aged 15+)

(Ipsos MORI, [‘European Union Membership—Trends’](#), 30 November 2012)

5. Select Further Reading

Parliamentary Research Briefings: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/european-union/>

House of Lords Library, *The European Union Today* (9 February 2012, LLN 2012/003)

House of Commons Library:

- *Recent EU Treaty Amendments and UK Ratification* (11 December 2012, SN06503)
- *Referendums on the European Union* (13 November 2012, SN06472)
- *The UK and Europe: Time for a New Relationship?* (24 July 2012, SN06393)

David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum* (1996, second edition)

Andrew Gamble, 'Better Off Out? Britain and Europe' (*Political Quarterly*, 2012, vol 83, pp 468–77)

Julie Smith, 'The European Dividing Line in Party Politics' (*International Affairs*, 2012, vol 88, pp 177–1195)

Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot* (1998)

Stephen Wall, *A Stranger in Europe* (2008)

Appendix: Extracts from Conservative, Labour and Liberal/Liberal Democrat Party Manifestos on Europe Since 1970

Election	Conservative	Labour	Liberal/Alliance/Liberal Democrat
1970	<p>“If we can negotiate the right terms, we believe that it would be in the long-term interest of the British people for Britain to join the European Economic Community, and that it would make a major contribution to both the prosperity and the security of our country. The opportunities are immense. Economic growth and a higher standard of living would result from having a larger market. But we also recognise the obstacles. There would be short term disadvantages in Britain going into the European Economic Community which must be weighed against the long-term benefits. Obviously there is a price we would not be prepared to pay. Only when we negotiate will it be possible to determine whether the balance is a fair one, and in the interests of Britain. Our sole commitment is to negotiate; no more no less... A Conservative Government would not be prepared to recommend to Parliament, nor would Members of Parliament approve, a</p>	<p>“We have applied for membership of the European Economic Community and negotiations are due to start in a few weeks’ time. These will be pressed with determination with the purpose of joining an enlarged community provided that British and essential Commonwealth interests can be safeguarded. This year, unlike 1961–63, Britain will be negotiating from a position of economic strength. Britain’s strength means that we shall be able to meet the challenges and realise the opportunities of an enlarged Community. But it means, too, that if satisfactory terms cannot be secured in the negotiations Britain will be able to stand on her own two feet outside the Community”.</p>	<p>“In Western Europe we want the closest possible political unity. We see Britain’s joining the Common Market as part of this unity. The Common Market is an exciting experiment in the pooling of national sovereignty in the economic sphere. It can be the forerunner of a similar unity in foreign policy and defence. Liberals advocated Britain’s applying to join at a time when it would have been very much easier than now. The Labour and Conservative Parties would not listen though they both subsequently came around to this view when in office. Liberals continue to believe that satisfactory terms can be obtained for British entry”.</p>

	settlement which was unequal or unfair.”		
February 1974	<p>“Every aspect of world affairs underlines the need for a Europe which is united and can carry the maximum weight in the councils of the world. Whatever our internal differences, we must increasingly learn to speak strongly with one voice which can be heard among the greatest powers, and which can play its part in the evolving mutually beneficial policies towards the rest of the world... this is what membership of the Community is about. It means increasing economic strength for each member and above all the certainty that there will be a partnership instead of rivalry and no more wars having their origin in Western Europe...</p> <p>Renegotiation of the Community in the sense of reforming its practice and redefining Britain's place in it, is a continuous process, which can only be conducted from within, and which we are already playing a full part. Renegotiation in the sense of British withdrawal, which is what sections of the Labour Party seeks, would be a</p>	<p>“Britain is a European nation, and a Labour Britain would always seek a wider co-operation between European peoples. But a profound political mistake by the Heath Government was to accept the terms of entry to the Common Market, and to take us in without the consent of the British people. This has involved the imposition of food taxes on top of rising world prices, crippling fresh burdens on our balance of payments, and a draconian curtailment of the British Parliament to settle questions affecting vital British interests. This is why a Labour Government will immediately seek a fundamental re-negotiation of the terms of entry... An incoming Labour Government will immediately set in train the procedures designed to achieve an early result and whilst the negotiations proceed and until the British people have voted, we shall stop further processes of integration, particularly as they affect food taxes... the right to decide the final issue of British entry into the Market will be restored to the British people”</p>	<p>“Liberals have always insisted on the duty of Britain to play a leading role in transforming Western Europe from warring rivalry into a united community, hence our consistent support for British membership of the Common Market. Furthermore, it is only as a full participant of in the world's largest trading entity that we can hope to solve our chronic balance of payments problem and at the same time develop the political unity that will guarantee peace and free us from the spectre of domination by the super powers. We deplore the delay in joining the Common Market for which Conservative and Labour Governments were equally to blame... the present Common Market structure is not what we voted for and the Liberal representatives in the European Parliament have lost no opportunity to point the way in which we feel the Community should develop. Liberals are thus effective but constructive critics of policies of the Common Market”.</p>

