

## Introduction: English nationalism, Euro scepticism and the Anglosphere

Dare to dream that the dawn is breaking on an independent United Kingdom ...  
Let June 23 go down in our history as our independence day! (Nigel Farage, cited in  
Withnall, 2016)

It is hard to understate the historic significance of the vote to leave the European Union (EU) that emerged from the rain on the morning of 24 June 2016. It was the greatest policy failure leading to a geo-strategic reorientation since the Suez Crisis of 1956 and potentially the greatest loss of markets since independence in the Indian subcontinent in 1947, if not the Thirteen Colonies in 1783. But Suez left few traces on the electorate or domestic British politics and was conducted in the 'black box' of foreign relations. In contrast, the decision to leave the European Union was enacted by the electorate who, in so doing, challenged the sovereignty of Parliament that some Brexiteers claimed they were trying to save. Moreover, this was a campaign and outcome dominated by England. Examining this event as a 'moment' of English nationalism opens up fruitful ways of understanding both the vote to leave the European Union and the nature of English nationalism itself.

In parts of the world where national memory is conditioned by resistance to British imperialism the idea of the English seeking and winning their independence is disconcertingly absurd. In almost every part of the world – from the Americas, to Asia, Africa, the Middle East and even within the United Kingdom (UK) itself – the English (not the Scots, Welsh and least of all the Irish) are the chief malefactors in many national narratives that end in independent nationhood for formerly subject peoples. Until recently, the English were a people from whom you sought independence, not a people seeking to regain their own nationhood by rising up against the inequities of foreign rule.

Yet this is how Brexit was portrayed in Nigel Farage's victory speech at 4 a.m. on 24 June 2016: with the important caveat that Farage was ostensibly speaking for the United Kingdom, not for England. But the disparity in support for leaving the European Union in the four nations of the United Kingdom raised the question of which nation might be seeking its independence and from what or whom? A newly politicised English identity was not just a salient feature of the 2016 referendum but

also of the ten years leading up to it. In this way politicised Englishness became an important element in explaining the decision to hold the Brexit referendum and its eventual outcome.

Raising questions of where sovereignty lay and who exactly was in charge in the United Kingdom was only one of the political dilemmas that were opened by the attempt to resolve three others. In seeming to resolve one grand dilemma – the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union – the referendum deepened two more inter-related problems: England's relationship to the United Kingdom and Britain's relationship to the world. The way that the decision to leave the European Union was arrived at opened up questions about what kind of country the United Kingdom had become. The outcome of the referendum vote was the result of diverse causes: the political effects of wealth disparities, the use of xenophobia to mobilise parts of the Leave vote and the difficulties of political communication in a democratic system that was adapting slowly to the disruptive effects of misinformation borne by new media. The national divisions that the 2016 referendum exposed are often noted. Yet little sustained attention has been given to the place of nationalism as an ideology (rather than shorthand for xenophobia) in explaining Brexit. This book attempts to make such an explanation.

This book builds on research that highlights the peculiar Englishness of Euroscepticism and the Englishness of Brexit (Wellings, 2012; Henderson et al., 2017). Some analysis downplays the particularity of Brexit in favour of broader, underlying strains and tensions in Western democracies, noting the 'long-standing suspicions' of the European project as a sub-text to Brexit (Flinders, 2018: 185–188). These shorter-term explanations are important, but we must not throw the English baby out with the comparative bathwater. Analysing the UK's 'awkwardness' through the lens of an emergent politicisation of English nationhood and longer continuities in the construction of English nationalism allows for a medium-term explanation of Brexit, as well as allowing us to gain valuable insights into English nationalism. Doing so therefore allows us to open up new fields of explanation for this major event in British and European political history. In this sense, Brexit is understood as an extended event, not solely the referendum campaign of 2016. The analysis that follows considers the politics of nationalist mobilisation in the years preceding the decision to leave the European Union and the inter-relationship between an elite project to alter the UK's relationship with the EU and popular grievances. The famously 'awkward' relationship between the UK and the EU cannot be understood separately from the increasingly awkward set of relationships between the nations of the United Kingdom themselves (Wellings, 2015). In this light – with an interpretation of English nationalism at its centre – Brexit becomes explicable as the result of an important but contingent alliance between a politicised Englishness and an elite project that aimed at withdrawing the United Kingdom from the European Union. It was this cross-sectional alliance that shifted politicised Englishness into an English nationalism defined by a political desire to separate the UK from the EU.

In order to respond to and manage popular grievance that was increasingly voiced in the language of this politicised Englishness, a political strategy formed that was shaped by this emergent nationalism. An elite project to get Britain out of the EU and reposition it in a globalising world was able to ally with a recently politicised Englishness mobilised by the issue of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and the free movement of labour that membership entailed. By so doing, it delivered a slim but significant majority to take the UK out of the EU in the referendum of 2016. The contingent alliance between elites and masses was not the only aspect of the creation of this 'national' moment. Past and future were joined in a critique of present political arrangements. Britain's imperial past allowed Brexiteers to imagine a global future for the United Kingdom. The 'Anglosphere' was part of this particular national imagination that appeared to offer a solution to the dilemma of exit from the EU. As a named ideology it emerged at the same time as England began to emerge as a de facto political community in the asymmetrically devolved United Kingdom. England found itself at the centre of a three-level game bought about through the politics of Brexit. The three levels of this dilemma were, first of all, how to get the UK out of the EU whilst, secondly, keeping the UK together on English terms and, thirdly, how to reintegrate a post-EU UK into the 'wider world' as a means to lessen the rupture of withdrawal from the EU and mitigate the possibility of a break-up.

By reframing Brexit through the lens of English nationalism, this book offers a medium-range explanation for the origins and outcome of the campaign to secure the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and the part played by 'the Anglosphere' in it. It also helps explain the nature of contemporary English nationalism as an emergent political project, and not just a 'stand alone' entity or 'Little England', but backed by other countries to help fill the diplomatic and trading space left by the UK's departure from the EU. Grounded in the growing literature on the politics of English nationalism and nationhood, this book examines the important – yet under-researched – inter-relationships between three ideas and ideologies in British politics: English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere. There may be good reasons to hesitate in calling each of these political ideas an ideology. However, if we do so based on a broad understanding of ideology as an interconnected set of ideas which form a perspective on the world that have implications for action-oriented political behaviour (Leach, 2002: 1), we can begin to appreciate how each relates to and informs the other which in turn helps us comprehend Brexit – and to comprehend it as a major moment in the history of English nationalism.

The current manifestations of these three political ideas are closely linked to contemporary politics and in that sense are relatively novel. The first recorded use of the term 'Eurosceptic' was in the British press in 1985 (Vasilopoulou, 2018: 23). Thatcher's 'Bruges Speech' in 1988, although tame by Brexiteers' standards, gave this putative resistance to particular directions in European integration some

political coherence. Whether or not there was such a thing as English nationalism was a moot point after New Labour's electoral win (and the Conservatives' poor showing in Scotland and Wales) in 1997. Nevertheless, a politicised Englishness emerged just after the re-emergence of Euroscepticism as a parliamentary force in the 1990s and – as we shall see – there were important links between these two phenomena. The last element in this ideational trinity, the Anglosphere, developed as a project on the disgruntled right of the political spectrum in the English-speaking democracies at the high point of the influence of the 'Third Way' in 1999–2000.

