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**‘Britain in the Euro?’: British newspaper editorial coverage of the  
introduction of the Euro<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is written in parallel to a European Union Framework Five project, ‘The Transformation of Political Communication and Mobilisation in European Public Spheres’, that began in September 2001 and runs for 3 years. The EurPolCom centre at the Institute of Communications Studies has been developing expertise on the British case since the project began. The paper also relates to my PhD thesis, which looks at how newspapers as opinion leaders construct European integration as a political issue.

**Abstract:**

This paper focuses on editorial commentary covering the topic of the introduction of the Euro in British national newspapers. It explores the extent to which the issue of Britain's membership of the Euro and the divisions within government, elite, and public opinion on the issue present a challenge to the construction of editorial opinion on the single currency. It argues that the role of newspapers as political actors who act autonomously in the debate and the conflicts present within the structure of the issue itself create a unique set of circumstances. Drawing on theories of agenda setting and framing, the paper undertakes a content and frame analysis of editorials on the single currency from a key stage in the development of monetary union – the adoption of the Euro as legal tender across the member states belonging to EMU in January 2002. The study covers the six week period surrounding the launch of the Euro and the analysis is based on editorials taken from six national newspapers representing the tabloid, mid-market and broadsheet sectors of the British newspaper market. The research explores the nature of newspapers involvement in the debate and focuses on the extent to which there is an affinity between the framing of the issue by different newspapers. Finally, the paper considers the implications of the findings of the content analysis for the role and potential strength of newspapers as political actors in the debate on Britain's involvement in the Euro.

## Introduction

Monetary union is set out as a fundamental component of the European Union [EU] in both the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties. The adoption of a single currency throughout Europe is regarded by some as a step towards a more federal EU and the eventual formation of a European super-state. Opponents of European integration perceive the possibility of supranational governance as a threat to national sovereignty and identity. In this way the two issues of the future of European integration and monetary policy are inextricably bound. The single currency is therefore an issue of great importance to the politics of European integration. National political debates over membership in countries that have not yet joined the Euro are particularly significant because rejection of the single currency by member states may endanger the legitimacy of the integration project as a whole. Britain's involvement in the European Union has been a continuous source of contentious political and public debate over the last few decades. David Baker has described the EU as "one of the most divisive issues of domestic British politics over the past fifty years" (Baker, 2001). Indeed, Britain's relationship with the European Union has been a destructive issue for both Conservative and Labour leaders in recent times. More specifically, within the broader context of European integration, the question of Britain adopting the single currency is an issue that has created cleavages in political parties, divided the business community, and separated the national press. It is arguably one of the most important and pressing political questions facing the UK at the present time. Ultimately, the British public will be asked to make the final judgement in a referendum. This is significant because the debate on Europe has previously been conducted within the domain of elites and has rarely involved ordinary citizens. However, the prospect of the UK's first nationwide referendum since the 1975 vote on membership of the European Community forces the debate into the public sphere. Within the public sphere in Britain, the national media are a key actor in the communication of the politics of Britain's decision on whether to become part of the single currency.

This paper aims to contribute to a relatively scarce body of empirical research that investigates the contribution of newspapers to political communication in terms of the agenda setting and opinion leading potential of leading articles or editorials. As will be discussed, newspapers are a key source of information and opinion about the European Union. The paper explores the way in which a number of characteristics specific to the question of Britain's involvement in the single currency, such as the status of public opinion and the possibility of a referendum, may serve to intensify the importance of the press as opinion leaders in the field. It then argues that the national press ought to be regarded as political actors who act autonomously in the debate. The context and conditions of the structure of the debate over European Monetary Union [EMU] in the public sphere in Britain are then examined. A set of assumptions is developed about the way in which the press communicates the issue. The assumptions draw on the conclusions made about the characteristics of the debate, and the theories discussed and are used as the main basis for a content analysis of the 'voice of the newspaper' in editorial articles. In order to describe the level of involvement of the press in the debate and the different ways in which newspapers construct the issue in editorials, the findings of the research are focused on four key aspects of the editorials analysed in the sample. To demonstrate the level of involvement of newspapers in the debate the research assesses the salience of the

Euro as an issue in editorials, the range of opinions on what action should be taken by political actors in editorials, and considers the extent to which newspapers communicate an opinion on whether Britain should join the Euro. Finally, the content analysis is used to describe the ways in which the issue is framed and constructed by each newspaper.

### **Newspapers in the debate on the Euro**

As key opinion leaders and agenda setters, the media occupy a potentially powerful place in the political debate over European integration in the public sphere. More specifically, as will be discussed shortly, newspapers in Britain hold a different position in terms of opinion leading and agenda setting to that of broadcast news media. In exercising their freedom to be overtly partisan and articulate opinions, I suggest that there are several reasons why the role of the press as an information provider and opinion leader may be intensified in the political debate on the Euro in the UK. These are as follows: the low level of consensus and knowledge about the single currency amongst the electorate; the place of national media in communicating the politics of the European Union to its publics; and the possibility of a national referendum to decide on Britain's membership.

The level of support for Britain's membership of the Euro amongst the British electorate is not high and much of the public is as yet undecided. In a recent Guardian/ICM poll only a quarter of those surveyed (28%) said they would vote in favour of Britain joining the single currency in a referendum, over half (55%) said they would vote against, and 17% were undecided<sup>2</sup>. The results of this poll since 1992 demonstrate that public opinion on the Euro has fluctuated over the last decade, but has tended to be against rather than for membership. Support for Britain to join the single currency has never risen above a high of 36% in February 1999, and opposition has rarely fallen below 50%<sup>3</sup>. The votes of those answering 'don't know' could be vitally important to the outcome of a referendum and have varied between 7% in May 1996 and 23% in February 1995. The results of a more ambiguous style of questioning used in a survey by MORI in November 2002 further highlight the potential significance of those members of the public who do not yet hold a firm opinion on Britain joining the single currency. Nearly half (45%) of those interviewed agreed that although they currently held a view either in favour or against the Euro, they could be persuaded to change that opinion and a further 7% said they didn't have an opinion<sup>4</sup>. These figures suggest that roughly half of the public may be open to have their opinion influenced in the instance of a referendum. This has significant implications for the role of the media in the current public debate on the Euro and any debate preceding a referendum.