	disaster for which future generations would never forgive us”		
October 1974	“All recent governments of this country have concluded that membership of the community is essential for British interests. These decisions were not lightly taken. They were preceded by the prolonged study of the facts. The terms secured by the last Conservative Government were supported by those members of the previous Labour government most qualified to judge them. The country’s long-term interests should not now be sacrificed to short-term party interests”	“Our genuine concern for democratic rights is in sharp contrast to the Tory attitude. In the greatest single peacetime decision of this century—Britain’s membership of the Common Market—the British people were not given a chance to say whether or not they agreed to the terms accepted by the Tory Government... The Labour Government pledges that within twelve months of this election we will give the British people the final say, which will be binding on the Government—through the ballot box—on whether to accept the terms and stay in or reject the terms and come out”.	“In the world sphere we are essentially internationalist. We oppose narrow, self-interested policies by nations or power blocs. We welcome the opportunity to transform the European Economic Community into a Liberal, outward looking federation of free people with sovereignty, pooled in respect of vital political and economic tasks, but with equally clearly defined powers and responsibilities for constituent states and regions.”
1979	“If we wish to play our full part in shaping world events over the next few critical years, we must work honestly and genuinely with our partners in the European Community. There is much we can achieve together, much more than we can achieve alone. There are some Community policies which need to be changed since they do not suit Britain’s—or Europe’s—best interests. But it is wrong to argue, as Labour do, that Europe has failed us.	“At this election, Labour will, once again, be the only major political party to offer the British people the prospect of bringing about fundamental and much-needed reform to the EEC. We are concerned to ensure that Greece, Portugal, and Spain receive an early welcome into the Community. This enlargement of the Community will provide an opportunity to create a wider and looser-grouping of European states, thus reducing the dangers of an over-centralised and over-bureaucratic	“In Europe we support a stronger and more democratic Community. Our long-term aim is a federal Europe based upon democratic institutions and an equitable sharing of economic and social burdens. This involves working towards economic and monetary union and more effective regional and social policies to overcome unemployment and deprivation. It also means a commitment to the strengthening of the European Parliament. Only such a Parliament, elected by Proportional Representation, can provide democratic political solutions to Europe’s

	<p>What has happened is that under Labour our country has been prevented from taking advantage of the opportunities which membership offers... the frequently obstructive and malevolent attitude of Labour Ministers has weakened the Community as a whole and Britain's bargaining power within it... the next Conservative Government will restore Britain's influence by convincing our partners of our commitment to the Community's success"</p>	<p>EEC. We aim to develop a Europe which is democratic and socialist, and where the interests of people are placed above the interests of national and multinational capitalist groups, but within which each country must be able to realise its own economic and social objectives, under the sovereignty of its own parliament and people".</p>	<p>problems and make nationalist solutions as irrelevant as they are dangerous".</p>
<p>1983</p>	<p>"the creation of the European Community has been vital in cementing lasting peace in Europe and ending centuries of hostility. We came into office determined to make a success of British membership of the Community. This we have done. Our first priority in 1979 was to cut our financial contribution to the Community Budget to a fairer level... We have stood up for Britain's interests, and substantially reduced our net contribution... we shall continue to try to shift the Community's spending priorities away from agriculture and towards industrial, regional and other policies</p>	<p>"Geography and history determine that Britain is part of Europe, and Labour wants to see Europe safe and prosperous. But the European Community... was never devised to suit us, and our experience as a member of it has made it more difficult for us to deal with our economic and industrial problems... The next Labour government, committed to radical, socialist policies for reviving the British economy is bound to find continued membership a most serious obstacle to the fulfilment of those policies... British withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain—to be completed well within the lifetime of</p>	<p>"The Alliance is wholly committed to the continuing UK membership of the European Community. Membership has increased our political influence with our European neighbours and in the world beyond. Continued membership is also unequivocally to our economic advantage. The community is by far Britain's largest trading partner, with over half our exports going to community countries or countries with whom they have Free Trade Agreements... Withdrawal, to which Labour is committed, would have a highly destructive effect on exports and hence jobs. We would also lose a great deal of foreign, particularly US investment which has come here because we are in the Community. The Alliance advocates further development of the Community and</p>