Notwithstanding the novelty of these political phenomena, they all rest on much older ideas and traditions in English politics and thus have significant continuities with the past. Importantly, this gives each of them legitimacy as a response to the political dilemmas outlined above and provides reassuring continuity in times of political dislocation. But these ideologies are not only a response to these great dilemmas: in their own ways they helped cause those dilemmas too. This is because the understanding of sovereignty in these ideologies differs markedly from the understanding of sovereignty required to legitimise European integration. Sovereignty is a crucial element in any nationalism and it holds a special place in the long development of English political practice and national consciousness (Black, 2018). Sovereignty is a major constitutive element of Eurosceptic thought that seeks alternative models of European integration or an alternative to European integration altogether. Anglosphere thought nurtures the constitutional development of sovereignty in England as part of its collective historical narrative and suggests that alternatives to European integration are to be found in a renewed set of international relationships based on the civilisational commonalities stemming from this English past.

This book examines these important inter-relationships between English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere. Building on important analyses of English nationalism from Tom Nairn to the more recent (and differing) accounts of this phenomenon written by Krishan Kumar, Arthur Aughey and Michael Kenny, it explains the nature of what Nick Startin and Simon Usherwood have referred to as the 'pervasive, embedded and persistent' nature of Euroscepticism (Startin and Usherwood, 2013: 10). It does so in this case in the United Kingdom, by linking it with an analysis of nationalism in England and shows that what we might call 'Euroscepticism' is far more embedded and persistent than even these authors' enquiry into the general EU-wide phenomenon suggests.

This re-energised English worldview was located at the intersection of three political inter-relationships: between English nationalism and Euroscepticism; between Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere; and between the Anglosphere and English nationalism. The memory of England's historical development that underpins the dominant articulation of British sovereignty inclines the English worldview away from the EU and out towards the 'English-speaking peoples', recently rehabilitated and reconceptualised for a global era as 'the Anglosphere'. The strain that these

competing conceptions of England and Britain placed on national traditions were expressed in the arguments whether to 'Remain' in or 'Leave' the European Union up to and after the historic vote to take the UK out of the EU held on 23 June 2016.

Thus, far from being inwardly focused and parochial, when understood as a contingent alliance between electorate and elites, contemporary English nationalism is a globally connected phenomenon, which is deeply engaged with the wider world. To be sure, nationalism in England displayed what we might call a 'defensive posture' towards European – and even British – levels of governance and those policies that we associate with globalisation in the decade after the Global Financial Crisis. The debate during the Brexit referendum campaign was certainly tainted by xenophobia, symbolised the murder of the Labour and pro-Remain MP Jo Cox during the referendum campaign and in the rise in hate crimes: the Home Office reported a 41 per cent rise in racist or religious abuse in the month after the vote (cited in the *EU Observer*, 2016). But this does not necessarily make it parochial. Instead of the Brexit vote being caused by a deepening parochialism, it was an awkward but decisive alliance between sections of the electorate disaffected by the effects of neo-liberal globalisation and elites attempting to expose Britain to more of the same. The arguments of the official Leave campaign sought to stress Britain's global links as an alternative to a European vocation for the United Kingdom. From this historically informed perspective, English nationalism was one of the least parochial on the planet. This global orientation is crucial in explaining the link between English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere that shaped Britain's European policy from the 1960s right up to the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the politics of withdrawal thereafter.

### Stating the argument

This book mounts an argument that resistance to European integration and the drive to withdraw the UK from the EU was constitutive of the contemporary manifestation of English nationalism. Euroscepticism revitalised English nationalism as a defence of British sovereignty. In doing so, it created the conditions for a contingent alliance between supporters of an elite project to withdraw from the EU and realign the UK with its 'true friends' in the Anglosphere and sections of the electorate expressing popular grievances through a recently politicised Englishness.

English nationhood is expressed in a variety of ways and is informed by a variety of ideological traditions (Kenny, 2014). However, the single most important concept shaping English nationalism as a political ideology is the historically derived notion of sovereignty at the heart of the British political tradition. Whilst this appears most obviously to be about politics, it is about that elusive concept 'culture' too. Nationalism politicises culture and the alignment or misalignment of 'national values' and everyday experiences with the political structures of governance is

a major motor of nationalist mobilisation. To understand English nationalism as a pervasive, persistent and embedded phenomenon and as a structuring force in British politics, one needs to comprehend the relationship between the political and the historical in articulations of England that coalesce as presentations of 'English political culture' and the relationship of that version of England to structures of governance. So whilst some of the drivers of contemporary English nationalism – that which Richard Wyn Jones and colleagues characterised as 'devo-anxiety', Euroscepticism, immigration (Wyn Jones et al., 2013) – violate general principles of nationalism (that the state and nation should be congruent and that the nation should be governed by 'its own people'), the worldview that shapes these demands and makes them appear legitimate is based on an English understanding of sovereignty that is presented as being both political and cultural.

What makes this English worldview politically appealing when faced with major dilemmas of statecraft is a heady brew of initial success – symbolised by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent Whig interpretation not just of English history but of British politics – and the expansion, imitation and endurance of that system; the latter symbolised by England and Britain's 'finest hour' in 1940 (what followed was by implication not as good). In all of this lay an important relationship between history and memory: in creating a narrative that legitimised the operation and existence of government and governance within the United Kingdom and the British Empire, this version of the past shaped and informed the contemporary politics of nationalism in England.

The narrative thread that links English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere is founded on three pillars: first of all, England's constitutional development; secondly, the expansion and contraction of first the 'Atlantic' Empire and then the truly 'British' Empire; and, thirdly, the memory of twentieth-century conflict in preserving English sovereignty and global liberty. The emergence of the English constitution in the seventeenth century laid important foundations for the expansion of English trade that, in turn, laid the foundations of the 'first' empire in the 'Atlantic world' (including the archipelago that today comprises the United Kingdom and Ireland). Despite the loss of the American colonies by 1783, further expansion in Asia, Oceania and Africa, in addition to the consolidation of Canada, led the 'second' British Empire to its greatest territorial extent and, in the settler colonies and Dominions, to the imitation and adaptation of the English constitution as forms of government and governance. The endurance of the United Kingdom throughout the twentieth century – in 1917–18, most dramatically in 1940, but even in 1983 after the Able Baker scare – appeared to give the notion of sovereignty at the heart of English constitutionalism a providential lease of life, anointing it with another form of success – endurance. However at the beginning of the twenty-first century the endurance of this sovereignty was challenged not militarily, but by the perceived threats from an encroaching European Union and a secessionist Scottish nationalism. Between 2011 and 2019, the British Government



ran the risk of 'losing' not only the EU but Scotland too. But this prospective major loss of markets was simultaneously compensated by the tantalising prospect of the return to a 'global Britain', a champion of free trade, a 'world island' in Andrew Gamble's phrase (Gamble, 2003: 34); something like a bigger and colder version of Singapore.

