

**Does Government Know Best?:  
The Challenge of European Integration and the  
Marginalisation of ‘the People’ in the British  
Political System**

Emma Vines

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**INSTITUTE FOR  
GOVERNANCE  
& POLICY ANALYSIS**

## ABSTRACT

British democracy has proved exceptionally stable and resilient; yet the price of this stability has been the marginalisation of ‘the People’ in their own democracy. This thesis explores the tenuous connection between citizens and their political system, considering this in relation to the challenge of European integration and its impact at a domestic level. Issues such as, referendums, depoliticisation, populism, anti-politics and, most broadly, the tension between popular and parliamentary sovereignty, are explored over five articles: ‘A Common Appeal: Anglo-British nationalism and opposition to Europe, 1970-1975’; ‘Populism and Sovereignty: The EU Act and the In-Out Referendum, 2010–2015’; ‘Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*: from Populism to the British Political Tradition’; ‘A Challenge to Depoliticisation? UKIP and Anti-politics’; and, ‘Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations’. Over the course of these articles, a British Political Tradition is identified. This is a Tradition based upon the belief that ‘Government knows best’; the masses are not to be empowered or trusted. Within such a system, centralised, elite control; responsible, not responsive government; and the preservation of the status quo, rather than democratic reform, are favoured. Whether such a conviction can be sustained in a time of anti-politics, however, is questionable. Pressure for reform appears to be growing as major parties face defections to minor parties and populist alternatives, such as the UK Independence Party. A shift in British politics is occurring and it seems that ‘the People’ are beginning to ask whether Government really does know best.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: POWER TO ‘THE PEOPLE’?

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In the pursuit of longevity and stability the greatest casualty in British politics has been the relationship between ‘the People’ and Parliament. ‘Responsible’, not ‘responsive’, government is the watchword for a political system built upon hierarchy, elitism and centralised power; and, when power is shared, it moves between privileged interests – from the political, to the economic, elite.<sup>1</sup> These ideational and structural constraints have formed the bedrock of British democracy, shaping a political tradition which is first and foremost concerned with the preservation of the status quo and elite control; the end result is that popular opinion and participation are marginalised. As Rousseau noted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: ‘the people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing’.<sup>2</sup> In many respects, this is still true today.

The following thesis examines the tension between popular and parliamentary sovereignty in British politics, focusing particularly on questions related to the issue of European integration and contextualising these within the ideological and structural framework of the British political system. It adopts an arena definition of politics and political participation.<sup>3</sup> It is not intended to be a normative analysis of the interaction

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘political elite’ (sometimes, the ‘political Establishment’) is used throughout this thesis to refer to those who have traditionally dominated the political system and held the majority of power. It refers especially to those

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau cited in Stanley Alderson, *Yea or nay?: referenda in the United Kingdom*, (London: Cassell, 1975) 4.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that process definitions are not important, nor that the two do not overlap. However, as this thesis is focused on the responsiveness of governments and the place of popular participation in traditional British

between popular and parliamentary sovereignty, nor of the virtues of representative versus direct democracy. Instead, it aims to offer a greater understanding of both the ways in which change occurs within the British political system and some of the current challenges that have the potential to undermine the continuation of the traditional system. Naturally, the possibility of Scottish independence has dominated many studies of the future of Britain, yet looking at developments related to European integration and its repercussions at a domestic level casts a far wider net. The latter draws in issues not only of national identity and representation, but, also, of political disillusionment and, indeed, threats to the very foundation of British democracy. At a time of great political disenchantment and with an in-out referendum on continued European Union (EU) membership to be held, understanding these issues is vital.

To date, much of the literature concerning Britain and Europe has focused on the hostility towards European integration, stemming largely from issues of identity and nationalism, which makes Britain Europe's 'awkward partner'.<sup>4</sup> This literature reaches back to the beginnings of European integration in the 1950s, when Britain was already distancing itself from an integrated Europe. More recently, there has been significant attention to the rise of populism across Europe and its links with Euroscepticism and, more generally, growing distrust of established political

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politics, an arena definition is most applicable. See for example, Paul Fawcett and David Marsh, 'Depoliticisation, governance and political participation', *Policy & Politics*, (2014): 42:2: 171-188.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Anthony D. Smith, "'Set in the silver sea": English national identity and European integration', *Nations and Nationalism*, (2006): 12:3, 433-452; David Baker, 'Britain and Europe: The Argument Continues', *Parliamentary Affairs*, (2001): 54, 276-288; Robert Dewey, *British national identity and opposition to membership of Europe, 1961-63: the anti-marketeers*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Krishan Kumar, 'Britain, England and Europe Cultures in Contraflow', *European Journal of Social Theory*, (2003): 6:1, 5-23; Ben Wellings, 'Losing the peace: Euroscepticism and the foundations of contemporary English nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, (2010): 16:3, 488-505.

systems.<sup>5</sup> This thesis draws on both these literatures. However, it seeks to move beyond, and revise, these explanations, focusing instead on what European integration tells us about the structural and ideational nature of British politics; as well as on the way in which political actors' responses to challenges connected with integration have both reinforced and, recently, potentially undermined, the British political system. It heeds Vasilopoulou's call for Euroscepticism to be analysed in a more holistic way, as more than a fringe concern or issue of party competition,<sup>6</sup> instead viewing it as deeply embedded and institutionalised.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the thesis questions whether issues related to European integration have the potential to alter, and indeed, strengthen, the place of 'the People' in their democracy. In this way, it seeks to contribute to the broad body of literature on British Euroscepticism, as well as the similarly considerable body of literature on Britain's political tradition and culture.

It should be noted at the outset that, while this thesis is concerned with *British* politics and the *British* political system, much of the focus is on England. In part, this is because the smaller nations of the Union have established a degree of political autonomy, which naturally brings with it a separate set of issues, not least of which is the growing push for independence. Devolution and separatism are issues which, although not entirely unconnected, generally dwarf the question of European integration, in Scotland in particular.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Euroscepticism, as article one

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<sup>5</sup> Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government & Opposition*, (2004): 39:4, 541-563; Paul Taggart, 'Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, (2004): 9:3, 269-288.

<sup>6</sup> Sofia Vasilopoulou, 'Continuity and Change in the Study of Euroscepticism: Plus ça change?', *JCMS*, (2013): 51:1, 153-168; See also, Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>8</sup> The connection between the two may become more important following the June referendum on EU membership should Scotland vote for continued membership but be forced out of the EU by an English majority 'no' vote.

establishes, is itself a form of Anglo-British nationalism, which seeks to defend British borders rather than divide the Union. Thus, when looking at British Euroscepticism and its impact on the British political system, it is often most effective to focus predominantly on England, the home of British Euroscepticism. While Wales shows similarly high-levels of Euroscepticism,<sup>9</sup> it is in England that it is becoming an increasingly obvious political force and it is in part because of growing support for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in England in particular that a referendum on EU membership is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016. Finally, as by far the largest nation, changes in England's political environment signal the potential for change across the Union.

This introduction considers these issues, creating a context in which the following articles, which form the core of this PhD, can be understood. As such, it provides an overview and exploration of the key themes and literature explored in the following articles: (i) the structural and ideational foundation of British politics, conceptualised as the British Political Tradition; (ii) the development of British Euroscepticism; (iii) the nature of populism and its links to Euroscepticism; and, finally (iv) the growth of anti-politics. These issues are considered in relation to the core concern of this thesis – the place of ‘the People’ in the British political system.

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<sup>9</sup> In the 2014 European Parliament elections, UKIP secured its first Welsh seat, winning 27.55% of the votes, narrowly beaten by Labour's 28.15%.

## 1. STRUCTURE

The question of how ‘the People’ are placed within their democracy is examined throughout five articles and an appendix,<sup>10</sup> with reference made to questions broadly related to European integration and their impact at a domestic level. There is, however, something of a division between the first two articles and the following three. In part, this shows an evolution and development of my own thoughts regarding the true purpose of top-down, populist offerings and apparent extensions of popular sovereignty; it also, however, reflects a recent (and ongoing) shift in British politics itself.

### **1.1 *Article One: ‘A Common Appeal: Anglo-British nationalism and opposition to Europe, 1970-1975’***

The first two articles – ‘A Common Appeal’ and ‘Populism and Sovereignty’ – both examine the tension between popular and parliamentary sovereignty through close consideration of three case studies: the 1975 referendum on continued membership to the European Economic Community (EEC); the *EU Act* (2011); and the current debates over an in-out referendum.

Article one serves as an introduction to British opposition, and English opposition in particular, to European integration, tracing one particular cause – an Anglo-British nationalism. In doing so, we begin to see some of the reasons why Britain is fundamentally opposed to the concept of a supranational European body. The article concentrates on the 1975 referendum, looking closely at the role of two prominent and divisive political figures – Labour MP, Tony Benn and Conservative MP, Enoch

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<sup>10</sup> Please note that referencing style changes in accordance to the journal the piece has been submitted to; References have been incorporated into the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

Powell – who, despite coming from opposing political backgrounds, nevertheless found themselves articulating a remarkably similar anti-Market argument.<sup>11</sup> Their opposition to European integration was based upon a belief in British parliamentary exceptionalism and a fervent view that British democracy and parliamentary sovereignty needed to be defended from external interference. An inadvertent consequence of this was that their Euroscepticism in fact exposed a form of Anglo-British nationalism based on a defence of British sovereignty.

Seeking to protect their identity and the independence of Britain they sought to mobilise popular, nationalist opposition to continued EEC membership, focusing particularly on England and demanding a referendum to ensure ‘the People’ determined how, and by whom, they were governed. What is ultimately revealed is the ideational basis for British Euroscepticism and the links between English nationalism and the defence of Britain. From here we can turn to the issue of greater importance to this thesis: the intertwining of popular and parliamentary sovereignty and the extent to which the latter can be strengthened by the former.

## **1.2 *Article Two: ‘Populism and Sovereignty: The EU Act and the In-Out Referendum, 2010–2015’***

As with article one, article two, ‘Populism and Sovereignty’, is driven by the notion that parliamentary sovereignty and popular sovereignty are linked. By examining the *EU Act* (2011), as well as current debates about an in-out referendum, article two

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<sup>11</sup> Both ‘anti-Market’ and ‘Euroscepticism’ encompass broadly the same arguments behind opposition to European integration. The term ‘anti-Market’ is used when referring to opposition to European integration prior to 1986. After this date, ‘Euroscepticism’ is used.

considers the role of Parliament in embedding a level of popular sovereignty in British politics.

The *EU Act* codified the place of referendaums on EU matters, effectively preventing further integration and, in so doing, appeared to limit parliamentary sovereignty. Although the extent to which parliamentary sovereignty is truly constrained is questioned, it is ultimately argued that, by formalising the requirement for referendaums, Parliament has fused parliamentary and popular sovereignty. The final say on European integration now, theoretically, rests with ‘the People’.

This theme is likewise explored through the ongoing debate over an in-out referendum, to be held in June. This debate, as in 1975, has, in large part, revolved around this question of representation and who has the right to decide how Britain is governed. Eurosceptic politicians have sought to portray themselves as ‘defenders of the People’, forming their arguments around a populist, nationalist defence of the nation and British democracy. As is demonstrated by these case studies, populism and popular sovereignty have become increasingly prominent in Britain’s political environment.

The extent to which this is true, however, is more critically examined in the subsequent articles. Although both articles one and two (in particular, ‘A Common Appeal’) signpost the question of whether government-sanctioned referendums, held for reasons of political expediency, rather than concern for popular opinion and participation, serve as true examples of populist, popular sovereignty, ultimately, the general conclusion is that these three cases demonstrate the institutionalisation of a

level of popular sovereignty in an otherwise insular, centralised political system. In this way, the political elite's attempts to accommodate European integration into British politics and diffuse the threat to their own control appear to actually enhance the influence of 'the People' within a political system which otherwise marginalises popular sovereignty. This interpretation is more critically considered in articles three, four and five.

### **1.3 Article Three: 'Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*: from Populism to the British Political Tradition'**

The third article, 'Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*', is a theoretically driven examination of this tension between parliamentary and popular sovereignty, looking again at the connection between English nationalism and Euroscepticism. Using the framework of the British Political Tradition (BPT), the article seeks to answer the question referred to above: if referendums depend on the whim of government and ultimately strengthen centralised power, do they reflect a genuine expression of popular sovereignty? Additionally, does the simple invocation of 'the People', alongside populist rhetoric, mean political actors are truly concerned with popular sovereignty? In both cases, the conclusion drawn is no. The power of 'the People' is far less than that described in articles one and two.

Once political actors' behaviour is contextualised within the BPT, the limitations of 'popular' sovereignty, particularly through referendums, become clearer. The article first outlines the argument that there is a dominant political tradition operating within Britain – one of elitist, centralised power and an ideational basis of 'Government knows best' – and the ways in which this tradition influences political actors and their

actions. This conceptualisation of the British political system is present throughout this thesis. From this theoretical base, the article turns to Wellings' analysis of the links between English nationalism and Euroscepticism, taking issue with his secondary argument, that this nationalist Euroscepticism is populist. It also rejects the idea that, since the 1970s, the extension of popular sovereignty through referendums has meant that, as popular sovereignty has become embedded in British politics, parliamentary sovereignty has been undermined. Employing the concept of the BPT suggests that referendums are, in fact, purely a political strategy designed to safeguard centralised power and, since they have historically been used to legitimise decisions already made and on questions where parliamentary sovereignty only stands to be strengthened, the populist dimension and extension of popular sovereignty are minimal.

'Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*' acts as something of a turning point in this thesis. In demonstrating the resistance to change and the inherent elitism in British politics, the following two articles – 'A Challenge to Depoliticisation? UKIP and Anti-politics' and 'Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations' – further explore the marginalisation of 'the People' in their political system. In this way, although the BPT is not explicitly referred to in the fourth article,<sup>12</sup> its core features – 'Government knows best' and the protection of the status quo – remain central to the conceptualisation of the British political system. The result is that both articles again show the conflict between parliamentary and popular sovereignty. However, what also becomes clear is that, over the past five years in

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<sup>12</sup> This is mostly a consequence of the limited space allowed for journal articles. As the BPT is a contested concept (a point developed in 'Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*'), it was not possible to include it in all articles, which contain their own separate theoretical considerations.

particular, there has been a shift in British politics and, more significantly, in the broader political culture.

#### **1.4 *Article Four: ‘A Challenge to Depoliticisation? UKIP and Anti-politics’***

The final two articles argue that a change is occurring in British politics. The BPT has depended upon societal acceptance that ‘Government knows best’; however, this appears to be weakening. The animosity and alienation felt by a significant section of the citizenry has become increasingly apparent and this is having noticeable effects on the political system. Because of this, the final two articles focus on identifying the nature and consequences of anti-politics.

Article four, ‘A Challenge to Depoliticisation’, considers this in relation to difficulties facing the process of depoliticisation, looking at this through a case-study of the rise of the populist, anti-establishment party, UKIP. UKIP’s populist rhetoric and anti-establishment platform have resonated with a deeply disillusioned populace and the result has been a challenge to the two-party system, as well as traditional governing strategy, in particular, the depoliticisation of the question of Europe. Externalising or downplaying the issue in order to protect party unity appears to be increasingly difficult. In addition, simply maligning UKIP and refusing to engage the Party in formal political debate became impossible as voters (and some Conservative politicians), began to see UKIP as a legitimate alternative in electoral competitions.

The traditional political order, as well as the broader political culture identified in the first three articles, appears to be breaking down in a number of important ways. While, formally, the place of ‘the People’ appears largely unchanged, anti-politics has

reached such a level that the rejection of major parties in favour of a populist alternative, UKIP, forced a reluctant Cameron to promise an in-out referendum on EU membership. External pressures and challenges to the dominance of the two major parties seem to be having an effect. The insularity of Parliament and the high-level of centralised power are facing greater opposition, placing the British political system under pressure.

### **1.5 Article Five: ‘Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations’**

Despite the significant attention anti-politics has received in recent years, it remains under-conceptualised. Article five, therefore, seeks to establish a clearer framework, focusing on four key issues: what is anti-politics; is it new; what causes anti-politics; and, what can be done? It should be noted that, in developing a conceptualisation of anti-politics, this article is less concerned with the issue of European integration, although this is not entirely absent. However, it brings together several themes explored throughout this thesis, including: the idea that citizens are disenchanted, not disengaged; the BPT; populism and popular participation; and, anti-establishment feeling, particularly in relation to UKIP. Using these issues, the article fills a noticeable gap in the existing literature, leaving normative assumptions largely to one side, and undertaking a systematic analysis of anti-politics, which looks not only at what ‘anti-politics’ is, but also, at its relationship with, and affect on, the fundamental features of the British political system. Finally, in addressing what can be done to counter anti-politics given it now appears to be an embedded part of British political life, the article focuses particularly on the need to expand our understanding of ‘the political’ to encompass new forms of participation and political engagement.

In the end, this article offers a systematic exploration of anti-politics, and, while not intended as a summary, as the final article of this thesis, it brings together many of the key themes explored throughout the previous four articles. Ultimately, article five, building on the previous article on depoliticisation and UKIP, exposes the shift occurring in British politics and the challenges facing the BPT. It seems we are witnessing a growing rejection of the idea that ‘Government knows best’, and the awakening of ‘the People’, whose dissatisfaction with ‘politics as usual’ is increasing, leading to a fragmented political system and society.

### **1.6 Appendix**

Finally, this thesis contains an appendix, comprised of a response piece,, ‘Nationalism, populism and the British political tradition’, which formed part of a round-table on English nationalism and is a follow-up to ‘Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*’. It also sits alongside article four, ‘A challenge to depoliticisation?’, looking at the growth of UKIP and what the response from the political mainstream tells us about the BPT and the nature of British politics.

The piece begins by recognising that British politics is in a state of flux, but adopts the argument put forward in articles three and four, that there remain considerable limitations when it comes to popular involvement with the British political system. It also discusses the idea that mainstream ‘populism’ has been misidentified. In this respect, the BPT remains alive and well.

Together, these articles and appendix demonstrate the impact of European integration on British politics since the 1970s. More importantly, by looking at the ways in which European integration (and the resulting Euroscepticism) has been incorporated into the political system and dealt with by the major parties, this thesis shows how the protection of centralised, elite power and the political status quo, at the expense of increased responsiveness, remains the driving goal of the political Establishment. Because of this, and in contrast to recent analyses,<sup>13</sup> it is shown that mainstream Euroscepticism has not been ‘populist’ and the place of ‘the People’ within their system has, until recently at least, remained peripheral. As the final articles, along with the conclusion, note, however, popular demands for change appear to be growing and the political elite may be forced to respond if challenges to their power are to be diffused and the tradition of strong, centralised control maintained.

## **2. A NOTE ON METHOD: CONCEPTUALISING CHANGE**

A key concern of this thesis is the way in which the British political system, and those acting within it, have responded to, and accommodated, the challenge of European integration. This requires an understanding of stability and change and, while an in-depth theoretical discussion of this well-explored, yet still contentious,<sup>14</sup> topic is

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<sup>13</sup> Ben Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: Losing the Peace*, (London: Peter Lang, 2012); Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>14</sup> See for example, David Marsh, ‘Stability and change: the last dualism?’, *Critical Policy Studies*, (2010): 4:1, 86-101; Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *Governance Stories*, (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Stephen R. Bates and Nicola J. Smith, ‘Understanding change in political science: on the need to bring space into theoretical positions and empirical analyses’, *Political studies review*, (2008): 6, 191–204; Colin Hay, *Re-stating social and political change*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996); Colin Hay, ‘Crisis and the structural transformation of the state: interrogating the process of change’. *British journal of politics and international relations*, (1999): 1:3, 317–344.

outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to outline the broad approach adopted here.

In this thesis, political actors' behaviour and responses to potential change are considered within the institutional and ideational context in which they exist. Thus, the conceptualisation of stability and change used here falls broadly within a historical institutionalist position. Emphasis is on developing historical narratives and accounting for stability and change through reference to the influence of material and ideational factors on institutions and, in turn, how these institutions constrain individuals operating within them. There is a path dependency inherent here, however, it is important to note that this differs greatly from path *determinacy* – with the former recognising that individuals retain significant autonomy and independence. Change occurs as a result of individuals' actions, however, these actions reflect the context in which actors operate.

This understanding of change is an integral part of the BPT. Article three discusses this in some detail, comparing the idea of a dominant tradition – the argument adopted throughout this thesis – with Bevir and Rhodes' popular, anti-foundationalist approach, which emphasises individuals' autonomy and ability to choose between various traditions.<sup>15</sup> As is argued in article three, Bevir and Rhodes' approach favours change over stability, seeing largely autonomous actors' responses to problems, or, 'dilemmas', as the driving force behind change. The result is a weak explanation of stability. Stability and change, like agency and structure, are not discrete forces,

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<sup>15</sup> Bevir and Rhodes, *Governance Stories*; Bevir and Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*.

instead operating dialectically, each influencing the other.<sup>16</sup> When politicians respond to challenges, therefore, they are doing so within a specific context. In Britain, this context is a political system which carries particular notions of stability and change – most importantly, it is based on the idea that stability is to be favoured and change resisted. This reality reflects the historical development of the political system, and it is to this that we now turn.

### **3. THE STRUCTURAL AND IDEATIONAL FOUNDATION OF BRITISH POLITICS**

As discussed above, political actors' responses to potential challenges or perceived threats to the status quo are shaped by both the structural and the ideational foundation of the system in which they operate. To understand either stability or change, therefore, it is necessary to have a clear conceptualisation of the nature of British politics and the way in which the system has evolved.

This section traces the historical development of the British political system, exposing its elitist nature.<sup>17</sup> It demonstrates how, over time, ideational, material and structural constraints have coalesced, forming a dominant political tradition, which is both resilient and elitist, and results in gradual, and often reluctant, change. The effect of this on European integration is considered. Ultimately, as is further developed throughout the following articles, the structural and ideational basis of this system constrains the sharing of power and the influence of 'the People'. Rather than responsive government, therefore, power is primarily the preserve of the political and economic elite, with 'the People' relegated to the sidelines of their democracy.

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<sup>16</sup> Marsh, 'Stability and change'.

<sup>17</sup> See also, article three.

### ***3.1 Resilience and insularity***

Britain's political system has proven to be one of the world's most enduring and resilient, favouring gradual evolution and adaptation over the radical shifts and revolutions seen in other European democracies. The Crown-in-Parliament system, established in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, persists, having accommodated challenges, including: the formation of the Union; the expansion of the franchise; the growth of the labour movement; post-imperialism; European integration; and devolution. While these pressures have left their marks, they have, for the most, been incorporated into the traditional political structure and culture, allowing change within continuity.

Such stability sets British democracy apart, both in its operation and its place in the national consciousness. Longevity and continuity have become synonymous with strength and value. For many, British democracy is held to be exceptional, elevated as a source of national pride and a means by which Britain can be distinguished from other countries, where political systems have, in the past, undergone numerous revisions, often within the context of war and domestic conflict. By its endurance, Britain's political system and its symbol – Westminster – have become part of the British identity, providing a common focal-point for a multi-national State in which strong national identities persist beneath the broader Union framework.<sup>18</sup> It has also, as article one discusses, come to underpin an Anglo-British nationalism which is, contrary to those who view it as 'absent',<sup>19</sup> an established political force, albeit one

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<sup>18</sup> See for example, Linda Colley, *Briton: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University press, 2005); Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (Norfolk: Lowe and Brudone printers, 1977); Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Aughey, "Anxiety and injustice: the anatomy of contemporary English nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 16, 3, (2010), pp.506-524.

which continues to defend *British* borders, *British* sovereignty and the *British* Political Tradition.

The other side of this resilience and longevity, however, is the reality that British democracy has not undergone the same level of modernisation seen in newer European democracies. While it may be somewhat unfair to consider British democracy fully ‘pre-modern’,<sup>20</sup> Tom Nairn’s pejorative label does reflect one of the key differences of the British system – the place of ‘the People’ and their rights in relation to government. In contrast to democracies born from revolutions led by ‘the People’, the roots of British democracy lie in the restoration of an elitist, hierarchical system (the *ancien régime*).<sup>21</sup> The Glorious Revolution curtailed the power of the monarch in relation to Parliament; however, it did little to empower the wider citizenry. Even as the franchise expanded, popular sovereignty remained marginalised, with Parliament, and those within it, firmly established as the ultimate authority.

### **3.2 ‘Government knows best’: the *British Political Tradition***

This ideological and structural foundation of British politics forms the British Political Tradition – a concept used throughout this thesis, particularly articles three and five. The idea of ‘political traditions’ allows us to better understand the nature and causes of political change. It remains, however, a contested term.<sup>22</sup> Hall identifies two broad approaches in the literature related to a British political tradition: the

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<sup>20</sup> Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See for an extended discussion, Matthew Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

‘classical approach’,<sup>23</sup> and the ‘critical approach’.<sup>24</sup> Alongside these is a third approach, discussed in detail in article three, which takes a constructionist view, and sees change as continuous and political actors as highly autonomous.<sup>25</sup> This thesis falls within the ‘critical approach’. The importance of the BPT in this work is that, because it influences both the ideological and structural constraints upon political actors, when they are faced with challenges, such as European integration, we would expect them to behave in certain ways and with particular goals – specifically, the continuance of the status quo and protection of elite power at the expense of responsive government.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to note at the outset, however, that, while the BPT is, in this thesis, considered the dominant Tradition, it is not the only one.<sup>27</sup> Further, while the Tradition plays a crucial role in shaping political actors’ decisions, it does not determine them – as already emphasised, it is a matter of path *dependency* as opposed to path *determinacy*. Hall helpfully summarises this position:

Political traditions help to shape institutions and practices, whilst these institutions and practices provide the context within which both dominant and competing traditions operate and develop over time.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See for example, A.H. Birch, *Representative and Responsible Government: An Essay on the British Constitution*, (London: G. Allan & Unwin, 1964); Samuel Beer, *Modern British Politics: A Study of Parties and Pressure Groups*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition, Vol. 1: The Rise of Collectivism*, (London: Methuen, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> See for example, A. P. Tant, *British Government: The Triumph of Elitism*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1993); David Marsh and Matthew Hall, ‘The British political tradition: Explaining the fate of New Labour’s constitutional reform agenda’, *British Politics*, (2007): 2:2, 215-238; David Marsh, David Richards and Martin J Smith, *Changing Patterns of Governance in the United Kingdom: Reinventing Whitehall?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*; David Richards and Martin J. Smith, ‘In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition’, *The Political Quarterly*, (2015): 86:1, 41-51.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Bevir and Rhodes, *Governance Stories*; Bevir and Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*.

<sup>26</sup> See also, appendix.

<sup>27</sup> See for example, Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*; Bevir and Rhodes, *Governance Stories*.

<sup>28</sup> Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*, 43

The nature of the BPT and competing ideas related to traditions are explored at length in article three. However, it is useful here to give a brief outline of the concept.

As discussed above, the political system in Britain has long-favoured parliamentary over participatory democracy, and centralised, elite power, rather than government responsive to popular opinion. As Marsh and Hall argue: ‘the British political system is based on a conservative notion of responsibility (which owes much to Hobbes and especially Burke) and a limited notion of representation’.<sup>29</sup> The advantages for those within the political arena are clear. Power becomes centralised and structural inequality is perpetuated as governments follow their own agenda, perhaps influenced by powerful external societal and business interests, but with far less concern for popular opinion.<sup>30</sup>

While the benefit for the political, economic and social elites is clear,<sup>31</sup> this system of insular government only survives because of societal complicity. The idea that ‘Government knows best’ extends well-beyond Westminster, underpinning the broader political culture.<sup>32</sup> Demands for greater participatory democracy have been infrequent and, with the exception of devolution to the Celtic nations (itself arguably

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<sup>29</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition’, 223.

<sup>30</sup> Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> The material effects of the BPT are discussed below.

<sup>32</sup> See for example, Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*; David Marsh and Matthew Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition and the Material-Ideational Debate’, *BJPIR*, (July 2015): doi: 1111/1467-856X.12077; Beer, *Modern British politics*.

a project designed to protect centralised power),<sup>33</sup> Westminster's control remains largely intact.<sup>34</sup>

As noted above, the BPT does not preclude or determine change, but rather, conditions it. Given the nature of the BPT, therefore, we would expect to see the protection of the status quo and strong government as political actors' primary goal. Protecting 'the People's' relationship with their government – although frequently raised by Eurosceptics as a justification for withdrawal or significant reform of the EU – will be a secondary concern.