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<sup>2</sup> November 2002. <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2002/guardian-poll-nov-2002.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/vote-intention-reports/single-currency-trends.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/fpc.shtml> Accessed 04/03/03. Respondents were asked to say which of the following statements best described their view of British participation in the single currency: 'I strongly support British participation; I am generally in favour of British participation, but could be persuaded against it if I thought it would be bad for the British economy; I am generally opposed to British participation, but could be persuaded in favour of it if I thought it would be good for the British economy; I strongly oppose British participation; don't know.'

Alongside the lack of decisive opinion amongst voters on the Euro issue, the low level of interest and concern about the politics of the single currency amongst the public should also be taken into consideration. The status of monetary union within the electorate's priorities is evident from a Guardian/ICM poll conducted during the May 2001 General Election campaign that asked voters to rank joining the Euro in a list of eleven key issues that would decide how they voted. Voters placed health, crime and education at the top of their priorities, with asylum and Europe coming at the end of the list<sup>5</sup>. The public is also divided in its level of knowledge about the issues associated with political case for membership. In a recent survey, 9% said they felt very well informed, 40% felt fairly well informed, 38% not very well informed and 10% not at all well informed<sup>6</sup>. In terms of the communication of European politics, much has been written about the problems of European institutions in communicating with their publics, and it has been suggested that a 'democratic deficit' exists between the EU and its citizens<sup>7</sup>. A significant implication of the problems of communication between the EU and its citizens is that the public gain much of their information on issues relating to European integration from the media. Here it is important to point out that because no European level media exists, the politics of the EU are communicated through the national media of member states. The problems associated with communication of the politics of the EU, not least of which are the questions it raises for legitimacy, have serious implications for the democratic process of public debate on issues crucial to the future of EU such as the Euro. This therefore provides a strong case for communications research to contribute to our understanding of the construction of European issues in national news media.

In terms of providing guidance and orientation to citizens to facilitate their participation in the democratic process of public debate and their ability to make informed decisions, the media's construction of the debate on Britain's membership of the single currency has taken on a particular significance since the government's commitment to hold a referendum on the Euro. Referendums represent one of the most accessible and direct forms of democracy and are associated with heightened periods of public debate and involvement in politics. Despite the fact that referendums are similar to elections in many ways, it is recognised that voters may require a greater amount of information about an issue, and for the material to be framed in a more deliberative way, during a referendum than during an election. The style of information needed to aid the electorate's decision on a particular issue is dependent on the status of four characteristics of the debate: whether the issue has been the subject of sustained debate; whether voters have standing opinions on the issue; the complexity of the issue; and, the nature of elite disagreement on the issue (Jenkins and Mendelsohn, 2001). In considering the status of these characteristics in the Euro debate it should be noted that the issue has not been subject to a sustained period of public debate, that voters' opinions on the issue are not decisively formed, and as will be examined later, the topic is a complex one and it is clear that a high level of elite disagreement exists.

Having established the background to the intensified role of newspapers in the debate on the Euro in the public sphere I now wish to discuss the idea that a contributory

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<sup>5</sup> 'Tories face poll meltdown' Alan Travis and Michael White, 30/5/01, The Guardian.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/gbishop1.shtml> Accessed 06/03/03

<sup>7</sup> For more on the democratic deficit see: Meyer, 1999; Banchoff, T and Smith M.P, 1999; Beetham, D and Lord, C 1998; Follesdal, A and Kolowski, P (eds), 1997; Tumber, 1995.

factor to the construction of the issue by the press is that the debate is structured by two sources of conflict. The first comes from the conflict in elite opinion on the Euro, and the second is inherent in the structure of the issue itself. Having set out the conditions of these conflicts I will go on to use an analysis of newspaper editorials from a key period in the introduction of the Euro to assess the performance of the media in the debate. However, before doing this it is essential to explain the theoretical assumption behind these propositions mentioned above: that journalists and the press ought to be considered not just as passive informers and critical observers of the political system, but also as political actors who act autonomously in the public sphere (Cook, 1998; Eilders, 2000; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, Page, 1996).

### **The Press As Political Actors**

While some people regard the press as acting simply as agents between politicians and the public by reporting political events in a 'straight' and unfiltered way, I argue that in providing editorial comment, critical analysis and interpretative evaluations of political messages the press have the ability to make an independent contribution to discourse on an issue. Further, through interpretative, evaluative and potentially persuasive content the media provide orientation to the process of opinion formation by making judgements regarding policy, political actors and political decisions (Eilders, 2000). In contrast to the broadcast media, who are restrained by an obligation to be objective, the press are aware of their ability to contribute to public opinion and perceive one of their roles as opinion articulators (McNair, 1999). Newspapers function as agenda setters and opinion leaders in several ways, and in analysing media content it is important to distinguish between the two differing contributions that newspapers make to public debate. In terms of reporting the news, newspapers select information from a range of alternatives and 'package' news content with meaning, thereby setting the agenda and articulating opinion on what is important through these choices. More overtly, editorial comment represents a newspaper's decision to select a specific issue on which the newspaper wishes to contribute an opinion. The treatment of these contributions as separate is necessary because newspapers intentionally use editorials as an outlet in which to identify issues as key concerns and to make direct calls for action on political actors in a way that is purposively distinct from day-to-day 'objective' news coverage in the rest of the newspaper. In this way editorials are used to set out the political identity of a newspaper.

A further distinction between general news reporting and opinion leading can be seen when we consider that whilst press partisanship is a defining feature of the British press, some newspapers, particularly the broadsheets often present a range of viewpoints in their news coverage and guest commentaries that are not necessarily consistent with their partisanship as represented in their editorials (Kuhn, 2000). If we suppose that this is true for newspapers' coverage of the Euro, then the most reliable way of measuring the actual 'voice of the newspaper' on the issue is to analyse the specific content of leading articles rather than articles from the rest of the newspaper, which represent the full range of opinions the editor chooses to allow in its pages. While it is beyond the focus of this paper, it is nevertheless important to note that in thinking of the press as political actors we must acknowledge that in their interventions into the political debate the press can use their right to express their

view in the public sphere to pursue their own political interests and goals (Page, 1996). These views are expressed under specific conditions relating to the organisational structure of a newspaper, including the interests of the broader commercial organisation the newspaper is owned by, and the views of its editor and proprietor. The existence of this situation is well documented, but what requires further investigation is the way in which newspapers act as independent actors in political debates and conflicts.