Faced with these political challenges, 'England' unwittingly re-emerged as a political community, with defenders of English sovereignty articulating narratives that mobilised fellow nationals in its defence. But politics could never allow such an emergence to be a straightforward process of 'national awakening' as nineteenth-century ideologues depicted the process. Focusing on sovereignty as the core concept in English nationalism certainly illuminates an understanding of English nationhood, but it blurs its boundaries too. This is a crucial point if we are to understand English nationalism in the past and today. England's sovereignty has for many centuries extended beyond the borders of England itself. Justifying the extension of English sovereignty from early modern times, through the two empires and within the United Kingdom itself produced legitimising narratives to explain the English and their form of governance to themselves and others. Despite challenges from national and class-based movements, those legitimising narratives that were produced to counter such movements won internal legitimacy owing to their endurance over time. Although esoteric in their purely constitutional form, these predominantly conservative (and Conservative) explanations for what we might call the 'national tradition' in English politics, created a worldview that was markedly different from the secessionist nationalisms in other parts of the United Kingdom. It is one that differed notably from the ideal type of nationalist movements that sought to throw off foreign rule. English nationalists do not seek to make the state and nation congruent: instead they instinctively defend British sovereignty – its existence, operation and memory. In its formative stages, English national narratives sought to justify foreign rule (their own) rather than critique it. Importantly, it is this expansive 'national tradition' that conditions English responses to the dilemmas of nationhood and national belonging presented in contemporary British politics.

### **English nationalism: expressing and occluding England**

In its secessionist or autonomist guises, nationalism is a political goal to be attained, or a political problem to be managed, via statecraft. It is also an ideology that legitimises the daily existence of a state or justifies the creation of a new one. Both these elements of nationalism operate in the United Kingdom. The multinational composition of the United Kingdom meant that managing autonomist and secessionist nationalism assumed an important role in British politics once home rule was proposed as an answer to the 'Irish Question' between 1885 and 1914. Although diminishing in salience after the Government of Ireland Act (1920),

secessionist and autonomist nationalism returned on the geographic peripheries of the United Kingdom in the 1970s and after. But following devolution a new national question gradually forced its way onto the political agenda: the 'English Question'. However, this national question did not at first seem to share the same autonomist or secessionist goals of the nationalisms of the periphery. Furthermore, by the turn of the twenty-first century the dilemma of what to do with England could not be seen in isolation from other national questions that situated the United Kingdom in Europe and the rest of the world. Whereas devolution and the push for Scottish independence were inadvertently posing the 'English question' in the UK, the United Kingdom's difficult part in the process of European integration was posing the 'British Question' in Europe. Moreover uncertainty about Britain's place in the European Union by extension posed further questions about the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of the world. In this evolving domestic and geo-political situation, structured by the embedding of 'globalisation' since the 1990s, older ties with what were referred to as 'traditional allies' or simply 'the Anglosphere' were renewed and reformulated and suggested as an answer to Britain's 'European Question'.

As an ideology, nationalism can be divided into two broad types: autonomist-secessionist and integrationist (with irredentist nationalism sitting between the two main forms). Although both variants ultimately seek to integrate an existing or formative national community, autonomist-secessionist nationalists seek to delegitimise existing political borders and the extension and operation of sovereignty within those borders. Their response to the dilemma of where to draw political boundaries is to suggest that a reorganisation of geo-political space around their nation is the form of governance best suited to the material and psychological needs of the group of citizens that they seek to represent through independent statehood. In their view, new borders are more legitimate than the pre-existing ones. Integrationist nationalists seek to reinforce existing state structures and forms of governance by legitimising those structures as already the best suited to the material and psychological needs of the citizenry. Both types of nationalists create and sustain nations and ideas about nationhood in their attempt to legitimise the political goals – disintegration or unity – that they seek to bring about. It is this contest about political legitimacy that shapes the content of particular nationalisms: the myths, memories and goals that animate and sustain nationalists and resonate with a broader citizenry as part of a political struggle.

Thus nationalism is born of political contestation, and particular nationalisms co-constitute themselves with reference to significant political others. But nationalist narratives cannot be created from nothing even if they can be articulated within different political and cultural traditions that give them different emphases and narratives upon which to draw. The past sets boundaries on the present and what claims are legitimate to make within political traditions and which will resonate within given constituencies in the existing or putative political community. For this reason, it is important to consider the historical development of any particular



nationalism in relation to other important national narratives and existing power relations that secessionist or integrationist nationalists seek to alter or sustain. In the case of nationalism in England, it is important to comprehend the series of 'national questions' that intruded on Westminster politics and how these shaped dominant understandings of English nationhood.

The first of the 'national questions' in British politics arose after the politics of the 'long eighteenth century' had created a sense of Britishness in support of the pluri-national United Kingdom (Colley, 1992; Newman, 1987). The so-called 'Irish Question' emerged in the wake of agitation for an independent Ireland after 1848. The response from the Liberal Party was 'home rule in the round', three successive attempts to introduce 'home rule' between 1885 and 1914 that ultimately helped make defence of the Union one of the defining features of the Conservative Party.

This political process was not related to the United Kingdom alone. The 'devolution' of responsible government mirrored a process that started in the colonies following a rebellion in Quebec in 1837 and the issuing of the Durham Report three years later. 'National questions' that asked what was the best way to organise the Empire and the growing assertiveness and self-confidence of colonial elites were resolved by according those settler colonies the almost-independent status of Dominions between 1867 and 1935. These colonial nationalisms were deeply informed by an integrationist imperialism that in turn fed back into understandings of nationhood in the United Kingdom, including England (Wellings, 2002). Conversely, secessionist nationalisms within the Dominions were contained or defeated by pan-imperial military efforts, notably that of the Afrikaners in South Africa in 1899–1902. Legitimising the extension of British sovereignty throughout the Empire became an important element for nationalists in all of these emergent nationalisms, England included.

When the first serious crack in the British Empire came, it was in Ireland. Irish independence was a drawn-out affair, ranging from uprising and civil war between 1916 and 1923, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 that made Ireland a Free State in the British Empire, to full independence by 1949. By the time of Irish independence, decolonisation and the end of Empire had begun in earnest. National questions sprung up throughout Britain's Asian, African and Caribbean colonies. When these questions had been resolved by granting independence, the political dilemma of how to respond to secessionist nationalism returned to British politics in Northern Ireland. Scottish and Welsh nationalisms also emerged as political forces in the 1970s, posing their own 'national questions'. Through the debates about devolution in the 1990s, Scottish nationalism became the 'motor' of nationalist politics in the UK, taking over the mantle from Northern Ireland after the stabilisation of power-sharing governments in 2007 until the Brexit vote in 2016.