When it comes to European integration since the 1970s, this has most certainly been the case as party leaders' responses to European integration have consistently prioritised the protection of key elements of the BPT. A strong party system is vital to stable, responsible government,<sup>35</sup> and, as articles three and four in particular show, attempts to depoliticise and externalise the European question, either by downplaying the issue or shifting responsibility through referendum promises, have been designed to protect party unity. Further, in addition to related economic and immigration concerns, Euroscepticism itself is largely driven by the desire to protect parliamentary sovereignty and centralised power, in what is frequently nationalist (as argued in article one), although not necessarily populist, discourse (as discussed in articles one

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland*, (London: Granta Books, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> The success of the devolution project, however, is now increasingly uncertain, having failed to prevent a referendum on Scottish independence and, now, with the potential for a second independence referendum should Britain withdraw from the EU against Scotland's wishes. Additionally, it is worth noting that the Scottish political system deliberately deviated from the BPT to encourage a more participatory, social democratic politics, see, Marsh and Hall, 'The British Political Tradition', 231.

<sup>35</sup> Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*; Beer, *Modern British Politics*; Birch, *Representative and Responsible Government*.

and three). It is because of this, that the idea of ‘populist Euroscepticism’, discussed below, needs to be closely questioned. Before moving onto this issue, however, there is one more aspect of the BPT that is worthy of consideration for its significant role in fueling the continuation of such elitism – the perpetuation of structured inequalities.

### ***3.3 Power for the privileged***

In a profoundly elitist system, deep-seated material inequalities thrive, as the political and socio-economic elites become closely intertwined.<sup>36</sup> Marsh and Hall examine the relationship between material inequalities and the BPT, beginning from the view that: ‘UK society is characterised by structured inequality; that is inequality based on unequal access to economic, social and cultural resources’.<sup>37</sup> This, in turn, ‘gives [the elites] privileged access to political capital’.<sup>38</sup> Social mobility is limited and power, even when shared, is reserved for political, societal and economic elites.

Beginning with the question of political actors’ own privileged position, looking solely at the educational background of MPs – often a reliable indicator of general socio-economic status and social mobility – we see a significant gap between politicians and the general public. Looking at the composition of Parliament after the 2015 election, research from the Sutton Trust shows that 33% of MPs were privately educated (although this was a decrease from 37% in 2010), as opposed to only 7% of the general public. In terms of university education, 26% are Oxbridge graduates,

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<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that this is not exclusive to Britain. Most Western democracies face this problem. However, for the purposes of this thesis, in Britain, this is a particular problem as it further distances citizens from their political system, increasing socio-economic inequality, and contributing to the intensification of anti-politics; see for example, Owen Jones, *The Establishment, And how they get away with it*, (London: Penguin Books, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition and the Material-Ideational Debate’, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

compared to 1% of the general public.<sup>39</sup> Finally, when it comes to the Cabinet, the discrepancy only increases – 49% were privately educated and 50% graduated from Oxbridge.<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that this division is not new. Further, when it comes to education, the number of MPs who are privately educated and Oxbridge graduates has in fact declined over the past three decades.<sup>41</sup> Despite this fall, however, the correlation between educational privilege and political power remains clear.

Given the socio-economic advantage of political actors, the next question to consider is the extent to which this privilege affects the operation of the political system and, relatedly, the power of the economic elite. In their study of material inequalities and political capital, one example considered by Marsh and Hall is the use of governance networks.<sup>42</sup> As article three of this thesis discusses, governance, as opposed to government, is now the norm, as responsibilities need to be shared to ensure efficient government. However, rather than ‘hollowing out’ the State,<sup>43</sup> governance networks are coordinated in such a way that the central actor – most often, the State – frequently retains significant influence through the ‘steering capacity’ that belongs to ‘metagovernors’.<sup>44</sup> Hierarchy thus remains a powerful factor and, in cases where the State does delegate, this is generally to ‘experts’ drawn from the economic elite.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For data see, Sutton Trust, May 10 2015, ‘Parliamentary Privilege – The MPs 2015’, available at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/parliamentary-privilege-the-mps-2015/> accessed: 28 October 2015.

<sup>40</sup> For data see, Sutton Trust, May 11 2015, ‘Half of new cabinet was privately educated’, available at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/half-of-new-cabinet-was-privately-educated/> accessed 28 October 2015.

<sup>41</sup> For data see, Sutton Trust, May 10 2015, ‘Parliamentary Privilege – The MPs 2015’.

<sup>42</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition and the Material-Ideational Debate’.

<sup>43</sup> See for example, R.A.W. Rhodes, ‘The Hollowing Out of the State: The Changing Nature of the Public Service in Britain’, *The Political Quarterly*, (1994): 65:2, 138-151; Chris Skelcher, ‘Changing images of the state: overloaded, hollowed-out, congested’, *Public Policy and Administration*, (2000): 15:3, 3-19.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Bell and Andrew Hindmoor, *Rethinking Governance: The Centrality of the State in modern Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition and the Material-Ideational Debate’.

Power, therefore, does not move downwards, but instead, horizontally, from one elite to another, and the BPT continues largely unchallenged despite the extension of governance.

In a political system in which popular sovereignty is already marginalised, this monopolisation of power by the political elite and powerful economic interests simply reinforces the appearance of a system which does not serve ‘the People’ – particularly, as is currently the case, in times of economic hardship and the exposure of a series of scandals involving the political, social and economic elites.<sup>46</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that those in the lowest socio-economic group are also the most politically disaffected and least likely to vote.<sup>47</sup> As a 2013 *Institute of Public Policy Research* Report revealed, over the last two decades there has been a significant increase in the gap between the highest and lowest income groups when it comes to voter turnout. While in 1987 there was a 4-point difference, by 2010, this had climbed to 22.7.<sup>48</sup> This gap, as article five discusses, contributes to the perpetuation of the BPT as those who would challenge it lose their voice. Further, it fuels anti-politics and anti-establishment resentment, the subject of articles four and five.

This disparity in voter turnout not only undermines the efficacy and fairness of the political system, but is also incredibly damaging to socio-economic equality. Using the Coalition’s 2010 spending review, Birch, Gottfried and Lodge find evidence of a

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<sup>46</sup> These scandals include: the drawn-out MPs’ Expenses Scandal; the ‘Banking Crisis’; the News of the World phone-hacking scandal; and the release of the Panama Papers.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Birch, Glenn Gottfried and Guy Lodge, ‘Divided Democracy: Political Inequality in the UK and Why it Matters’, *IPPR Report*, (November 2013).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

‘political inequality effect’<sup>49</sup> – something which, as article five addresses, is often ignored by much of the existing anti-politics literature. While both voters and non-voters were affected by spending cuts, the difference between the two groups was dramatic. The average net change to voters’ household incomes was -11.56%, compared to -20% for non-voters. Further, when looking at the difference in terms of income groups, the gap is particularly alarming. Those with an average annual household income of less than £10,000 faced a cut of 40.89%, significantly more than the next income group, £10,000-19,999, which lost 8.13%. Inevitably, the group least affected by the cuts were those on £60,000+, who lost only 2.67%.<sup>50</sup> As is developed throughout this thesis, it is perhaps little wonder that within a climate of such inequality, disaffection and anger grow among significant sections of the public, feeding a culture of anti-politics.

This inequality is unsurprising when we reflect on the very nature of the British political system. As Marsh and Hall argue: ‘a political tradition that espouses an elitist view of democracy allows the political elite to develop policies that privilege the interests of the socio-economic elite’.<sup>51</sup> This bias causes such profound damage to citizens’ confidence and trust in their political system that Birch et al. contend: ‘it might be argued that it is the rise of political inequality that represents the real “crisis” of British democracy, and that low levels of public trust in politicians and participation are merely symptoms of this wider malaise’.<sup>52</sup> This is an issue that is subsequently discussed, and some potential ways in which it may be remedied are considered in article five and returned to in the conclusion. First, however, we

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Figures taken from Birch, Gottfried and Lodge, ‘Divided Democracy’, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition and the Material-Ideational Debate’, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Birch, Gottfried and Lodge, ‘Divided Democracy’, 4.

consider how the nature of British politics and this issue of political inequality and popular disenchantment are highlighted by the issue of European integration.

#### **4. AN AWKWARD FIT: BRITAIN IN EUROPE**

This thesis revolves around issues related to Britain's participation in European integration. This section consequently gives an overview of this involvement, with a focus on the strengthening Euroscepticism that has gone hand-in-hand with deepening integration,<sup>53</sup> as well as a growing English national consciousness. The reasons behind this Euroscepticism – in particular, the protection of elite, centralised control – are discussed, demonstrating how they further expose the BPT and the limited power held by 'the People'.

Given the fierce protection of elite power and centralised control that dominates the British political system and the BPT, European integration was never likely to be enthusiastically embraced. Since the beginnings of European integration in the 1950s, Britain has thus positioned itself as Europe's 'awkward partner', proving a reluctant participant in the integration process. Despite committed Europeans occasionally occupying Number 10, overall, most Prime Ministers have approached integration with caution in the face of their own scepticism and that within Parliament and their

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<sup>53</sup> While this thesis focuses on British Euroscepticism, it should be noted that opposition to European integration is present across the EU. Even before the current hostility to the EU, driven in large part by austerity packages, made itself known through the rise of Eurosceptic parties, referendums in Denmark and France on the *Draft Constitution* demonstrated popular opposition to integration with the 'no' vote derailing plans for a codified European Constitution. While a substantially similar document was passed as the *Treaty of Lisbon*, the smooth passage of the Treaty was again prevented by an Irish 'no' vote, which was subsequently overturned at a second referendum. British Euroscepticism is, therefore, not exceptional. It has, however, as this thesis explores, manifested slightly differently, in part because of the unwillingness of governments to allow citizens a say on the direction of integration.

parties. Even those more sympathetic to integration, such as Prime Ministers Edward Heath and Tony Blair, frequently found their attempts to increase Britain's role in Europe frustrated by divisions within their own parties, as well as popular opposition and media pressure.

The reasons for Britain's hostility towards European integration are well documented.<sup>54</sup> Its separation from the Continent by geography, history and political tradition combine to form the opinion, as Churchill famously proclaimed, that Britain is 'with Europe, but not of it'.<sup>55</sup> Further, as discussed in article one, it has become a form of Anglo-British nationalism – an outlet for an identity which has, for the sake of the Union, been suppressed and denied clear national definition.<sup>56</sup> A multi-national state such as Britain, where one nation dwarfs all others in terms of both population and representation in Parliament,<sup>57</sup> requires the majority nation to show 'hubris',<sup>58</sup> or, in Nairn's word, become 'occluded'.<sup>59</sup> English nationalism, therefore, has been feared, despite, as this thesis explores, being a phenomena that potentially *strengthens*, rather than undermines, the Union and British borders. As argued, Euroscepticism has become a surrogate for English nationalism, with the Union it opposes starting across the Channel and not within Britain's own borders.<sup>60</sup> This link between identity, nationalism and Euroscepticism has, as articles one and three show,

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<sup>54</sup> See for example, Smith, "'Set in the silver sea'"; Baker, 'Britain and Europe'; Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*; Kumar, 'Britain, England and Europe Cultures in Contraflow'; Wellings, 'Losing the peace'.

<sup>55</sup> Winston Churchill cited in Andrew Geddes, *The European Union and British Politics*, (New York, 2004), p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> See for example, Kumar, *The Making of English Identity*; and Wellings, 'Losing the peace'; For a detailed discussion of the connection between English nationalism and Euroscepticism see article three.

<sup>57</sup> It should be noted, however that England is now the only British nation without its own national representation, with the 'West Lothian' question remaining unresolved despite years of discussion.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Resnick, 'Hubris and melancholy in multinational states', *Nations and Nationalism*, (2008): 14:4, pp. 789-807.

<sup>59</sup> Nairn, *After Britain*.

<sup>60</sup> See in particular, Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*.

been present since the beginnings of European integration and played a part in Britain's early reticence towards membership of the EEC.

Economic realities may since have made membership a necessity, yet Churchill's view continues to inform governments' general approach towards Europe. In today's context, with economic instability threatening the Eurozone and a widespread climate of popular disenchantment with politicians and political processes, opposition to European integration has only increased. As outlined in article two, Cameron is now, like Wilson in 1975, faced with having to renegotiate British membership before putting the decision of continued involvement to the public. However, as the fourth article of this thesis argues, unlike in 1975, the in-out referendum scheduled for 2016 may prove a far greater gamble for a government currently committed to continued membership. The reasons for this are discussed later, initially, however, there is an overview of Britain's participation in Europe and the parallel development of Euroscepticism.<sup>61</sup>

#### ***4.1 An inauspicious start***

By the 1960s, it was becoming increasingly clear to both Labour and the Conservatives that Britain's economic future was best secured by participation in Europe. The Commonwealth was no longer as strong as it had been and Britain itself was failing to match the post-war economic development occurring on parts of the Continent. After 1960, the answer to this post-war decline was believed to lie in European integration. Following two failed bids for membership during the 1960s, Heath eventually took Britain into the EEC in 1973. That decision, however, followed

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<sup>61</sup> For a general overview of the development of European integration from the European Coal and Steel Community to the European Union see article one of this thesis.

him for the rest of his Premiership, exposing divisions within the Conservative Party and allowing Labour to attack the Government for its failure to secure popular approval for a decision that fundamentally changed the way in which Britain was governed and was contrary to the nation's history and, as article one discusses, identity. When Labour returned to power it was committed to renegotiating the terms of British membership, as well as a referendum meant to secure 'the People's' 'full-hearted consent',<sup>62</sup> the subject of article one. From the beginnings of Britain's involvement in Europe, therefore, anti-Market sentiment overshadowed Britain's participation and, despite minimal public interest, was a powerful force within Parliament and a dangerous disruption to party unity.

One cause of opposition to European integration has already been outlined – the commitment to centralised power characteristic of the BPT. A second, not unrelated, reason is the domestic political confusion of the time. As Gifford explains, early British resistance to European integration developed out of post-imperial decline and the resulting need for national redefinition as Britain's place in the global order was being rewritten, along with the role of the Commonwealth.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, at the same time that Britain was becoming part of the European Project: 'Euro-sceptic Britain was being configured in the context of a crisis of political economy and of national identity, and the political struggles that emerged out of this'.<sup>64</sup> At a time when 'Britain' was being redefined, 'Europe' became a convenient 'other', particularly for the dominant nation of the Union.

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<sup>62</sup> David Butler and Uwe W. Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1976).

<sup>63</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Euro-sceptic Britain*.

<sup>64</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Euro-sceptic Britain*, 29; see also, Alex Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, *Opposing Europe: Vol 2. The Comparative Party Politics of Euro-scepticism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

This view became more powerful as it became clear that the basis for European integration did not fit with the dominant narrative of British history, or the related political tradition. As Wellings argues, European integration was being driven by the conviction that nationalism was dangerous and that an integrated Europe was the best means to overcome it and avoid another Continental war.<sup>65</sup> While this may have been a powerful motivator for the governments pushing for the creation of a European community, in particular France and Germany, for Britain the war represented the nation's 'finest hour' and the strength of the British people and the integrity of national institutions.<sup>66</sup> Further, it became increasingly evident that integration conflicted with a developing sense of Anglo-British nationalism, which only grew stronger as European integration proceeded. The founding myth of Europe, therefore, failed to resonate across the Channel and, instead, the perception began to grow that European integration was a threat to the British way of life.

In addition to this disconnect between British and European interests, there was a more fundamental difference over the role of national institutions. As discussed above, in Britain, political institutions play a central role in the national imagination, in England in particular, and crucial to this is the longevity and inviolability of parliamentary sovereignty. Thus, as article one discusses, integration into supranational institutions threatens both Britain's independence and identity, a fear which is particularly powerful in England given an Anglo-British identity is closely tied to the sovereignty and independence of Britain.<sup>67</sup> European integration is consequently an anathema to the ideational foundation of British democracy and the

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<sup>65</sup> Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

challenge facing British political leaders since the beginning of British EEC membership has been how to incorporate a necessary level of European integration and interference within the overarching structures of the British political system.

#### ***4.2 Embedded Euroscepticism***

Euroscepticism clearly has a well-established place in British politics, so much so that, according to both Gifford and Vasilopoulou, it needs to be considered as an institutionalised feature of the political system and not simply a complication of party competition or policy contestation.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, Euroscepticism needs to be viewed as:

Integral to the trajectory of the British political order; an embedded and institutionalised facet of its contemporary history. This not only means a persistent opposition to the idea of an integrated European political and economic order but a deeper and more fundamental reproduction of Britain and Britishness in opposition to the integrationist project. In a context of global change and domestic political crisis, Eurosceptic Britain emerges as an essentialist articulation of distinct and exceptional interests and identities.<sup>69</sup>

Understanding Eurosceptic Britain in this way moves the analysis beyond the now problematic hard/soft division established by Szczerbiak and Taggart.<sup>70</sup> Although still influential, as Mudde and Gifford both point out, the hard/soft division has lost much of its usefulness given how widespread ‘soft’ Euroscepticism has become.<sup>71</sup> Further, Szczerbiak and Taggart’s model was, as they themselves acknowledged, always problematic when it came to Britain, where ‘hard’ Euroscepticism is found in the political mainstream, rather than solely on the political fringes.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*, 5, 130; Vasilopoulou, ‘Continuity and Change in the Study of Euroscepticism’.

<sup>69</sup> Gifford, 171.

<sup>70</sup> Szczerbiak and Taggart, *Opposing Europe*.

<sup>71</sup> Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’; Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>72</sup> Szczerbiak and Taggart, *Opposing Europe*, 21.

Since European integration fits so uneasily with both the structural and ideational basis of British democracy, Euroscepticism is, as Gifford demonstrates, deeply embedded within mainstream British politics and centrist parties;<sup>73</sup> this has both complicated and highlighted some of the defining features of the British political system. Embedded Euroscepticism can be explained in part by Britain's electoral system, which deters coalitions and independents and thus brings Eurosceptics into mainstream parties.<sup>74</sup> For countries with proportional representation, as opposed to the British first-past-the-post system, coalitions are more common. This provides politicians with governing ambitions a greater choice of parties. Unlike in Britain, therefore, anti-integrationists may join parties whose platforms are more sympathetic to their own beliefs without sacrificing their electoral chances.<sup>75</sup> It has been only recently, with the rise of UKIP, that political actors with strong Eurosceptic tendencies have changed party allegiance and still secured their parliamentary seat – although, as the May 2015 election showed, the first-past-the-post system again hugely disadvantaged minor parties, leading UKIP to win only one seat, despite having a large popular vote.<sup>76</sup>

A more notable consequence of mainstream Euroscepticism is that party leaders are confronted with internal party divisions. As Wallace notes: 'the key arguments about Europe became focal points for controversies *within* rather than *between* political

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<sup>73</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>74</sup> Mark Aspinwall, 'Structuring Europe: Powersharing Institutions and British Preferences on European Integration', *Political Studies*, (2000): 48, 415-442.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 431-433.

<sup>76</sup> The outcome of the 2015 General Election is returned to below, as well as in article four and the conclusion.

families'.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, regardless of their own beliefs, leaders' responses to Eurosceptic arguments have been, first and foremost, concerned with protecting party unity by treading the middle ground. In his study of the effects of powersharing arrangements and European policy direction, Aspinwall demonstrates that, despite methods of party management, such as party responsibility and the use of the Whips, in a first-past-the-post two-party system, backbenchers can have a greater influence and, consequently:

The government (and Cabinet) must take account of this anti-integration opinion. The result is that *powersharing occurs within the ruling party, and on questions of European policy the centre of balance falls between the pro-integration centre and the anti-integration end of the spectrum.*<sup>78</sup>

Cameron found this out the hard way, with his first loss in the Commons being the result of a backbench rebellion over the EU budget

The important point here is that, when it comes to European integration, party management dominates the decision-making process, particularly as the belief in strong parties is ingrained in the political system and, consequently, into political actors' own ideational understanding of British politics. As is shown throughout this thesis, this means that apparent displays of popular sovereignty are, in fact, simply a protection of elite power, party unity, and responsible government, through the depoliticisation of a tricky issue. They are, therefore, entirely in keeping with a tradition of insular, centralised power, secured in large part by a strong two-party system, underpinned by a non-proportional electoral system. This view is a significant deviation from both Gifford and Wellings' analyses<sup>79</sup> and instead demonstrates the strength of the BPT and its ability to overcome challenges such as European

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<sup>77</sup> Helen Wallace, 'At Odds with Europe', *Political Studies*, (1997): 65, 677-688, 677 [emphasis in original].

<sup>78</sup> Aspinwall, 'Structuring Europe', 431 [emphasis in original].

<sup>79</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*; Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*

integration. While the embedded nature of Euroscepticism may be clear, what is less obvious is the extent to which this Euroscepticism is populist. Answering this question is a key concern of this PhD and first requires an explanation of how ‘populism’ is understood in this thesis.

## 5. POPULISM, NATIONALISM OR EUROSCEPTICISM?

A central concern of this thesis is whether European integration has caused a shift towards populist politics in Britain. Recent studies of Euroscepticism have emphasised its populist nature.<sup>80</sup> This thesis, however, is more cautious in attributing populist intent to British politicians. Much of this argument turns on the definition and interpretation of populism. This section, therefore, develops the approach to populism that is adopted here. It revolves largely around Cas Mudde’s highly influential discussion of populism in Europe,<sup>81</sup> supporting this analysis with Paul Taggart’s similarly important exploration.<sup>82</sup> What emerges from the discussion is the idea that populism *must* go beyond nationalism or rhetoric, and instead encompass a spirit of reform which strives to renegotiate the relationship between ‘the People’ and the elite. As argued here, this means that Eurosceptics’ discourse of ‘us and them’ is far closer to nationalism than populism.

With the British political system constraining the sharing of power and protecting elitism, populism among the political mainstream is likely to prove shallow and, when

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<sup>80</sup> See in particular, Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*; Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*; Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’; Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’.

<sup>81</sup> Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’.

<sup>82</sup> Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’.

it comes to opposition to integration, Euroscepticism from within Parliament has been first and foremost concerned, not with empowering or protecting ‘the People’, but, instead, with safeguarding Westminster’s own privileged position. Attributing populist intent to mainstream political actors, therefore, seems generous.

### **5.1 *Not just ‘us and them’: beyond populist rhetoric***

There remains significant ambiguity surrounding what is meant by ‘populism’. This is in part because comparisons of populist movements often throw up as many differences as similarities. A key problem is that populism, in Mudde’s terms, is a ‘thin-centred ideology’,<sup>83</sup> frequently found alongside other, more conceptually concrete phenomena, in particular, nationalism. Taggart explains:

Populists have been revolutionary, reactionary, left wing, right wing, authoritarian and libertarian. This is not indicative of the emptiness of populism as a concept but it does reveal the empty heart of populism that gives it both weakness and potential ubiquity.<sup>84</sup>

In existing alongside alternative, and often more easily identifiable movements or ideologies, populism gets lost. One danger here is that the epithet ‘populist’ can be attributed to any political activity or movement seemingly addressed to, or invoking, ‘the People’. As such, actors’ true motives may be obscured. This concern dominates a number of articles in this thesis, in particular, articles three, four and five.

In discussing the relationship between populism and anti-politics, article five notes that, while there is still significant debate over the definition of ‘populism’,<sup>85</sup> the mid-

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<sup>83</sup> Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’.

<sup>84</sup> Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’, 275.

<sup>85</sup> See for an extended discussion, Paul Taggart, *Populism*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000); Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, (eds.), *Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Margaret Canovan, ‘Populism for political theorists?’.

2000s saw a renewed attempt to bring conceptual clarity. This was in response to the notable growth of populism across Europe and its increasing presence in mainstream politics, as parties such as Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* gained power. It is in discussing this period that Mudde identifies the birth of a 'populist *Zeitgeist*'.<sup>86</sup> Mudde is concerned not only with defining populism, but also demystifying it and refuting the widespread normative assumption that populism is a corruption of democracy.<sup>87</sup> In doing this, he concludes that populism is:

An ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volanté générale* (general will) of the people.<sup>88</sup>

There is an apparent simplicity and clarity in this definition, which makes it a useful starting point. What is most useful in Mudde's work, however, is that, in seeking to establish what populism is, he initially focuses on what it is not.

Prior to presenting his own definition, Mudde identifies two dominant (mis)understandings of populism, which lead to occasions of demagoguery and opportunism being labelled 'populism'.<sup>89</sup> The first misunderstanding refers to instances of 'highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the "gut feelings" of the people'. The second misunderstanding manifests itself through 'opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the People/voters – and so "buying" their support'.<sup>90</sup> Mudde's distinction between demagoguery, opportunism and

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*Journal of Political Ideologies*, (2004): 9:3, 241-252; Robert R. Barr, 'Populist, Outsider and Anti-establishment Politics', *Party Politics*, (2009): 15:1, 29-48.

<sup>86</sup> Mudde, 'The Populist *Zeitgeist*'.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 543.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 542.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

populism helps significantly when attempting to identify ‘genuine’ populism, something which, as article five demonstrates, is also important when seeking to more fully understand anti-politics.

It is a shame, therefore, that this distinction seems to become clouded as Mudde moves away from populism at the fringes of politics and onto the issue of populism within the political centre.<sup>91</sup> Mudde notes the elite strategy of adopting ‘populist themes and rhetoric’<sup>92</sup> to counter external populist threats. However, there is confusion surrounding why such strategic adoption of populist rhetoric, without the underlying spirit of reform, is ‘populism’ and not ‘opportunism’. Mudde does distinguish between ‘explicitly populist’ groups and those within the Establishment who are simply using populist discourse in response to pressure from an external populist movement.<sup>93</sup> However, given the objective of the latter is to consolidate the Establishment’s own position, why is this ‘populism’ and not ‘opportunism’?

For Mudde, Blair’s New Labour was an example of centrist populism, as the Party sought to downplay social divisions and appeal to a single ‘people’.<sup>94</sup> However, far from having ‘voiced some of the most *pure* examples of contemporary populism’,<sup>95</sup> Blair instead seems like an excellent example of a politician who adopted an opportunistic, ‘populist *style*, rather than populist *politics*’.<sup>96</sup> Despite the Party’s rhetoric of reform, the period of New Labour saw fierce protection of centralised

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 563.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 551.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 551 [emphasis added].

<sup>96</sup> Catherine Fieschi and Paul Haywood, ‘Trust, cynicism and populist anti-politics’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, (2004): 9:3, 289-309, 302 [emphasis added].

power, despite devolution,<sup>97</sup> and a failure to fully implement its constitutional reform agenda, which would have seen greater reform of the House of Lords, as well as changes to the electoral system. Populist rhetoric cannot be enough to distinguish something as ‘populist’. Rather, there needs to be a more genuine conviction that politics should, as Mudde’s own definition makes clear, better reflect and serve the wishes of ‘the People’.

Better representation, at its core, means not being governed by an ‘alien’ or out-of-touch elite. While this can mean an extension of popular sovereignty and participatory democracy, this is not always the case. It is a question of *better* democracy, not necessarily *more* democracy.<sup>98</sup> Here again, British mainstream ‘populism’ runs into trouble – a consistent theme developed throughout this thesis. In Britain, ‘populist’ ideas or methods, for example, referendums, have been used by the political Establishment to defend a highly insular system which marginalises popular participation. This view counters Mudde’s argument that:

Populists (both leaders and followers) support referendums mainly as an instrument to overcome the power of “the elite”. They see it as the only possibility left to ensure that the wishes of “the people” are reflected in government policies.<sup>99</sup>

While this may be true in some countries where referendums are constitutionally required or serve more as plebiscites, British referendums have most often been underpinned by a conservative, Dicean narrative; meaning that they are concerned

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<sup>97</sup> Marsh and Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition’.

<sup>98</sup> Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’, 273.