### **Framing**

In addition to the argument that newspapers seek to contribute to the political agenda through editorial content, it should be noted that editorials can be deliberately constructed in order to represent an issue in a particular way. This is the framing process which has been defined as ‘to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the issue described’ (Entman, 1993). In terms of news editorials, the selection or exclusion of an issue as the focus of an article is as much a part of the framing process as is the construction of meaning through the definition of problems and recommendations of ways to address them in the article. It has been suggested that the presentation of choices, problems or judgements in subtly different ways to people can result in changes to their decision outcomes (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Research on the link between framing and public opinion suggests that where the public is not well informed or cognitively active on matters of social or political interest, framing can heavily influence their responses to media coverage of issues in such cases (Iyengar, 1991; Kahnemann & Taversky, 1984; and Zaller, 1992). The way in which editorials frame an issue such as the single currency may therefore be of particular significance to public opinion formation on the matter.

The research presented in this paper operationalises Entman’s definition of framing in a content analysis of the construction of the introduction of the Euro in newspaper editorials that focuses specifically on ‘problem definition’ and ‘treatment recommendation’. The analysis begins by demonstrating the extent to which the issue of the Euro is given salience in news editorials. In order to identify the ‘problem definition’ articulated by newspapers, the research considers the different ways in which the debate concerning Britain’s involvement in the Euro is defined in terms of either the political or the economic problems associated with the issue. For the purposes of the analysis the term ‘treatment recommendation’ it is taken to refer to the solutions and actions suggested in a leading article to deal with a ‘problem’ that has been defined. The research takes the range of calls for action and assertions of policy preferences made in editorials as an indicator of the framing of the ‘treatment recommendation’. Therefore the research investigates the way in which newspapers communicate specific political viewpoints and frame their evaluation of the issue in the political debate as independent political actors.

### **The Euro Debate: Structured by Conflict?**

Moving now to look at how the debate in the public sphere on the Euro is structured by two sources of conflict, we can see there are two elements of the structure of the Euro issue that have significant implications for newspapers’ editorial constructions

of the debate: 1) the lack of consensus in elite opinion, and 2) the complex political and economic nature of the issue.

### **1) A lack of consensus in elite opinion.**

It is a journalistic norm to report on politics in terms of where political parties stand on the issue, especially in areas where there is controversy. In terms of elections and referendums, political parties are central to the structure of media coverage and the media only refer to the substantive nature of issues in order to help in the construction of stories about the electoral contest (Jenkins and Mendelsohn, 2001). Whilst politicians are dependent on news media for support and confirmation of their legitimacy, the relationship between the two is interdependent with the media equally reliant on politicians as a source of news material (Meyer, 1999). As has already been briefly mentioned, the issue of Britain's membership of the single currency and more generally the prospect of Britain's involvement in further European integration is a major source of contention in British national politics. In order to explore the implications of the contentious nature of the matter for the role of the print media in the debate it is necessary to briefly outline the background to the conflictual dimensions of the debate in terms of the positions of elite actors such as the government and political parties, as well as the views voiced by the business community and trade unions.

Since winning the General Election in 1997, Labour has advocated a "prepare & decide" policy on the Euro and has consistently characterised the issue as an economic one that can be judged by the Chancellor's 'five economic tests'. In principal the government is in favour of Britain's membership, but only if the economic case is 'clear and unambiguous'. If the case is made, the final decision will be put to public approval in a nationwide referendum. As will be discussed later, the extent to which the question is a political or economic one is a major source of conflict and is central to the structure of the entire debate. Over the past few years the government has been forced to reaffirm its official denial of the existence of a political dimension to the decision on several occasions. For instance, a row broke out in January 2002 over a statement made by a treasury official whom it was claimed had made a speech saying the decision whether to join the Euro would be a political rather than economic one. In addition to this source of disagreement, the establishment of two polarised party groups in 2002 formed to push the campaign for and against the Euro, the pro-Euro 'Labour Movement for Europe' and a rival group 'Labour Against the Euro', has exposed deep divisions within the party. Perhaps a more serious rift is thought to exist between the two key actors in the debate, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown. Tony Blair is outspoken about his vision of Britain's role in Europe. He set out what he called a 'bold aim' in a speech in Aachen, Germany in 1999: "That over the next few years Britain resolves once and for all its ambivalence towards Europe. I want to end the uncertainty, the lack of confidence, the Europhobia"<sup>8</sup>. Conversely, Gordon Brown is widely held to be considerably less Euro-enthusiastic, and although he publicly stands committed to his economic tests it is not known to what extent he actually supports Britain's entry into the EMU. Regardless of this break in party unity and despite increasingly critical calls

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<sup>8</sup> 'The new challenge for Europe' *Speech by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, at a ceremony to receive the Charlemagne Prize, Aachen, Germany, 13 May 1999.* [http://www.britain-info.org/usaterrorism/xq/asp/SarticleType.1/Article\\_ID.589/qx/articles\\_show.htm](http://www.britain-info.org/usaterrorism/xq/asp/SarticleType.1/Article_ID.589/qx/articles_show.htm) Accessed 04/03/03

from various corners of the debate, including the business community and the media, the Prime Minister continues to decline to set a date for a referendum or to falter from the party's non-committal "prepare and decide" stance.

Described as "the Tory party's festering sore"<sup>9</sup>, the issue of Europe has been the main divisive element within the Conservative party for over fifteen years. During his time as Prime Minister, John Major experienced constant in-fighting in the party over further integration with Europe and membership of the single currency which eventually led to his resignation, re-election and, it has been suggested, the party's failure at the 1997 election. He advocated a 'wait and see' position to be followed by a referendum if necessary. William Hague adopted a stronger anti-Euro position when the party lost power in 1997. The new leader pledged that the Conservatives would not seek to join the Euro during the course of the next government if they were re-elected in 2001, therefore ruling out membership and a referendum in the medium term. The deep divisions within the party were yet again visible during the leadership contest between pro-European Kenneth Clarke and Euro-sceptic Iain Duncan Smith which followed the Conservatives' failure at the 2001 General Election. Since becoming leader, Duncan Smith has remained largely silent on the Euro, occasionally speaking out to criticise the Blair administration for its lack of leadership. He has surrounded himself with a shadow cabinet of Euro-sceptics, and recently declared that any senior Conservatives who want to back British membership in a referendum would have to resign from the shadow cabinet first<sup>10</sup>. The Liberal Democrats are in favour of Britain joining the Euro, subject to a referendum, and are anxious for the government to call a referendum soon. Their leader, Charles Kennedy has called on the government to "stop dithering and abandon its over-caution"<sup>11</sup>. Whilst the Liberal Democrats are the most united party on the Euro issue, a minority of its members have signalled privately that they would support a 'no' vote<sup>12</sup>.