It is important to note the assumptions built into these 'national questions': England was assumed to be an unproblematic and invisible element in the framing of political dilemmas. In this way, it was elided with rule from Westminster and with the idea

of 'Britain' itself. Three broadly consistent explanations for this elision have been offered. Tom Nairn provided an account of what he termed 'the English enigma' in the 1970s, noting that 'some vital elements in the modern political principle of political nationality are diminished, or lacking in England' (Nairn: 2003 [1977]: 285). For Nairn, the historically precocious nature of the development of English national consciousness – 'God's firstborn' in Liah Greenfeld's evocative phrase (Greenfeld, 1992: 27) – was channelled into and ultimately subsumed by the British state and expressed through the monarchy. This historic outcome ensured the continuation of the 'absolutism of Parliament' after the long seventeenth century and 'prevented the emergence in Britain of the doctrine of popular sovereignty as the true source of power' (Nairn: 2003 [1977]: 290).

This explanation of political quiescence was given an imperial dimension by both Benedict Anderson and Krishan Kumar. Anderson – a New Left stable mate of Nairn's – augmented Nairn's explanation with the concept of 'official nationalism'. This variety of nationalism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the challenge to pluri-national empires by autonomist-secessionist nationalists. This challenge forced those in power to adopt and adapt nationalist ideas about legitimacy for their own empires. The 'fundamental legitimacy for most of these dynasties', argued Anderson, 'had nothing to do with nationalness'. Anderson noted that in these pluri-national empires:

Romanovs ruled over Tartars and Letts, Germans and Armenians, Russians and Finns. Habsburgs were perched high over Magyars and Croats, Slovaks and Italians, Ukrainians and Austro-Germans. Hanoverians presided over Bengalis and Québécois, as well as Scots and Irish, English and Welsh. On the continent, furthermore, members of the same dynastic families often ruled in different, sometimes rivalrous states. What nationality should be assigned to Bourbons ruling in France and Spain, Hohenzollerns in Prussia and Romania, Wittelsbachs in Bavaria and Greece? (Anderson, 1991: 83)

Yet the nationalist challenge to the legitimacy of these dynastic pluri-national empire-states forced imperial officials and supportive citizenry to legitimise empires in language and symbols that looked more and more like the types of mythic tropes that nationalists themselves drew upon: history, governance, common language or *lingua franca*.

Traces of this explanation about the diversion of an early form of English national consciousness into an official nationalism, whose function was to legitimise the British state and its Empire, can be found in Krishan Kumar's account of the making of English national identity. Building on comparative analyses, Kumar argued that imperialism did not so much inform expressions of English nationhood but instead inhibited it. It was Britain's imperial mission that prevented anything resembling the nationalisms emerging in Continental Europe from forming in England during the nineteenth century. Kumar's notion of 'missionary nationalism' concedes that

empires, 'though in principle opposed to claims of nationality, may be carriers of a certain kind of national identity which gives to the dominant groups a special sense of themselves and their destiny' (Kumar, 2003: 34). For Kumar, being at the heart of an imperial mission led to a diminution of expressions of strident nationhood for fear of upsetting the imperial applecart and causing nationalist reactions from peripheral groups. 'Such people', suggested Kumar, 'will be careful not to stress their ethnic identity; rather they will stress the political, cultural or religious mission to which they have been called' (Kumar, 2003: 34). This meant that Britain's imperial mission both restrained and inhibited expressions of English national identity. Thus where we might (theoretically) expect to find examples of 'national identity' and its attendant myths and memories, we instead find muted and conflated expressions of nationhood that informed – and were in turn informed by – wider imagined political communities and different, if cognisant, ideologies.

None of this was the source of a political dilemma in England until the very end of the twentieth century. Devolution in the UK – a response to the 'national questions' of the 1990s – resulted in an asymmetric constitutional resettlement (House of Lords Constitution Committee, 2016). In this situation, as Arthur Aughey noted, England's constitutional place experienced a series of 'ironic inversions'. During the period when nationalism was becoming the principal means of legitimising the organisation of geo-political space, England's constitution and the ideas of nationhood that were so closely linked to it were, in Ernest Barker's phrase, a 'self-evident fact' that did not require explanation let alone theorisation (cited in Aughey, 2016: 351). But after devolution this 'self-evident' nature became reconceptualised as 'absence' and was therefore now a problem in a polity that was reorganising political space along national lines. What was once the source of England's political confidence was now a source of insecurity and resentment. Perceptions of absence diminished in the latter part of the 2000s to be replaced by 'resentment' when a politicised Englishness emerged as a significant element of British (and European) politics (Mann and Fenton, 2017: 136). This emergence of politicised Englishness that Aughey called 'the disordering of English self understanding' (Aughey, 2016: 353), pushed another 'national question' – this time England's own – slowly but surely up the political agenda. This phenomenon created three inter-related political dilemmas: the English question, the British question and the European question.

### **English Euroscepticism: pervasive, embedded and persistent**

Speaking in Berlin in November 2014, John Major sought to explain the growth in support for parties or candidates advocating withdrawal from the European Union witnessed in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament: 'We have never been a comfortable partner', he explained – a statement that would have caused little surprise amongst his German audience. More surprisingly, he singled out the 'we' in

this statement as one nation in particular: 'In England', he added, 'which is 85% of the population of the United Kingdom, opposition has reached a critical mass and now, for the first time, there is a serious possibility that our electorate could vote to leave the EU. I put the chance of exit at just under 50%' (Major, 2014).

In claiming that the English were never comfortable partners in the process of European integration (a claim more accurate at the level of politics rather than government and a sentiment that varied in intensity over time), Major drew attention to England's contribution to what Startin and Usherwood conceptualised to be the 'pervasive, embedded and persistent' nature of Euroscepticism, as noted above (2013: 10). This comparative research added important avenues of analysis into the study of Euroscepticism initially concerning its nature – embedded and persistent – and later its organisation – transnational and pan-European (Fitzgibbon, Leruth and Startin, 2017: 11). This research raised questions about the exact cause and nature of such embedded persistence. The argument in this book is that resistance to European integration revitalised English nationalism as a defence of British sovereignty whilst the Englishness of this worldview inclined Britain away from the EU and towards the Anglosphere. Politicians framing this dilemma via the dominant traditions in English nationalism, sought to re-energise links with 'traditional allies' and mobilise popular support for withdrawal from the EU via imagining the United Kingdom at the centre of a web of like-minded, English-speaking nations who collectively offered an alternative to Britain's place in Europe.

Making Euroscepticism a core concern of European Studies is itself a recent phenomenon (Brack and Startin, 2015: 239). The study of European integration is famously partisan in its personnel (Varsari, 2010). The relationship between academia and EU funding is deep and strong: we might even say persistent and embedded. This had some appreciable effect on research into European integration. In the field of European integration history, what Wolfram Kaiser identified as 'the federalist hurrah historiography and the conventional diplomatic history of interstate negotiations', resulted in the field being in his view 'conceptually underdeveloped' (Kaiser, 2010: 45). Paul Taylor suggested that we should turn our attention to the means by which European integration may unravel. Noting that any theory of integration required two elements – as a system defined against certain criteria that was different from an existing one and a sense of a dynamic process within the current system able to produce a new one – Taylor suggested that European disintegration ought to be a major concern to scholars and practitioners alike (Taylor, 2008: 92). Brexit gave greater urgency to this need for a theory of European *disintegration* as well as European integration (Lequesne, 2018: 290). A theoretical appreciation of nationalism combined with one of Euroscepticism will leave us well placed to understand this countervailing tendency in general and help to explain Brexit in particular.