<sup>99</sup> Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, 559

with preventing change, frequently by legitimating already-formed government policy.<sup>100</sup>

In Britain, therefore, what drives the Establishment to employ populist discourse is often, in fact, what Mudde terms populism's 'mirror-image': elitism.<sup>101</sup> It is the protection of the political elite's position and power, which, as discussed above in relation to the BPT, has, historically, proved particularly stable, despite episodic threats from external reformists, such as the Chartists, or, later, those pushing for devolution.<sup>102</sup> One complication here is that, despite being 'mirror-images', populism and elitism in fact share a number of features, in particular, the division of society into two groups – 'the People' and 'the Elite'. They differ, of course, over which group is most virtuous and capable.<sup>103</sup> However, although it is understandable why the line between two supposedly dichotomous phenomena is less clear than expected, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate through an examination of issues related to European integration, it is a distinction that must be more fully explored and understood.

## **5.2 Populism and nationalism**

Euroscepticism frequently invokes the idea of 'us' and 'them'. Because of this, it is easily linked with both nationalism and populism. When it comes to the former, as has been mentioned, Britain's position as Europe's 'awkward partner' is most often seen as a consequence of Britain's distinct history and identity. It becomes easy,

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<sup>100</sup> Vernon Bogdanor, *The People and the Party System: The Referendum and Electoral Reform in British Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>101</sup> Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 543

<sup>102</sup> See for a general discussion, Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*.

<sup>103</sup> Agnes Akkerman, Cas Mudde and Andrej Zaslove, 'How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters', *Comparative Political Studies*, (2014): 47:9, 1324-1353.

therefore, for Eurosceptics to conjure up the division between ‘us’ (Britain) and ‘them’ (Europe). This is, as articles one and three discuss, particularly effective in England where it has become an out-let for an Anglo-British identity which strengthens, rather than threatens, the Union. However, while the nationalist element of Euroscepticism may be clear, assigning the label ‘populist’ needs to be done with more care.

A useful starting point is differentiating between ‘populism’ and ‘nationalism’. Conflating the two is easily done, largely because both conceive of a ‘good’, unified ‘People’, often constructed in opposition to an ‘alien’ group, and it is because of this that populism is most frequently associated with the Far Right,<sup>104</sup> whose appeals are often nationalistic in nature and directed towards the general populace. Nairn explained the link between nationalism and populism by invoking the idea of ‘the necessary resort to populism’.<sup>105</sup> For countries seeking modernisation, the industrial demands were such that a ‘national’ community became the most effective means of production and this necessitated bringing ‘the People’ into the national project. Top-down attempts to simply ‘create’ a national community would prove, at best, laborious, and, more likely, simply unsustainable in the long-term. An easier and more effective option, therefore, was to encourage ‘the People’ to join a national community through an appeal to cultural, linguistic and social commonalities, or, in Nairn’s terms, an ‘invitation ... written in a language they understood’.<sup>106</sup> Yet, while nationalism may be populist, the reverse is not necessarily true.

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<sup>104</sup> See for a discussion, Taggart, *Populism*.

<sup>105</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

In his work on populism,<sup>107</sup> Taggart avoids the term ‘the People’, arguing it is ‘simply too broad to tell us anything substantial about the real nature of the populist constituency’.<sup>108</sup> He instead refers to ‘the homeland’: ‘a construction of the good life derived retrospectively from a romanticized conception of life as it has been lived’.<sup>109</sup> In Britain, the idea of ‘Middle England’ is one such ‘homeland’, and is invoked by nationalists, populists and mainstream politicians alike. Populism grows when this view of the collective is threatened by the actions of a corrupt and distant elite, and, as Taggart argues:

Implied in the emphasis on ‘the people’ is buried the idea that these people are an undifferentiated mass. It is through their very collectiveness that they are able to produce wisdom. The singularity of the heartland implies a singularity in its population. The heartland as a single territory of the imagination demands a single populace.<sup>110</sup>

The similarities with Benedict Anderson’s influential idea of the ‘imagined community’<sup>111</sup> are clear. However, Taggart is careful to separate ‘populism’ from ‘nationalism’:

While populism excludes those outside the nation, it does not include all those in the nation. The heartland, in so far as it refers to a nation, is a very qualified nationalism, explicitly excluding a series of social groups.<sup>112</sup>

The reason for this exclusion is that populism is most often driven by a desire for better governance and representation. The ‘other’ in this case, is not an ethnically or culturally different group, but rather, an internal ‘Elite’.

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<sup>107</sup> Taggart, *Populism*; Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’.

<sup>108</sup> Taggart, *Populism*, 98.

<sup>109</sup> Taggart, ‘Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe’, 278.

<sup>110</sup> Taggart, *Populism*, 96.

<sup>111</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>112</sup> Taggart, *Populism*, 96, 97.

### **5.3 Populist Euroscepticism?**

Turning to Euroscepticism, the question then becomes: if nationalism is necessarily populist,<sup>113</sup> and Euroscepticism is often driven, in large part, as argued in article one, by nationalist sentiments, does it follow that the political elite has embraced populism in its attempts to curtail European integration? As the following articles explore in detail, the answer is no. In particular, when it comes to opposition to European integration, the label ‘populist’ has been misapplied to situations where political actors, although using populist themes and rhetoric, and appearing to extend popular sovereignty through referendums, are, in fact, not encouraged by a desire to reconnect citizens with their representatives, or strengthen ‘the People’s’ place within the political system, but, rather, protect their own power through a defence of the BPT.

As shown, when it comes to the issue of populist Euroscepticism, this thesis is especially informed by two authors, Gifford and Wellings. Both view Euroscepticism as populist and institutionally embedded within British politics. This thesis rejects the former claim. Article three, *Reframing* ‘English Nationalism and Euroscepticism’, looks in-depth at Wellings’ work, also considering Gifford’s interpretation of the way in which European integration has caused tension between the traditional British political system and demands for popular sovereignty. While accepting important elements of the authors’ work, the article ultimately comes to the conclusion that the BPT remains protected and the insularity of the Establishment continues. So long as the political Establishment’s control of the European issue remains almost total (something which, as articles four and five show, is in danger), it is difficult to believe

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<sup>113</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*.

its responses are populist in nature, despite its invocation of the populist terminology of ‘us and them’, or the use of referendums.

While Wellings and Gifford argue that populism emerged as an important and embedded feature in British politics in the 1970s, this thesis instead views it as a far more recent phenomenon, dating roughly from 2010,<sup>114</sup> and, as discussed below, fueled more by anti-politics and general political disenchantment than a surge in Euroscepticism. For both Gifford and Wellings, the 1975 referendum affirmed the populist dimension of Euroscepticism.<sup>115</sup> Although used as a political strategy to protect party unity, the referendum established the idea that it was an issue of national importance – despite low public interest – and, consequently, by allowing a popular vote to determine government policy, this period saw an unintentional fusion of popular and parliamentary sovereignty.<sup>116</sup> This argument is critiqued in article three of this thesis, which explores in-depth the dangers of simply equating referendums with populism or the extension of popular sovereignty and shows them instead to be a means of reinforcing the BPT.

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<sup>114</sup> It is important to note that, while a specific year is given, the shift towards populism identified here is not evidence of a ‘punctuated equilibrium’ approach to change (see, David Marsh, ‘Stability and change: the last dualism?’, *Critical Policy Studies*, (2010): 4:1, 86-101), but, rather, was the culmination of a build-up of anti-establishment sentiments, in particular, following the drawn-out MPs’ expenses scandal. The General Election in 2010, which saw the Liberal Democrats enter a coalition with the Conservatives, merely presented the opportunity for this discontent to be expressed, causing a shift in traditional, majoritarian government through the success of parties running on anti-establishment platforms.

<sup>115</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*; Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*.

<sup>116</sup> Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*.

Much of this argument is informed by Kai Oppermann's model of European referendums.<sup>117</sup> As he shows, the one British referendum and four (now five) referendum pledges on issues related to European integration – the 1975 in/out referendum and debates over referendums on the *Maastricht Treaty*, the Euro, the *Draft Constitution* and the *Treaty of Lisbon* – were promised so as to diffuse party infighting and prevent significant political fallout at the domestic level.<sup>118</sup> As Oppermann explains in regards to New Labour's European policy:

The Blair government's referendum commitments elevated the electorate to the status of veto players and thus mitigated the potential of the euro and the European constitution to become important dimensions of issue voting. In anticipation of their ability to directly decide on these issues in a referendum, voters were free to ignore the competing parties' stances on them when deciding whom to vote for in a parliamentary election without incurring any political costs.<sup>119</sup>

Further, with referendum promises deliberately vague and without timetables, they served as a way to 'defer' controversial decisions, rather than ensure public opinion was reflected in government policy.<sup>120</sup> If, as argued above, populism requires more than populist rhetoric or votes designed solely to strengthen governmental power, is it fair to consider referendum promises intrinsically 'populist'? Previously, the answer, as article three shows, was 'no'. Referendums were allowed because they protected the BPT which preferences parliamentary, not popular, sovereignty, and elite, not popular, power. However, as articles four and five argue, there has been a shift in British politics. The 'populist *Zeitgeist*' that Mudde identified in 2004,<sup>121</sup> appears to have finally reached Britain and is having real effects on the political system and the

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<sup>117</sup> Kai Oppermann, 'The politics of discretionary government commitments to European integration referendums', *Journal of European Public Policy*, (2013): 20:5, 684-701; Kai Oppermann, 'The Blair Government and Europe: The Policy of Containing the Saliency of European Integration', *British Politics*, (2008): 3, 156-182.

<sup>118</sup> Oppermann, 'The politics of discretionary government commitments to European integration referendums'.

<sup>119</sup> Oppermann, 'The Blair Government and Europe: The Policy of Containing the Saliency of European Integration', 174.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 175.

<sup>121</sup> Mudde, 'The Populist *Zeitgeist*'.

broader political culture. As article five in particular argues, it is the linking of populism and anti-politics that is placing the BPT under pressure.

## **6. ANTI-POLITICS AND THE END OF BUSINESS AS USUAL?**

British democracy is currently facing a number of challenges with the potential to undermine the BPT and the traditional operation of the political system – these are the subject of articles four and five.<sup>122</sup> These issues are discussed in this section, which focuses on anti-politics and anti-establishment movements. It first addresses the question of where responsibility lies for low voter turnout and increasing distrust of political processes, before looking at one cause of anti-politics – depoliticisation (the subject of article four). This analysis feeds into a discussion of the effects of anti-politics (discussed in detail in article five), in particular, the challenge to the two-party system, which is returned to in the conclusion, and the rise of UKIP.

As this thesis demonstrates, hostility towards British democracy is manifesting itself through disenchantment and opposition to the status quo, far more than through disengagement. For some academics, the primary consequence of this has been a growth in non-formal political participation.<sup>123</sup> However, while alternative methods of participation are certainly worthy of attention, so too are the effects of anti-politics on formal political participation and mainstream politics (both issues are discussed in article five). Here again, issues broadly related to European integration – specifically,

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<sup>122</sup> See also, David Marsh, Matthew Hall and Emma Vines, ‘The British Political Tradition: Challenges and Responses’, (forthcoming).

<sup>123</sup> Henrik Bang, “‘Yes we can’: identity politics and project politics for a late-modern world’ *Urban Research & Practice*, (2009): 2:2, 117-137; Max Halupka, ‘Clicktivism: A Systematic Heuristic’, *Policy & Internet*, (2014): 6:2, 115-132.

the growth of the UKIP – prove useful case studies. Before moving on to a discussion of UKIP, however, we turn to anti-politics and the current level of popular disenchantment.

### **6.1 *Who's to blame: anti-politics and political disenchantment***

Falling voter turnout and the rise of populist parties across Europe have gone hand-in-hand with a decline in trust and confidence in the efficacy of political systems and political actors. This atmosphere of anti-politics has received considerable academic attention and, although there is a breadth of explanations for the causes and nature of anti-politics,<sup>124</sup> this thesis is influenced most by the works of Hay and Stoker.<sup>125</sup> Both discuss the increasingly unstable political culture, seeking to explain how it has come about and what it means for politics:

What do we mean when we say we have an anti politics culture? In the UK we probably never especially liked doing politics or trusted politicians in the founding days of our mass democracy but what makes our situation different today is that our culture has created citizens who feel disempowered and who have lost faith in the capacity of government.<sup>126</sup>

As article five, in particular, develops, in a society dominated by anti-politics, politics is not so much rejected, but instead mistrusted, and politicians come to be seen as out-of-touch and unconcerned with the interests and needs of the ‘ordinary’ person. Overall, the problem becomes one of alienation and anger, rather than disengagement and apathy.

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<sup>124</sup> See for example: Colin Hay, *Why we hate politics*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Gerry Stoker, *Why politics matters*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); Richards and Smith, ‘In Defence of British politics Against the British Political Tradition’.

<sup>125</sup> See in particular, Hay, *Why we hate politics*; Stoker, *Why politics matters*.

<sup>126</sup> Gerry Stoker, ‘Antipolitics in Britain: Dimensions, Causes and Responses’, 119-144, 122, available at: [https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAAahUKEwjkuDH2nZnJAhWFdKYKHfNEDBQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.idi.org.il%2Fmedia%2F1429259%2Fbythepeople\\_stoker.pdf&usg=AFQjCNGMIQseH\\_GWS665W1P0qN2bIhaahg&cad=rja](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAAahUKEwjkuDH2nZnJAhWFdKYKHfNEDBQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.idi.org.il%2Fmedia%2F1429259%2Fbythepeople_stoker.pdf&usg=AFQjCNGMIQseH_GWS665W1P0qN2bIhaahg&cad=rja)

This distinction is crucial. As articles four and five demonstrate, many disenchanted citizens remain informed and engaged,<sup>127</sup> looking for an alternative to the status quo. Consequently, we begin to see challenges to the traditional system, whether through the growth of non-formal forms of participation or, as articles four and five show, an abandonment of major parties in favour of minor parties and populist alternatives. The conviction that people remain fundamentally engaged with politics drives both Stoker and Hay's work and through this, they reject traditional explanations of falling participation which blame citizens.<sup>128</sup> Both instead argue that contemporary politics is offering less, leading people, in turn, to expect little from their politicians and political system.<sup>129</sup> For Hay, this is the distinction (discussed in articles four and five) between the 'supply' and 'demand' side of politics.<sup>130</sup> That is: 'citizens may well be more critical than they once were; but should we not also consider the possibility that they may have more to be critical about?'<sup>131</sup>

Article five compares Hay and Stoker with the work of Robert Putnam, who is arguably the most influential proponent of the idea that fault falls on the 'demand' side of politics.<sup>132</sup> The atomisation of society and weakening of civic engagement results in lower political participation and the rejection of political offerings. This 'social capital' theory is consequently the antithesis of that put forward by Hay and

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<sup>127</sup> For a statistical analysis of popular participation see article four.

<sup>128</sup> See for example, Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> Hay, *Why we hate politics*; Stoker, *Why politics matters*; Paul Whitely, *Political Participation in Britain: The Decline and Revival of Civic Culture*, (London: Palgrave, 2012).

<sup>130</sup> See also, Richards and Smith, 'In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition'.

<sup>131</sup> Hay, *Why we hate politics*, 49.

<sup>132</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

Stoker. Putnam addresses the question of where to place blame, advancing the idea that:

It is commonly assumed that cynicism toward government has caused our disengagement from politics, but the converse is just as likely: that we are disaffected because as we and our neighbors [sic] have dropped out, the real performance of government has suffered.<sup>133</sup>

He continues: ‘in a community rich in social capital, government is “we”, not “they”’. In this way social capital reinforces government legitimacy’.<sup>134</sup> This may be true, yet it does not seem unreasonable to ask whether the onus of maintaining responsive, representative government should lie most, not with ‘the People’, but rather, with those in power.

## **6.2 *Passing the buck***

Hay identifies one problem on the supply-side as the chief culprit behind disenchantment – depoliticisation.<sup>135</sup> Both articles four and five consider depoliticisation in depth, with article four taking Hay’s work as its starting point,<sup>136</sup> and article five discussing Flinders and Wood’s work.<sup>137</sup> Here, I will focus on Hay. Briefly, Hay identifies three ‘spheres’ in which deliberation and action occur: public/governmental; public/non-governmental; and private. Depoliticisation occurs when issues are shifted from one sphere to another, with the aim of transferring responsibility. Thus, political depoliticisation occurs when governments place an issue outside their sphere of influence, arguing it is a question for commercial bodies,

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 347.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 347.

<sup>135</sup> Hay, *Why we hate politics*.

<sup>136</sup> See articles four and five for a discussion of alternative explanations of depoliticisation

<sup>137</sup> Matthew Wood and Matthew Flinders, ‘Rethinking depoliticisation: beyond the governmental’, *Policy & Politics*, (2014): 42:2, 151-170.

the public or, problematically in the case of Europe, supranational organisations.<sup>138</sup> While the offloading of responsibilities may allow ‘good governance’, as articles four and five argue, a damaging consequence of depoliticisation is its contribution to anti-politics as political processes lose transparency and citizens increasingly question the capabilities of political actors.

This thesis is broadly in agreement with Hay’s explanation. There are, however, important qualifications. The first concerns the motivation behind depoliticisation. For Hay, depoliticisation is primarily a consequence of politicians’ own declining confidence in their capacity to govern.<sup>139</sup> Although it is at times a deliberate political strategy, this is not the dominant motivation. Instead, globalisation and increased national interdependency have convinced politicians of their own declining authority. Depoliticisation thus stems from this lack of confidence and the resulting disenchantment is shared between political actors and citizens:

When our political elites seem to hold such pessimistic assumptions about their competence, credibility and autonomy, is it any wonder that as citizens of the polities they serve we have come to share in their crisis of political confidence and competence?<sup>140</sup>

Politicians, therefore, may have contributed to this ‘crisis of political confidence’, yet this has not been the result of deliberate political strategy.

Hay’s explanation is sympathetic and forgiving when it comes to political actors. Article four of this thesis is more sceptical, viewing depoliticisation as primarily a deliberate political strategy and distinguishing between ‘party political

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<sup>138</sup> Hay, *Why we hate politics*.

<sup>139</sup> Hay, *Why we hate politics*, 94.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 151.

depoliticisation’ and ‘governmental depoliticisation’.<sup>141</sup> In part, this is in keeping with the idea, mentioned previously, of the State as metagovernor. This view emphasises government’s continued control of delegated power – in regards to both which powers are delegated and the subsequent outcomes of that delegation.<sup>142</sup> In a similar way, when it comes to depoliticisation, governments frequently have the capacity to choose which issues are depoliticised and the way in which this occurs.

This argument fits more generally with that advanced by Foster, Kerr and Byrne, who point out the conflict between image and reality when it comes to depoliticisation.<sup>143</sup>

Issues supposedly removed from the political sphere in fact remain heavily influenced by politics:

While governmental actors may use de-politicisation to place blame, responsibility and even decision making “at one remove”, perhaps even to the societal or private spheres, it is rarely assumed that government truly “absents” itself from the policy area; nor is it assumed that such arena-shifting examples amount to consigning issues to the realm of fate, or even to “autonomous” expert professionals.<sup>144</sup>

Depoliticisation is thus a political strategy, which seeks to shift responsibility and, ideally, minimise public deliberation; yet, in doing so, it inadvertently creates space for populists such as UKIP.

This point is connected with a further deviation from Hay’s analysis – depoliticisation at the governmental and supranational levels. Here, we return to the question of European integration. As article four shows, the attempt to depoliticise the European issue has proved particularly difficult. Despite being an issue of low salience amongst

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<sup>141</sup> My thanks go to Dr Paul Fawcett for helping identify this distinction.

<sup>142</sup> Bell and Hindmoor, *Rethinking Governance*.

<sup>143</sup> Emma Ann Foster, Peter Kerr and Christopher Byrne, ‘Rolling back to roll forward: depoliticisation and the extension of government’, *Policy & Politics*, (2014): 42:2, 225-241.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* 230.

the electorate, any appearance of Westminster being subordinate to Europe is met with public indignation and vociferous media criticism.<sup>145</sup> The result is that governments cannot simply argue (often truthfully) that an issue is outside their control and now an EU responsibility. The political fallout of such an admission would be too great, not only because of societal opposition, but also internal party divisions.

Depoliticisation of the European issue has instead occurred very differently. As discussed, the British political system is ill-suited to European integration, both because of the fierce protection of centralised power and the importance of political institutions to the national imagination. At a popular level this results in the problem mentioned above, however, it is at the party level that Europe causes the greatest damage and with strong party unity a key feature of the BPT, significant care has been taken to avoid division over Europe. It is, however, an issue that greatly divides parties.<sup>146</sup> Consequently, the solution has been the externalisation of the issue. As argued above, it is for this reason that referendums have been held and promised on European integration, giving the *appearance* of a populist response. This has, in the past, proved effective since governments have remained firmly in control of both depoliticisation and referendum promises. In a climate of anti-politics, however, this strategy is becoming increasingly problematic.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See for a discussion of the links between the media Euroscepticism, O. Daddow, 'The UK media and 'Europe': from permissive consensus to destructive dissent', *International Affairs* (2012) 88:6, 1219-36

<sup>146</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>147</sup> See appendix.

### 6.3 *Intensifying populism*

The ‘populist *Zeitgeist*’ Mudde identified in the mid-2000s made itself apparent across Europe as established party systems were weakened and populist movements gained strength, particularly in countries such as Italy and Greece.<sup>148</sup> The exception to this populist surge was Britain, which remained largely untouched despite chronically low levels of trust in Parliament and politicians.<sup>149</sup> One crucial reason for this, as previously discussed, is the ideational basis of the political system and the tradition of minimal popular involvement. Although the conviction that ‘Government knows best’ may have been damaged by the generally poor opinion of politicians, the lasting effect of this idea has been the belief that ‘the People’ can have little influence over politics, even when they do become involved.<sup>150</sup>

Today, however, despite this feeling of disempowerment persisting, citizens’ anger has become increasingly apparent as support for major parties declines and minor parties grow. This challenge to the party system and turn towards populism is, as articles four and five develop, a symptom of anti-politics. As UKIP has shown, even minor parties with almost no national representation are still capable of placing significant pressure on the governing parties. Because of UKIP’s primary policy – withdrawal from the EU – demands that Westminster re-engage with ‘the People’ have, of course, been focused around the issue of European integration. Its influence, however, has extended far beyond this issue. Thus, *contra* Gifford and Wellings, the

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<sup>148</sup> Mudde, ‘The Populist *Zeitgeist*’.

<sup>149</sup> Rachel Ormston, and John Curtice, (eds.) (2015), ‘British Social Attitudes: the 32nd Report’, London: NatCen Social Research, available at: [www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk), 136.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 132

development of a truly populist Euroscepticism, and significant populist movement in general, has been a very recent development.<sup>151</sup>

Over the course of New Labour's time in office, confidence in the political Establishment collapsed (also discussed in article five, but worth repeating here). Data from *British Social Attitudes Surveys* shows this decline between 1986 and 2013.<sup>152</sup> When Blair came to office in 1997, trust in government rebounded after a period of continuous decline under the Major Government. Those responding that they trusted government 'just about always/most of the time' rose from 22% (the lowest since 1986) in 1996 to 32% after the 1997 election.<sup>153</sup> Further, the number of respondents who replied that they 'almost never' trusted government fell to 12%, after reaching a high of 23% in 1996. This level of trust, however, began to decline almost immediately. Towards the end of New Labour's period in office, the MPs' expenses scandal broke and trust reached its lowest point since 1986. In 2009, only 16% trusted government 'just about always/most of the time'; while 40% replied that they 'almost never' trusted government.<sup>154</sup> These figures have improved; however, they remain significantly below the level seen at the point when New Labour took office.

Given the expenses scandal, the 2010 election was dominated by questions of trust. Nick Clegg successfully positioned the Liberal Democrats as the Party of integrity, bringing the third party of British politics into office in coalition with the Conservative Party. The new Coalition came to power committed to broad political reform:

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<sup>151</sup> See appendix.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 144.

Our political system is broken. We urgently need fundamental political reform, including a referendum on electoral reform, much greater co-operation across party lines, and changes to our political system to make it far more transparent and accountable.<sup>155</sup>

However, support for the Liberal Democrats collapsed almost immediately as the early days of the Coalition saw key election promises broken, most notably the pledge not to increase student fees. However, despite support for coalitions collapsing alongside support for the Liberal Democrats – it fell from 40% in 2010 to just 28% in 2011 –<sup>156</sup> this did not correspond with renewed confidence in the two-party system. As the most recent *British Social Attitudes Survey* concludes, the period of Coalition Government failed to repair confidence in politics and low levels of trust now appear to be ‘part of the fabric of British public opinion’.<sup>157</sup>

#### **6.4 The rise of UKIP**

UKIP became the main beneficiary of the Liberal Democrat’s collapse, becoming the new ‘protest party’. As Roger Liddle puts it, ‘the UKIP surge was a different side of the same coin as the Liberal Democrats becoming a party of government’.<sup>158</sup> Articles four and five, as well as the appendix, explore the make-up of UKIP support, demonstrating how successful its anti-establishment platform has been, reaching voters from across the political spectrum. The Party’s leader, Nigel Farage, has proved particularly adept at presenting UKIP as the protest party, assuming the role of the populist leader in touch with ‘the People’ and trying to bring the elite to account.

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<sup>155</sup> ‘The Coalition: our programme for government’, 28, available at: GOV.UK, ‘The Coalition: our programme for government’, 20 May 2010: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-coalition-our-programme-for-government> accessed: 7 Jun 2012.

<sup>156</sup> Ormston and Curtice, ‘British Social Attitudes: the 32nd Report’, 134.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>158</sup> Roger Liddle, *The risk of Brexit, Britain and Europe in 2015*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 12.

In doing this, he has drawn in some of Britain's most disempowered and disenchanted.

UKIP voters are consistently more sceptical when it comes to trust in Parliament and a citizen's ability to influence Government.<sup>159</sup> Against an average of 42%, only 26% of UKIP supporters trust Parliament 'a great deal/tend to trust'.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, when it comes to the issue of citizens' ability to influence government, 70% of UKIP supporters believe they have no say in what government does, compared to the national average of 44%.<sup>161</sup> It is also noteworthy that, in support of the argument presented above that citizens are disillusioned not disengaged, UKIP supporters, although amongst the most disenchanted, continue to show a significant interest in, and understanding of, British politics.<sup>162</sup> Support for UKIP, as articles four and five show, can be understood as a rejection of 'politics as usual' and a symptom of the anti-establishment fervour that has both contributed to, and been fueled by, anti-politics.

With voters disenchanted with the major parties and minor parties growing as a result, the May 2015 General Election proved almost impossible to predict.<sup>163</sup> Few expected an outright Conservative victory and, despite this outcome, it should not be assumed that Britain has returned to stable two-party electoral competition after a brief experimentation with coalition government. As Denver's analysis of the 2015 results

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<sup>159</sup> See, Ormston and Curtice, 'British Social Attitudes: the 32nd Report'; Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, *Revolt on the Right*, (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>160</sup> Ormston and Curtice, 'British Social Attitudes: the 32nd Report', 25.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> For an overview of the election see, Andrew Geddes and Jonathan Tonge (eds), *Britain Votes 2015*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): doi:10.1093/pa/gsv024.

concludes: ‘the rise of UKIP, the relative success of the Greens, the demise of the Liberal Democrats and, of course, what Alex Salmond called an “electoral tsunami” in Scotland make matters somewhat less familiar than usual’.<sup>164</sup> When it comes to electoral politics in Britain since 2010, there has been a noticeable shift and destabilisation of the tradition system.

While the SNP’s breakthrough was most obvious, UKIP’s results should not be ignored. Considering how established Britain’s traditional party system is, UKIP’s rise has been meteoric, with its share of the national vote climbing from just 3.2% in 2010 to 12.9% in 2015.<sup>165</sup> This put the Party in third place, ahead of the Liberal Democrats. However, in an indictment of the first-past-the-post system, despite receiving almost four million votes, this translated into only one Parliamentary seat, with former Conservative, Douglas Carswell holding the seat of Clacton.<sup>166</sup> The Party’s wide geographical distribution of votes meant that despite coming third in the share of votes, it came only equal tenth in terms of seats.<sup>167</sup> The incongruity of this result becomes even clearer when considering that the SNP won 56 of 59 Scottish seats on only 50% of the votes cast in Scotland. UKIP’s poor representation at Westminster, therefore, does not accurately reflect the Party’s popularity. Anti-politics and anti-establishment sentiment have provided an incredibly fertile base for the Party.