The business community is perhaps the sector most directly affected by Britain's relationship with the rest of Europe. Whether business leaders interpret Britain's membership of the Euro in terms of potential costs or benefits depends largely on the type of organisation they belong to. Large international businesses, such as Ford & Nissan, and industry associations whose members are large exporters strongly favour Britain's membership of the Euro due to the predicted positive effects on exports that would be brought about by a devaluation of the pound. On the other side of the debate, smaller scale businesses and organisations not dependent on export markets are more likely to be opposed to membership. A number of surveys conducted regularly by organisations representing a diversity of interests in the business community demonstrate the scale of the lack of consensus in opinion on membership amongst British businesses. For instance, representing the interests of small businesses, the British Chambers of Commerce surveyed its members on their attitudes to Britain's membership of the Euro in October 2002. Asked what they

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<sup>9</sup>'Split over Europe poisons head-to-head clash' by Sarah Hall, 23/08/01, <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/conservatives/story/0,9061,541225,00.html> Accessed 04/03/03

<sup>10</sup> "Euro policy is settled insists Duncan Smith", 08/10/02, <http://www.epolitix.com/bos/epxnews/00000020A7F5.htm> Accessed 04/03/03

<sup>11</sup> Charles Kennedy's New Year Message 2002, [http://www.charleskennedy.org.uk/frame.htm?http://www.charleskennedy.org.uk/articles\\_speeches.htm](http://www.charleskennedy.org.uk/frame.htm?http://www.charleskennedy.org.uk/articles_speeches.htm) Accessed 04/03/03

<sup>12</sup> "Kennedy lines up euro vote date", 25/02/02, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/1839574.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1839574.stm) Accessed 04/03/03

would want the government to do if the Chancellor's five economic tests are met in the forthcoming assessment, the poll of over one thousand members found 49% of businesses would want the Chancellor to wait and see how the Euro develops before joining, 13% do not want the UK to join under any circumstances and 35% would support entry as soon as is practicable<sup>13</sup>. In contrast, a MORI poll of Confederation of British Industry members who represent companies from all sectors of business, showed 52% believing the UK should commit to join, 31% saying we should wait and see and 15% saying entry should be ruled out for several years<sup>14</sup>. Business leaders are some of the most vocal actors in the debate and have often called on the government to take a more decisive approach to the issue. For example, the CBI's director general, Digby Jones, has called the Euro debate 'sterile' and claimed the next stage "has got to be a lead from the politicians."<sup>15</sup> Opinion among Britain's major trade unions has been strongly expressed and whilst the Trade Union Congress has supported the government's policy, it has made its concern about the effect of Britain's exclusion from the Euro on manufacturing jobs well known, and has called for entry as soon as possible. In his 2002 New Year's message, the then General Secretary, John Monks, claimed it would be 'disastrous' if a referendum was not called before the next General Election, and he urged the government to 'push ahead with its economic tests and start a serious hearts and minds campaign'<sup>16</sup>.

The issue of the Euro presents a challenge to the usual way in which newspapers construct political debates. First, due to the divisions within the political system on the issue of Europe and the Euro, the press are unable to rely on the traditional political divisions of left and right to present the argument. In addition, journalists are unable to take their cues from political parties or the government due to the lack of consensus among politicians on the issue. Further, the press cannot take any direction from other elite opinion leaders such as figures in the business community because opinion is also markedly divided. This lack of consensus may have significant implications for our understanding of newspapers' role as opinion leaders and agenda setters in the debate if we consider some concepts from political communications. According to Lance Bennett's (1990) theory of indexing, the press reflects the cleavage structure in the political system. In addition, Daniel Hallin (1986) argues that political news coverage either reproduces elite consensus or legitimate elite controversy on an issue. For instance, in the case of foreign policy where there is a high level of consensus within elite debate there will be a correspondingly high level of consensus in the news media. When there is elite dissensus around an issue, such as is the case with the Euro, it follows that this will be mirrored by a low level of consensus in coverage of the issue in the press.

The lack of consensus evident within the political system on the Euro may well serve to intensify the influence and role of the press in the debate on Britain and the Euro. With reference to media coverage of foreign policy issues it has been suggested that when circumstances are such that there is elite dissensus on an issue in addition to policy uncertainty within government, and media coverage is critically framed, then the media becomes an active participant in the debate and functions to influence the

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/bcc-topline.shtml> Accessed 04/03/03

<sup>14</sup> MORI Poll 1999. Full details can be found at - <http://www.cbi.org.uk>

<sup>15</sup> Article in the Financial Times, 31 January 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Press release 28.12.01 'John Monk's New Year Message: 2002 will be 'make your mind up' time for the government'. Can be found - at [www:tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

direction of government policy (Robinson, 2001). Indeed, this may have been the case in the performance of the press in the 1975 Referendum on Britain staying in the Common Market. Colin Seymour-Ure describes the construction of the debate by the press as engendering the feeling that the press and broadcasting *were* the referendum. “In the absence of a single, permanent, organised leadership and official orthodoxy on each side, the press could decide for itself what the issues were”(Seymour Ure, 1976: 245). Therefore, a lack of clarity in the political debate and the divisive opinions of politicians on the single currency bring journalists and news organisations to the forefront of the debate, and may provide the opportunity for the press to define the issues of the debate themselves and to contribute to the outcome of the debate.