	<p>which help Britain more. We shall continue both to oppose petty acts of Brussels' bureaucracy and to seek the removal of unnecessary restrictions on the free movement of goods and services between member states... The European Community is the world's largest trading group. It is by far our most important export market. Withdrawal would be a catastrophe for this country".</p>	<p>this parliament. That is our commitment. But we are also committed to bring about withdrawal in an amicable and orderly way, so that we do not prejudice employment or the prospect of political and economic co-operation with the whole of Europe. We emphasise that our decision to bring about withdrawal in no sense represents any weakening of our commitment to internationalism and international co-operation. We are not 'withdrawing from Europe'. We are seeking to extricate ourselves from the Treaty of Rome and other Community treaties which place political burdens on Britain".</p>	<p>new common policies. At the same time however, there is a great deal wrong with the structure of existing policies, and we will take the lead in putting things right".</p>
1987	<p>"This Government has taken Britain from the sidelines into the mainstream of Europe. But being good Europeans does not prevent us from standing up for British interests. The agreement we negotiated on the Community Budget has saved Britain £4,500 million since 1984... Britain has led the way in establishing a genuine common market, with more trade and service moving freely across national boundaries. We will campaign for the opening of the market in financial and other services and the extension of</p>	<p>"Labour's aim is to work constructively with our EEC partners to promote economic expansion and combat unemployment. However, we will stand up for British interests within the European Community and will seek to put an end to the abuses and scandals of the Common Agricultural Policy. We shall, like other member countries, reject EEC interference with our policy for national recovery and renewal".</p>	<p>"The European Community must be the basis of a united Europe which has common policies on trade, technology and social policy, and encourages Europe's scientific and industrial development. We believe that Labour's negative attitude to the European Community, and the obstructiveness of Mrs Thatcher's Government, not least vetoing the proposed European Community programme for co-ordinated research and development, is short-sighted and unconstructive. In a world of super-powers, Europe has to speak with a united voice".</p>

	cheaper air fares in Europe. We will also continue to work with our European partners to defend our own trading interests and press for freer trade among all nations”		
1992	<p>“The Conservatives have been the party of Britain in Europe for 30 years. We have argued when argument was necessary; but we have not wavered nor changed our views. We have ensured that Britain is at the heart of Europe; a strong and respected partner. We have played a decisive part in the development of the Community over the past decade. It was a British initiative which launched the Single Market programme and our insistence which reformed the Community’s finances. Britain has promoted cooperation on foreign policy and in combating terrorism. Britain has also persuaded partners to welcome new countries who apply for Community membership. The Maastricht Treaty was a success both for Britain and the rest of Europe. British proposals helped to shape the key provisions of the Treaty including those strengthening the enforcement of Community law defence, subsidiarity</p>	<p>“The Labour government will promote Britain out of the European second division into which our country has been relegated by the Tories. Our first chance will be the United Kingdom’s six-months’ presidency of the Community, starting on 1 July. We shall use that presidency to end the Tories’ opt-out from the Social Chapter, so that the British people can benefit from European safeguards. We will also use our presidency to help ensure that poorer countries are not disadvantaged as a result of the Single Market. We shall play an active part in negotiations on Economic and Monetary Union”.</p>	<p>“Liberal Democrats will take decisive steps towards a fully integrated, federal and democratic European Community. We believe that by sharing sovereignty and pooling power, Britain and its partners will be better able to achieve common goals for the economy, the environment, society and security than by acting alone. Our aim is to create a citizens’ Europe in which power lies as close to the citizen as possible”.</p>