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<sup>164</sup> David Denver, ‘The Results: How Britain Voted’ in *Britain Votes 2015*, 16.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> The Greens were similarly disadvantaged by the electoral system. Despite increasing their vote share by 2.8%, the Party failed to secure any additional seats; see Denver, ‘The Results’, *Britain Votes 2015*, 11.

<sup>167</sup> John Curtice, ‘A Return to Normality? How the Electoral System Operated’ in *Britain Votes 2015*.

Given its limited presence at Westminster, it is outside of Parliament that the Party has been most effective. As articles four and five discuss, between 2010–2015 UKIP acted as a pressure group,<sup>168</sup> forcing the Conservatives, in particular, to change the way in which they engaged with a party they had previously written off as inconsequential extremists. Notably, ignoring the issue of Europe became impossible as backbench rebellion grew and UKIP emerged as a potential alternative for disaffected Conservatives – both voters and MPs. Cameron’s initial response to this (discussed in article two) reflected traditional methods. In the first instance, the introduction of the ‘referendum lock’ through the passing of the *EU Act* (2011) ensured that European integration was effectively halted. This was meant as a sop to the Conservative Right. It was, however, an easy concession to make given Cameron himself is a ‘soft’ Eurosceptic and wary of further integration.

While the *EU Act*, in formalising the principle of Parliamentary Sovereignty and preventing further integration, was in keeping with the BPT and Cameron’s own agenda, the issue of an in-out referendum has proved more complicated. As mentioned previously, externalising the issue through referendum promises has proved effective in the past. However, demands for a referendum have never come so forcefully and effectively from outside Parliament. Further, as discussed above, although Euroscepticism has a long history in Britain it is particularly strong at present,<sup>169</sup> with the ongoing Eurozone crisis, as well as UKIP’s success, ensuring widespread media coverage of the issue. For a Prime Minister committed to membership, despite his own misgivings as to the current state of European

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<sup>168</sup> See also, appendix.

<sup>169</sup> Mark Briggs, ‘Euroscepticism on the rise in UK’, *EurActiv.com*, 1 April 2015, available at: <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/uk-europe/euroscepticism-rise-uk-313300> accessed 18 November 2015.

integration, the promise of an in-out referendum was made only reluctantly and in the context of a Coalition Government, in which backbench rebellion can be particularly troublesome.<sup>170</sup> Eventually, a referendum emerged as an ‘obvious panacea’ to Cameron’s troubles with Eurosceptics both inside and outside Parliament.<sup>171</sup> This was a significant success for UKIP and a sign that the traditional political system is under pressure, with a populist movement contributing to a dramatic turn-around in government policy.

As the make-up of the Party’s support base suggests, however, the reality is that Euroscepticism has not been behind UKIP’s rise. The result is, that by viewing the issue through the narrow lens of party competition and party management, Cameron has failed to recognise the broader problem – support for UKIP stems far more from widespread hostility towards the political Establishment than support for its Eurosceptic agenda. A referendum on Europe is, therefore, unlikely to be enough to appease a citizenry which is increasingly demanding an end to ‘politics as usual’. Restoring faith in politics will, instead, likely require a more fundamental rethink of how ‘the People’ fit within their political system and the ways in which politicians engage with those they are meant to represent. As the following thesis considers, the balance between responsible and responsive government needs to be re-examined.

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<sup>170</sup> See, Liddle, *The risk of Brexit, Britain and Europe in 2015*.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. 13.

## Chapter 2.

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**Emma Vines, 'A Common Appeal: Anglo-British Nationalism and Opposition to Europe, 1970-1975', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, (2015): 61:4, 531-546**

## Abstract

Debates over European integration allow the articulation of an English nationalism based upon an Anglo-British identity committed to Parliamentary sovereignty and British exceptionalism. This was seen during debates over entry to the European Economic Community between 1970 and 1975, which ended with a referendum. Tony Benn and Enoch Powell emerged as leaders of the campaign. With Benn a leading figure of the Labour Left and Powell a prominent yet contradictory figure on the right, they presented unlikely allies. However, since European integration conflicted with their Anglo-British identity, partisan politics were secondary to nationalist sentiments. By examining Benn and Powell's anti-Market rhetoric, this article considers 1970-1975 as the period in which the paradox of Anglo-British nationalism was affirmed: that its populist expression can be used to reinforce parliamentary sovereignty.

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**Keywords:** Benn, Powell, England, Referendum, Nationalism, Sovereignty, Populism

## Introduction

This article seeks out some of the origins of contemporary English nationalism and the relationship between populism and parliamentary sovereignty in Britain. Alongside Ben Wellings,<sup>172</sup> it argues that the sources of Englishness can be found before devolution in the late 1990s and, in fact, are more closely related to arguments about European integration than British disintegration. It also sits alongside Chris Gifford's exploration of the place of populism in British – and more recently –

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<sup>172</sup> B. Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: Losing the Peace* (London: 2012).

English politics.<sup>173</sup> However, like Michael Kenny,<sup>174</sup> this article suggests that although significant processes of partisan de-alignment underpin new articulations of Englishness, the challenge of populism to parliamentary sovereignty is one that the British system can ultimately accommodate and will likely subsume. By examining the speeches and arguments of the two foremost populists of the 1970s – Tony Benn and Enoch Powell – this article locates a populist Anglo-British nationalism within the British political system.

European integration has been a subject of significant debate in Britain ever since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. From the outset, Britain's position has been one of detached support, with Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously declaring Britain to be “with Europe but not of it”. Designed to prevent the outbreak of another war, the ECSC laid the foundations for the more wide-reaching European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. It was this body that Heath took Britain into in 1973. Although substantially more sophisticated than the ECSC, the EEC's purview, unlike the European Union of today, was confined to economics and the creation of a common market. However, the signing of the Single Europe Act in 1986 not only renewed moves towards a single market, but also signaled an expansion of the Community's influence in domestic affairs. This laid the groundwork for the Maastricht Treaty, which, in 1993, established the European Union and affirmed the intention to harmonise not only nations' economic policies, but also much of their political, social and foreign policy. With each major change to the Community, there has been debate within Britain over the merits of

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<sup>173</sup> C. Gifford, “The People Against Europe: The Eurosceptic Challenge to the United Kingdom's Coalition Government”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 52, 3 (2014), pp. 512-528.

<sup>174</sup> M. Kenny, *The Politics of English Nationhood* (Oxford: 2014)

integration. While conflict over the Maastricht Treaty was perhaps the most politically damaging – crippling the Major Government and fracturing the Conservative Party – it was during the 1970s that the most coordinated public debates over European integration occurred.

Debates in Britain over European integration between 1970 and 1975 led to close study of both the national character and constitution, shifting the focus from economics to issues of sovereignty and identity. The issue divided both major parties, invoked passionate nationalist rhetoric and demands that the “full-hearted consent” of the people be secured.<sup>175</sup> Calls for a popular vote came loudest from English MPs whose Anglo-British nationalism was built upon the defence of national independence, linked firmly to parliamentary sovereignty. Benn and Powell, in particular, emerged as vocal proponents of populist politics and the most prominent anti-Marketeters during the 1975 referendum campaign. Opposition to Europe consequently brought together two of the most divisive figures on the Left and Right of British politics, allowing them to place country before party and articulate visions of their nation – visions predicated on the inviolability of Westminster and consequently antithetical to European integration.

The political and ideological chasm between the two meant their arguments often reached different audiences; however, with their opposition to Europe stemming from a shared Anglo-British identity rooted in parliamentary sovereignty, they found common ground. That they failed to secure Britain’s withdrawal from the EEC speaks far more to the considerable obstacles they faced than a rejection of the sentiments

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<sup>175</sup> D. Butler and U. Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum* (London: 1976).

they expressed. The National Referendum Campaign (NRC) faced a hostile press, “unlikely bedfellows”,<sup>176</sup> financial disadvantage and, since the referendum was on withdrawal rather than entry, the public’s unwillingness to disrupt the *status quo*. This was opposed by a campaign supported by leaders of both major parties and a budget almost ten times greater. That a populist appeal was allowed by a state normally hostile to popular sovereignty was itself an enormous achievement. Further, that this appeal maintained public interest spoke to Benn and Powell’s ability to frame the issue in nationalist terms. In doing this, Benn and Powell did not simply draw upon pre-existing notions of Anglo-British identity, but more importantly, used opposition to Europe to transform these notions into coherent nationalist expressions. By inviting the masses to consider their identity, Benn and Powell hoped that the populist expression of Anglo-British nationalism would protect parliamentary sovereignty. This is the paradox of Anglo-British nationalism: the centrality of political culture to Anglo-British identity ensures the popular nationalist expression reinforces parliamentary sovereignty.

English nationalism is often considered in terms of an “absence” or “anxiety”,<sup>177</sup> remaining far more elusive than the clearly articulated nationalism fuelling Scottish and Welsh separatism. This is in large part because of the difficulty in distinguishing England from Britain – the conflation of the two having been necessary for the early success of the Union. As Britain became an imperial giant united under a Protestant cause, narrower identities became secondary to an overarching sense of Britishness,

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<sup>176</sup> HANSARD, 21 October, 1971.

<sup>177</sup> J. Abell, S. Condor, R.D. Lowe, S. Gibson and C. Stevenson, “Who ate all the pride? Patriotic sentiment and English national football support”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2007), pp. 97-116; A. Aughey, “Anxiety and injustice: the anatomy of contemporary English nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2010), pp. 506-524.

the survival of which required the silencing of the majority national identity.<sup>178</sup> The fate of Englishness within this broader identity, however, is debated. Krishan Kumar argued that the creation of the British Empire with England at its core rendered the persistence of an independent English nationalism “meaningless”; and not until the late nineteenth century was a “moment of Englishness” possible as the “missionary nationalism” supplied by empire waned.<sup>179</sup> However, since the creation of empire generated myths of British exceptionalism through the spread of what were held by the majority as peculiarly English institutions, it also laid important foundations for English identity.<sup>180</sup> Thus, while imperialism undoubtedly contributed to confusion between England and Britain, this did not preclude the development of an English identity but rather conditioned it, ensuring it became better considered in terms of a hybrid Anglo-British identity.<sup>181</sup>

Such confusion over national self-definition represents what Tom Nairn termed “occluded multi-nationalism”.<sup>182</sup> While his early work, *The Break-up of Britain*, focused on the occlusion of Celtic identities within a Union dominated by England, his later polemic, *After Britain*, was more sympathetic towards England and Englishness, acknowledging that, as the economic and political power in the Union, England suffered the greatest occlusion.<sup>183</sup> It is only through the break-up of the Union that British nations will achieve a clearly defined nationalism, which not only

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<sup>178</sup> L. Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New Haven, 2008); K. Kumar, *The Making of English Identity*, (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>179</sup> Kumar, *The Making of English Identity*, p. 36.

<sup>180</sup> B. Wellings, “Empire-nation: national and imperial discourses in England”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, 1, (2002), pp. 95-109.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> T. Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (Norfolk, 1977).

<sup>183</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*; T. Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland*, (London, 2000), p. 22.

captures national identity, but also establishes a legitimate relationship between the state and the people.<sup>184</sup> Nairn's analysis, however, is coloured by his own desire to see an independent Scotland. The existence of a second, multi-national identity does not negate the power of national identities and the two can, and have, co-existed.<sup>185</sup> Further, although Nairn's fears that an England freed from the Union would inevitably descend into "crude racialism"<sup>186</sup> perhaps finds some support in the rhetoric of 'one nation' conservatives such as Powell and, more recently, the United Kingdom Independence Party, this neglects alternative manifestations of English nationalism. As this article discusses, an Anglo-British nationalism has existed for decades, and, far from threatening the Union, it has sought to strengthen it by protecting Britain from European interference. Thus, as Wellings argued, debates over European integration have allowed Euroscepticism to become "in all but name English nationalism".<sup>187</sup>

Crucial to Anglo-British nationalism is the notion of the exceptionalism of British democracy. Yet the democracy that developed in England was far more insular than those later established in countries such as America and France. As Nairn noted, the legacy of the English Civil War was ultimately "the contrary of populism. Not the self-action of the *Volk*, but the inexhaustible wisdom of Institutions and their custodians".<sup>188</sup> This created a political system generally hostile to popular sovereignty.<sup>189</sup> There have, however, been challenges to the marginalisation of

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<sup>184</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 42.

<sup>185</sup> Colley, *Britons*.

<sup>186</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 80.

<sup>187</sup> B. Wellings, "Losing the peace: Euroscepticism and the foundations of contemporary English nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 16, 3, (2010), pp. 488-505, p. 503.

<sup>188</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 296.

<sup>189</sup> A. P. Tant, *British Government: The Triumph of Elitism*, (Aldershot, 1993);

popular participation. Even those, such as A.V. Dicey, (and as will be seen, Powell) generally protective of the Crown-in-Parliament, sought a means by which Parliament could face greater accountability.<sup>190</sup> Dicey became the first prominent proponent of referenda, seeking to measure popular support for Irish Home Rule; although, as Vernon Bogdanor argued, Dicey sought a referendum “less to encourage popular participation than to secure constitutional protection”.<sup>191</sup> As will be seen, this has proved common among those calling for referenda and has ensured that, unlike Wellings’ contention that populist Euroscepticism has constrained parliamentary sovereignty since 1975,<sup>192</sup> referenda have instead been strictly controlled by the Establishment, used to diffuse party tensions, depoliticise contentious issues and, often, justify a decision already made.<sup>193</sup> Wellings is right, therefore, to argue that Euroscepticism has provided a vehicle for English nationalism. What is questionable, however, is how transformative the populist dimension of this nationalism has been on British democracy itself.<sup>194</sup> British democracy remains highly insular and, it is in part because of this, that those who seek substantial change have often struggled to retain positions at the centre of government. As will be seen, both Benn and Powell, although possessing strong bases of popular support – and, as the referendum campaign showed, capable of engaging with audiences at an emotional, as well as

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D. Marsh and M. Hall, “The British Political Tradition: Explaining the fate of new Labour’s constitutional reform agenda”, *British Politics*, Vol. 2, 2 (2007), pp. 215-238; M. Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*. (New York, 2011).

<sup>190</sup> V. Bogdanor, *The People and the Party System: The referendum and electoral reform in British politics*, (London, 1981), pp. 11-16.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>192</sup> Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*.

<sup>193</sup> E. Vines, “Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*: From populism to the British Political Tradition”, *British Politics*, Vol. 9, 3 (2014), pp. 255-274; K. Oppermann, “The politics of discretionary government commitments to European integration referendums”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 20, 5, (2013), pp. 684-701.

<sup>194</sup> Vines, “Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*”.

practical level – struggled within a system built on the strict preservation of the *status quo* and party discipline. The result was, like the recent defection of some Conservative MPs to UKIP, Powell abandoned his Party to pursue his principles and Benn never reached the political heights someone of his public standing might otherwise have been expected to.

### **Tony Benn: Democratic Socialist, Populist and Inadvertent Nationalist**

Benn saw EEC membership as the “end of an era in British history”.<sup>195</sup> Consequently, the decision could not be made solely by Parliament for fear of precipitating a constitutional crisis. Benn’s demands for a referendum were consequently driven by a desire to protect the state, yet he further hoped this populist appeal would secure Britain’s withdrawal from Europe. Throughout the campaign he invoked central tenets of Anglo-British identity, believing this would mobilise opposition to the Government’s decision to curtail Britain’s independence.

Benn often came into conflict with the Labour leadership, yet his politics and style earned him a devoted public following as he presented himself as a true representative of the people. After inheriting a peerage in 1960, Benn was expelled from the Commons. Following failed appeals to Parliament, the “reluctant peer” (or “persistent commoner”, as Benn preferred) mobilised public opposition to the archaic procedures of the House of Lords.<sup>196</sup> His recourse was to the press and his constituents of Bristol South-East who had re-elected him in the by-election following his expulsion with almost 70% of the vote. Persistent public outcry helped secure Benn’s readmission to the Commons and established in his mind the necessary power of the people over

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<sup>195</sup> HANSARD, 27 October, 1971.

<sup>196</sup> J. Adams, *Tony Benn*, (London, 1992), pp. 168-169.

their government; an idea dominating his speeches on Europe. An entry in Benn's diary in July 1970 noted the similarities between his peerage case and the current question of popular participation:

The public are really angry at the way they are being treated. They don't care much about the details of the Common Market ... but they are irritated at the way in which it is being done, and just as I mobilised my constituency and public opinion against the Government on the peerage case, I think I might be able to do it again now.<sup>197</sup>

Yet, although Benn believed in greater popular participation, he remained committed to Parliament – largely because, however imperfect, it was a source of identity.

Benn's defence of Britain reflected a particularly *Anglo*-British nationalism. During debates on Europe, concerns were raised that separatism would strengthen through demands for equal representation at Brussels.<sup>198</sup> These fears were in part founded. In March 1975, Scottish National Party Leader Donald Stewart warned Wilson his Party would “fight this on the issue of sovereignty, because we are a people who know what it means to have lost our sovereignty”.<sup>199</sup> Similarly, following the referendum, Plaid Cymru demanded self-government to ensure direct Welsh representation.<sup>200</sup> Benn considered these issues only in passing. Unionist concerns were wholly absent from his speech during the ‘Great Debate’<sup>201</sup> and in April 1972 when arguing over the referendum, Benn's English arrogance upset Welsh MP Nicholas Edwards:

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<sup>197</sup> T. Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1973-76*, (London, 1988), pp. 346-347.

<sup>198</sup> *HANSARD*, 21 October, 1971.

<sup>199</sup> *HANSARD*, 18 March, 1975.

<sup>200</sup> *The Times*, 7 June, 1975.

<sup>201</sup> *HANSARD*, 27 October, 1971.

There are already stresses and strains among people in Scotland and Wales about their being governed by an English majority from London. Why should they accept being governed from Brussels and represented by Englishmen from London?<sup>202</sup>

Edwards responded that:

Some Members on both sides of the House will resent the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion that Scotland and Wales are represented by English Members from London. Some of us like to think that Welsh constituencies, and no doubt Scottish constituencies, are represented by Welshmen, and Scotsmen.<sup>203</sup>

Although Benn was quick to argue he had been “misunderstood” and meant a “predominately English Parliament”,<sup>204</sup> his conflation of England and Britain was suggested; seen again in January 1975, when discussing devolution. Barbara Castle, another Labour anti-Marketeer, recorded Benn attributing calls for devolution to “the collapse of confidence in the English Establishment”.<sup>205</sup> That it was the English, rather than British Establishment, betrayed his Anglo-centricism. Benn avoided the overtly nationalistic rhetoric Powell often invoked, and, in this, his Anglo-British nationalism was largely inadvertent, however, given the historic conflation of England and Britain, this has proved one of the most common features of English nationalism.

Up until his death in 2014, Benn was one of Labour's most committed left-wing politicians, yet his international socialism sat strangely alongside his evident nationalism. Although optimistic of a socialist transformation for Britain, he was unwilling to sacrifice British institutions. Writing in 1972, Nairn praised Benn for his

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<sup>202</sup> *HANSARD*, 18 April, 1972.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> B. Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1974-76*, (London, 1980), p. 282.

alliance with nationalists, believing international socialism was best served through “national revolutions” and Benn’s cooperation with Powell’s “chauvinism” was a necessary evil.<sup>206</sup> Yet, Benn’s opposition to Europe had little to do with socialism. His belief in the exceptionalism of the British political system ensured Benn espoused not only a truly *democratic* socialist agenda but one which was also distinctly *Anglo-British*. It is difficult to view Benn as anything other than, in Nairn’s own words, one of the “patriotic scoundrels of the Labour front bench”.<sup>207</sup> Benn himself made his pride in British institutions clear when, in 1972, he warned the President of the European Commission, Sicco Mansholt, that: “if Britain is dragged in without its consent we would lose before we entered our traditions of democracy which the communities so notably lack in their present structures”.<sup>208</sup> Mansholt’s reply condemned Benn’s adoption of the protectionist nationalism traditionally held by Conservatives.<sup>209</sup> But although Benn replied that “the banner we have hoisted is not labelled ‘nationalism’ but ‘democracy’”,<sup>210</sup> as debates progressed it became clear that, for Benn, these were inseparable.

While Benn’s defence of British sovereignty was consistent, his position on Europe was not. In 1963, Benn outlined the case against entry, criticising: the inefficiency of supranational institutions; the growing East/West divide; the neglect of underdeveloped nations; the loss of Britain’s global influence; and the rigidity of written constitutions.<sup>211</sup> During Britain’s second application in 1967, he supported

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<sup>206</sup> T. Nairn, “The Left Against Europe?”, *The New Left Review*, Vol. 1, 75, (1972), pp. 5-120, p. 112.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Benn cited in J. Bodington (ed.), *Speeches by Tony Benn*, (Nottingham, 1974), p. 117.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* p. 118.

<sup>210</sup> Benn cited in Bodington, *Speeches by Tony Benn*, p. 119.

<sup>211</sup> Bodington, *Speeches by Tony Benn*, p. 93.

integration on the basis of the necessity of sharing technology.<sup>212</sup> Then, by 1971, Benn was again anti-Market and supported many of the “nationalistic arguments” he had dismissed three years earlier.<sup>213</sup> Russell Lewis considered Benn’s changing position an attempt to challenge Wilson by advocating an issue which appealed to “the Labour grass roots”.<sup>214</sup> Given Benn’s shifting position also largely corresponded with changes of government, oppositional politics were likely also an influence. However, there were two crucial areas of consistency in Benn’s advocacy of, and opposition to, entry: demands for a referendum and defence of parliamentary sovereignty. These elements reflected the contradiction presented by a popular Anglo-British nationalism – since Parliament is its heart, Benn’s populism was ultimately in defence of parliamentary sovereignty.

Benn was by no means the only one conflicted over European integration. When Heath proposed the opening of membership negotiations, the Commons remained divided. Given this, both parties relaxed collective responsibility, allowing backbenchers to speak and divisions during the ‘Great Debate’ (21<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October 1971) to defy party lines. This debate – held over the principle rather than terms of entry – allowed the articulation of anti-Market sentiments based predominately on questions of sovereignty. Those pro-Market, were aware that the issue of federalism caused the greatest anxiety. Opening the debate, Sir Alec Douglas-Home instead outlined the economic necessity.<sup>215</sup> On the issue of political federation he offered what would become a standard pro-Marketeer response: “decisions on the political evolution of the Community are not for now, even for tomorrow, but for the future ...

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> R. Lewis, *Tony Benn: A Critical Biography*, (London, 1978), p. 158.

<sup>215</sup> *HANSARD*, 21 October, 1971.

It is time that we regained some of our confidence and entered into partnership knowing that we are going to pull our full weight”.<sup>216</sup> Arguments based on Britain’s decline were used by both sides. While pro-Marketeers presented the EEC as an opportunity for national renewal, anti-Marketeers instead saw it as the definitive symbol of Britain’s decline.<sup>217</sup> This mixed instinctively with a belief in British exceptionalism and the strength of its parliamentary tradition. Since EEC membership would compromise this tradition, speakers discussed the limits of state power and the need for popular approval – a demand expressed most clearly by Benn.

When Benn spoke on 27<sup>th</sup> October, his focus was sovereignty, offering a clear definition:

We have talked about sovereignty, but what does it mean? Without referring to the old texts or the Treaty of Rome, it means that when people come to this Chamber we can point to the Treasury Bench and around the House and say, ‘This is where your laws are made and your taxes are imposed. This is where policies are explained, and you can get rid of these men yourselves.’ That is all there is in parliamentary democracy. Open debate plus a secret ballot.<sup>218</sup>

Betraying Britain’s history would run counter to the “constitution embedded deeply in the hearts and minds of the people who live in this country”.<sup>219</sup> The Government risked public outcry should they violate the popular conception of Britain without popular assent.

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> T. Benn, *Against the tide: Diaries 1973-76*, (London, 1989), p. 362; Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p. 302.

<sup>218</sup> *HANSARD*, 27 October, 1971.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Benn consequently became one of the most persistent promoters of a referendum. In 1972, he again condemned the absence of popular support in an argument with Liberal Party leader Jeremy Thorpe. When Thorpe questioned Benn's support for a whipped vote during the 'Great Debate', Benn argued his overriding concern had always been a "free vote of the British people".<sup>220</sup> Thorpe's demand, to "hear about this place first" drew Benn's condemnation:

The British parliamentary system cannot survive if we are to have distinguished parliamentarians saying 'let us think about this place first', because if that is what Parliament is about there is no reason why anybody outside should support it.<sup>221</sup>

Thorpe's response, "freedom starts here", further angered Benn:

Now we have it. Freedom began before the House of Commons was set up. Freedom was forced on the House by people outside it. Freedom is defended by the ballot box and not by the Division Lobby.<sup>222</sup>

Benn's belief that the public had, and could again, oppose a parliament it considered unrepresentative, ensured he passionately argued for popular sovereignty on questions affecting the national character. Since Benn believed that character derived from the strength of Parliament, he was sure a popular appeal would affirm the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.

Arguments against the referendum came from both sides of the Commons, often defended by citing Burke. In May 1971, when Heath reported on preliminary discussions, he confirmed that:

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<sup>220</sup> *HANSARD*, 18 April, 1972.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

It is my responsibility fully to report on these matters to my constituents and to consult them, but I have always taken the view of Burke, who represented the constituency of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn), that one owes them one's judgement as well as one's energy.<sup>223</sup>

As the Member for Burke's constituency, Benn was most often criticised for subverting this basis of representative democracy – something that proved a persistent annoyance for him throughout his career, finally provoking a particularly heated response in 1995:

Do not give me Edmund Burke. He was my predecessor as a Member of Parliament for Bristol for six years and visited it four times. His great contribution to democracy was to call the public 'the swinish multitude', and the remark prompted Tom Paine to write 'The Rights of Man'.<sup>224</sup>

Even in the 1970s, Benn considered Burke out-dated, coming before universal suffrage.<sup>225</sup> Since EEC membership attacked the fundamental principle of parliamentary sovereignty, the decision required popular approval.

While Benn's focus was the integrity of the British state, Wilson's concern was party unity. By the special Labour Party Conference in July 1971, Wilson opposed entry; a position the Conference vote supported. After Heath announced his decision to allow a free vote for Conservatives during the 'Great Debate' however, Wilson argued Labour should follow suit.<sup>226</sup> Benn countered that a free vote would ignore the decision of the Party Conference.<sup>227</sup> Wilson subsequently enforced a three-line Whip which 69 Labour members defied.

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<sup>223</sup> *HANSARD*, 24 May, 1971.

<sup>224</sup> *HANSARD*, 13 February, 1995.

<sup>225</sup> *HANSARD*, 22 July, 1971.

<sup>226</sup> Benn, *Office Without Power*, p. 379.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

Following the passing of the White Paper at the conclusion of the ‘Great Debate’, the question of a referendum became the next problem for Wilson. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1972, the Shadow Cabinet rejected Benn’s referendum proposal. However, the following day, President Pompidou announced France would decide British membership through a referendum. That the French could decide the issue when the British could not was seized upon by Benn and on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, the National Executive agreed to a referendum, 13 votes to 11. Now recognising the benefits for party unity, Wilson recommended it to the Shadow Cabinet. Wilson hoped a referendum would appease Labour factions and ultimately resolve the issue once the public decision was known. Labour subsequently voted for the *Referendum Amendment* and, although this was narrowly defeated, Deputy Leader Roy Jenkins resigned from the Shadow Cabinet on the grounds that “opposition to the terms of entry to the EEC has increasingly become one of opposition in principle” and fear that a referendum campaign would prove fatally divisive for Labour.<sup>228</sup> The issue remained far from settled when, after the *European Communities Bill* passed by just eight votes, Heath acceded to the Treaty of Rome without public consent and Britain entered the EEC on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1973.