## **2) The complex political and economic nature of the issue.**

It is likely that the readers to which newspapers aim to appeal see the politics of the EU as distant, unfamiliar, and even foreign. As already pointed out, there exists a great deal of literature on the failure of the European Union to earn public support and create a legitimate political order: its ‘democratic deficit’<sup>17</sup>. Public perceptions of the complex and somewhat distant issue of a common monetary policy are therefore more likely to be reliant on domestic news coverage than perceptions about domestic politics are. However, the issue of monetary union is not a straightforward one for journalists to present. Even though Britain’s involvement in the Euro has substantial implications for the UK economy (whether we join or not), issues surrounding potential membership rank near the bottom of the public’s political concerns. More importantly, the question of Britain’s membership of the single currency has a number of implications for a range of complex issues such as national identity, economic and political sovereignty, political stability, and influence and weight in international relations. The construction of these points by the press is not aided by the persistence of the government in presenting the question of Britain’s membership as a purely economic matter. A political strategy of the government has been to present the issue as a value free and almost apolitical concept. The debate has been constructed in a technical manner, and the government has asserted that the decision is an economic one, which should and can be made on the basis of Gordon Brown’s five economic tests rather than by any political considerations. The presentation of the issue in this way prevents the deep divisions and uncertainty within the Labour party over the political implications of the Euro from being exposed. By framing the issue in this way the government avoids any discussion of the wider political implications of Britain’s membership that divide both their own party and the opposition Conservative party. Head of Policy at the Institute of Directors, Ruth Lea, has accused the debate in Britain of hiding the true political intentions behind Britain’s membership of the Euro: “Continental politicians are quite unequivocal about the political nature of the Euro. They know it is a step, albeit a hugely significant step towards the unification of Europe. Their honesty is in sharp contrast to the dissembling honesty surrounding the debate in the UK.”<sup>18</sup> The refusal of the government to debate the political ramifications of the Euro publicly makes it very difficult for the press to communicate many elements of the issue.

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<sup>17</sup> see Meyer, 1999; Banchoff, T and Smith M.P, 1999; Beetham, D and Lord, C 1998; Follesdal, A and Kolowski, P (eds), 1997; Tumber (1995).

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Lea, Head of the Policy Unit, IoD. In Press release 14.03.03. ‘IoD says the euro is a political project with profound economic implications’.

## **Editorial construction of the introduction of the Euro**

Based on this set of circumstances and theoretical assumptions I propose a set of assumptions about newspapers' editorial coverage of the debate on the Euro:

- 1) The lack of consensus within elite opinion and government policy on the Euro creates a situation whereby newspapers put themselves at the forefront of the debate by becoming active and involved participants – political actors. The issue of the Euro will therefore be salient in newspaper editorials as they attempt to take become involved in the debate. In addition, newspapers will attempt to become engaged in the debate by addressing political claims at other actors in the policy field through their editorials.
- 2) The position of policy uncertainty within the government and elite opinion fosters a situation whereby newspapers must assert their own policy preferences if they are to cover the issue. Unable to rely on traditional political divisions of left and right or to take their cues from politicians, newspapers must assert clear policy preferences and take sides to be able to comment on the debate.
- 3) In light of assumptions one and two above, and the argument that the media reproduces controversy in the political system, there will be differences in the ways in which newspapers define the problems and other elements of the issue in editorial articles.

The remainder of this paper will explore to what extent these assumptions are visible in editorials on the Euro through an analysis of a range of British national newspapers. The research was conducted in parallel to the British national case of a three-year EU Framework Five-funded project on 'The Transformation of Political Communication and Mobilisation in European Public Spheres'<sup>19</sup>. The analysis will compare and contrast the following aspects of editorials' construction:

- The salience of the issue of the Euro in the 'voice of the newspaper'.
- The political claims addressed directly to political actors by newspapers through their editorial voice.
- The variations in the framing of the issue by different newspapers.

### **The press and the politics of the Euro: an overview**

Before detailing the specific findings of the research it is helpful to examine the current context of newspaper coverage of the single currency. Interestingly, the differences in newspapers' editorial stances on the Euro are not demarcated along party lines as might be assumed. The positions of the newspapers shown in Table 1 below illustrate that although partisanship is a defining characteristic of the British newspaper industry, and does provide a context for much political journalism, not all

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<sup>19</sup> Contract no: HPSE-CT2000-00046 Project 'Europub' For more information please see 'project description' at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de/>

coverage adheres to partisanship all of the time. Therefore, if the complexities of the divisions within the two main political parties are put to one side, and their positions towards the Euro reduced to their official policy stances - Labour 'for' and the Conservatives 'against' - not all newspapers' positions on the Euro are congruent with their partisanship. For instance, based on their editorial support for parties during the 2001 election, The Sun and The Times (who both called on readers to vote Labour) assume an editorial position on the Euro that is inconsistent with the official Labour policy whilst at the same time continuing to support the Labour party in most other issue areas. Thus as Kuhn states "Sympathetic newspapers may adopt a hostile attitude in their coverage of certain issues at certain times in the political cycle, without necessarily calling into question their structural partisanship" (Kuhn, 2000: 17). In a study of the British press and European integration from 1948-96 Wilkes & Wring argue that 'the European issue may have damaged more than just Conservative party unity: it might also be in the process of breaking up what was once commonly termed the 'Tory press'' (Wilkes & Wring, 1998: 204). Therefore, it is not sufficient to rely on party positions as an indicator for newspapers' editorial viewpoint on specific issues. The editorial views taken by newspapers are often far more complex and contradictory than the partisanship model allows for. Indeed, it has been suggested that political coverage in the press has recently changed so that "we can have much less confidence in our assumptions about the continuity of political coverage than we used to. Newspapers have not maintained a consistent editorial line on any or all of the political parties, their leaders and their policies" (Gavin & Saunders, 2002: 4).

**Table 1: Newspaper Positions on membership of the Euro & partisanship during 2001 general election**

	<b>In favour</b>	<b>Against</b>
<b>Position on Britain's membership of the Euro</b>	The Mirror The Guardian The Express The Star The Financial Times The Independent	The Sun The Times The Daily Mail Daily Telegraph
	<b>Total circulation: 4.9million</b>	<b>Total circulation: 7.7million</b>
<small>Source of circulation data: ABC, Monthly report for July 2002.</small>		
	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Conservative</b>
<b>Partisanship at 2001 General Election</b>	The Mirror The Guardian The Express The Star The Sun The Times The Financial Times	The Daily Mail Daily Telegraph
	The Independent (Not in support of any party, but told voters not to vote Conservative)	
<small>Source: (Scammell 2002)</small>		

