ideological centre. Whether New Labour continues to get that balance right remains to be seen.

Gordon Hands
Lancaster University

Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics: Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties Since 1945*. London: Routledge, 2002. × + 157 pp. ISBN 0 415 28731 6 (hbk); ISBN 0 415 28732 4 (pbk).

This book offers a wide-ranging and historically thorough review of the nature and development of Euroscepticism in British political parties since the end of the Second World War. It begins by defining and explaining Euroscepticism, setting out five key factors behind its ebb and flow in British politics. These include the identity of the sceptics, the opportunities (or lack thereof) they have encountered, the arena in which they oppose government policy, the resources available both to governments and sceptics, and likewise the information available, which Forster considers to be separate from other resources.

Six empirical chapters follow this introduction, in which he tackles chronologically the challenges faced by successive governments, the changing nature of Euroscepticism, from xenophobia to anti-capitalism, to a scepticism concerned with the protection of national sovereignty. He also details the impact the sceptics have had, the burgeoning of new extra-parliamentary groups with divergent objectives, and their increasingly impressive organizational and financial acumen.

In the first of these chronological chapters, the author considers the 1945–69 period, in which not only did Britain make two failed bids to join the European Community, but Eurosceptics also failed to stop the inexorable shift in British foreign policy, away from the Empire/Commonwealth. The next two chapters deal with the fallout of Prime Minister Edward Heath's successful bid to join, culminating in British membership in 1973 and a sham renegotiation and subsequent referendum held under Labour leadership. Chapter 5 examines the Thatcher years, 1979–90, showing how Conservative scepticism grew in the post-Bruges period (1988) from a relatively muted level to a much more vocal scepticism in which both 'fundamentalists' and 'pragmatists' united behind the defence of sovereignty line.

Chapter 6 addresses the resistance to political union in the Maastricht Treaty from 1990–3, the coming of age of British Euroscepticism according to Forster, and the final empirical chapter examines the continuing resistance to monetary union, beginning in 1992. In each of these chapters, Forster provides a picture of who these sceptics were or are, what arenas the conflicts have been played

out in, what the arguments have been, and what the opportunities have been for resistance to European integration.

In the conclusion, Forster suggests the emergence of a number of important patterns and trends. One of the most important is that parties begin their tenure in office more positive about European integration than when they leave it. He ascribes this to the fact that governments approach office taking a pragmatic and utilitarian view of the value of European integration and then become disillusioned with it as they fail to achieve their objectives. He does not consider the effect of party management, and how low majorities have given prime ministers so many headaches: to have done so would have strengthened his argument. It would also have been enhanced by considering why other member states do not experience the same disillusionment, a fact which manifestly cannot be explained by them having achieved all their objectives.

Paradoxically, parties experience mass scepticism only when they are out of office, the opposition period giving them time and scope to radicalize before they realize that to become electable they need to temper their views. Forster also shows how the changing editorial lines of the British media have helped the Eurosceptic cause, and how the latter's effort to reach out to non-British groups has resulted in a Europeanization of British Euroscepticism.

Forster's work is very much in the tradition, which he shares with so many of his contemporaries in British academia, of diplomatic history. His is a sweeping, authoritative account, empirically satisfying and full of contextual details. For example, he provides us with the little known and counter-intuitive fact that 'pro-EC MPs have been more willing than sceptics, not merely to disobey their parties, but to place loyalty to the European cause before their party'. Its real strength is its description of the changing influence of British Eurosceptics both within and outside the main parties.

His strength is also his weakness, however. Scholars looking for a meticulous selection, specification and operationalization of theoretical approaches; a rigorous methodology (or methodologies); and theory-testing and building on the basis of empirical research, will not find it here. Thick description and a lot of detail are what we get. Moreover, in the introductory account of extant explanations of British Euroscepticism, Forster misses two of the most influential approaches to the question of why people (and more importantly, governments) might resist integration. They are Andrew Moravcsik's liberal assimilation by governments of social interests, and the transactionalist approach associated in the contemporary literature with Alec Stone Sweet and Wayne Sandholtz, in which governments are motivated by levels of economic and social transactions. In fact, economics takes a back seat to diplomacy in this book as the focus is squarely on political elites rather than economic or social interests.

On balance, both students and researchers will benefit from the level of historical detail available in this relatively short book, and it is a welcome addition to the corpus of work on British–European relations, especially that dealing with Euroscepticism.

Mark Aspinwall
Robert Gordon University