Despite British entry, the issue continued to plague both parties. For Wilson, the solution to both party disunity and national unease was to promise a referendum on continued membership in Labour’s 1974 Election Manifesto. This was a remarkable success for the anti-Marketeters given Wilson’s previous opposition, and it opened the way for Benn’s nationalism to move to the public stage once Labour returned to office. In March 1975, following the conclusion of renegotiations, Wilson announced

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<sup>228</sup> P. Goodhart, *Full-Hearted Consent: The story of the Referendum Campaign – and the Campaign for the Referendum*, (London, 1976), pp. 47-48.

his intention to support continued membership. The Cabinet, however, split 16 to 7 in favour. During a Cabinet meeting prior to Wilson's announcement, Benn cautioned: "if we accept this paper, we'd be betraying, in a very special sense, our whole history".<sup>229</sup> He was far from the forward-looking revolutionary Nairn had credited him as in 1972.<sup>230</sup> At the same meeting, guidelines were distributed outlining the procedure during the campaign. The Prime Minister's note began by recognising the necessity for free debate; however, the guidelines overwhelmingly disadvantaged the anti-Marketeters. Wilson prohibited "direct confrontation" between ministers, forbade anti-Marketeters from campaigning in Parliament or with "a representative of any organisation he would not in any other circumstances be seen dead with".<sup>231</sup> Given the NRC spanned the political spectrum, this proved impossible and Wilson later relaxed this restriction, allowing Labour anti-Marketeters such as Peter Shore to appear alongside (former) Conservatives such as Powell. Benn, however, remained hesitant from appearing too closely aligned with Powell and consequently, although occasionally coordinating with the NRC, the Labour anti-Marketeters (known as the "Dissenting Ministers") often worked separately. One consequence of this was that Benn's arguments were predominately aimed towards Labour's grass-roots. Unlike Powell, whose anti-immigration position often resonated with working-class Labour voters, Benn struggled to reach beyond his traditional support base. However, both faced a similar problem – although they had strong core support bases, because they represented the less moderate positions of their respective parties, they also engendered more intense dislike amongst electors opposed to their ideological positions. This meant that, whatever the reasons for their opposition to Europe, there

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<sup>229</sup> Benn, *Against the tide*, p. 343.

<sup>230</sup> Nairn, "The Left Against Europe?", p. 112.

<sup>231</sup> "EEC Referendum: Guidance on Procedure Between Announcement of Government Recommendation and Referendum, 18 March, 1975", (CAB/129/182/16),

were many voters who were likely to dismiss Benn and Powell's arguments based simply on principled opposition to them.<sup>232</sup>

The Dissenting Ministers faced a considerable battle. Castle's diary showed repeated frustration with the disorganisation of the politically disparate anti-Marketeers.<sup>233</sup> Another significant obstacle was a lack of funds. Parliament had consented to £125,000 grants for each side, however, the Government-backed 'yes' campaign secured an overwhelming financial advantage and, by the end of the campaign, Britain in Europe had spent £1.5 million compared to the NRC's £133,000.<sup>234</sup> Considering these difficulties, Castle made the modest observation: "I think it is a miracle we have made the impact we have".<sup>235</sup> This impact was due in large part to the emotive quality of their appeals. By framing the issue in terms of national sentiments rather than economics, the anti-Marketeers made a substantial impression, reaching those with an Anglo-British identity.

In terms of public campaigning, one immediate obstacle was overcoming unease with a referendum. Even before 1975, Benn had attempted to explain the virtue of popular sovereignty, through letters to his constituents. The first, although written in 1970 when he was pro-entry, considered it "inconceivable that Britain with its strong Parliamentary tradition would allow a bureaucratic Commission in Brussels to reach central decisions".<sup>236</sup> Similarly, in December 1974, Benn distributed another letter,

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<sup>232</sup> Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p. 109.

<sup>233</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries*, pp. 373-374, 381, 391.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p. 408.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* p. 391.

<sup>236</sup> "Letter by Tony Benn on EEC membership, 3 November 1970", (SHORE/9/29: (Europe, February-March 1971)).

which warned that the EEC “would mean the end of Britain as a completely self-governing nation”.<sup>237</sup> This, was followed by a reminder that British democracy had “bound us together by creating a national framework of consent for all the laws under which we were governed”.<sup>238</sup> Here again, Benn sought to mobilise opposition by drawing upon fundamental ideas of the national character: the sense that national worth and unity depended upon democratic institutions. To sacrifice these was to weaken Britain.

Benn’s diary charted his success in overcoming public apathy. Reflecting in 1970 on a year in opposition, he acknowledged:

The British public just isn’t in favour of participation. It is told by its liberal elites that it shouldn’t be interested in these things, and I am not sure how easy it will be to get people to accept participation at the moment.<sup>239</sup>

By 1975, however, Benn appeared more optimistic. Recalling a public meeting in Manchester, he thought that the “great tide of opinion cannot be held back now ... because this time we have espoused the issue of our national identity”.<sup>240</sup> The positive reception of these ideas despite the enormous pro-Market campaign showed the effectiveness of appealing to communal features.

Despite the anti-Marketeters’ efforts, on 5<sup>th</sup> June, Britain voted overwhelmingly for continued membership. Across the United Kingdom, voter turnout was 64.5%, with 67.2% in favour and 32.8% against. Support for entry was the highest in England with

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<sup>237</sup> M. Holmes (ed.), *The Eurosceptical Reader*, (Basingstoke, 1996), p.40.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Benn, *Office Without Power*, p. 391.

<sup>240</sup> Benn, *Against the tide*, p. 362.

68.7% for and 31.3% against, while Northern Ireland presented the closest margin with 52.1% for and 47.9% against.<sup>241</sup> However, Jenkins's delight that it proved "a second D-Day for British resurgence in Europe based not on sulky acquiescence but on enthusiastic cooperation" was misjudged.<sup>242</sup> As numerous studies of the 1975 referendum showed, the result better reflected resignation than support, with the possibility that Britain could lose its "own way of doing things" and become "an offshore island of Europe" remaining abhorrent.<sup>243</sup> In this respect, the anti-Marketeers' arguments had undoubtedly connected with popular national conceptions. For Benn, although the referendum had protected the relationship between Parliament and the people, he continued to oppose European integration because, as for Powell, it threatened his Anglo-British nationalism.

### **Enoch Powell: High Tory, Populist and English Nationalist**

For someone renowned for their unrelenting logic, Powell's own beliefs seem surprisingly conflicted. Although a committed High Tory, Powell recognised the place of popular sovereignty. Like Benn, his opposition to European integration stemmed from a belief in the exceptionalism and strength of Britain's parliamentary democracy. Additionally, like Benn, Powell stood apart from his Party and it was in public halls rather than Parliament that he was most effective. This was made clear by his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, in which he spoke of the fear felt by members of his constituency that the steady growth of the immigrant population would make

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<sup>241</sup> *The Times*, 7 June, 1975.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Bogdanor, *The People and the Party System*, p. 45; Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p. 280; Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership, "Summary of qualitative research findings on attitudes and beliefs towards the EEC" carried out for the National Referendum Campaign, 1975", (SHORE/10/45 (EEC, 1974-75)).

native Britons “strangers in their own country”.<sup>244</sup> Powell’s speech was hugely divisive. Although dismissed from Heath’s Shadow Cabinet, a Gallup poll showed 74% of the public agreed with Powell,<sup>245</sup> and in a show of support, strike action occurred across the country. The Conservatives themselves were divided. While the leadership criticised the racialism and inflammatory nature of the speech, others gave their support, praising Powell’s plain speaking on an issue of great importance.<sup>246</sup> Powell’s speech, and the controversy it engendered, demonstrated his political potency and potential power. His willingness to speak openly on controversial issues and often counter to the wishes of his Party’s leadership undoubtedly damaged his promotion prospects, yet they also gained him significant popular support.

Powell thus offered an influential political voice able to transform public sentiments into nationalist expressions. As his biographer, Simon Heffer, noted: “the hundreds of speeches he would make ... would, like an evangelical mission, become the means of communicating the creed of ‘Powellism’”.<sup>247</sup> Opposition to Europe would provide an ideal forum, forcing him to abandon his Party and put his faith in the electorate. Powell’s alienation from his Party, however, went against his own belief that parties were crucial to democracy – the reason he did not stand as an Independent once he refused to stand as a Conservative.<sup>248</sup> His was thus an uneasy populism, advocating popular sovereignty in so far as it was in defence of the British state.<sup>249</sup> The clear irony here – but one that suits Anglo-British nationalism – was that Powell’s

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<sup>244</sup> T.E. Utley, *Enoch Powell: The Man and his Thinking*, (London, 1968), pp. 179-190.

<sup>245</sup> S. Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*, (London, 1998), p. 467.

<sup>246</sup> *HANSARD*, 23 April, 1968.

<sup>247</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 342

<sup>248</sup> R. Ritchie, *Enoch Powell on 1992*, (London, 1989), p. 19.

<sup>249</sup> Vines, “Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*”; B. Wellings, “Enoch Powell, the lonesome leader”, *Humanities Research Journal*, Vol. 19, 1, (2013), pp. 25-60.

populism, like Benn's, was ultimately in defence of parliamentary sovereignty, despite being against the wishes of the majority in that Parliament.

Even while mobilising opinion against the Government, Powell remained a committed High Tory, holding the Crown-in-Parliament and Church of England as the pillars of Britain. Powell considered the nation to be “neither the product of reason or deliberate human creation, nor does it correspond to any objective reality” and was therefore best symbolised through the Crown.<sup>250</sup> This relationship between Crown and nation ensured the Reformation was the watershed in Powell's history of Britain:

The whole subsequent history of Britain and the political character of the British people have taken their colour and trace their unique quality from that moment and that assertion. It was the final decision that no authority, no law, no court outside the realm would be recognised within the realm.<sup>251</sup>

Given England and Scotland were not under one crown until 1603 and not politically united until 1707, Powell's understanding of the continuity of English/British history conflated the two. This was not from an ignorance of history – Powell's scholarship was well known. It instead likely stemmed from the common conflation of England and Britain.

Powell's England was one in which “English qualities” could be defined in:

a single word: debate, debate in the sense specific to that Parliament which same English qualities converted from a feudal institution of the kind common to all Western Europe into the unique instrument of national self-expression.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 339.

<sup>251</sup> J. E. Powell, *The Common Market: Renegotiate or Come Out*, (Surrey: 1973), p. 49.

<sup>252</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 152.

In this idea he was not alone. As Kumar wrote: “parliamentary sovereignty is so enshrined within English constitutional practice that many English commentators cannot imagine an English nation or an English national identity without it”.<sup>253</sup> Consequently, like Benn’s, Powell’s populist appeal for the defence of parliamentary sovereignty was not as contradictory as it first appeared. In holding Parliament at the heart of his England he was articulating a widely held if, as he acknowledged, often “unconscious”, sentiment.<sup>254</sup>

European integration presents a particular problem for Conservatives since any decision is likely to conflict with two central Conservative principles: patriotism and free-trade. Powell was no exception. During Macmillan’s first membership bid (1961-63), Powell believed it to be an economic, rather than political, issue.<sup>255</sup> Powell thought this disproved by the 1970s. The Community’s external tariff barrier meant trade was in fact restricted (a particular issue regarding the Commonwealth), while the political ramifications of entry seemed to indicate an inevitable path towards federalism.<sup>256</sup> In his 1973 book, *The Common Market: Renegotiate or Come Out*, Powell argued there had been no significant economic disadvantages from Britain’s exclusion and scathingly criticised proponents of entry: “when advocates of accession to the Treaty of Rome find the economic argument difficult to sustain, they commonly shift the ground by saying: ‘After all, the real justification is political’, and in the next breath we begin to hear about ‘European unity’”.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Kumar, “Britain, England and Europe Cultures in Contraflow”, pp. 17-18.

<sup>254</sup> Powell, *The Common Market*, p. 44.

<sup>255</sup> *The Guardian*, 22 February, 1971.

<sup>256</sup> Powell, *The Common Market*.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 11, 13

Powell thought the idea of “European unity” offensive since it “is in contradiction to the very essence of what is Europe”.<sup>258</sup> Yet while Powell denied ‘Europe’ meant only the EEC, Britain remained apart. Speaking in Brussels in January 1972, Powell explained Britain’s hesitancy towards the EEC: “the relevant fact about the history of the British Isles and above all of England is its separateness in a political sense from the history of continental Europe”.<sup>259</sup> As Powell had reconciled the loss of empire,<sup>260</sup> this separation was most basically because of Britain’s constitutional structure. A year earlier in France, Powell had explained:

Your assemblies, unlike the British Parliament, are the creation of deliberate political acts, and most of recent political acts. The notion that a new sovereign body can be created is therefore as familiar to you as it is repugnant, not to say unimaginable, to us.<sup>261</sup>

As support for the anti-Marketeters often showed, British exceptionalism was a theme common shared by many uncomfortable with European integration, suggesting that the Anglo-British nationalism both Benn and Powell espoused reflected a common national conception.

In February 1972, in almost identical words to Benn,<sup>262</sup> Powell spoke of the powers Parliament “held as a trust for the entire people of this country” and which could not be relinquished unless “willed, by the overwhelming majority of the people”.<sup>263</sup> How to gauge this necessary support, however, was unclear, since far more than Benn, Powell believed in representative democracy. Indeed in 1970, Powell spoke bluntly

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid. pp. 48-49.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>260</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 340.

<sup>261</sup> Powell cited in Ritchie, *Enoch Powell on 1992*, p. 12.

<sup>262</sup> *HANSARD*, 27 October, 1971.

<sup>263</sup> *HANSARD*, 17 February, 1972.

against a referendum believing it “would be quite literally irresponsible government” if politicians were “able thereafter to say, whatever happened: ‘Well, don’t blame us, it is no fault of ours; we wanted to do one thing, but you decided to do the other’”.<sup>264</sup> Yet Powell’s commitment to representative democracy remained tempered by his belief in the necessity of popular support for such a radical change, evident when he addressed the question of Burke:

In the heart of the debates over the American colonies Edmund Burke ... wrote: To follow, not to force, the public inclination, to give a direction, a form, a technical dress and a specific sanction to the general sense of the community is the true end of legislature.<sup>265</sup>

Powell believed that, while referenda were not desirable, they were necessary when Parliament sought to change the national character.<sup>266</sup>

The responsibility to protect England’s history did not rest solely with Parliament, however. Powell felt that it was the people’s obligation to defend their identity. While Benn spoke of the electorate’s opportunity, Powell spoke of its duty. In January 1972, Powell warned a crowd that if Britain relinquished its self-governance:

It is the nation itself that will have judged itself. When it could have spoken it will have stayed dumb; when it could have acted, it will have remained idle. The power is still the people’s if they have the will to use it.<sup>267</sup>

Powell firmly believed mobilising the masses against a threat to their identity was the best chance to challenge government policy.

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<sup>264</sup> Powell cited in Powell, *The Common Market*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>265</sup> *HANSARD*, 28 October, 1971.

<sup>266</sup> *HANSARD*, 18 April, 1972.

<sup>267</sup> Powell cited in Powell, *The Common Market*, p. 118.

When Heath acceded to the Treaty of Rome, he did so without popular assent and a majority of only eight votes. Powell's indignation was so great that by February 1974 he refused to recontest his seat as a Conservative. Evidence of his cross-party support, Labour anti-Marketeer Michael Foot congratulated Powell for his decision.<sup>268</sup> Support from within the Labour Party was not wholly unexpected. Powell had been meeting with Wilson since June 1973 – although as he admitted, “our contacts were incidental rather than by assignment ... there were half a dozen meetings with Wilson in the loo”.<sup>269</sup> He considered a Labour victory the best chance for withdrawal.

Following the announcement he would not seek re-election, Powell's first public appearances were at Get Britain Out rallies. The first came only five days before the election and coverage in *The Times* suggested Labour would resent Powell monopolising press coverage.<sup>270</sup> In fact, Powell and Wilson coordinated the timing, arranging for no Labour frontbenchers to campaign so as not to detract attention from Powell's speech.<sup>271</sup> Given the content of the speech, this was likely unnecessary. He was unrelentingly critical of Heath:

[Heath] is heard accusing his political opponents of lacking respect for parliament and the law. It is a savage irony, and not the less so for being unconscious, that these taunts come from the first Prime Minister in 300 years who entertained, let alone executed, the intention of depriving parliament of its sole right to make the laws and impose the taxes of the country ... without either electoral or parliamentary authority.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 701.

<sup>269</sup> B. Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, (London, 1992), p. 611.

<sup>270</sup> *The Times*, 23 February, 1974.

<sup>271</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 705.

<sup>272</sup> Powell cited in Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 706.

Powell encouraged the electorate to vote Labour to ensure they were allowed to decide whether Britain would remain “under institutions which know nothing of political rights and liberties that we have so long taken for granted”.<sup>273</sup> On the issue of party, he was certain that “the call of country must come first”,<sup>274</sup> reiterating this idea when he addressed the second rally on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Now three days before the election, he was even more explicit in his support for Labour, criticising those who argued that Labour, “if given a mandate, ... will not fulfill it, or – to use the more elegant expression – ‘Harold Wilson will rat on his undertaking’”.<sup>275</sup> He warned: “there are a lot of people about whom it behoves to be very cautious in accusing their political opponents of past or prospective u-turns”.<sup>276</sup> Leaving none in doubt of his target, he continued: “in acrobatics Harold Wilson, for all his nimbleness and skill, is simply no match for the breathtaking, thoroughgoing efficiency of the present Prime Minister”.<sup>277</sup> Powell was both advocating a Labour victory and mobilising support for a ‘no’ vote should a referendum be held. He appealed to what he considered fundamental to the English nation – an independent parliament. Wilson’s support showed the paradox of Anglo-British nationalism. Powell, with the support of a major party leader, could make passionate appeals for the masses to demand popular sovereignty because both believed the popular verdict would ultimately reinforce parliamentary sovereignty.

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid. p. 705.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. p. 708.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

Following the election, Wilson's intention to support continued membership became clear and Powell instead began work with the NRC. In a televised debate three days before the referendum Powell reiterated that "belonging to the Common Market may be the sign of hope and vitality for Italy or for Luxembourg ... [but] for the United Kingdom it spells living death".<sup>278</sup> This debate should have been significant publicity for the NRC, yet the headline in *The Times* the following day was: "Mr Benn pulls out of TV debate".<sup>279</sup> He had been unhappy with the proposed layout, which, despite being a mock Commons would have sat him next to Powell. Heffer assumed Benn's reluctance had "more to do with the fact that, in the real House, he would not then be sitting on the same side as Powell, rather than with any personal or political apathy".<sup>280</sup> However, given five years earlier Benn had claimed "the flag hoisted at Wolverhampton is beginning to look like the one that fluttered over Dachau and Belson",<sup>281</sup> it is easy to believe him reluctant to be seen so closely aligned with Powell. Nevertheless, that Benn and Powell were presenting the same arguments at all was remarkable.

When Powell spoke after the referendum he made clear the decision was "provisional", convinced that once the full implications of European integration were felt, Britain would reconsider.<sup>282</sup> Coverage in *The Times* showed the NRC's impact. Normally hostile to the anti-Marketeers, an editorial acknowledged they had "developed arguments of a serious historic character and it is no doubt those historic arguments which will stay in the mind when the details of the debate have been

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<sup>278</sup> Powell cited in *The Times*, 3 June, 1975.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 754.

<sup>281</sup> Benn cited in Heffer, *Like the Roman*, p. 556.

<sup>282</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries*, p. 408; *The Times*, 7 June, 1975.

forgotten”.<sup>283</sup> Although the editorial recognised the value of the anti-Marketeers’ patriotism, it ended with the words of Edith Cavell: “I realize that patriotism is not enough”.<sup>284</sup> Perhaps the greatest achievement of the referendum campaign, however, was “that, after nearly three months of rhetoric, interest is holding up so well” – remarkable considering there was minimal public interest at the beginning of 1975.<sup>285</sup> By framing the question in terms of identity, the anti-Marketeers had revitalised the issue and confronted Parliament with their obligation to consult the people. Further, although economic considerations had triumphed, support for the anti-Marketeers’ political ideas showed their nationalist sentiments, though “not enough”, legitimately reflected the character of an Anglo-British community.

## **Conclusion**

Powell’s alliance with someone like Benn, however uneasy, was astounding. It reflected elements of a shared identity, the articulation and imaginings of which may have drawn from antithetical ideological positions, but which were ultimately built upon the strength of British institutions. In advocating a populist appeal, therefore, neither sought to undermine Parliament, but rather, protect it. This is the paradox of Anglo-British nationalism: since Parliament is its foundation, popular appeals designed to check state action ultimately strengthen parliamentary sovereignty. The often positive reception of the anti-Marketeers’ arguments exposed an Anglo-British nationalism so often thought absent, and, it was because of this, that the success of the ‘yes’ campaign did not reflect enthusiastic “full-hearted consent” but rather resignation and economic necessity. As Powell predicted, almost four decades later, it

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<sup>283</sup> *The Times*, 5 June, 1975.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

appears many are beginning to reconsider the merits of European integration. Always Europe's "awkward partner", Britain is now showing considerable animosity towards the European Union and today, hostility towards Europe is most vocal within England – many of the reasons for which can be found in the debates between 1970 and 1975. European integration conflicts with an Anglo-British identity which, having been denied a strong cultural foundation because of the necessary conflation with Britain, is instead based on the exceptionalism of Westminster. When academics today speak of the "absence" of English nationalism, therefore, they are mistaken. Just like Scottish and Welsh nationalism, English nationalism is a reactive phenomenon, yet one which, by seeking to reinforce the Union, reacts most to threats upon Britain's parliamentary sovereignty; debates on European integration are thus the ideal forum for Anglo-British nationalism to speak.

### CHAPTER 3.

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**Ben Wellings and Emma Vines, 'Populism and Sovereignty: The EU Act and the In-Out Referendum, 2010-2015', *Parliamentary Affairs*, (2015): 1-18:**

**doi: 10,1093/pa/gsv045**

## **FORM E: DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORED PUBLICATION CHAPTER**

*For use in theses which include publications. This declaration must be completed for each co-authored publication and to be placed at the start of the thesis chapter in which the publication appears.*

### **Declaration for Thesis Chapter: Article 2, 'Populism and Sovereignty: The EU Act and the In-Out Referendum, 2010-2015'**

#### **Declaration by candidate**

*In the case of article two the nature and extent of my contribution to the work was the following:*

<b>Nature of contribution</b>	<b>Extent of contribution</b>
<p><i>Prior to July 2013: Conceptual discussions with co-author on the effect of Euroscepticism and populism on the BPT;</i></p> <p><i>July-December 2013: Deepened theoretical framework from first draft of article and incorporated research on populism into draft;</i></p> <p><i>January-December 2014: Empirical research, particularly into the EU Act and the in-out referendum debate ;</i></p> <p><i>from Hansards; discussed differences of interpretation with co-author and arrived at a compromise position;</i></p> <p><i>January- April 2015: refined the argument and produced a shortened 1000 word version of the argument for 'The Dilemmas of Political Englishness' workshop at the University of Huddersfield;</i></p> <p><i>7 April 2015: presented article at 'The Dilemmas of Political Englishness' workshop in Huddersfield.</i></p> <p><i>May 2015: reworked the article in the house style of Parliamentary Affairs (that had been selected for publication);</i></p> <p><i>June-July 2015: responded to requested revisions from the Parliamentary Affairs refereeing process;</i></p> <p><i>Article published on line in July 2015 as 'Populism and Sovereignty: the EU Act and the In-Out Referendum, 2010-2015': doi 10.1093/pa/gsv045.</i></p>	<p>50%</p>

The following co-authors contributed to the work.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Nature of contribution</b>	<b>Extent of contribution (%)</b>	<b>Contributor is also a student at UC Y/N</b>
<b>Ben Wellings</b>	<p><i>July-Dec 2012: Wrote first version of article that focused exclusively on the EU Act (and not the referendum debate);</i></p> <p><i>Jan 2013: Submitted this version to Journal of Common Market Studies;</i></p> <p><i>April 2013: Article rejected by JCMS;</i></p> <p><i>May 2013: Began discussing re-drafted article with Emma Vines.</i></p>	50%	No
<b>[name 2]</b>			
<b>[name 3] *</b>			

<b>Candidate's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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#### **Declaration by co-authors**

The undersigned hereby certify that:

- (1) the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors.
  - (2) they meet the criteria for authorship in that they have participated in the conception, execution, or interpretation, of at least that part of the publication in their field of expertise;
  - (3) they take public responsibility for their part of the publication, except for the responsible author who accepts overall responsibility for the publication;
  - (4) there are no other authors of the publication according to these criteria;
1. (5) potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed to (a) granting bodies, (b) the editor or publisher of journals or other publications, and (c) the head of the responsible academic unit; and
  2. (6) the original data are stored at the following location(s) and will be held for at least five years from the date indicated below:

<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Politics and International Relations, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Clayton VIC 3800. AUSTRALIA.</b>
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<b>Signature 1</b>		<b>8 December 2015</b>
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<b>Signature 3</b>		

## Abstract

This article argues that the ‘referendum lock’ enshrined in the European Union Act (2011) and the pledge to hold a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union have eroded the principle of parliamentary sovereignty that they sought to defend. Analysis of the Act and debates about an In-Out referendum during the Coalition government’s period of office from 2010 to 2015 reveals an unintended consequence: recent debates and policies concerning the European Union have enshrined a populist nationalism opposed to European integration as part of contemporary British political culture.

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**Keywords:** Referendums, EU Act, Populism, Sovereignty, In-Out Referendum, Euroscepticism

### 1. Introduction

While the Eurozone crisis dominated the European Union from 2010 onwards, older challenges to European integration persisted and even gathered strength. One such challenge was the consolidation of a populist politics opposed to further European integration. This was part of a broader trend labelled the ‘populist *Zeitgeist*’ (Mudde, 2004) that was brought into sharp relief by the rise in electoral support for populist parties in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament.

One of the most important locations of this populist zeitgeist was the UK. At first glance, this may seem unsurprising, but a closer analysis reveals some important peculiarities. The first was that the politics of European integration created a populist political atmosphere whereby ‘the People’ in Britain were pitted against further

European integration via the device of a referendum. The second was that this populism was written into English law thereby undermining the principle of parliamentary sovereignty that this policy was designed to uphold. This was unusual since the Conservative Party has been the most vociferous in defending the principle of parliamentary sovereignty in the face of European integration since the 1980s. By examining the debates surrounding the passing of the *EU Act* (2011) and the debate about the so-called ‘In-Out referendum’, this article will analyse the place of populism in contemporary British politics and the resultant challenge to its political culture and tradition. In so doing it will document the transformative nature of a populist response to European integration on British politics, arguing that the populism contained within the debates about referendums between 2010 and 2015 has had the unintended consequence of eroding the sovereignty of Parliament that it sought to defend.

## **2. Sovereignty, traditions and the European Union Act (2011)**

This article starts from the viewpoint put forward by Usherwood and Startin that Euroscepticism is now a ‘pervasive, embedded and persistent’ feature of European politics (Usherwood and Startin, 2013, p. 10). It also takes its cue from Vasilopoulou’s plea to consider Euroscepticism as a political phenomenon that has existed from the earliest stages of European integration (Vasilopoulou, 2013, p. 158). In this regard, the scope of this argument goes back far beyond the debates over the *Draft Constitutional* and *Maastricht Treaties*. It concurs with Chris Gifford’s assessment that a post-imperial crisis, namely the historic shift from Empire and Commonwealth to Europe, ‘embedded a structural susceptibility to populist politics within Britain that have taken on a significant Eurosceptic dimension’ (Gifford,

2014b, p. 6), a development that has embedded hard Euroscepticism within British politics (Gifford, 2014a). However, it augments Gifford's arguments by focusing specifically on debates about referendums as the vehicle for embedding this form of populism. As a result of the European Union Act, populist Euroscepticism, already persistent, has also become an embedded feature of British politics and the British political system.

The European context for this manifestation of Euroscepticism in the UK is the crisis of the single currency and the growth of a populist Euroscepticism across the EU since the 1990s. Paul Taylor suggested that we were at 'the end of European integration' even before the euro crisis struck in 2010. 'In the early twenty-first century', argued Taylor, 'the European project needed rescuing' (Taylor, 2008, p. 1). Support for this conclusion could be heard from political actors themselves. The Foreign Minister, William Hague, said in Parliament at the outset of the debate about an in-out referendum in 2011 that 'I put it to those who have always enthused about the prospects for greater European integration that for this country, the limits of such integration have been reached—more than reached in my view' (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 52). But even before this debate, the Government had acted to end further extension of EU powers and thereby defend British sovereignty.