	and law and order.”		
1997	<p>“The government has a positive vision for the European Union as a partnership of nations. We want to be in Europe but not run by Europe. We have much to gain from our membership of the European Union—in trade, in co-operation between governments, in preserving European peace... A Conservative Government will seek a partnership of nation states. Some others would like to build a federal Europe. A British Conservative Government will not allow Britain to be part of a Federal European State... We will argue for a flexible Europe which fully accommodates the interests and aspirations of all its Member States and where any new proposals have to be open to all and agreed by all. We will not accept other changes to the Treaty that would further centralise decision-making, reduce national sovereignty, or remove our right to permanent opt-outs”.</p>	<p>“Britain, though an island nation with limited natural resources, has for centuries been a leader of nations. But under the Conservatives Britain’s influence has waned... Our vision of Europe is of an alliance of independent nations choosing to co-operate to achieve the goals they cannot achieve alone. We oppose a European federal superstate. There are only three options for Britain in Europe. The first is to come out. The second is to stay in, but on the sidelines. The third is to stay in, but in a leading role. An increasing number of Conservatives, overtly or covertly, favour the first. But withdrawal would be disastrous for Britain. It would put millions of jobs at risk. It would dry up inward investment. It would destroy our clout in international trade negotiations. It would relegate Britain from the premier league of nations. The second is exactly where we are today under the Conservatives. The BSE fiasco symbolises their failures in Europe. The third is the path a new Labour government will take. A fresh start in Europe, with the credibility to achieve reform...</p>	<p>Britain’s interests can only best be pursued through constructive participation in an enlarged European Union. Our vision is of a European Union that is decentralised, democratic and diverse. A strong and united Europe, but one that respects cultural traditions and national and regional identities. In seeking to reform the EU, our priorities are to:</p> <p>Give the British people a say. Reform that fundamentally changes Britain’s place in Europe should only proceed if it has the explicit support of Britain’s people. If there is any substantial change in Britain’s relationship with the EU, the British people must give their consent through a referendum.</p> <p>Make EU institutions more democratic and accountable. We will give the House of Commons a more effective role in scrutinising European policy. We also want the Council of Ministers and the EC Commission to be more accountable to the elected European Parliament. We will introduce a fair and proportional voting system for British MEPs in time for the 1999 European Parliament elections.</p> <p>Make EU decision-making more efficient and</p>

		<p>Any decision about Britain joining the single currency must be determined by a hard-headed assessment of Britain's economic interests... in any event there are three pre-conditions which would have to be satisfied... first the Cabinet would have to agree; then Parliament; and finally the people would have to say 'Yes' in a referendum".</p>	<p>effective. Europe cannot effectively enlarge without improving its decision-making. We therefore favour the wider application of majority voting. But we will keep the veto on all issues relating to the constitution, budgetary matters and regulations on pay and social security. We support the use of the 'double majority', especially on matters such as foreign and security policy. Each member state must retain the unfettered right to make its own decisions on the commitment of its national troops".</p>
2001	<p>"The guiding principle of Conservative policy towards the European Union is to be in Europe, but not run by Europe. We will lead a debate in Europe about its future, promoting our own clear and positive vision. The European Union has, with the prospect of enlargement, reached a fork in the road. Down one route lies a fully integrated superstate with nation states and the national veto disappearing. The Government is taking us down this route. The alternative is a Europe of nations coming together in different combinations for different purposes and to differing extents. In other words, a network Europe. If Britain leads the debate, we can make this</p>	<p>"Unlike the Conservatives, we see Europe as an opportunity not a threat. Because we participate fully, we are able to work with our partners to shape an EU agenda that advances our national interests. We will put democratically elected national governments in the driving seat of EU policy. Our ten-year goal is to work with our partners for Europe to have the most competitive knowledge-based economies in the world. We hold to our promise: no membership of the single currency without the consent of the British people in a referendum".</p>	<p>"Liberal Democrats are firm supporters of the European Union, but as critical members of the European family, we are also firm on its failings. We believe that the EU offers the best means of promoting Britain's interests in Europe and in the wider world. Nations acting together can achieve more.</p> <p>The EU must have the resources and powers to act in areas where problems cannot be solved at a national level. But it should stay clear when European action is not necessary.</p> <p>Europe needs a new agenda for reform. Liberal Democrats are determined that Britain should lead this reform. We want a Europe where the interests of people not bureaucrats come first; a Europe that seeks to empower people, not impose upon them; and where European</p>