Writing in 2012, Cas Mudde identified two main schools of thought about emerging research on Euroscepticism: the so-called 'Sussex' and 'North Carolina' schools (Mudde, 2012: 193). The Sussex School was constituted by the pioneering research

of Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart and their two-volume edited collection, which was published under the title of *Opposing Europe* in 2008 (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a and 2008b). This research focused on the categorisation and definitions of various political parties and movements that in one way or another opposed the policies or principle of European integration. Most enduring was their binary typology of opposition to European integration as 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism, where 'hard' Euroscepticism referred to principled opposition to the political project of European integration and 'soft' Euroscepticism to opposition to the trajectory of European integration or planned extension of EU competencies (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2018: 13). In other words, 'soft' Eurosceptics engaged in 'policy contestation' at the EU level, whereas 'hard' Eurosceptics engaged in 'polity contestation' (Trenz, 2018: 293).

The 'North Carolina' school pursued a slightly different approach in terms of methodology and focus. Based on research conducted by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, this school emphasised that the wellspring of Euroscepticism as a pan-European phenomenon was the issue of party management. Most importantly, Hooghe and Marks popularised a chronological break in the study of European integration by arguing that a 'permissive consensus' towards this process had broken down after the debate about political and monetary union around the negotiation and signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991–93. This was replaced thereafter by a 'constraining dissensus' that meant that room for political manoeuvre was greatly reduced by the growth of popular scepticism towards the European project (Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 1).

We might now add a third school to this list. Importantly for the argument mounted in this book, it is one that opens up avenues of enquiry sympathetic to the place of nationalism and nationhood as explanatory factors in resistance to European integration. Although tempting to call this the 'M4 School' after the motorway linking the universities of Surrey and Bath, where much of the coordinating activity originated, it would be better to link this school with the idea underpinning its approach to Euroscepticism, that of embedded persistence. Other scholars took the implications of such embedded persistence further. Cécile Leconte suggested that the pre- and post-Maastricht dividing line was drawn too sharply (Leconte, 2010: 166). Claudia Schrag Sternberg adopted a similar position, but focused on contestation over legitimacy rather than Euroscepticism as such (with Euroscepticism as a by-product of this contestation). Schrag Sternberg's concerns accorded with those of Craig Parsons: that certain political ideas win out over others and that contestation of the European project has been a persistent and embedded feature of European integration from its start (Parsons 2003; Schrag Sternberg, 2013).

These analyses ally with a constructivist understudying of European integration that should alert us to the importance of the discursive creation and contestation of the idea of Europe (Trenz and de Wilde, 2012: 537). As an emergent polity with no

agreed-upon *finalité*, the European Union generates such contestation. As Leconte notes, this is particularly true for a polity that ‘challenges exclusive definitions of national identity, without succeeding in constructing a new European *demos*’ (Leconte, 2015: 258). This lacuna facilitated contestation between supporters of European integration and opponents of the process and principle of European integration, legitimised with reference to nationhood as being the site of collective identity and statehood as being the optimal site for democratic participation.

This shift of focus raised another broad research question: what is the source or nature of this embedded persistence? As Sofia Vasilopoulou notes, more research is required on the way that Euroscepticism influences national identity formation (and vice versa) (Vasilopoulou, 2013: 163). Although not the first to make the link between the ‘winners and losers’ of European integration and globalisation, Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin’s *Revolt on the Right* offered the best-known explanation of support for radical right-wing (and *ipso facto* populist Eurosceptic) parties in the UK. But this important analysis had little to say about the place of nationhood in Eurosceptic mobilisation (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). Employing the concept of the ‘left behind’ is important but can only be a partial explanation of the appeal of Euroscepticism in England; not all leave voters in 2016 were poorer, less well educated, white men in their fifties (Evans and Mellon, 2016; Hennig and Dorling, 2016). Crucially, Ford and Goodwin sought only to explain support for the radical right rather than Euroscepticism, although the two phenomena overlapped considerably. This was an important element in support for Brexit but cannot do all the explanatory lifting that was given to it in the immediate wake of the surprise result in 2016. To understand Brexit we need to examine the ways that the ‘polity contestation’ of the European Union was not only provided with an opportunity through the referendum (Oppermann, 2018: 249), but was also framed in terms that took support for UK withdrawal from the EU beyond the committed support of Euro-rejectionists and managed to persuade the uncommitted to vote to leave the EU.

Virginie van Ingelgom similarly focused her research on the ‘undecideds’, ‘don’t knows’ and ‘don’t cares’, which the results of the 2009 and 2014 elections to the European Parliament revealed were now a solid feature of the political landscape in Europe. Far from becoming politicised after Maastricht, van Ingelgom argued that European citizens largely withdrew their interest and activity from EU politics, creating a new category: ‘Euro-indifferents’ (van Ingelgom: 2014: 183). What changed was not citizen politicisation, but rather elite polarisation. Thus, although it is plausible that a constraining dissensus emerged at an elite level in the past two decades, van Ingelgom argued it is an overstatement to transpose this model onto public opinion. In this reading, elite contestation becomes an important feature of Euroscepticism. Projecting this elite contestation onto and through the device of a referendum, necessitated elites seeking to influence an electorate that rarely put the issue of Britain’s place in Europe high on the list of priorities, meaning that elites



needed to find alternative registers through which to pitch their arguments to the peoples of the United Kingdom.

The above conclusions were the product of comparative research. In the United Kingdom's case it is not difficult to construct Euroscepticism as a 'persistent and embedded' phenomenon. The contours of such a narrative are well known. Official scepticism towards the emerging project of meaningful regional integration can be found in Britain since the 1950s when European integration began in earnest. Principled opposition amongst a widening set of interest groups in civil society formed during the first negotiations (Dewey, 2009). In the 1960s and 1970s, Eurosceptics were known as 'Anti-Marketeers' and were principally drawn from the left of British politics with an emphasis on protecting sovereignty in order to defend British socialism from the ideas and policies of the European centre-right. Euroscepticism became characteristic of the right from the mid-1980s, building in support and intensity until the Brexit referendum in 2016.

The emphasis on the continuity of opposition to European integration within and from the United Kingdom led to some fruitful explanations that move us beyond issues of party management. Party management is a necessary but not sufficient explanation for the persistent nature of Euroscepticism in the United Kingdom. The expression 'awkward partner', coined by Stephen George in his book of the same name, appeared first in 1990, with a second edition published in 1998 (George, 1998). The durability of George's phrase rested upon the concept of 'awkward': a concept that not only suggested an uncomfortable relationship with European integration but also suggested a social characteristic observable amongst denizens of the British Isles. Despite this resonance, the link between nationhood and Euroscepticism was not explored in George's seminal work. This was left to later scholars such as Menno Spiering who traced a causal link between national identity and Euroscepticism (Spiering, 2004).