The European Union Bill completed its passage through Parliament on 13 July 2011 and subsequently became the *European Union Act*. The Act did two things of importance in regard to sovereignty in the UK. The first was to re-state and enshrine the principle of parliamentary sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the European Union into statute, reinforcing the provisions of the *European Communities Act* from 1972. The second

was to provide a so-called ‘referendum lock’ on any future transfers of power (competencies) from the UK to the European Union.

It was these two actions that had the paradoxical effect of ultimately undermining parliamentary sovereignty by bringing popular sovereignty to its defence. Section 18 of the *Act*, relating to the status of EU law, stated that

Directly applicable or directly effective EU law (that is the rights, powers, liabilities, obligations, restrictions, remedies and procedures referred to in Section 2(1) of the European Communities Act (1972)) falls to be recognised and available in law in the United Kingdom only by virtue of that Act or where it is required to be recognised and available in law by virtue of any other Act. (*EU Act*, 2011, s. 18)

In other words, the *EU Act* restated the principle that any EU laws could only take effect in the UK as a result of the will of the (Westminster) Parliament. This represented a powerful reassertion of the principle of parliamentary sovereignty: the idea that any law that applies to the UK only does so because Parliament allows and enacts it. This reassertion of a centuries-old principle was primarily directed at the process and direction of European integration with its unknown *finalité* — a final destination particularly troubling for the absence of any consensus as to where that destination might be and with the distinct possibility after 2011 that the euro crisis might provoke more, rather than less, Europe.

Tradition, however, was coupled with novelty in the Act, and it was an innovation that took the politics of European integration in Britain beyond the usual understanding of the UK as Europe’s ‘awkward partner’ (George, 1998). Innovation came in the form of the provisions that ensured that further transfers of powers from the UK to the EU would now require approval via a referendum of the British people—if the government deemed the transfer of powers as sufficiently significant

and not merely technical adjustments. What was promoted by the Government as a ‘referendum lock’ applied to new treaties and also passarelles (or the so-called ‘ratchet clauses’) that had the potential to increase the areas of EU competency without requiring a treaty-based change. This ‘referendum lock’ meant that if the government of the day were to agree that a transfer of power (primarily via a treaty) was in the UK’s interest, it would have to submit that judgement to a referendum of the British people. Further, while previous referendums were not legally binding, the *EU Act* made it clear that, in the event of a ‘no’ vote, the proposed change could not pass through Parliament. On paper, at least, the Act made the People, not Parliament, the final guarantor of the UK’s sovereignty.

This represented a codification of a novel development brought about by the politics of European integration in the UK. However, although on first appearances, the Act did indeed invoke popular sovereignty to an unprecedented degree, beneath this lay a protection of Parliament’s authority. Even with the Act in force, popular votes on future transfers of power are far from certain. Not only is the Act open to considerable interpretation, it also contains mechanisms that allow the avoidance of referendums. In particular, the ‘significance condition’ (*EU Act*, 2011, s.3 (4)) allows the bypassing of a referendum in cases where the sole purpose of the change is either: to allow the EU to ‘impose a requirement or obligation on the United Kingdom’ (*EU Act*, s.4 (1i)), or, to grant the EU ‘new or extended power to impose sanctions on the United Kingdom’ (*EU Act*, 2011, s.4 (1j)). However, in these cases, a referendum is only required when the effect of the change would be ‘significant’—a threshold determined by the government. Although perhaps not in keeping with the spirit of the Act, this liberal interpretation certainly fits with the tradition of protecting

parliamentary sovereignty and, particularly, executive power; and despite its existence, it was notable that the Act was not invoked between 2011 and 2015.

The *EU Act* enshrined this fusion of popular and parliamentary sovereignty into law. However, the two forms of sovereignty have long had an uneasy relationship within British political culture. Edmund Burke provided the most famous explanation of the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty in his ‘Letter to the Electors of Bristol’ written in 1774. Once elected, explained Sir Edmund, an MP is an MP and is not answerable to the electors. ‘Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays you, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion’ (cited in Bogdanor, 1981, p. 80). Here then was an early assertion of parliamentary sovereignty in the face of nascent democratic norms and assumptions. As elections based around party competition became the accepted means of determining which people would form His or Her Majesty’s Government, popular sovereignty was constrained by the operation and assumptions of representative government and parliamentary sovereignty. This avoided the deployment of French-style plebiscitary referendums in British politics, devices which were seen as risky when seeking to govern what Walter Bagehot referred to as the ‘vacant many’ (Bagehot, 1936 [1867], p. 34). Instead, British political culture was built around the premise that ‘government knows best’ and that ‘responsible’ government meant strong, rather than necessarily accountable or responsive government (Birch, 1964). These traditions were still operative in the twenty-first century and still guided many parliamentarians in their day-to-day work. In speaking about the role of a Member of Parliament in the debate about a referendum on the UK’s relationship with the EU, the Conservative Member for Beverly and Holderness, Graham Stuart, noted that, ‘The

previous weekend I spent all day going round the villages listening to people and hearing from them, but it is not my job to do whatever the percentage majority tell me to do. My job is to come to this place and to do the best I can by the people whom I represent' (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 121).

This is not to say that referendums and direct democracy were entirely unknown in the UK prior to the 1970s, but they tended to be deployed at a local level. Referendums were held during the nineteenth century on the establishment of public libraries and during the twentieth century on drinking hours in Wales (Alderson, 1975). Nor were these local referendums necessarily binding. In 1946, irate residents of Stevenage held a referendum in which they rejected plans for the establishment of a New Town in the vicinity—to no avail (Kynaston, 2007, p. 162). As we can see from this over-ruling of a localised expression of the general will, referendums suffered from principled problems of legitimacy in the British political tradition as well as specific problems of which electorate was being represented. For a start, given the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, any referendum could only be advisory in the style of a plebiscite as its decisions could technically be overturned by any subsequent parliament (although at considerable political cost that invalidated the initial technical assumption of sovereignty). Specifically, referendums also rested on an assumption of the existence of a homogenous political community that accepted the legitimacy of the exercise. The so-called 'Border Poll' held in Northern Ireland in 1973 illustrated this. The attempt to bolster the UK's sovereignty and defend its border against the Irish Republic resolved little as it was almost entirely boycotted by the Nationalist-Catholic community (Hennessey, 1997, p. 216).

However, if we broaden our perspective to take in the political systems of what historians call ‘the British world’, we find that referendums are not as alien there as in Britain itself. In much the same way as federalism was spurned in Britain, but adopted enthusiastically in other parts of the Commonwealth, referendums are also a standard feature in many of these countries. The best known of these is in Australia whereby Section 128 of the Australian Constitution provides that any proposed change to the Constitution must be endorsed by a majority of the electorate of the Commonwealth of Australia (although this expression of popular sovereignty is circumscribed by the sovereignty of the Commonwealth Parliament and of the States themselves) (Australian Parliament, 2012). In the Australian case, the adoption of referendums was seen as part of the ‘social experiment’ that characterised Australian politics at the turn of the twentieth century, similar to ideas about referendums and popular sovereignty being adopted in California and Switzerland around that time. New Zealand initially adopted referendums in 1911 and more fully in 1956, although these were not as frequently deployed as in Australia. Ireland adopted referendums on matters of constitutional alterations in 1987. Even within the UK, there was room for expressions of popular sovereignty that were used as a counter-balance to the emerging sovereignty of Crown-in-Parliament. The Scottish Claims of Right of 1689, 1842 and 1988 can be interpreted as competing—if not always popular—expressions of sovereignty and the English radical understanding of Parliament articulated by the Chartists and suffragists forced a wider understanding of popular political representation into the existing institutions in the UK and beyond.

Nevertheless, despite this use of referendums in the ‘British world’, there remained an enduring belief that referendums were alien to Britain’s own political tradition. Thus

in 1974 it was possible for Conservative MP Norman St-John Stevas to refer to referendums as ‘a nasty continental aberration’, linked to—and tainted by—Gaullism (cited in Alderson, 1975, p. 74). Nevertheless, the following year, the first UK-wide referendum was held on Britain’s continuing membership of the EEC, and since then referendums—or the threat of them—have become part of British political practice.

The reasons for this innovation are both historical and expedient. Once Harold Wilson had conceded to the Anti-Marketeters’ demands for a referendum following the ‘Great Debate’ in 1971, he was able to borrow from established practice in Australia, although he rejected the idea of a compulsory vote and equivocated over the use of computers to assist in the referendum count (National Archives, PREM 16/403). Once referendums had been inserted into British politics, their increasing deployment to provide deeper legitimacy for decisions already taken by parliaments and governments (devolution in the UK, ratification of treaties within the EU), their use—or their non-use in the case of the debates about the euro and the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty—began to contribute to exactly what their new-found proponents hoped to avoid: erosion of public trust in Parliament and the wider problem of disengagement from politics (Stoker, 2006).

This attempt to counter public disengagement was at the heart of the official reasoning given in defence of the adoption of referendums into English law. When introducing the European Union Bill to Parliament in 2010 David Lidington, Minister for Europe, argued that ‘there has been a profound disconnection between the will of the British people and the decisions taken in their name by the British Government in respect of the European Union’. He added that

This Government is determined to reconnect with the British people by making itself more accountable for the decisions it takes in relation to how the EU develops. We plan to decentralise power from the Government to the British people, so the people can make the big decisions on the direction of the EU. This Government is committed to allowing the British people to have their say on any future proposals to transfer powers from Britain to Brussels. (Lidington, 2010)

This argument gained strength after David Cameron's announcement of Conservative commitment to an in-out referendum. 'I think that one of the ways in which we can turn people back on to politics', the Prime Minister told the House of Commons on 4 June 2014, 'is to make clear that, when it comes to the vital issue of whether or not Britain should be a member of reformed European Union, it is the British people who should have their say' (Hansards, vol. 582 and part 1, col. 24).

In one sense, this view is perfectly consistent with a view of democracy and popular sovereignty that placed 'the People' at the heart of political legitimacy. But on a deeper level, the emphasis on referendums helped contribute to what Colin Hay identified as the deliberate depoliticisation of politics whereby political parties and governments have asserted that they have neither the inclination nor the competency to take decisions on important matters (Hay, 2007, p. 94). Put differently, there are other less idealistic explanations for invoking 'the People' in relation to the EU that come to the fore when analysing the use or threat of referendums in the UK in relation to European integration.

### **3. Referendums and European integration in the UK**

Kai Oppermann has developed a four-way typology of referendum pledges in regard to European integration. The four main types that he has identified and classified over the past 40 years are described as 'Domestic', 'European', 'Defensive' and 'Offensive'. Domestic pledges are those that appeal primarily to a national audience

and are treated as national, rather than European, issues. European pledges are those that seek to further European integration and outflank critics (Oppermann, 2011). All of Britain's referendum pledges fall into the Domestic/Defensive category, being designed to forestall any further transfer of sovereignty. In a comparative sense, this can be put down to the high level of intra- and inter-party open contestation about European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Oppermann, 2011). But it also reveals something about the peculiarity of British politics regarding European integration and the way that referendums and arguments about sovereignty (both popular and Parliamentary) have been deployed as a means of retarding and circumscribing Britain's involvement in Europe.

In contrast to the situation from the 1990s, where anti-integration attitudes were most commonly expressed on the right of British politics, in the 1970s the idea of a referendum initially emerged on the Labour left. The idea was to protect British socialism from the centre-right project of European integration by shoring up parliamentary sovereignty with concepts of popular sovereignty under-pinned by a leftist populism. It was the defeat of Anti-Common Market League's position in the 'Great Debate' of October 1971 that led to the idea of a referendum as a way of out-maneuvring Parliament on this issue amongst Labour Anti-Marketeters; a blow struck against the sovereignty of Parliament which those opposing entry to the European Communities felt was justified given the importance of the loss of parliamentary sovereignty associated with accession. This is when the current tension inherent in defending parliamentary sovereignty by invoking popular sovereignty began.

But when it came to it, the actual use of a referendum was never primarily about constitutional principle. Like the Conservatives in 2015, the Labour party campaigned in 1974 on a platform that included a pledge to hold a referendum on re-negotiated terms of Britain's EEC membership. This innovation was generated by political dynamics within the Labour Party. The Cabinet was divided and the Labour leadership always at risk of losing control of the debate, particularly after a specially convened Labour conference indicated its clear opposition to UK membership of the EEC in March 1975. In all of this the unity of the Labour Party was far more important to Harold Wilson than the unity of Europe. In such a situation, the attractions of a referendum became apparent: if this issue was too difficult for the Party to decide, then let the People decide instead.

The eventual 2:1 vote in favour of staying within the EEC on the terms renegotiated by the Labour Government came as something of a surprise, given the scepticism indicated in the opinion polls ahead of the referendum campaign in May–June 1975 (King, 1977). But beneath the seemingly strong endorsement of Britain's European future lay a resignation and apathy about the issue (Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership, 1975, p. 13; Garnett, 2008). However, the lasting significance of the vote was that it signaled that Britain's place in Europe was a matter of such supreme national importance that conventional measures for resolving the issue were inadequate. Thus a precedent was set whereby the People—whose will was expressed via the device of a referendum—were established as the ultimate sovereign on the matter of European integration.

The legacy of the 1975 referendum laid important foundations for subsequent populist politics concerning European integration in Britain. During the first half of the 1970s, popular sovereignty had been invoked in order to preserve Parliament's sovereignty in the face of the European Communities' supranational competencies (or fears of them). The 1975 referendum led to a situation whereby 'the People' now underwrote parliamentary sovereignty. Thus the legitimacy of Britain's place in the Europe was hereafter directly exposed to the state of popular opinion. Initially, this opinion could be described as benignly apathetic (King, 1977), but after 1991 it became increasingly sceptical and hostile towards the pace and direction of European integration (Commission of the European Communities, 2005, p. 6; Curtice, 2012).

The new relationship between popular and parliamentary sovereignty in the face of European integration continued throughout the 1990s and beyond, particularly after the acrimonious ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991–1993 and Margaret Thatcher's advocacy of a referendum in opposition to her successor's support of parliament sovereignty (Gifford, 2014b, p. 121). This adoption of the referendum is surprising if we consider that the Conservatives were hitherto one of the foremost creators and defenders of representative democracy and representative government over the past two centuries. But this is to assume that referendums are in fact about representative democracy alone. It is less surprising when we consider referendums as devices used to preserve and legitimise the status quo (as in Margaret Thatcher's case from 1993) or provide post facto popular legitimacy for settled decisions (as per New Labour's devolution settlements). One of the most important Conservative thinkers to endorse referendums was AV Dicey. Referendums, argued Dicey in the wake of the 'People's Budget' and Lloyd George's clash with the Lords in 1910 –

1911, would strengthen representative democracy, as they would be part of the checks and balances on governmental authority. Politicians would be more responsive to the views of the citizenry if they knew that controversial laws would ultimately need the sanction of the electorate. In this way, as Matt Qvortrup expresses it, the referendum would be simultaneously democratic and conservative (Qvortrup, 2005, p. 47) as it would lead to greater caution on the part of governments when initiating change. In other words, referendums were advocated as a means of preventing change. From the mid-1990s calling for a referendum could increasingly be assumed to be an act designed as a brake on Britain's deeper integration into European structures, institutions and policies, such calls resting as they did on the assumption of an electorate increasingly hostile to 'more Europe'.

Thus during New Labour's period of government from 1997 to 2010, the Conservatives increasingly invoked 'the People' as a way of placing pressure on the Government. Although not seen as a great success, Ian Duncan-Smith's period of leadership did land a notable blow in regard to Britain's relationship to Europe. In early May 2003, the new Party leader called for an immediate referendum on the Euro and later went on to call for a further one on the Draft Constitutional Treaty, as did David Cameron over the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The ostensible reasons for these moves were tactical. Duncan-Smith hoped to exploit divisions between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown over the Euro thereby blocking Britain's adoption of the single currency. Likewise, Cameron sought to unnerve the Labour Party, forcing them to avoid what was presumed would be a costly referendum defeat over the Lisbon Treaty.

Therefore, before entering government in 2010, the Conservatives had adopted a posture of using the referendum not to enact change, but to forestall it. This tactic was predicated on the assumption of a public opinion now so hostile to European integration that to merely extract a pledge for a referendum from the government was to have won the debate. This tactic further rested on another assumption that the adoption of a democratic principle previously ill at ease with British conservatism—popular sovereignty—was also in many respects in keeping with a tradition of statecraft that could accommodate seemingly hostile forces or ideas in order to integrate them into the established political order thereby preventing a more serious challenge from subsequently arising. As Philip Norton has argued, the Conservative Party was ‘prepared to contemplate change, but change designed to maintain, not destroy, the system’ (Norton, 2012, p. 127). However, the result of this development in Conservative policy was that popular sovereignty was increasingly invoked in order to defend British sovereignty (equated with that of Parliament). Parliament’s sovereignty to decide matters of European policy was accordingly exposed even more directly to public, as much as parliamentary, opinion (Gifford, 2014a).

Furthermore, due to fears about losing votes to single-issue Eurosceptic parties, the greater use of popular sovereignty also aligned Conservative policy with a broader populist pan-European Euroscepticism, driven in the UK’s case by populist political parties, notably the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which performed well in the 2004 and 2009 elections to the European Parliament (Hayton, 2012, p. 73). In 2013, UKIP scored notable successes in English council elections and performed especially well at the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, topping the UK poll and sending 24 MEPs to Brussels – Strasbourg. This result was seen within the political

class as indicative of what Ed Milliband argued was ‘a depth and scale of disenchantment that we ignore at our peril’ (Hansards, 582, 1, col 15). At the 2015 General Election, UKIP won 3,881,099 votes (or 12.6% of the vote, making them the third largest party in the UK by popular vote), far more than the Scottish National Party’s 1,454,436 votes. But without the SNP’s concentration of voters, UKIP could not make a similar Westminster breakthrough. Despite this, UKIP can see their efforts as a success. Attempts to diffuse the UKIP threat by adopting a more hardline Eurosceptic position in response to what Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin characterised as ‘the revolt on the right’ (Ford and Goodwin, 2014) accordingly meant that Conservative pressure for an in-out referendum grew.

#### **4. The In-Out Referendum debate 2011–2014**

That the UK would hold a referendum on EU membership by the end of 2017 was by no means a foregone conclusion at the outset of the Coalition Government, or even after Cameron’s speech in January 2013. Although the Liberal Democrats have consistently advocated referendums on EU matters—not only on treaty changes but also on membership—the Conservative leadership needed to alter its position. This change began in the period of 2011–2013 when pressure from its backbenches increased. Conservative MP, James Wharton’s Private Member’s Bill of 2013 – 2014 kept the issue alive after the ‘Bloomberg Speech’ and the Conservatives’ surprising majority in May 2015 ensured a referendum would be held before the end of 2017.

While parties’ positions on an in-out referendum shifted, throughout this period, the framework of the debate and the arguments within them remained consistent and were clear by the end of 2011. In championing popular sovereignty as expressed via a

referendum, the Conservatives contributed to a populist critique that implicitly contrasted ‘cosmopolitan and political elites’ with the ‘pure People’ (Mudde, 2004, p. 543) while seeking to manage this populism within the traditions of Parliament and in the language of democratic renewal. During consideration of the Lords’ amendments in July 2011, Lidington again stated that the purpose of the Bill was ‘to reconnect with the people whom we serve. It aims to re-engage them with key decisions on the direction of the European Union, on which they have, in the past, been denied their say’ (Hansards, Vol. 531, part 135, col. 61), adding his expectation that this was ‘an innovation that will be welcomed by the British people, and it should become an enduring part of our constitutional framework’ (Hansards, Vol. 531, part 135, col. 73). Following the Royal Assent of the *EU Act*, Hague argued that beyond the restoration of parliamentary sovereignty, ‘this is good news for our democracy and will significantly strengthen it’. He continued

For the first time it gives real control to Parliament and every voter in the country over the most important decisions a government can make in the EU. Trust in the EU has been severely damaged. It is only by giving voters proper control over any future proposal to change the Treaties—the EU’s rule book—to shift powers from Britain to the EU that we can begin to reconnect people to the EU. (Hague, 2011)

This shift towards referendums was unusual if we consider the general trend for the use of referendums in Europe in addition to their uneasy position within the British political system. Cécile Leconte noted the effect of referendums in an increasingly Eurosceptic climate. She observed that ‘the impact of Euroscepticism on the integration process is compounded by the more frequent use of referenda (as opposed to parliamentary ratification) in order to settle debated EU issues’ (Leconte, 2011, p. 14). However, the political popularity of these exercises in direct democracy came to a sudden halt after the ‘period of reflection’ post-2005. Often, electorates were delivering important ‘no’ votes in referendums relating to European integration, even

if the reasons for so doing might have more to do with domestic politics and levels of voter education than with the European dimension itself (Hobolt, 2009, p. 16).

The negative reaction in European capitals to Georges Papandreu's suggestion that there be a referendum on the second Greek bailout package in late 2011 indicated how far out of favour referendums had fallen as part of the legitimisation process related to European integration. The July 2015 referendum on austerity conditions attached to the third bailout, notwithstanding the Syriza-led government's subsequent acceptance of an even stricter austerity package despite the overwhelming 'no' vote, further dented confidence among European leaders on the wisdom of holding popular votes. In this context, the Coalition Government's decision to adopt referendums might seem odd were it not for the knowledge that in a Dicean view of referendums their main aim is to prevent, rather than enable, change.

But the Coalition Government had to be careful that it did not lose control of the issue. Having invoked 'the People' in defence of British sovereignty for the purposes of the *EU Act*, the leadership found itself at risk of being outflanked on the issue of a referendum countenancing the possibility of complete withdrawal and creating new issues of party management. In this light, the *EU Act* was an unsuccessful sop to the Conservative Eurosceptic right with veterans such as Bill Cash in particular undermining the tentative Eurosceptic support for the Act (European Foundation, 2011). As in 1975, intra-party and intra-government divisions helped create the conditions whereby the issue of European integration appeared again to be in need of resolution by 'the People'. Despite Cameron's veto in the European Council in December 2011, the Conservative members of the government quickly found itself in the familiar

position of having to collaborate more in the councils of Europe than they had imagined in opposition. Thus the Government had to steer a line between cooperation and resistance. The official government position on the EU at this stage was one that reflected a traditional British understanding of what the EU was—or should be—about. In reporting to Parliament on returning from a meeting of the European Council in October 2011, Cameron told MPs that

At the heart of our national interest, when it comes to the EU, is not only access to that single market but the need to ensure that we are sitting around the table of the single market determining the rules that our exporters have to follow. That is key to our national interest and we must not lose that. (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 38)

This view was what Andrew Geddes has described as ‘a rather narrow trade-based idea of European integration’ (Geddes, 2004, p. 192) that had been the standard way of making British membership of the European Union palatable since the debates about accession in the 1960s and 1970s; although it was not a vision that prepared public or elite opinion well for the deeper integration envisaged by leading European partners like Jacques Delors, or for the pro-integration logic of the Eurozone crisis.

In one sense the Coalition Government was playing a familiar ‘two-level game’: outside of high profile policy areas such as the euro, British engagement in Europe had been quite constructive since 1997 and even since the formation of the Coalition Government in 2010 (Thorlakson, 2011). Thus some of the motives for bringing about the referendum lock in the *EU Act* were for domestic consumption as well as a need to keep the issue from more damaging arenas, such as general elections, where the collective memory of Conservative divisions remained strong (Geddes, 1997). But the referendum lock was also a means to manage intra-party tensions within the Conservative Party itself. With a narrow parliamentary majority and in coalition with

the most pro-European major party in British politics, it might have been expected that backbench Eurosceptics would have remained quiescent for the life of the new Parliament. However, this was not to be the case and on the night of 24 October almost one-third of the Conservative parliamentary party defied a three-line whip on the issue of an in-out referendum.

In moving a motion in favour of an in-out referendum on the European Union in the House of Commons, Conservative MP for Bury North, David Nuttall complained that

At a time when people pick up their phones and spend their own money voting week in, week out to keep their favourite contestants on programmes such as ‘Strictly Come Dancing’ and ‘The X Factor’, many will be baffled as to why the Government and all those who oppose this motion seem keen to prevent them from having their chance to vote on Britain’s future relationship with the European Union. (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 48)

This revolt had been coming for some time. For many Eurosceptics inside and outside Westminster, the question of the UK’s place in the EU was more important than the existence of the Coalition itself. Daniel Hannan was part of a group of parliamentarians in the European Parliament and at Westminster who campaigned to keep the issue of British membership at the forefront of political debate. In this he and his colleagues were helped by a Eurosceptic press, particularly the Daily Express, and the use of web-based media to disseminate their views. ‘It’s hard to imagine a larger question in British politics than whether we should be in the EU’, argued Hannan. He went on:

Depending on how you measure it, between 50 and 84 per cent of our laws come from Brussels. The curtailment of our democracy was at first seen as the price for being part of a prosperous and growing market; but it now seems clear that the EU is sinking, dragging us with it like so many chained galley-slaves. (Hannan, 2011)

The fact that there was a debate about holding an in-out referendum at all was a mixture of long-standing, but growing concerns about Britain’s membership of the

European Union and new initiatives designed to improve the electorate's relationship with Parliament. The first of these concerns was expressed by Labour MP Frank Field: 'The real reason why Europe has such a sulphurous effect on our politics is that, as we now know from the records, there has been an exercise in deceit from the word go' (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 99). The Bill's sponsor, Conservative MP David Nuttall, elaborated further: 'The situation we find ourselves in', explained Nuttall, 'is rather like that of someone who has boarded a slow train going in one direction and finds, just as they are settling in, that the train starts to career off at high speed in a completely different direction, with carriages being added on left, right and centre, and they are locked in and have no way of getting off. Worse still', he continued,

The longer people are on the train, the more the fare goes up, but there is absolutely nothing they can do about it because any negotiation with the guards or the driver is almost impossible. This motion would simply allow the train to stop for a while so that the passengers can decide whether they want to continue the journey or even disembark. (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col 49)

But the debate was also a product of the 'New Politics' promised in the 2010 General Election. Specifically, it was initiated by the introduction of e-petitions that were designed to signal to Parliament issues of popular concern. The motion was moved by David Nuttall (Bury North), with support from John Baron (Basildon and Billericay), Christopher Chope (Christchurch), Steve Baker (Wycombe), Peter Bone (Wellingborough), Douglas Carswell (Clacton), Mark Reckless, (Rochester and Strood)—the latter two still Conservatives at this stage. The motion called for a bill that would seek approval for a referendum that would ask the electorate whether the UK should remain a member of the EU on current terms or renegotiate the UK – EU relationship 'in order to create a new relationship based on trade and co-operation' (Hansards, Vol. 534, Part 1, col. 46).

Immediately, the motion based on this initiative ran in to problems of Parliamentary management, with all three major parties imposing a three-line whip against the motion. This whipping was portrayed by supporters of the bill as a denial of the voice of the British people. Labour MP Austin Mitchell called the three-line whip ‘an abomination of democracy’, adding that ‘I shall be voting for this motion tonight because I do not want to become part of what has become a three-party conspiracy against the people’ (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 105). He also gave voice to a left-populism that was growing in the wake of the Euro crisis. ‘The EU is the construction of an EU elite that does not listen to the people,’ he declared, adding, ‘it knows where it wants to go, and it is not bothered what the people think. We cannot have that attitude in this country’ (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 105). Conservative MP Anne Main claimed that the vote would not show the will of Parliament; ‘it will show the will of the Whips; it will show the will of enforcement. It will certainly not show the will of the people, who have voted for us to be elected to Parliament to speak on their behalf’ (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 74). For Democratic Unionist Nigel Dodds (one of the people who delivered the original e-petition to 10 Downing Street), the issue of an in-out referendum was one ‘that transcends party allegiance’ and that ‘the people must therefore have their say’ (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 73).