Assessing the circulation of the newspapers on each side of the debate Table 1 demonstrates that even though there are a greater number of newspapers supportive of the Euro than against it, their circulation and hence potential weight in the public debate, is only two thirds that of the group of newspapers that are opposed to the UK's membership. This has not always been the case. There was an almost unanimous pro-European consensus amongst the press in the run-up to the 1975 referendum on Britain's membership of the European Community, when all but one paper, the Morning Star, supported the 'yes' campaign. Over the following fifteen years, the united positive attitude of the press towards Europe gradually diverged towards a position of widespread Euroscepticism during the 1990s followed by the current divided status over the Euro. In a recent Foreign Policy Centre report, the Mirror Group's political editor claimed that the Sun and the Mail will be 'the battleground of the referendum' and "those that are leading the fight against EMU are obsessed with the subject and have a huge, unbalanced and dangerous influence on the government and broadcasting, especially the BBC."<sup>20</sup> Whether it is possible to say that the press campaign against the Euro is 'obsessed' with the issue will be explored later, but it is clear that in terms of circulation and potential readership the 'no' section of the press is dominant. Their importance to the government, and potential influence in the outcome of a referendum, stems from the ability of some of the titles, in particular 'The Sun', to reach the sections of society that Labour are most keen to appeal to over the Euro proposition – the members of the electorate who are most

<sup>20</sup> David Seymour in Leonard & Arbuthnott (eds) (2001).

hostile to the Euro (socio economic groups C1, C2 and D). The Prime Minister has commented on the problems that a dominant anti-Euro section of the press could cause in the event of a referendum, and has criticised the anti-Euro press claiming, 'I'm perfectly prepared to take them all on, on the subject of Europe. I have made it clear I regard some of this negative anti-Europeanism as wholly against Britain's proper interests.'<sup>21</sup>

## Sample

The editorials used were taken from six British national newspapers from a period during a key stage of the move towards monetary union – the introduction of the Euro as legal tender across the Euro-zone on 1 January 2002. The newspapers chosen – the Sun, Mirror, Guardian, Times, Daily Mail, and Daily Express – were selected so as to include newspapers from all sections of the national UK newspaper market. They therefore include tabloids, broadsheets and mid market newspapers, represent the traditional partisan divisions of left and right and communicate a range of opinions on Europe. Editorials are defined as the daily leading article representing the collective opinion of the newspaper rather than that of any individual journalist or guest commentator. Unlike in some other European countries, UK newspaper editorials are easily identifiable as they are always located in the opinion or commentary section, and are written anonymously with the title, and often crest, of the newspaper at the top of the column. For instance, in the Sun the editorial is 'The Sun Says', in the Guardian it is the 'leading article', and in the Mirror it is the 'Voice of the Mirror'. In terms of the issue, editorials that contained either references to the Euro or to European integration and the Euro were included in the selection. Articles were selected from a two-week period during the run up to the introduction of the Euro and for one month thereafter: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2001 to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002<sup>22</sup>.

## Results

**Assumption 1: The lack of consensus within elite opinion and government policy on the Euro creates a situation whereby newspapers put themselves at the forefront of the debate by becoming active and involved participants – political actors.**

An assessment of the overall salience of the Euro in the editorial agenda of the newspapers sampled enables the extent to which newspapers are active participants in the debate on the Euro to be determined. The concepts of issue selection and salience are central to both agenda setting theory and framing theory. Agenda setting research states that the salience of an issue in the media constitutes a key element in the process of public opinion formation. Although original agenda setting theory does not suggest that the media can tell people what to think, it does assert that the media are able to tell people what to think about (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Based on this principle, the frequency of the issue of the Euro in editorials is important to our understanding of the power of newspapers to set the agenda in the public debate on the single currency. A profile of the number of editorials referring to the Euro in the selected period is shown in table below. We can see that during the six week period selected, discussion of the Euro featured regularly in all of the

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<sup>21</sup> Guardian, 30.1.99 'Blair ready to take on anti-European press'

<sup>22</sup> Sunday newspapers were excluded on the grounds that they often take different editorials positions to their daily counterparts. Therefore in the period selected amounted to 41 days of coverage.

newspapers opinion columns. For some newspapers the issue was particularly high in salience. For instance, the Sun ran ten editorials focussing on the Euro. The Euro was therefore the subject of the Sun’s opinion column on nearly one in every four of the days selected. Furthermore, the Sun carried an editorial on the Euro for seven days in succession after the Euro launch. In comparison to the other newspapers, the Euro was clearly a priority on the Sun’s editorial agenda. The Express, Mail and Mirror addressed the Euro in approximately 12% of their editorials, while the broadsheets gave it slightly more attention.

**Table 2: Number of editorials on the Euro between 15<sup>th</sup> December 2001 & 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002**

	<b>For</b>		<b>Against</b>	
Tabloid	The Mirror	5*	The Sun	10
Mid-market	Daily Express	5	Daily Mail	5*
Broadsheet	The Guardian	6	The Times	7
	Total	16		22

Note: \* = newspaper where an editorial was run on the front page.

The majority of the editorials in each newspaper were concentrated in the first nine days following the currency’s launch (see Appendix 1 for distribution of coverage). On the first two days of the new currency’s life (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> January), all of the newspapers carried an editorial on the subject of the Euro. The joint efforts of the press in speaking out on the Euro at this crucial stage in its development is of particular significance if we consider that “only a unified collective opinion in the media system can put sufficient pressure on the political system” (Eilders, 2000: 181). As mentioned earlier, the political editor of the Mirror has publicly suggested that the anti-Euro newspapers are more obsessed with the issue than the pro-Euro titles. If we can judge the level of ‘obsession’ by the number of editorials published by the newspapers that oppose the Euro, his comments can be seen to be accurate. This is mainly down to the large number of editorials on the Euro run by the Sun in the time period selected. In terms of prominence, both the Daily Mail and the Mirror ran front-page editorials on the Euro. Three days after the Euro launch, The Mirror pleaded to Tony Blair to let Britain join the Euro – “We’re Missing the Boat, Tony” - on its front page and continued on page six (Mirror, 3/1/02). On the opposite side of the debate, The Daily Mail used its front page on the day of the Euro launch to predict that the Euro will result in higher prices for ‘everyone’, and went on to propose that the decision to join by other member states had been undemocratic, and that their economies would suffer from the ‘one size fits all’ interest rate (Daily Mail, 1/1/02).

A further indicator of the level of newspapers’ involvement in the debate on the Euro are calls for action made by newspapers in editorials. By actually calling upon other actors involved in the debate to do something, such as call a referendum, editorials create the impression of an active and involved two-way dialogue between themselves and politicians. So, rather than simply making a comment on an issue that does not require an answer from any other actors or for actors to react to the comments made, some newspapers are actively immersed in the debate in the sense that they use editorials to address consistent and repetitive claims to politicians. In addition, these calls for action can be taken as an indicator of how the issue is framed by newspapers. As referred to in the earlier discussion of framing, part of the framing process defined

by Entman is ‘treatment recommendation’ (Entman, 1993). The examples below demonstrate some of the recommendations of newspapers made to the government relating to how they should deal with the question of Britain’s membership of the Euro.