Chris Gifford explains the persistence of Euroscepticism in the United Kingdom in relation to its post-imperial political economy (Gifford, 2014: 15). Gifford cautions against making too close a causal link between Euroscepticism and English nationalism: 'Populism is populism, it's not nationalism' (Gifford, 2015: 363). Nevertheless his focus opens up valuable avenues of enquiry, suggesting a path dependency *out* of the EU (and to somewhere else). With its emphasis on the post-imperial structure of the British state and a missing European 'rescue', Gifford's argument is one that links Euroscepticism with both a populist nationalism and – although he does not use this term – the Anglosphere. This does not happen in a way that is simply nostalgic, regressive or delusional but results from a structural susceptibility to populist Eurosceptic politics embedded in the post-war British political system (Gifford, 2014: 6).

The term 'Euroscepticism' was itself put under strain by Brexit. David Cameron's negotiations in Brussels in February 2016 saw him switch from someone who appeared to be contemplating exit to a man committed to campaign 'heart and soul'

to remain in a reformed EU (or rather a reformed UK–EU relationship). The debate in England in the lead up to the Brexit referendum tended – in the conceptualisations outlined above – to be a contest between soft and hard forms of Euroscepticism with little Euro-enthusiasm on offer. In the analysis in this book, the term ‘Brexitteer’ will denote EU-rejectionists advocating a position of ‘polity contestation’, whereas ‘Eurosceptic’ will cover those whose claims are characterised by ‘policy contestation’.

### **The Anglosphere: England’s transnational Euroscepticism**

Another important insight provided by the recent scholarship on Euroscepticism relates to its pan-European and transnational nature and organisation (Fitzgibbon, Leruth and Startin, 2017). It should also be noted, however, that the transnational dimension of emergent Euroscepticism is not solely a pan-European phenomenon, but extends beyond the borders of Europe. Indeed this extra-European dimension to Euroscepticism became – in the case of Brexit – constitutive of Euroscepticism by suggesting an alternative to the political trajectory of continued European integration and the EU political project as a whole.

Perhaps best seen as a transnational political tradition given life through policy networks rather than as an actually existing entity, the Anglosphere is a relatively novel expression of an older idea in the politics of Anglophone countries. The boundaries of this entity are far from fixed, but the ‘core’ states are taken to be the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Other countries with an Anglophone heritage or a link to the former British Empire are sometimes included, notably Singapore, India, countries of the Caribbean and – more problematically given its means of exiting the British Empire and non-membership of the Commonwealth – the Republic of Ireland. At an ideational level, three interlinked narratives concerning the development of representative democracy, the positive effects of empire and free trade and the defeat of totalitarianism in the twentieth century bind the Anglosphere.

By 2007, when it entered the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘Anglosphere’ came to represent a mutually beneficial political association of English-speaking countries that built on older political traditions linking the Anglophone world (Vucetic, 2011: 165). It was also imagined as a balancing corrective to the type of polity represented by the European Union. As Daniel Mandel explained in the *IPA Review* on the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 2005:

In a world of politically centralising bureaucracies, a vigorously sovereign, free market, democratic Anglosphere might yet prove a corrective. If so, it will be owed in large measure to the British maritime supremacy established at Trafalgar, which permitted the expansion of British influence and institutions via trade and empire. And if not, the fact will remain that British naval power has been on the whole a powerful benign force that helped shape the better contours of our world. (Mandel, 2005: 32)

This was certainly true of the United Kingdom, as Duncan Bell has shown with the idea of 'Greater Britain' (Bell, 2017) and Michael Kenny and Nick Pearce have shown with regard to both that idea and that of the 'English-speaking peoples' (Kenny and Pearce, 2018). But what is often referred to as 'the Anglosphere' in the singular is in fact a multilayered identity that means different things in different places. For Eurosceptics in the United Kingdom, the Anglosphere's main practical attraction was as an alternative to the European Union. As Stefano Gulmanelli has shown, the 'Anglospherist reshaping of Australia' during John Howard's time as prime minister was advanced in the areas of a challenge to existing understandings of multiculturalism and a realignment of international relations towards those states with 'shared values' that implicitly aligned Australia's foreign relations in a 'transnational cultural space' (Gulmanelli, 2014: 593). These specific areas of activity were bolstered by wider discourses on the right about 'Judeo-Christian', Enlightenment, 'Western' and 'British' civilisation(s) during the years 1996–2007 (Berryman, 2015: 591). It was these networks and ideas that linked debates in one part of the Anglosphere with those taking place in others.

These mutually constitutive transnational links were important for Eurosceptics and Brexiteers in the United Kingdom in helping to them to imagine the UK outside of the EU. Accordingly the idea was attractive to prominent British Eurosceptics and high-profile Conservatives who eventually became Brexiteers. Margaret Thatcher, David Willetts, John Redwood, Daniel Hannan, David Davis, Norman Lamont, Liam Fox, Bill Cash, Michael Howard and Jacob Rees-Mogg wrote or spoke in support of increased cooperation across the Anglosphere, although explicit mentions of the concept diminished the closer to government these figures got. This list of supporters also suggest that the Anglosphere is an idea with friends in high places, but that is also a love that dare not speak its name, except when in opposition or safely on the backbenches.

When exactly 'the Anglosphere' emerged in its contemporary manifestation is hard to say. It is probably safer to suggest that the idea never really went away on the right of politics. If a date were to be chosen, however, two Hudson Institute Conferences in 1999 and 2000 announced the arrival of the Anglosphere as a new concept in right-wing transatlantic discourse in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. These two conferences, the first in Washington, DC and the second in Berkshire, brought together an impressive array of conservative grandees. Delegates included Margaret Thatcher, David Davis, Conrad Black, Francis Fukuyama, James C. Bennett, John O'Sullivan, Robert Conquest and Kenneth Minogue. It was here, argued John Lloyd, who attended as an observer for the *New Statesman*, that the vague notion of a return to closer cooperation between kindred English-speaking nations, 'congealed into a movement' (Lloyd, 2000).

The Anglosphere idea represented a push for a realignment of global and domestic politics (and occasionally an international organisation), to be grounded in the history, culture and institutions that many Eurosceptics and especially

Brexiteers believe make Britain different from the Continent (Nedergaard and Friis Henriksen, 2018). As John Laughland explained, the Anglosphere is ‘united by an attachment to individualism, the rule of law ... and the elevation of freedom’, with the implication that these values were not shared by the ‘corporatist, socialist, corrupt and even authoritarian political cultures prevalent on the European continent, and of which the EU is itself an expression’ (Laughland, 2008). Since the late 1990s, exponents of the ‘Anglosphere’ argued that the English-speaking nations were distinguished by a set of institutions and values that other nations of Europe and Asia lacked: ‘a common law tradition, respect for private property, continuous representative government, and a culture that nurtures civil society and entrepreneurial enterprise’ (Bennett, 2004: 54). With the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, the English-speaking Caribbean islands and Singapore all being dedicated to free trade and greater military and security cooperation, the Anglosphere would, it was argued, constitute ‘a centre of hope in the world ... round which peace, cooperation, and democracy can develop’ (Conquest, 2005: 225).