	alternative a reality”.		institutions concentrate on what they do best”.
2005	<p>“Conservatives support the cause of reform in Europe and we will co-operate with all those who wish to see the EU evolve in a more flexible, liberal and decentralised direction. We oppose the EU Constitution and would give the British people the chance to reject its provisions in a referendum within six months of the General Election. We also oppose giving up the valuable freedom which control of our own currency gives us. We will not join the Euro. In a reformed Europe, the restrictive employment laws of the Social Chapter will have to give way to more flexible working. We will ensure that Britain once again leads the fight for a deregulated Europe by negotiating the restoration of our opt-out from the Social Chapter.</p> <p>The common policies on agriculture and fisheries are unsustainable, damaging to free trade and conservation, and waste huge sums of money. The CAP needs further and deeper reform. And, because fisheries would be better administered at the</p>	<p>“We are proud of Britain’s EU membership and of the strong position Britain has achieved within Europe. British membership of the EU brings jobs, trade and prosperity; it boosts environmental standards, social protection and international clout. Since 1997 we have gone from marginal players, often ignored, to leaders in the European Union. Working hard with Labour MEPs, we are determined to remain leaders. Outside the EU, or on its margins, we would unquestionably be weaker and more vulnerable.</p> <p>The EU now has 25 members and will continue to expand. The new Constitutional Treaty ensures the new Europe can work effectively, and that Britain keeps control of key national interests like foreign policy, taxation, social security and defence. The Treaty sets out what the EU can do and what it cannot. It strengthens the voice of national parliaments and governments in EU affairs. It is a good treaty for Britain and for the new Europe. We will put it to the British people in a referendum and campaign whole-</p>	<p>“Membership of the EU has been hugely important for British jobs, environmental protection, equality rights, and Britain’s place in the world. But with enlargement to twenty-five member states, the EU needs reform to become more efficient and more accountable. The new constitution helps to achieve this by improving EU coherence, strengthening the powers of the elected European Parliament compared to the Council of Ministers, allowing proper oversight of the unelected Commission, and enhancing the role of national parliaments. It also more clearly defines and limits the powers of the EU, reflecting diversity and preventing over-centralisation. We are therefore clear in our support for the constitution, which we believe is in Britain’s interest—but ratification must be subject to a referendum of the British people.”</p>

	national level, we will negotiate to restore national and local control over British fishing grounds. We are determined to ensure national control in this area. We will also build on the success of enlargement, making Europe more diverse by working to bring in more nations, including Turkey”.	heartedly for a ‘Yes’ vote to keep Britain a leading nation in Europe”.	
2010	<p>“The European Union has done much to reconcile the painful division of Europe and to spread democracy and the rule of law across our continent. But it should not rest on those achievements. European countries need to work together to boost global economic growth, fight global poverty, and combat global climate change.</p> <p>The European Union has a crucial part to play in enabling the countries of Europe to meet these great challenges of the 21st century. A Conservative government will play an active and energetic role in the European Union to advance these causes. We will stand for open markets, and a strong transatlantic relationship; for an EU that looks out to the world, and that builds strong and open relations with</p>	<p>“We are proud that Britain is once again a leading player in Europe. Our belief is that Britain is stronger in the world when the European Union is strong, and that Britain succeeds when it leads in Europe and sets the agenda for change. Sullen resistance and disengagement achieve nothing. Stronger competitiveness must be Europe’s economic priority. Europe will only grow and prosper if it is dynamic and knowledge-based, with excellent universities, competitive companies, and thriving start-ups, underpinned by a modern infrastructure of digital communications and low-carbon transport. The EU should strive to improve the regulatory environment, in particular for small and medium sized business. But we reject any attempt to renegotiate or unravel social rights for the British people, and believe that</p>	<p>“Liberal Democrats believe that European co-operation is the best way for Britain to be strong, safe and influential in the future. We will ensure that Britain maximises its influence through a strong and positive commitment. But just because Europe is essential, that doesn’t mean the European Union is perfect. We will continue to campaign for improved accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. Working together, the member states of the EU have a better chance of managing the impacts of globalisation, such as cross-border crime and environmental pollution.</p> <p>... The European Union has evolved significantly since the last public vote on membership over thirty years ago. Liberal Democrats therefore remain committed to an in/out referendum the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU. We believe that it is in Britain’s long-term</p>

	<p>rising powers like China and India. And, like every other Member State, we will fight our corner to promote our national interests.</p> <p>We believe Britain's interests are best served by membership of a European Union that is an association of its Member States. We will never allow Britain to slide into a federal Europe. Labour's ratification of the Lisbon Treaty without the consent of the British people has been a betrayal of this country's democratic traditions. In government, we will put in place a number of measures to make sure this shameful episode can never happen again".</p>	<p>economic strength and social protection go hand-in-hand—a modern EU must enhance competitiveness and growth while guaranteeing security and fair rights at work... On the euro, we hold to our promise that there will be no membership of the single currency without the consent of the British people in a referendum. We support the enlargement of EU membership to include Croatia, and believe that all Western Balkan states should open negotiations on EU accession by 2014—one hundred years after the start of the First World War".</p>	<p>interest to be part of the euro. But Britain should only join when the economic conditions are right, and in the present economic situation, they are not. Britain should join the euro only if that decision were supported by the people of Britain in a referendum".</p>
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(Sources: Iain Dale (ed) *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900–1997* (2000); Iain Dale (ed) *Labour Party General Election Manifestos, 1900–1997* (2000); Iain Dale (ed) *Liberal Party General Election Manifestos, 1900–1997* (2000))