Such attitudes that pitted the British People against their elected representatives were compounded by the previous politics of referendums in the EU that had helped to contribute to the perception of popular cynicism towards the politics of European integration. Roger Godsiff, also a Labour MP, characterised this politics as the drive of pro-Europeans towards ever closer union regardless of public opinion. The aim of

the pro-Europeans was ‘to move relentlessly forward—take two steps forward, a massive great row, go into denial, label objectors mad or worse, take one step back, wait for the fury to subside, then move two steps forward again’ (Hansards, Vol. 534, part 1, col. 81). Thus, far from resolving issues of declining interest in the politics of European integration, the use of referendums as legitimating devices had helped create the cynicism that the proponents of the *EU Act* and the in-out referendum ostensibly sought to address.

Despite the potentially corrosive impact of referendums on public interest in politics, the normative force of the referendum is difficult to deny and was given a boost by the 84.6% turnout for the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 (Electoral Commission, 2014). ‘In the last resort,’ argued Vernon Bogdanor, ‘the arguments against the referendum are also arguments against democracy, while acceptance of the referendum is but a logical consequence of accepting a democratic form of government’ (Bogdanor, 1981, p. 93). Even given this force, not all Parliamentarians were blind to the tensions inherent between popular and parliamentary sovereignty. The Lord Bishop of Guildford issued a double caution during the second reading of the EU Bill in the House of Lords: ‘[W]ould not a large extension of the principle of decisions by plebiscite risk evacuating the principle of parliamentary sovereignty of real meaning?’ (Hansards, 22 March, 2011, col. 619).

Granted the lamentably endemic low view of Europe in the United Kingdom, is there not a serious risk that extensive referenda on necessarily complex European matters could lead . . . through low turnout and referenda fatigue, to a multispeed Europe in which the UK is confined to the hard shoulder? (Hansards, 22 March, 2011, col. 619)

This, of course, was precisely the intention.

## 5. Conclusion

As the EU faces the possibility of deeper integration in its ‘Eurozone core’, the UK is pulling in a different direction. This may not have the regenerative effect on democratic participation and inclusion as hoped and stated by the proponents of referendums, either as part of the *EU Act* or as part of a wider campaign to remove the UK from the EU. Referendums can be didactic and exclusionary as well as participatory and the experience of the previous decade suggests that referendums can reinforce a populist politics that contrasts ‘the People’ against European—including British —‘elites’.

Thus European integration has forced a profound change on the English political tradition. Tensions between popular and parliamentary sovereignty persist, and given the historic insularity of Parliament, these will not be quickly resolved. However, opposition to European integration, both inside and outside Westminster, has meant that popular sovereignty now has a recognised place in British law. That Parliament’s authority is no longer absolute is an indirect consequence of the politics of European integration in the UK. Despite provisions intended to safeguard executive power, the ‘referendum lock’ enshrined in the *EU Act* (2011) eroded the principle of parliamentary sovereignty that it sought to defend. It also resulted in the unintended consequence of embedding a populism opposed to European integration as part of British political culture. It is now the People, not Parliament, who are the ultimate guarantor of Britain’s sovereignty.

## CHAPTER 4.

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**Emma Vines, 'Reframing *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*: from Populism to the British Political Tradition', *British Politics*, (2014): 9:3, 255-27**

## Abstract

This article analyses Ben Wellings' recent contribution to the debate over the English Question, English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: *Losing the Peace*, and places it within the context of the British Political Tradition (BPT). Wellings develops the case for an English nationalism characterised by an opposition to European integration. Although this article is broadly in agreement with his central proposition that Euroscepticism is the most coherent expression of English nationalism, it takes issue with his secondary argument – that this nationalism is populist. Instead, this article reframes the case for Eurosceptic English nationalism in terms of a continued adherence to a BPT characterised by elitist ideas of responsibility and representation. Rather than being genuinely populist, the adoption of Eurosceptic attitudes by a growing section of the political class has been driven by a desire to perpetuate a political system that protects elite power and a culture of limited democratic participation. A study of Euroscepticism consequently offers evidence, not only of English nationalism, but also of the existence of a BPT that constrains and facilitates political action and development.

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**Keywords:** nationalism; populism; traditions; Euroscepticism; England

## Introduction

Stability and continuity have long been held as the dominant and enviable characteristics of British democracy; yet the spectre of an independent Scotland and the challenges still facing the Union since devolution raise serious questions as to the continued viability of the current constitutional settlement. Although Scottish nationalism has dominated headlines, the English Question presents another potentially volatile aspect of British identity politics. While the greatest attention has

been paid to the West Lothian Question and funding inequalities, a recent contribution, Wellings' (2012) *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: Losing the Peace*, instead develops the case for an English nationalism characterised by an opposition to European integration based on an alternative understanding of the past and attitudes towards national and parliamentary sovereignty, which conflict with the foundational myth of European unity.

Given David Cameron's recent pledge to hold an in-out referendum should the Conservative Party win the next election, understanding the complex interplay of economic, social and political factors driving the intensification of Euroscepticism in Britain is becoming increasingly important. Since the breakdown of the 'permissive consensus' in post-Maastricht Europe, and the failure of the 2005 French and Danish referenda on the European Constitution, academics' analyses of Euroscepticism have broadened considerably from the traditional focus on party politics and Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008) influential 'hard'/'soft' dichotomy. Civil society and the mobilisation of grassroots Eurosceptic groups are becoming increasingly important to the understanding of Euroscepticism at a national level (Fitzgibbon, 2013; Usherwood and Startin, 2013). However, British Euroscepticism stands apart from its Continental form, because the British Parliament has, historically, been more accommodating of Eurosceptic arguments (Fitzgibbon, 2013). In this context, Wellings' discussion of Euroscepticism as a phenomenon driven, not simply by economic pressures, but also the search for national redefinition and an embrace of populist politics, is particularly valuable. He presents an account that explores the interweaving of nationalism, populism and Euroscepticism to demonstrate the intersection of two increasingly

important debates in British politics: opposition to the European project and English nationalism. This article seeks to further this discussion by looking specifically at the institutional and ideational factors influencing political actors' behaviour in decisions over Europe.

Thus, although this article is broadly in agreement with Wellings' central proposition that Euroscepticism is the most coherent expression of English nationalism, it takes issue with his secondary argument – that this nationalism is populist. Instead, this article reframes the case for Eurosceptic English nationalism in terms of a continued adherence to the British Political Tradition (BPT). The BPT is characterised by elitist ideas of responsibility and representation (Tant, 1993; Marsh and Hall, 2007; Hall, 2011). As such, the argument here is that, rather than being genuinely populist, the adoption of Eurosceptic attitudes by a growing section of the political class has been driven by a desire to perpetuate a political system that protects elite power and a culture of limited democratic participation. A study of Euroscepticism consequently offers evidence, not only of an English nationalism often thought absent (Abell et al, 2007), but also of the existence of a BPT that constrains and facilitates political action and development.

This article begins with an examination of Wellings' argument for a Eurosceptic English nationalism, placing this within the broader debate over the English Question. A sizeable body of literature devoted to the character of the Union and the competing nationalisms within it has grown out of the turbulence of British identity politics and, recently, significant time has been devoted to unravelling the English Question (see,

for example, Kumar, 2003; Hazell, 2006; Aughey, 2007; Lodge and Kenny, 2009; Wellings, 2012; Wyn Jones et al, 2012). Wellings' analysis differs in that it reveals a well-defined English nationalism through an examination of external, rather than internal, political developments. The move away from developments within the Union is a welcome one and Wellings has added a fresh perspective that ought to reinvigorate debate over the English Question. In particular, his contribution is the first detailed examination of the connection between Euroscepticism and English nationalism, since most authors have instead concentrated on the looser concept of 'identity' (Smith, 2006). Wellings builds upon previous work done on Britain's position as Europe's 'awkward partner' and, more recently, the significance of Europe to England in particular (Gifford, 2010). However, unlike authors such as Gifford (2010, pp. 334, 335), Wellings is more definitive in his characterisation of Euroscepticism as a specifically English nationalism.

The final section of this article challenges the populist dimension of Wellings' work, showing instead the persistence of the BPT, which, in direct contrast to the aims of populist politics, instead, continues to foster insular, elitist, politics. The article concludes by acknowledging that, although the perpetuation of such an elitist tradition presents problems for those desiring a genuinely open and participatory democracy, the development of Eurosceptic attitudes and policies coextensive with the BPT ensures that, unlike demands for English devolution or the strengthening of a far-right xenophobic Little England, Euroscepticism is not only a form of English nationalism acceptable to both the Establishment and society, but also one that does not spell the end of the Union, instead seeking to strengthen its sovereign borders.

### **Wellings: *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism***

Debates over the English Question have been numerous and varied, with the nature of a resurgent English nationalism remaining ambiguous and its very existence frequently disputed. In the wake of devolution, there was an upsurge of interest in the composition of the British Union. Responses to devolution ranged from arguments that New Labour's policies spelt the end of Britain's historic constitution (Bogdanor, 2005), to criticism that little had changed, with devolution failing to significantly decentralise power and offering only superficial concessions to nationalists' demands (Nairn, 2000).

Despite some commentators prophesying an imminent English backlash (Bryant, 2003), the years following devolution led to broad consensus that although English nationalism may exist as a low-level generalised 'anxiety', it remained at most a 'mood not a movement' (Aughey, 2010, p. 506). Although explanations for this varied, common themes emerged. The first and most common was that the English had little cause for complaint (Aughey, 2010; Blair, 2010; Kumar, 2010). The United Kingdom had always been, and remained, dominated by England geographically, demographically, politically and economically. Despite concerns over the disproportionate public spending in Scotland compared with England, the South of England remained the economic capital of the Union. Similarly, despite powers being decentralised to the newly formed Parliament and Assemblies, Westminster retained its dominance over areas of high politics (Nairn, 2000) and thus the symbol of British politics remained, at least for the English, in their own nation. The sense of marginalisation and domination that had been shared in Scotland and Wales was

consequently lacking in England; and it is this absence of grievance that has often been presented as the obvious explanation for England's acceptance of asymmetrical inequalities (Kumar, 2010).

This absence of nationalist fervour allowed the English Question to be shelved by politicians who either agreed that the English had little to fear from devolution or else dreaded the ramifications for the Union should English nationalism be unleashed. The result was that whatever potential momentum existed at the time of devolution for a politically motivated English nationalism to develop was lost due to the absence of formal political engagement and leadership. Here, the Conservative Party has been held most responsible (Aughey, 2010). Despite being the Party of the Union, at the time of devolution the Conservatives held no seats in either Scotland or Wales and, in the next general election in 2001, they regained only a single seat in Scotland. Given the Conservatives' poor electoral record outside England, they appeared 'the de facto English party' (Wellings, 2007); this was, however, a label they rejected, seeking instead to retain their Unionist credentials (Aughey, 2010, p. 518). The absence of leadership from the centre-ground of politics has consequently been viewed as preventing English nationalism from becoming a coherent and credible force in British politics. Yet, while this idea that English nationalism is no more than an 'anxiety' has become almost an accepted norm within the literature on the English Question, it is an argument based on a highly problematic and misleading model of nationalism.

Although the lack of political engagement with English nationalism has hindered its development, it is wrong to infer from this that English nationalism does not exist in any real or important way. There is significant evidence to suggest that an English nationalism has developed despite elite opposition. The 2012 IPPR report *The Dog That Finally Barked* drew together survey data covering issues concerning the current state of British politics, economics and questions of identity. While the report confirmed that people are more likely now to identify first as ‘English’, rather than ‘British’, a more important finding was that Englishness had developed a clear political dimension (Wyn Jones et al, 2012). The report concluded by arguing that ‘after centuries of being subsumed within the wider state, England is re-emerging as a political community’ (p. 31) – a development unlikely to be discouraged by continued elite antipathy.

This evidence flies in the face of commentators’ claims (Bryant, 2003; Aughey, 2010) that English nationalism remains politically impotent and highlights the pressing need for both a new model of nationalism and an analysis that focuses not on the narrow issue of devolution, but, rather, broadens its examination to a variety of political, economic and social forces within Britain (Lodge and Kenny, 2009). A broader focus locates an English nationalism driven by the fundamental goal of adequate representation, which involves not English devolution, but rather securing a representative political class capable of protecting British sovereignty and English interests.

The search for a new model of nationalism drives Wellings' study and this is the greatest strength of *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*. Traditional definitions focus on a community clearly delineated by geographical borders and defended by a sovereign body limited to, and representative of, this nation-state (Anderson, 2006). In contrast, Wellings (2012) finds this notion of a 'limited and sovereign' nation problematic. Instead, he develops a broader model that emphasises both the place of contemporary English identity and nationalism within a multinational unit and continued commitment to the Union. Nationalism is thus conceived as a phenomenon that: 'legitimises a particular location of sovereignty' (p. 11). This conception of nationalism moves beyond the often unhelpful emphasis on either a normative idea of reactionary national development (based largely on Scottish comparisons) or a concentration on the more ambiguous notion of identity (Bryant, 2003; Kumar, 2010; English, 2011).

Central to Wellings' definition of nationalism and conception of Englishness is the role of Empire. This starting point is by no means unique to *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*; indeed, almost any study of English or British nationalism begins with an exploration of imperialism (Kumar, 2003; Colley, 2005). However, there are important differences between Wellings' understanding of imperialism and its links with nationalism and alternative narratives, such as Kumar's (2003) *The Making of English National Identity*. For Kumar (pp. 32–33), imperialism and nationalism are not simply discrete forces, but also antithetical in nature. Empire building required that the imperial state abandon claims to a homogeneous population, appearing distant and impartial and finding its common centre in the figure of an emperor or monarch.

Thus, imperialism is incompatible with the narrow concept of the modern ‘nation-state’ that developed out of the French Revolution and that ‘makes claims to exclusivity and, often, homogeneity’ (pp. 32–33). Kumar does, however, recognise the vital importance of imperialism to the development of the looser idea of national identity. In his view, imperialism provided a sense of national purpose and, subsequently, became crucial to national pride and identification and, as other authors have also confirmed, fostered patriotic allegiance to the multinational British framework (Kumar, 2003; Colley, 2005). This concept – although termed ‘missionary nationalism’ – remained distinct from modern political nationalism, as it continued to look beyond national borders: ‘find[ing] its principle not so much in equating state and nation as in extending the supposed benefits of a particular nation’s rule and civilization to other people’ (Kumar, 2003, pp. 30–35). Ultimately, for Kumar, although contemporary England can only be understood with reference to this imperial past, a ‘moment of Englishness’ distinct from the broader allegiance to empire, Crown and Britishness could only arise in the post-imperial period of the nineteenth century. Although Kumar’s concept of missionary nationalism has value, he makes too great a division between imperialism and nationalism and it is here where Wellings’ conflation of the two processes is useful. Wellings (2012) instead argues that ‘what we might expect to call English nationalism was not so much inhibited by Empire and Britain but was merged with these wider categories of belonging’ (p. 32). This is vital to understanding why English nationalism continues to identify itself with the Unionist project and protect the sovereignty of Westminster and the integrity of the Crown-in-Parliament system.

Rather than viewing the missionary nature of British imperialism as a block to English nationalism, Wellings (2012) instead views it as its foundation. The belief in the superiority of British democracy justified the imperial project and became the defining ideology of not only the state, but also of Englishness. Although this was a period in which England and Britain were conflated, Wellings, again unlike Kumar, does not view this as preventing nationalism, but rather as shaping its character (Kumar, 2003; Wellings, 2012). The English may have refrained from speaking of England and Englishness, yet, by developing a sense of Britishness based on the extension of British sovereignty and justified by a belief in the Crown-in-Parliament, they established the foundation for contemporary English nationalism. This belief in British democracy as exceptional had important implications for Britain's relations with its Continental neighbours, given the differences between British and Continental democratic traditions and conceptions of sovereignty.

Britain's democratic institutions largely pre-date the creation of the Union, reaching back to the seventeenth century and the Glorious Revolution. Unlike the revolutions in France and America, the English Civil War was not driven by Enlightenment ideals, such as liberty and equality. England's abortive attempt at Republicanism and the entrenchment of the Crown-in-Parliament in 1688 reasserted that it was the elite and the institutions, rather than the people, who knew what was in the national interest (Nairn, 1977). England (and after 1707, Britain) thus became a pre-modern 'state-nation', based on the certainty that 'government knows best', rather than a modern 'nation-state' in which government depends on its people for continuing

legitimacy (Nairn, 1977; Preston, 1994; Marsh and Hall, 2007). The entire foundation of not only British democracy but also the British nation thus stands in stark opposition to the institutions on the Continent, which have (with various degrees of success) nurtured at least an ideal of popular participation.

This elitist tradition within British democracy will be the focus of the following section, but I will first outline Wellings' argument that Euroscepticism is an example of populist English nationalism. Just as British democracy and conceptions of sovereignty differ markedly from those in Continental Europe, so too does the perception of nationalism. For the European Continent, World War II exposed the evils of nationalism, while for the British it represented the nation's 'finest hour'. Thus, World War II did not hold the same lessons for Britain as it did on the Continent. The creation of first the European Coal and Steel Community, and subsequently the European Economic Community, depended up 'a myth of origins capacious enough to encompass – and trump – all other national myths', developing a narrative of peace in the aftermath of a war that had shown the worst excesses of nationalism (Wellings, 2012, p. 78). From its inception, therefore, the idea of European unity sat uneasily with the British national myth. Further, as Wellings (2012, p. 124) points out, when Britain did finally enter the EEC in 1973, it did so out of economic desperation and the need to reverse national decline rather than out of commitment to a federal Europe or a fervent belief in the foundational myth of a Continent at peace. As such, from the beginnings of Britain's involvement in the EEC, belief in the core ideals of the European project was a distant second to national economic considerations and, most importantly, its opinion of sovereignty and

nationalism remained anathema to the foundational myth of Europe.

As the 1975 referendum reflected, at this time, ambivalence towards Europe was felt particularly keenly outside England, in the Celtic periphery (Butler and Kitzinger, 1976). Under Thatcher, however, at the same time as public opinion hardened against greater European integration, Scottish and Welsh opinion similarly hardened against the British Establishment and, since 1993, the principle of ‘independence in Europe’ has been at the heart of Scottish nationalism. From the early 1990s, therefore, Euroscepticism has found England to be its most welcoming home, and, consequently, as Wellings (2012) argues, although devolution may have sharpened the outline of an English political community, ‘the ideological content of contemporary English nationalism had been forming for some decades and it had been forming in opposition to European integration’ (p. 42). The fact that England remains content with Westminster continuing to act as their national Parliament does not mean that the English do not conceive of themselves as a political community. If nationalism demands, as Gellner (1983) claimed, ‘the political and national unit should be congruent’ (p. 1), then resistance to European integration, based on concerns that the European project is incompatible with the British national character and demands for the reassertion of Westminster sovereignty, should be considered a nationalist cause.

For Wellings, the final element of contemporary Euroscepticism in England is its populist character, as popular sovereignty has eroded parliamentary sovereignty. Wellings (2012) argues that on the question of Europe, the mainstream British parties

have been forced to respond to the growing popularity of overtly populist fringe parties, such as the British National Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). He views this in part as a reflection of what Mudde (2004) has termed the ‘populist zeitgeist’ in contemporary politics.

Mudde (2004) charts the growth of populist politics since the 1980s, noting in particular the increased adoption of populist policies by mainstream political parties. The focus is not explicitly on citizens’ desire for greater participation, but rather on the need for responsive government. As will be discussed, this demand for responsive government directly challenges the narrow understandings of responsibility and representation at the heart of the BPT. Much of the elite’s interaction with the ‘populist zeitgeist’, however, has been superficial at best. Consequently, rather than Mudde’s (2004, pp. 550–551) argument that the rise of New Labour saw an increase in populist politics, the actions of the Blair Government were instead largely concerned with protecting centralised power and elite dominance (Blunkett and Richards, 2011). While Mudde is arguably correct that Blair’s modernisation of the Labour Party initially did much to redress the appearance of a distant political elite, this change was largely cosmetic. As former Home Secretary David Blunkett argued, New Labour policy can only be properly understood within the context of the BPT (Blunkett and Richards, 2011). Constitutional change – with the exception of the unstoppable move towards devolution (Marsh and Hall, 2007) – was not, therefore, the result of a commitment to modernisation and decentralisation; rather, the BPT can be used to explain ‘a crucial paradox that spans the New Labour administration: the commitment to the idea of devolving power away from the centre ... and the empirical

reality of a public policy programme driven from the centre in a traditional hierarchical and elitist manner' (Blunkett and Richards, 2011). The 'populist zeitgeist', therefore, has struggled to have real effect in Britain.

This raises questions over Wellings' theorisation of Euroscepticism as a populist force. The final section of this article thus reframes the issue in terms of the BPT. It is argued that, rather than reflecting a shift from an elitist tradition to populism, elite responses to Euroscepticism instead continue to demonstrate the influence of the BPT, as party unity and the protection of a democratic inheritance based on elitism and insularity remain the main impetus behind political action. Euroscepticism is, consequently, not only a form of English nationalism benefited by elite leadership and support, but one that is also coextensive with the continuation of the dominant national narrative of revered institutions and limited popular participation.

### **Reframing Euroscepticism: From Populism to the BPT**

Using traditions to frame political analyses allows us to sharpen discussions of continuity and change and begin to understand the form of institutions and actors' behaviour within a more defined context. For Greenleaf (1983), a 'tradition':

implies just such a unity in diversity: a complex amalgam of different forces and opposing choices, and therefore of internal tensions, which is at the same time in a continual state of flux and development but which nevertheless constitutes a recognisable and acknowledged whole. (p. 13)

Such a concept throws up a myriad of issues and this definition of 'tradition' is by no means definitive (Hall, 2011). However, for our purposes here, it is enough to recognise that a political tradition will encompass particular beliefs, discourses and practices. This article also views political traditions as capable of constraining,

without determining, actors' behaviour and political decisions. Broadly speaking, therefore:

the predominant political tradition will be institutionally embedded and will reflect established political practice. Through its dominance, it will also inform the parameters for debates and discourses regarding the political system. It will also condition how actors view existing arrangements and alternatives to established practices. (Hall, 2011, p. 118)

Some of the issues surrounding this essentially historical institutionalist position are discussed below. Initially, however, we turn to traditional accounts of the British political system and their focus on the exceptionalism of British politics, which, as already discussed, provides much of the ideological content of English nationalism.

Traditional accounts of British politics focused on the idea of the Westminster Model, emphasising the strength and exceptionalism of British democracy (Beer, 1965; Birch, 1964; Greenleaf, 1983). Britain was viewed as a unitary state in which stability was prized and founded on a strong, centralised government and party system. Chief among these traditional accounts are Samuel Beer's (1965) *Modern British Politics* and Anthony Birch's *Representative and Responsible Government* (1964). Both Birch and Beer portray the development of British politics as essentially a series of contests between liberal and collectivist ideas. British institutions may be based on a liberal blueprint; however, the growth of the Labour Party in the first half of the twentieth century and the post-war consensus in the second half entrenched collectivist ideas (Tant, 1993).

Birch is perhaps more critical than Beer, frequently citing the gap between theory and practice that occurs in areas such as collective and individual responsibility (Birch,

1964, pp. 137–149). Ultimately, however, despite its flaws, the British system is held to be superior to other democracies. Collective responsibility, for example, although not always providing constant governmental accountability to Parliament, facilitates strong government as it minimises destabilising open intra-party conflict (p. 138). Party cohesion and the ability to govern are privileged over accountability mechanisms. Clear here is the understanding of ‘responsible’ government at the heart of the British political system: ‘a government is acting “responsible” not when it submits to Parliamentary control but when it takes effective measures to dominate Parliament’ (p. 138). This understanding of responsibility perpetuates a political tradition (and indeed, an entire civil society) founded on the principle that ‘government knows best’ (Tant, 1993; Marsh et al, 2001; Marsh and Hall, 2007; Hall, 2011). Not only does this result in a staunch defence of the status quo, but it also encourages wider political apathy, as government and its institutions are seen as distant and something to be revered.

Societal apathy is further aided by the very limited notion of ‘representation’ operating within Britain. Politicians are not formally bound to popular opinion and the government is free to pursue an agenda more concerned with consistency than responsiveness. Again, both Birch and Beer applaud this understanding of representation, with Birch (1964, p. 245) concluding that: ‘all the evidence suggests that the British people still like being governed’. Beer (1965, p. 102) similarly highlights the public’s deference to their political leaders and defends the elitism of British politics since ‘millions of Britons of all classes do accept the class system as an integrating force in country and in party’. British conceptions of responsibility and

representation are thus admired for their ability to provide strong, centralised government through the Westminster Model. The elitism obviously inherent within such conceptions is applauded and defended.

Since the 1960s, however, enormous changes in Britain, such as the shift from government to governance and the rejection of the unitary state through devolution, have shown the Westminster Model to be grossly misrepresentative (Marsh et al, 2001; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Hall, 2011). Contemporary studies of British politics have sought to take account of such changes and offer critical analyses of the BPT.

Critical analyses of the BPT are immediately confronted with a series of questions. How many traditions operate within Britain? Which, if any, tradition is dominant? Most importantly, how does a tradition influence, constrain or determine actors' behaviours and beliefs? (Marsh et al, 2001; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Hall, 2011). Responses to these questions vary significantly and often reflect irreconcilable differences in commentators' ontological and epistemological positions; a problem particularly apparent when comparing the position of anti-foundationalists Mark Bevir and Rod Rhodes, with that of critical realists such as David Marsh and Matthew Hall. This article adopts the conception of the BPT suggested by academics such as Marsh and Hall, finding this to be more convincing given the historical development of British democracy. Before developing this argument, however, it is first necessary to turn to Bevir and Rhodes and what is currently the most popular theory of BPTs and governance.

Bevir and Rhodes' (2003) argument begins with a rejection of what they see as the dominance of positivism and the need to decentre accounts of British politics. In this, they reject the idea of reified institutions and instead stress agency and discourse: 'individuals are bearers of traditions even as they enact and remake structures in their everyday lives. So, governing structures can only be understood through the beliefs and actions of individuals and through the traditions passed on from person to person' (p. 77). Consequently, unlike for Hall, traditions are not fixed and actors may draw on different traditions depending on the situation. Bevir and Rhodes identify four dominant traditions: Tory, Whig, Liberal and Socialist. However, although actors may respond in a way that reflects the dominance of a particular tradition, they are not necessarily limited to a single tradition. Bevir and Rhodes (2003, pp. 129–137) use the example of Blair and New Labour, who, although most comfortably fitting within the Socialist tradition, were also influenced by the Liberal tradition, as they adapted to the changes in governance wrought by the Thatcher period. British politics, therefore, comes to be understood as a series of discourses, dependent on the actions and interpretations of individuals. As such, change, rather than continuity, is emphasised, as situated actors respond to, and interpret, 'dilemmas'. Further, institutions cannot be inscribed with fixed ideas or behavioural norms and, although a tradition, 'may appear to tell people how they should extend it, modify it or apply it ... it can only provide them with a guide to what they might do. It does not have rules fixing what they must do' (pp. 36–37). The path-determinacy of historical institutionalist accounts is rejected.

Although Bevir and Rhodes (2006) are right to reject the overly static institutionalism of traditional accounts of British politics, their post-structuralism gives individuals too much autonomy, despite viewing them as ‘situated agents’. Their interviews conducted with civil servants in their book *Governance Stories* (2006) display actors’ implicit understandings of certain institutional practices and culture that demand a degree of observance. This suggests institutions are, to a certain degree, embedded with certain discourses and practices that are independent of actors. The alternative BPT outlined below takes this into account and better situates British institutions within the narrative of British history discussed above.

Alternatives to Bevir and Rhodes’ work reject their claim that there is no one dominant political tradition within Britain. The critical approach to the BPT offered by authors such as Marsh, Hall and Tant emphasise the structured inequality embedded within British society and political culture (Tant, 1993; Marsh et al, 2001; Hall, 2011). These authors’ accounts share numerous similarities with classical accounts of British politics. However, rather than either implicitly accepting or openly applauding the elitism of British democracy, they instead demonstrate the distance between politics and the people fostered by the elitist understandings of ‘representation’ and ‘responsibility’ outlined above (Birch, 1964; Beer, 1965).