In certain respects, the Anglosphere did not have to be conjured up: it already existed. This was particularly true at the level of intelligence cooperation through the existence of the so-called ‘Five Eyes’ network of intelligence sharing, which was established between 1946 and 1956 (Vitor Tossini, 2017). Such long-standing cooperation between Anglosphere countries led to what Jason Dittmer described as the practice of ‘everyday diplomacy’ that looks like a ‘civilisational’ alliance, but is based on bottom-up and quotidian cooperation (Dittmer, 2015: 605). Tim Legrand’s research has shown how these networks and the identities they create extend beyond intelligence sharing and into the realm of policy transfer (Legrand, 2016). The revelations about Cambridge Analytica’s involvement in the Brexit campaign, via Aggregate IQ and BeLeave, show that trans-Anglosphere networks were active during the referendum (Cadwalladr, Graham-Harrison and Townsend, 2018).

Whatever their past relationships, five independent nation-states will have their differences. Sometimes these can appear to be shades of grey: literally in the case of the Royal Australian Navy’s (RAN) adoption of its own shade of ‘Haze Grey’ for RAN vessels (more appropriate to Pacific conditions) to replace the British ‘Storm Grey’ designed for the Atlantic (*Daily Telegraph*, 2016: 11). There are, however, separate if inter-related spheres within the Anglosphere. The Commonwealth is the largest of these and the Anglo-US alliance is the most important for international relations. This ‘special’ relationship hints at the importance of bilateral relations within the Anglosphere, but also the unique place of the United States, with the presidency of Donald Trump complicating rather than facilitating the idea of the Anglosphere as an emergent unit in world politics. CANZUK (Canada–Australia–New Zealand and the United Kingdom) also emerged as another source of cooperation within the Anglosphere. Such interaction did not always produce a sense of commonality. The Anglosphere contains hierarchies as well as commonalities.

Intra-Anglosphere relations are as important for creating and sustaining national distinctions, as are oppositional and macro-level 'civilisational' identities in creating a sense of commonality, as Steven Loveridge has shown (Loveridge, 2015). Indeed, Brexit led to stronger statements of what we might call 'Anglo-scepticism' amongst some politicians of the English-speaking world as much as it created support for the Brexiteers' grand strategy.

For all its conceptual vagueness, the Anglosphere in British politics represented a response to a dilemma that used historical consciousness and political tradition not only as its point of departure, but as its place of destination too. Its value for Brexiteers was as much ideational as material. As Peg Murray-Evans noted 'the Commonwealth was part of the ideological driving force of Brexit' and an integral part of the government's vision for 'Global Britain' (Murray-Evans, 2018: 197). This was true of the Anglosphere too. The past was used as a political resource: 'Like so much else about the current moment – from the planned restoration of grammar schools to cries for relaunching the Royal Yacht Britannia – the past serves as inspiration and guide', noted Duncan Bell. 'We are invited to march back to the future' (Bell, 2017). Marching back to the future gave Brexit its nostalgic air, but it was a necessary ideological move to imagine the UK outside of the EU. As Andrew Mycock noted, it rested not so much on imperial amnesia, but instead on a form of myopia in which the best of all possible Empires was used to inspire voters to have the national self-confidence to vote 'leave' (Mycock and Wellings, 2017).

The Anglosphere is a growing area of academic attention. Yet, little is known about what Tim Legrand has called these 'elite, elusive and exclusive' networks amongst policy-makers within the Anglosphere (Legrand, 2016: 440). Those who explicitly refer to it as such are found on the right of politics, but such policy networks exist on the centre-left too. Srdjan Vucetic has gone furthest to theorise the Anglosphere and its likely consequences in international relations and politics. According to Vucetic, actions should follow identity despite rational reasons to behave otherwise (Vucetic, 2011: 25). The well-known motto that nations have interests not friends is challenged by this analysis. Yet Vucetic is right to accord identity an important place in explaining politics and one that can be fruitfully applied to the inter-relationship between English nationalism, Brexit and the Anglosphere.

### **The outline of the book**

To make the argument that Euroscepticism provides the most formed-up ideological content for contemporary English nationalism and that the memory of England's historical development inclines the English worldview away from the EU and out towards the 'English-speaking peoples', this book is structured into three parts. Part I, 'Discovering England', sets out the dilemmas that have helped create contemporary English nationalism and the ways of understanding this phenomenon that actors and analysts bring to bear on this topic. Part II, 'Three Pillars of

the English Anglosphere', outlines the ideas that animate and link English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere. Part III, 'England's Brexit and the Anglosphere', examines the way in which English nationalism and the idea of the Anglosphere informed the politics of Brexit before, during and after the 2016 referendum.

Chapter 2, 'England's Dilemmas', examines the emergence of contemporary English nationalism and adopts a 'traditions and dilemmas' approach to understanding policy towards England, the European Union and the Anglosphere. Mark Bevir and Rod Rhodes have argued that when confronted with a dilemma, political actors will be guided in their policy choices by pre-existing political traditions. One important tradition they overlooked in their analyses was the national one and it is this that will be applied to the analysis of policy choices and the discursive construction of political Englishness in this book. In other words, nationalism should not be overlooked as an explanatory factor when seeking to understand the changing constitutional nature of the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom's changing relationship with the European Union and the United Kingdom's changing relationship with the rest of the world. The inter-relationships between these major dilemmas and English nationalism were admittedly complex since the United Kingdom was both object and agent of change, first in relation to Scottish independence and secondly in relation to withdrawal from the European Union. Thus an important sub-claim is that it is impossible to analyse the 'awkwardness' of Britain's relationship with the EU without analysing the 'awkwardness' of Britain itself. Since the 1990s, Euroscepticism and English nationalism have become constitutive of each other. Again, the historical continuities within English nationalism incline English nationalists away from Europe and towards the English-speaking world.

Chapter 3, 'Locating England', examines the way in which English nationalism has been theorised and researched. It argues that the analysis of English nationalism has been trapped between two ideal types of nationalist development and politics: France and Scotland. The Scottish intellectual and nationalist Tom Nairn had a major influence on this framing. Situating his analysis of English nationalism within a Marxist-derived understanding of historical development and ideological hegemony, Nairn initially described English nationalism as 'absent' in the 'normal' sense; that is to say in comparison with the historical development of France and its integrative republican traditions. More recent analyses of English nationalism also found it to be 'absent' but for different reasons, principally because it did not look like Scottish secessionism, which is an account associated with Krishan Kumar. In this way, when theoretically as well as geographically located between France and Scotland, England appeared to be missing in action. But this was only because the ideal types used to define English nationalism inhibited a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The 'absence' was only ever a *perception* of absence and it was this perception that required explanation. Thus another important sub-argument in this book concerns the merging of Englishness and Britishness that came about through



the tendency in English nationalism to legitimise and defend British sovereignty. Building on the definition of nationalism advanced above we can see not only how English nationalists speak the language of Britishness, but in defending British sovereignty, the English are drawn away from the European Union and propelled towards the English-speaking world.