For example:

Headline - Voice of the Mirror: We’re missing the boat, Tony.

*“For God’s sake man, stop your embarrassing dithering and get on with it. Before Britain sinks into economic, political, and cultural OBLIVION”* – The Mirror, 3/1/02

Headline: It’s time to let us have our say on the Euro question.

*“The Government has promised us a referendum on the Euro: now it must tell us when this is to take place.”* – The Express, 2/1/02.

Headline: Eurospeak

*“What is clear is that the Government accepts there is a major political dimension to the Euro decision. This hopefully means we are heading towards a more honest and open debate on the Euro.”* – The Sun, 7/1/02.

Headline: Bogus arguments

*“This paper has repeatedly pointed out that this vital issue must have a full and honest debate.”* – The Mail, 4/1/02.

**Table 3: Political claims of newspapers directed at political actors**

<b>For</b>		<b>Against</b>	
The Mirror	Make a decision/join	The Sun	Call for debate
The Express	Call for referendum.	The Mail	Call for debate
The Guardian	No consistent claims. One call for debate.	The Times	No consistent claims. One call for referendum on the future involvement in the EU.

Table 3 gives an overall summary of how these calls were distributed between the different sections of the press arguing for and against the Euro. The two newspapers most opposed to Britain joining the Euro, the Sun and the Mail, are united in their demand for the government to lead a full debate on the issue. Those in favour of membership demand more urgent and radical action in the form of a referendum, or a decision by the government that Britain should join (The Express and the Mirror). As will be discussed below, the broadsheets present the issue in a far more complex and substantial fashion and do not make consistent calls for the government to act in one way or another.

The claims by the tabloids and mid market titles are similar in their recommendations for the government to act or become more involved in the debate. This is unsurprising if we recall the earlier discussion of the mutually dependent relationship between the press and politics and the challenge to the usual way in which newspapers construct political debates that the issue of the Euro represents. The lack of guidance from the government and other politicians is reflected in the newspapers’ calls for the

government to take action or to set a precedent in the debate. We can therefore conclude that newspapers consider the single currency as an issue area in which they wish to use their ability to function autonomously as political actors in order to contribute to the construction of the debate in the public sphere.

**Assumption 2: The position of policy uncertainty within the government and elite opinion fosters a situation whereby newspapers must assert their own policy preferences if they are to cover the issue.**

In order to give guidance and coherence on the issue of the Euro, and faced by a political directional void from the government and in elite opinion, newspapers are expected to make their position on the issue clear to their readers, to fill the void. Through summarised statements in editorials concerning their policy preferences, newspapers explicitly express their attitude on the Euro. Examples of such comments from editorials in the newspapers in the analysis are given in Table 4 below, and confirm the position of the newspapers on one side or the other of the debate. In assessing the case for or against Britain’s membership of the single currency, these statements can also be taken as examples of the framing of the issue in editorials. The statements provide ‘treatment recommendations’ by suggesting solutions to the question of whether Britain should join EMU.

**Table 4: Editorial positions on Britain’s membership of the Euro**

<b>For</b>	
The Guardian, 28/1/02.	“If that happens, it would remove one, but not all, of the obstacles to be overcome before the government can decide that entry is in Britain’s long term interest.”
The Express, 28/12/01.	“We are keen to see the Euro adopted here.....”
The Mirror, 1/1/02.	“This country is so closely bound into the European economy and markets that, as the year goes on, it will become blindingly clear that we must join the others.”
<b>Against</b>	
The Sun, 1/1/02	“The Euro is born. And thank goodness Britain is not part of it”
The Times, 18/1/02	“Her Eichel dismissed British opposition to the Euro as a ‘national eccentricity’, which would harm its own interests. Yet for a nation to enter an economic arrangement which is palpably at odds with its own interests, simply for political reasons, is surely the height of eccentricity.”
The Mail – 4/1/02.	“Opposition to the Euro is firmly based on reality. Quite apart from the fundamental objection that it will destroy British sovereignty, the economic case for membership with its one-size fits all policies is unpersuasive”

**Assumption 3:** In light of assumptions one and two, and the argument that the media reproduces controversy in the political system, there will be differences in the ways in which newspapers define the problems and other elements of the issue in editorials.

This section describes the variations in the ways in which the editorials were constructed and framed. It considers the ‘problem definition’ element of the framing process by investigating the way in which the question of Britain’s membership of the Euro is defined in terms of either the political or the economic problems associated with the issue. Up to three ‘frames’ were coded in each of the editorials from each of the six newspapers used in the selection. Where a frame was found the evaluative position of that frame towards the issue of European monetary union was coded. For instance, if the Euro was framed in terms of democracy and the editorial implied that the introduction of the Euro in other Euro-zone countries was undemocratic because the people did not get a chance to vote in a referendum, then the frame would be coded as negative towards the Euro. The following section gives an overview of the framing of the issue by each newspaper.

**The Mail:** Editorials in the Mail presented an equal mix of political and economic arguments centring on why membership of the Euro would be a bad thing for Britain. In terms of economics, the Mail framed the implications of Britain joining the Euro in terms of a threat to the economic stability of Britain in three out of the five editorials selected. It used the economic problems being experienced by Euro-zone countries to suggest that the Euro would have the same negative consequences on the stability of the British economy. In terms of economics, the editorials framed the Euro as undemocratic and as representing ‘the death knell’ for British sovereignty.

**The Sun:** Similarly the Sun used a mix of both economic and political frames to construct their case against the Euro, but a wider variety of frames were employed. Despite using a large number of different frames, the editorials consistently constructed the possibility of Britain joining the Euro extremely negatively and focussed on the overall possible consequence as a loss of sovereignty. More so than any of the other newspapers, the Sun pushed the concept that any economic integration would inevitably lead to further political integration, and that this was an unthinkable prospect.

**The Times:** Editorials in the Times framed the Euro issue largely in terms of threats to economic stability, growth, global competition and unemployment. In contrast to its sister anti-Euro Murdoch paper, the Sun, and the other anti-Euro title, the Mail, the Times’s political arguments against the Euro were not framed in terms of sovereignty or democracy. Instead, they were far less nationalistic in scope and pointed to the potential negative effects of further European integration for Euro-zone countries. One of the Times editorials pointed to the potential resistance to further integration amongst the public in Euro-zone countries and the possible political instability their dissatisfaction may cause in terms of an uprising of nationalism.