A crucial element of this English worldview rests on an understanding of the past. Broadly, the English Eurosceptic version of the past rests on three intertwined pillars: the development of representative democracy and the English 'genius' for government; the acquisition and operation of the British Empire; and memory of twentieth-century conflict. Within this political memory, there are 'hard' and 'soft' Eurosceptic interpretations of the past. The 'soft' version of English Euroscepticism suggests that England was the home of representative democracy, which helped create the conditions necessary for an Empire of free trade that, in turn, helped rid Europe of militarism and totalitarianism. In this version, England – usually conflated with the United Kingdom – is distinct but not entirely incompatible with the European Union as long as it is given special recognition for its difference. In this way, it is very much the 'Scotland of Europe'. The 'hard' English Eurosceptic version of the past presents the development of representative democracy in England as incompatible with what is perceived as the anti-democratic development of the EU since 1992 and especially after the Eurozone crisis, which means that the UK should withdraw from the EU and embrace the opportunities presented by globalisation (assuming that European integration and globalisation are incompatible). This reorientation included re-emphasising ties with its former Empire and Commonwealth that helped Britain win the war, but was then betrayed in 1973 by what was presented as a spineless political class that had lost faith in the nation. Both versions crowded out a Europhilic English version of the past and both were deployed by their political supporters to legitimise their projects of reform or exit.

Chapter 4, 'Gift to the World', develops this idea of the importance of English constitutional history as a form of resistance to European integration and for Anglosphere thought. England's constitutional development is the fulcrum that links English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere and serves as the foundation for all three ideologies. Thus Chapter 4 begins by looking at the debate surrounding the re-publication of Henrietta Marshall's *Our Island Story* in 2005 and the subsequent political support for that celebratory Edwardian English constitutional narrative in 2010–14 as a means of cohering Britain and Britishness and suggesting an alternative (global) future to Europe through a 'shared exceptionalism'. In this context, this chapter argues that support for Henrietta Marshall's book was not just a debate about history teaching but suggested the constitutional and global preferences of the Conservative elements of the Coalition Government (even the ultimately pro-Remain ones), thereby reinforcing an Anglosphere narrative in English public life.

Chapter 5, 'Greater Britain', develops this theme and examines England's 'wider categories of belonging', an important element in generating support for the Anglosphere and hence imagining the UK outside of the EU. It argues that, given the importance of sovereignty in England, the boundaries of Englishness were blurred during the historical formation of nationalism that conditions an Anglo-British worldview to this day. Importantly, this historical blurring occurs alongside a conceptual one, whereby sovereignty is equated with 'greatness' that is in turn equated with Empire (or a particular memory of it). The sub-argument is that this imperial dimension to English national consciousness has been reworked and rehabilitated for a global era. Once again, debates about Empire – whether it was a 'Good Thing' or a 'Bad Thing' – were not merely academic (or comedic) but were part of a political project that sought to legitimise a reorientation away from Europe and towards a global policy underpinned by the importance of free trade.

Chapter 6, 'Great Wars', examines the place of war memory in situating England between Europe, the Anglosphere and the wider world, whilst at the same time cohering the United Kingdom around the most commonly shared narrative amongst the nations of the UK. Interpretations of the past as a guide for current and future action are a crucial element of nationalist ontology. The so-called 'second memory boom' beginning in the late twentieth century was not simply a nationalist phenomenon but there were strong affinities between remembrance, commemoration and national narratives. This was especially true for English memory of the wars of the twentieth century. Whereas a Franco-German narrative emerged soon after the end of the Second World War that saw European integration as a logical outcome of the conflicts between 1914 and 1945, a contrary conclusion took root in England. In England, the wars suggested that Continental Europe was a source of threat to England with '1940' standing as a metaphor for the defence of British sovereignty par excellence. British accession to the European Communities in 1973 represented a historical rupture via the United Kingdom's seemingly ever-closer relationship with former enemies at the expense of traditional allies. Thus the accelerating pace of war commemoration at the start of the twenty-first century helped reinforce an English worldview that again favoured the Anglosphere at the expense of Europe.

Chapter 7, 'Leap into the Known', examines the part played by arguments for the Anglosphere in the referendum campaign that began in earnest after the Conservative election victory in 2015. Heavily bound up in ideas about globalisation and at times subsumed amongst alternative 'models' for the UK's relationship with the EU, the Anglosphere exercised a strong ideational pull away from the European Union for pro-Leave elites. In contrast to 1975, when the regime of global governance and free trade was less extensive and the Commonwealth was not a political community that could offer any alternative to Europe, Eurosceptics in 2016 turned to the Anglosphere as a more appropriate cultural and economic 'fit' than the EU and one whose 'muscular liberalism' was a more effective counter to the threats of the twenty-first century than an EU that one Eurosceptic critic described

as ‘regulated, apologetic, sclerotic and feeble (Hannan, 2013: 356)’. Such a critique and reorientation sat comfortably with English nationalism committed to a defence of British sovereignty and attuned to the (somewhat illusory and certainly not straight forward) sense of commonality with the English-speaking peoples of the world.

Chapter 8, ‘Taking Back Control’, examines the fate of England during the process of Brexit that began after the referendum vote of 2016. The Brexit referendum was a ‘moment’ in the history of English nationalism and the vote to leave was built on particularly English issues and worldviews. Yet in the aftermath of the vote, England receded in political importance – at least that accorded to it by senior political actors as the UK Government sought to ‘take back control’ not only from the European Union, but also from the alternative and potentially competing sources of sovereignty called into salience through the referendum.

Each of these chapters is preceded by a vignette of a commemorative moment from the recent past. These vignettes are designed to highlight the way in which State-sponsored history informs public life in England, which will help to make the link between the past and present, via memory, in this account of contemporary English nationalism.

The book concludes with Chapter 9, ‘Interregnum and Restoration: Brexit as English nationalism’, arguing that the political memory of England’s constitutional development, of its imperial past and of twentieth-century warfare are the cords that unite English nationalism, Euroscepticism and the Anglosphere. If ‘1688’ established the English genius for government, which was exported by Empire and saved in ‘1940’, the lasting result of the endurance of English sovereignty was a blurring of the boundaries of political Englishness. This blurring shaped the national imagination in England in enduring ways. Contemporary resistance to European integration revived and energised this powerful national tradition in England, historically founded on the defence of British sovereignty. Like the words of ‘Land of Hope and Glory’, which express a particular idea of England without ever mentioning it, England’s nationalism should be understood as being constituted in a wide frame. It is both merged with and occluded by these wider categories of belonging. The wide boundaries of this historical imagination inclined English nationalists away from European integration and towards the Anglosphere as an affective political community. This national imaginary framed responses to major political dilemmas, which it also helped cause. English nationalism coalesced around resistance to the European Union and put the United Kingdom on a trajectory that seemingly set England’s boundaries ‘wider still and wider’ at the beginning of the twenty-first century.