**The Guardian:** This pro-Euro broadsheet was often ambivalent towards the Euro in the way it framed the issue. Although the overall tone of the editorials was in favour of membership, the Guardian did not shy away from pointing out the poor performance of the Euro in terms of growth in the Euro-zone and its strength in the

currency market. However, they also framed the potential economic consequences of the Euro in a positive way by referring to the savings that would inevitably be made in costs as a result of greater price transparency. In one editorial, they focussed specifically on calling for reforms to the ECB before the UK agreed to join the Euro. Therefore although they advocate eventual EMU membership by Britain, they use their public voice to make calls for changes they feel are necessary in Europe.

**The Mirror:** The pro-Euro Mirror constructed the debate employing almost entirely positive economic frames. It framed the economic effects of Britain remaining outside the Euro in terms of the negative consequences this would have for Britain's economy and public services such as schools and hospitals. In three out of the five editorials selected the Mirror framed the Euro as being in the 'national interest' in terms of politics, it highlighted the contribution that joining the Euro and therefore further European integration could make to peace and suggested that further integration would help prevent tragedies such as the holocaust occurring in the future.

**The Express:** In stark contrast to the other editorials, the Express did not employ frames to construct the debate. The focus of two out of the five editorials was to call the government to hold a referendum. As such, their commentary on the Euro focussed on the actions and behaviour of political actors involved in the debate, mainly Tony Blair, rather than on the substance of the issue itself.

This overview demonstrates that the use of framing by newspapers to construct editorials on the Euro is diverse. Even those newspapers campaigning on the same side of the debate tend to frame the issue in different terms. In fact, there appear to be more similarities in the way the debate is framed by newspapers operating in the same sector of the market (tabloid, mid-market etc.) than in the framing of the issue by those championing the same cause. This lack of similarity or focus between the 'problem definition' frames used makes sense in the context of the statements by Bennett and Hallin that when there is a high level of consensus in elite debate there will be a correspondingly high level of consensus in the news media (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986). As has been demonstrated, there is not a high level of consensus in the elite debate on the Euro. Although there is consensus in the overall opinion of the newspapers involved in both sides of the debate in the sense that they are united in their cases either for or against, there is disparity in the way the cases for and against are constructed by each newspaper in terms of frames. If it is indeed the case that the press's capacity to influence government and policy formation is dependent on the presentation of a consistent and unified position, then the strength of the British press in the debate on the Euro may be in doubt.

## **Discussion**

The debate over Britain's involvement in the Euro covers a specific point in history that provides us with an interesting set of circumstances in which to study the role of the press in the political process. This paper has emphasised the importance of studying the actions of the press as opinion leaders and agenda setters in the political debate over the Euro in Britain in relation to a set of unique conditions that intensify the role of the press in the debate. The low level of consensus in opinion about the single currency among the electorate, the position of the national media as key actors in the communication of European issues to the European Union's members states,

and the possibility of a forthcoming referendum on the issue in Britain each provide strong reasons for why newspapers occupy a potentially powerful place in the national debate on the Euro. The paper has argued that the topic of the Euro presents a challenge to the usual way in which newspapers construct political debates due to divisions with the political system on the issue, the lack of consensus among politicians and elites in the debate, and the complex political and economic nature of the topic.

The main findings of the research established that newspapers are active and involved participants in the debate on Britain's membership of the single currency. The issue of the Euro was of high salience in the newspapers chosen for the sample, especially when we take into account that on average newspapers publish only three leading articles each day. The Euro occupied a higher place on the editorial agenda of some newspapers than others, and some newspapers assigned their editorial opinion a high priority by running leading articles on the front page. In the context of the policy uncertainty within government and among other elite actors, newspapers chose a range of different aspects of the issue to highlight as problems and gave a number of different opinions on how those problems should be dealt with. The content analysis showed that there was a degree of affinity among newspapers holding the same opinion either in support or opposition of the single currency in terms of the calls for action they made to other political actors in the field. In both the tabloid and mid market newspapers these claims called on the government to take action on the issue either by calling a referendum, making the decision to join or facilitating a public debate. These calls reflect the needs of newspapers for political cues from government and other elites in the policy area.

The research also demonstrated that there are variations in the way the issue is framed in terms of how the problem of the issue of membership is defined. The arguments for or against membership related to either the political or economic problems or benefits associated with entry, and some newspapers used a combination of both. The portrayal of Britain's involvement in the single currency in terms of either positive or negative consequences is particularly important when we consider that studies of public opinion suggest that newspapers can be more influential in shaping public perceptions of political issues relating to foreign policy than domestic news issues (Page & Shapiro, 1992; Meyer, 1992). Furthermore, whilst the 'democratic deficit' between the EU and its public remains unresolved, and there exists no European level media, Europe's citizens will continue to rely on their national mass media to inform their understanding and base their knowledge of European integration.

It remains unclear what will happen in the future in terms of the government's assessment of the economic tests and consequences for Britain's membership of the Euro. As discussed earlier, around the time of a referendum voters require a greater amount of information about an issue and for the material to be framed in a more deliberative way than at other times (Mendelsohn, 2001). Despite the uncertainty of when a referendum will be called, during the sample period selected the issue of the Euro did feature in newspapers' editorial agendas and therefore provided voters with information and opinion on the issue. In addition, it is clear from the analysis that commentary and opinion on the Euro are framed in deliberative way by the newspapers. A fruitful avenue for further research would be to assess whether newspapers continue to participate in the debate in this way in the event of a

referendum. Finally, the findings of this paper emphasize the continuing importance of political communications research into media coverage of European politics in analysing the construction of the politics of the EU in the public sphere.

**Appendix 1:**

**Number of editorials found on the Euro/European integration and the Euro**

15-31 <sup>st</sup> December 2001	The Express	The Daily Mail	The Guardian	The Times	The Sun	The Mirror
15		1				
17			1			
18			1	1		
19						
20						
21						
22						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28	1					
29	1	1			1	
31						
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2002	1	1(front page)	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1
3					1	1 (front page)
4	1	1		1		
5			1		1	1
7					1	
8				1	1	
9						1
10						
11						
12						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18				1		
19						
21					1	
22						
23				1		
24						
25						
26						
28			1			
29					1	
30					1	
31						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

Note: Sundays not included in sample.

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