Hall (2011) identifies two dominant democratic discourses: a ‘limited liberal notion of representation’ and ‘a conservative notion of responsibility’ (pp. 124–125). This is supported by two related discourses concerning change: an emphasis on continuity and stability through the perpetuation of the status quo and the idea of British

exceptionalism (pp. 124–125). Consequently, the emphasis is ‘on strong, rather than responsible, government, and an elite, or leadership, democracy, rather than participatory democracy’ (Marsh and Hall, 2007, p. 224). The links between this conception of the BPT and the narrative of British nationalism outlined above are clear. The belief that ‘government knows best’ and an associated confidence in the superiority of British democracy forms a firm foundation for a state-centred nationalism, in which Britishness is firmly linked to allegiance to Westminster and the Crown-in-Parliament. With the growth of the Celtic nationalisms forcing decentralisation of powers to Scotland and Wales, this idea remains most powerful within England.

Given the clear links between the BPT, English Nationalism and Euroscepticism, how genuinely populist is elite Euroscepticism? Further, does the rise of the ‘populist zeitgeist’ present a significant challenge to the insularity of the British system? For Wellings, the answer is yes and in this he is supported by the work of Gifford (2010). Gifford analyses the tension caused by the European issue between the BPT and the Differentiated Polity Model (DPM) proposed by Bevir and Rhodes (2003). Although the use of referenda is viewed as having incorporated a populist element into British politics, ultimately ‘demands for greater popular sovereignty have been grafted on to parliamentary sovereignty without necessarily challenging its overall supremacy’ (Gifford, 2010, p. 323). This has meant the power of the elite has largely remained secure. The final element of Gifford’s analysis, however, looks at the impact of multi-level governance and the restrictions imposed on parliamentary sovereignty by policy networks. Bevir and Rhodes’ (2003) DPM fits with their decentred account of British

politics and, rather than the unitary state, they instead outline the ‘shift to a differentiated polity with a power-dependent core executive hollowed out by internal differentiation and international interdependence’ (p. 198). The extent to which the state has been ‘hollowed-out’, however, has been contested and a number of authors have argued that, although the state operates within complex networks, it retains an important steering capacity (Skelcher, 2000; Marsh et al, 2001; Bell and Hindmoor, 2009). Hierarchy remains an important feature of governance networks. This is made clear by Bell and Hindmoor’s (2009) work on metagovernance:

Although governments are experimenting with different modes of governance, this does not necessarily imply a shift away from hierarchical command and control strategies or from the use of governmental or state authority in structuring a range of governance models. Instead, the new instruments are running in parallel with command and control strategies because the operation of a wide range of governance mechanisms usually entails hierarchical state oversight. (p. 8)

The incorporation of hierarchy within governance networks resolves much of the tension highlighted by Gifford (2010, p. 327): ‘the continued assertion of executive power is consistent with the BPT model yet the evident incorporation of the UK into a complex system of policy linkages and networks points to the DPM’. Perhaps of more use to Gifford, therefore, would be Marsh et al’s (2001) Asymmetric Power Model; this incorporates key ideas of the BPT into an explanation of governance networks dominated by the core executive and fits with Gifford’s argument that, as far as possible, EU proposals are harmonious with national agendas (Gifford, 2010, p. 326).

Integral to both Gifford and Wellings’ argument is the increased use of referenda as a means of curtailing the power of the elite and ensuring the views of the public are heard (Gifford, 2010; Wellings, 2012). Wellings devotes significant space to the issue of referenda; indeed, he contends that 1975 marked the beginnings of a populist Euroscepticism. The crux of Wellings’ (2012) argument is that the use of a

referendum in 1975, along with the promise of a popular vote on the single currency issue and, since 2011, the formal requirement for referenda before further transfer-ences of sovereignty, has entrenched the idea that governmental policy on Europe is dependent on popular consent. Parliamentary sovereignty, therefore, is no longer supreme or unquestionable. This argument, however, grossly misrepresents the place of referenda in Britain as a populist tool and means of empowering the people. As debates prior to 1975 showed, within British politics, referenda were considered an abdication of responsibility (Powell, 1973). This is a view based on Burke's argument that: 'your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion' (Burke cited in Stanlis, 1963, p. 224). This reflects the narrow understanding of responsibility and representation at the heart of the BPT.

Does the eventual use of referenda in Britain, therefore, reflect a change in the BPT and, as Wellings suggests, an increase in populist politics? In answering this, rather than looking to Burke, it is more useful to consider another pivotal political thinker: A. V. Dicey. Dicey was one of the first prominent advocates of referenda, yet he did not seek wider popular participation, but, instead, recognised that referenda could be a useful political device and a powerful means of protecting the status quo (Bogdanor, 1981). Indeed, Wellings (2012) refers to Dicey's view that referenda could prove an effective block to change, yet interprets this use of 'the people' as evidence that Euroscepticism has become a populist force (pp. 40, 218). This is misleading. Although referenda may involve wider popular participation, their use in Britain remains firmly in keeping with the BPT; involving the protection of Westminster

sovereignty, party cohesion and the preservation of the status quo. As the BPT constrains political action, political change is most likely when it conforms to its central tenets (Marsh and Hall, 2007, p. 227). The European issue is a perfect example of this, as the willingness to hold referenda has been primarily because Euroscepticism does not present a challenge to the elite's power within their domestic Parliament, but rather strengthens it.

This argument is supported by Oppermann's (2013) recent analysis of 28 referenda either held or promised within the EU. Oppermann looks specifically at 'discretionary' referenda – that is, referenda not constitutionally required – and divides these into two types: 'offensive' and 'defensive'. All five British referenda fall into the 'domestic/defensive' mode, meaning:

governments pledge EU referendums to defuse the contestation of European policy in the arena of party politics and to avoid the political costs they expect to incur from it. This type of reasoning drives what may be referred to as depoliticizing referendum pledges, because it is about insulating European policy from the realm of discretionary government choices and this from inter-party and intra-party competition. (Oppermann, 2013, p. 689)

The populist dimension, therefore, is minimal, as these votes are manipulated to protect party interests. The ease with which such manipulation can occur, however, has arguably been reduced since the introduction of the *European Union Act* in 2011. This Act both formally acknowledged the principle of parliamentary sovereignty and made referenda a statutory requirement on any future transfers of significant British competencies to the EU. With popular opinion so decisively Eurosceptic in Britain, the Conservatives have effectively introduced a block on any further integration. Thus, it appears that not only have governments undermined their capacity to fully control the timing and substance of referenda – an often crucial determinant in the

success or failure of a popular vote – but they have also ostensibly ceded responsibility for European integration to the people. This formalises the principle, which, according to Wellings (2012), was born in 1975, that, because it is an issue of such importance: ‘the People were to have the ultimate say on European integration’ (p. 146). However, as the Act remains untested, it is difficult to determine the true extent to which it will limit government autonomy. In particular, not only is it difficult to predict which proposals will be deemed important enough to be subject to a popular vote, but future governments will also have the right to simply repeal the Act. Further, with Euroscepticism present in some form across the spectrum of British politics and Europe currently in a state of crisis, the Act has been introduced within a climate where further integration is, arguably, unlikely. As such, the Act may remain untested for some time. It remains difficult to conclude, therefore, that there has been any meaningful shift towards popular sovereignty; rather, the quieting of intra-party dissent has once again been achieved through a nominally populist offering and referenda continue to present a minimal challenge to the BPT. It is to this issue we now turn.

If we examine the 1975 referendum, serious questions are raised over Wellings’ (2012, p. 140) claims that the use of a referendum ‘highlighted the issue of popular versus Crown-in-Parliament sovereignty’ and, thereby, made ‘“the People”, rather than Parliament, the ultimate defenders of British sovereignty’ (p. 41). The first issue that must be addressed, and one that Wellings acknowledges, is why a referendum was permitted in a country built on the idea that ‘government knows best’. The simple answer is that Wilson saw it as a means of reconciling divisions within the Labour

Party. This is conceded by Wellings (p. 140), yet he views the resulting fusion of parliamentary and popular sovereignty as irrevocably eroding parliamentary sovereignty. Although this may have been an unintended consequence, it was one that had enormous ramifications, establishing a precedent for popular votes on European matters. However, in calling a referendum to protect party cohesion, Wilson was acting in a way perfectly in keeping with the BPT.

The second problem with Wellings' explanation of the 1975 referendum is that a popular vote was held only after formal party policy had been determined and a decision already made by the core executive. Throughout the referendum campaign, the government-backed Yes campaign remained firmly in control of the agenda, monopolising press coverage and securing a budget almost ten times greater than the No campaign (Butler and Kitzinger, 1976). In addition, restrictions were imposed on the Labour members of the No campaign. For example, no Labour member of the No campaign was permitted to appear with a member of 'a different political party, or with a representative of any organisation he would not in any other circumstances be seen dead with' (CAB/129/182/16, 18 March 1975). The key point here is that, despite Wilson loosening collective responsibility, the sanctity of party politics remained fiercely protected.

At the same time, politicians' own beliefs about British democracy sometimes constrained their behaviour, with Enoch Powell serving as the best example. Powell was arguably the most prominent politician of the No campaign and, as an outsider in his party, yet someone with enormous popular appeal, he was ideally placed to lead a

populist campaign. He was, however, a committed High Tory and reluctant to sacrifice his belief in the principles underpinning British democracy. Consequently, although he supported a referendum, this was only out of desperation and he continued to believe it would be ‘quite literally irresponsible government’ if, following a referendum, politicians were ‘able thereafter to say, whatever happened: “Well, don’t blame us, it is no fault of ours; we wanted to do one thing, but you decided to do the other” ’ (Powell, 1973, pp. 20, 21). A referendum may have been a necessary evil, yet Powell was adamant it should not become a fixture of British politics. Powell’s principles were also reflected in his decision not to recontest his Wolverhampton seat as an Independent following his resignation from the Conservative Party over its support of EEC membership. The reason for this was simply his fervent belief that democracy was ‘dependent upon one indispensable ingredient. That ingredient is party’ (Powell cited in Ritchie, 1989). His actions clearly displayed the constraints of the BPT. Overall, rather than being the beginnings of a populist Euroscepticism in which political decisions are legitimated by ‘the people’, the 1975 referendum reasserted the inviolability of Westminster sovereignty and legitimated already formed government policy through a carefully controlled popular vote called to protect party unity.

The view that the 1975 referendum was only nominally populist does not itself counter Wellings’ claims that its legacy continues to influence current debates on Europe. However, just as in 1975, referenda continue to reflect Oppermann’s (2013) ‘domestic/defensive’ typology and are used to inhibit change, protect the status quo and maintain the supremacy of Westminster. Political considerations, therefore,

continue to override any populist inclination. Wellings (2012, p. 218) discusses the issue of the single currency, highlighting Blair's inability to enter the Eurozone without a popular vote as evidence of the curtailing of parliamentary sovereignty. John Major's promise to hold a referendum before abolishing the pound forced New Labour to adopt a similar policy, effectively removing the Euro question from British politics, as a single currency referendum would likely, even prior to the Eurozone crisis, prove unwinnable. Again, however, Major's primary concern was the cohesion of his party (Oppermann, 2013). The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and Major's failure to reign in the 'Euro Rebels' had shown how divided the Conservatives were on Europe. Major was forced to offer concessions to the powerful Eurosceptic faction to prevent further infighting. The populist dimension to this area of debate, therefore, is questionable and Wellings' (2012) claims that 'the politics surrounding the euro showed how the Conservatives could now invoke "the People" as a way of altering Labour Party policy' (p. 218) distorts Major's motivations. He may have referred to 'the people', yet his chief concern was strengthening his own hold on the Conservative leadership.

Similarly, during the Blair (2010, p. 537) years, it was not public opinion that proved the major obstacle to the single currency, but rather economic considerations, and the majority of Blair's discussion of the single currency in his autobiography is concerned with countering claims that the Euro was another conflict between himself and Brown. Blair does express his frustration with British Euroscepticism, particularly at the time of the renegotiation of the rebate (*ibid.*, pp. 532–536). As a pro-European, Blair's frustration is unsurprising, yet, although he was clearly aware of the

Euroscepticism openly apparent within the media and public at large, this did not prove a decisive factor in New Labour's European strategy as party policy continued to be directed by the core executive along lines determined with only minimal regard for popular opinion.

Finally, Cameron's (2013) recent speech pledging an in-out referendum by 2017 after the renegotiation of British membership returned to familiar themes of economics, security and sovereignty. Despite promising to support continued British membership, Cameron (2013) made clear that it must be membership to an EU based on:

a new settlement subject to the democratic legitimacy and accountability of national parliaments where member states combine in flexible co-operation, respecting national differences not always trying to eliminate them and in which we have proved that some powers can in fact be returned to member states.

Only through the strengthening of national parliaments could the democratic deficit be redressed. Here, again, the commitment was to Westminster rather than to a strengthening of democratic supranational institutions such as the European Parliament. The similarities between Cameron's speech and Thatcher's Bruges speech were remarkable. However, while Thatcher's speech caused divisions within her party, Cameron's was instead a means of healing the rift between the core executive and backbench Eurosceptics.

It was also a political strategy that hoped to counter the increasing popularity of UKIP. Prime Minister's Question Time on the 23 January was dominated by the referendum issue and, while Ed Miliband's reaction as Leader of the Opposition was predictably adversarial, his scepticism about Cameron's motives was not unreasonable given the Conservatives' difficulties over the European question over

the past 2 decades:

The only thing that has changed is that a few months ago, when he said he was against an in/out referendum, is not the situation in Europe, but the situation in the Tory party. Why does he not admit it? He has not been driven to it by the national interest, but dragged to it by his party. (Hansard, 2013)

Since 1975, the main casualty of European integration within Britain has been party stability. The preoccupation with a second-order electoral issue offers little political advantage, but has led to a series of leadership contests. As such, mollifying the powerful Eurosceptic faction is likely to be at the forefront of Cameron's mind, particularly after his loss in the Commons at the end of October 2012 in a vote concerning reductions in EU spending.

Further, by addressing the issue through the promise of a referendum, to be held at the convenience of the Government, and only following Government-led membership renegotiations, Cameron has reasserted centralised control of the issue. In doing so, he has potentially diffused some of the threat posed by influential Eurosceptics, such as Daniel Hannan and Douglas Carswell, both of whom seek a significant revitalisation of democratic practices and civic engagement through greater localism – changes contrary to the BPT. Viewing Cameron's pledge as a shining example of responsive government is consequently difficult. For Labour, however, refusing to support a referendum shows how far they have drifted from their original ideals. As constitutional commentator Bogdanor (2013) argued: 'Europe has for too long been an elite project .... But the Labour party was formed to combat the power of elites, not to yield to it'. Miliband's refusal to pledge Labour to a referendum shows just how entrenched they are within the BPT.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that Euroscepticism has become a powerful force within Britain. It is an issue that now not only divides political parties on both sides, but has also increasingly captured the public's attention. While the Eurozone crisis has compounded economic uncertainty within a Britain already in recession and heightened Euroscepticism to the point where an in-out referendum has finally been promised, the antecedents of this hostility can be traced back to the beginnings of the European project. Britain's position as Europe's 'awkward partner' is well documented, and Cameron's plans for a renegotiated membership will do little to heal frosty relations with France and Germany in particular.

It does appear that on the issue of Europe Cameron is acting responsibly by voicing the widespread public Euroscepticism within Britain. However, it does not follow that his motives are driven by a belief in responsive government or populist politics. Calls for a referendum have come amidst rising dissent within the Conservative backbenches and the startling growth of UKIP. Cameron need look back only a decade to note the dangers of factionalism, as the Conservative Party suffered a series of electoral defeats under various leaders unable to successfully grapple with the European issue. His concern for party unity, therefore, remains at the forefront of his mind and, by delaying a referendum on Europe until 2017, Cameron has avoided debating the issue amidst hugely unfavourable economic conditions. This is further evidence that referenda reflects, at most, a weak form of populism, as they can be manipulated and tightly controlled by those in power to ensure the desired outcome. On the issue of Europe, political behaviour continues to show the preoccupation with

party cohesion and protection of strong, centralised government and, as 1975 proved, these can occasionally be best secured through nominally populist offerings. For now, however, the BPT appears largely unchallenged by the ‘populist zeitgeist’ and the insularity of the Establishment remains.

Despite populist politics having failed to find a firm foothold in Britain, the elite’s response to Euroscepticism does have its advantages. The shape of Euroscepticism sketched by Wellings in *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism* is one that imagines the English as a discrete political community, with political objectives and demands for representative government. As a form of English nationalism, therefore, it does not present a threat to the Union, as the ideology of English nationalism ‘legitimises a particular location of sovereignty’ in Westminster, rather than Brussels. That the elite continues to act within the constraints of the BPT does not negate the fact that for the public their concerns over Europe appear to be being heard. For a country whose nationalism has been actively suppressed over centuries for fears of damaging the Union, Euroscepticism is perhaps a better alternative than the racialism offered by the BNP or a continuation of the futile ‘out of sight, out of mind’ attitude that much of the elite has adopted. English nationalism is very much a political reality and Euroscepticism gives it a form capable of coexisting with traditional British structures and democratic traditions.

## CHAPTER 5.

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**Emma Vines, 'A Challenge to Depoliticisation? UKIP and anti-politics'<sup>286</sup>**

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<sup>286</sup> To be submitted to *Policy Studies*.

## **Abstract**

Attempts to explain anti-politics and the rise of anti-establishment sentiment have increasingly emphasised the harmful effects of depoliticisation. Less explored, however, is the impact of anti-politics on depoliticisation itself. While governmental depoliticisation may be a useful form of statecraft, when used as a party political strategy it also contributes to widespread public alienation and the growth of anti-establishment parties. Not only does this destabilise the party system, it also weakens some forms of political control. By looking at the success of the UK Independence Party, this article considers how anti-politics has exposed some of the limitations of depoliticisation, with a non-traditional, anti-establishment party helping return previously depoliticised issues to mainstream political debate. Ultimately, depoliticisation is shown to be both more complex and more problematic than previously suggested, particularly within a climate of anti-politics and pervasive anti-establishment sentiment.

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**Keywords:** Anti-establishment, Depoliticisation, Anti-politics, UKIP, Hay

## **Introduction**

Depoliticisation is now a common form of political control, as governments shift responsibilities and remove controversial issues from their agenda, seeking to minimise public deliberation and party disunity. While governments may consider this effective party management and responsible governing, depoliticisation also fosters a culture of anti-politics in which mainstream parties lose favour and politicians are deeply mistrusted. By limiting deliberation of issues often highly relevant to citizens, the political Establishment has helped cultivate an image of politicians as self-serving and acting only on behalf of society's most powerful and

affluent. The effect of this is widespread alienation and cynicism. Declining voter turnout is the most obvious consequence of this, however, another, more pervasive type of anti-politics involves, not opposition to, or disengagement from, the entire system, but, rather, discontent with its current form. This type of anti-politics manifests as anti-establishment sentiment; and, within this environment, depoliticisation as a form of deliberate political control becomes increasingly difficult.

The purpose of this article is to build-upon explanations of depoliticisation and anti-politics through an examination of anti-establishment sentiment. It focuses on the idea of *party political* depoliticisation, as opposed to *governmental* depoliticisation. In contrast to analyses which see depoliticisation as a useful tool of governance for overloaded states (governmental depoliticisation), therefore, this paper instead looks at the damaging effects of depoliticisation when it is used primarily as a political strategy (party political depoliticisation). Ultimately, it is argued that the repoliticisation of particular issues would likely prove both electorally advantageous for major parties and beneficial to the health of British democracy.

This paper is intended as a conceptual exploration of a reaction against depoliticisation, using the British example of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) as a timely and relevant case study and hopefully offering a starting point for future empirical research. The analysis is grounded in Colin Hay's (2007) conceptualisation of 'depoliticisation' as the transfer of issues from one 'sphere' – governmental, societal or private – to another; however, it seeks to further, and amend, Hay's analysis through a focuses on the development of anti-establishment sentiment and

the resulting challenges to the political system and established political strategies. Further, by distinguishing between party political and governmental depoliticisation, it demonstrates how a common political strategy is not simply assisting the process of governance, but instead, is in fact damaging major parties through the growth of anti-establishment sentiment. An anti-establishment movement has come around, in part, because of a combination of depoliticisation and anti-politics, with the latter characterised by mistrust, disillusionment and disaffection from politics.

These theoretical considerations are explored through an examination of UKIP. Although the Party's future remains uncertain following the disappointing outcome of the May 2015 election (for a look at the challenges facing anti-establishment parties' long-term survival, see, Abedi and Lundberg, 2009), the Party remains a useful and relevant example – particularly since the Party is likely to play a high-profile role in the 2016 in-out referendum on EU membership. Looking at UKIP's growth, particularly over the past five years, we can see how a populist, anti-establishment party has played a part in returning a matter mainstream parties have sought to depoliticise – membership to the EU –<sup>287</sup> to the Government's agenda as the issue's salience has increased within the societal sphere, among the electorate and media. This process is presented here, as a challenge to depoliticisation. The influence of external pressure on the governmental sphere, and mainstream parties' need to engage with issues of potentially significant electoral advantage, has shown depoliticisation to be more problematic than is often portrayed in analyses which see the process as the dominant form of statecraft (Wood and Flinders 2014).

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<sup>287</sup> It is worth noting here that this analysis focuses on UKIP's effect on returning the European Question to mainstream debate and this is considered a separate, although of course, related, issue to immigration. Thus, while immigration is discussed, it is not contended that the issue has ever been depoliticised. Indeed, as will be discussed, it is routinely one of the top three concerns for voters.

As Ford and Goodwin (2014) argue, the profound loss of faith in mainstream politics, compounded by long-term social and demographic changes, has created space for a populist party such as UKIP, which has appealed to the white, English, working-class – termed the ‘left behind’ by Ford and Goodwin. This Party consequently represents a challenge to Britain’s normally strict two-and-a-half party system. This article builds on Ford and Goodwin’s analysis by relating it to Hay’s concept of depoliticisation to demonstrate how the process has aided UKIP by contributing to the rise in anti-politics, and how, in turn, UKIP’s success has exposed some of the weaknesses of depoliticisation. This is the vicious cycle governments can find themselves in: responding to criticisms concerning effective governance, governments frequently turn to depoliticisation; however, this, in turn, leads to accusations of ‘passing the buck’ or ignoring salient issues, fostering the anti-politics which have contributed to the growth of minor parties. In this context, depoliticisation becomes a weaker tool for beleaguered governments who can then be painted as both ‘out-of-touch’ and ineffective. This is a complex and important issue and one in need of further development in the depoliticisation literature.

### **What’s behind anti-establishment sentiment?**

Across Europe, there has been a dramatic rise in anti-establishment sentiment. Politicians are perceived as an out of touch, insular ‘elite’. One consequence of this has been the growth of populist parties and their move into mainstream politics (Mudde, 2004). In Britain, although dissatisfaction with the political mainstream, in particular, with Labour and the Conservative Party, has long been evident, its effects have taken longer to manifest than on the Continent. Then, in 2010, in a rejection of

the two major parties, the Liberal Democrats broke-through, taking the third party of British politics into the first coalition government since World War Two. Despite the Liberal Democrats' subsequent collapse, confidence in the major parties has continued to falter, fuelling the growth of UKIP, as well as the Scottish National Party's landslide victory in Scotland in the General Election in May 2015.

These events can, in large part, be attributed to the rise of anti-politics, which, as Stoker (2006) explains, results in dissatisfaction with 'politics as usual':

Disgruntlement is expressed with governmental processes, parties and the whole political system. Government processes are regularly portrayed in the media and in everyday conversations as wasteful and inefficient (33).

As this paper argues, one cause of this anti-politics is the (over)use of party political depoliticisation. In pursuing a strategy of depoliticisation, the governmental sphere can appear to have disengaged from issues of public interest. This assists the rise of anti-establishment, populist parties. Anti-politics, therefore, is not a total rejection of the system, but, rather, reflects a desire for reform from engaged, but dissatisfied citizens.

As this paper explores, attempts to explain the recent growth of anti-politics, and the related phenomenon of declining participation, have identified depoliticisation as one of the key culprits behind distrust of politicians and the political system more generally. Broadly, 'depoliticisation' refers to the transfer of competencies and policy areas away from government. Burnham (2001) defines 'depoliticisation' as an attempt to:

*Place at one remove the political character of decision-making in order to: off-load responsibility for the consequences of unpopular government policies; establish*

credibility with financial markets and alter expectations; and reassert the “operational autonomy” of the political executive (131, emphasis in original).

Here, Burnham’s primary focus is the relationship between government and the market. Subsequent scholars have extended the process beyond the governmental/market spheres and identify depoliticisation at different levels – political, societal and discursive (Hay 2007; Wood and Flinders 2014).

Hay presents one of the most accessible models of depoliticisation (2007, ch. 2). He identifies three potential political spheres: public/governmental; public/non-governmental; and private. Outside of these, non-political issues operate in the ‘realm of necessity’. While politicisation occurs as issues become subject to human intervention, depoliticisation involves a reconsideration of both ‘what is political’ and ‘who is responsible’. Hay identifies three forms of depoliticisation. The first occurs in the public/governmental sphere, when government transfers responsibilities to public/quasi-autonomous bodies, supranational organisations or the market. The second occurs as issues previously deliberated at the public/non-governmental level move to the private sphere where personal agency is encouraged. Finally, the shift of issues to the ‘realm of necessity’ occurs when an issue is no longer subject to public deliberation or collective action. Of these three forms, the first is the primary focus of this article and is considered in terms of its effects on the political system and the resulting challenge to the process caused by anti-politics. In contrast to Hay, however, here it is portrayed as a more difficult process, with political actors’ motives more complex and the process itself facing an increasing number of obstacles. Before examining this, however, it is useful to consider an alternative to, and extension of, Hay’s model.

Wood and Flinders (2014) identify ‘three faces of depoliticisation’ – governmental, societal and discursive – and overlay these onto Hay’s map. Arguably, much of what Wood and Flinders offer is already in Hay’s work; however, of particular value is their focus on the interdependency of the faces. For example, depoliticisation at the governmental level can be aided by the actions of the media in the societal sphere if the media chooses to remove an issue from its news-cycle (Wood and Flinders 2014, 159). Conversely, continued media coverage will hinder attempts at depoliticisation and may instead force it back onto the government’s agenda. For the purposes of this analysis, this aspect is important when considering how an overwhelmingly Eurosceptic British press has nurtured public opposition to European integration. Not only has this hampered attempts to remove the European issue from party agendas, it has also created fertile ground for UKIP.

The final face of depoliticisation in Wood and Flinders’ (2014) analysis is discursive. At this level, ideas and language are used to curtail debate and present an issue as belonging to the ‘realm of necessity’, and therefore beyond political or societal influence (161-164). While discourse is undeniably a powerful tool, it is unclear why Wood and Flinders assign this face so closely with Hay’s third sphere. Discursive depoliticisation is likely to be present at each stage of the process, playing an important role in justifying the shifting of responsibility, without necessarily removing it from the political realm entirely. Indeed, for Hay (2007, ch. 4), discourse has not only facilitated depoliticisation, but also, more fundamentally, created the climate of anti-politics in which the process is considered necessary.

Hay spends considerable time on the effects of globalisation (Hay 2007; Hay and Smith 2010). While critical of the extent to which the world is truly globalised, Hay considers the discursive power of the globalisation thesis enormously important. When politicians believe they are acting within a globalised world, confidence in their capacity to govern is diminished. In this way, depoliticisation still occurs and democratic deliberation suffers. Hay's argument concerning the material limits of globalisation is convincing. However, when considering the ways in which British politics operates, as well as the broader anti-politics, it is important to more fully consider the effects of regionalisation – which, as Hay demonstrates, has a far greater impact on domestic politics than globalisation (2007, ch. 4). It is for this reason that the European Union and debates surrounding it, particularly at the domestic level, should be considered. Further, while discourse is of undeniable importance, its effects need to be considered within a nation's structural context. In privileging the discursive nature of economic forces, Hay neglects material and structural constraints. The interdependency of ideational and material realities needs to be more fully considered (Marsh 2010). The EU is the world's largest and most integrated supranational body and has considerable influence over member-states' economic, and, to a lesser, though still considerable, extent, political direction. In this way, the processes Hay argues would be present if the world were truly globalised may exist at the regional level, imposing both discursive and material constraints upon domestic policymakers.

This raises questions related to the efficacy of depoliticisation as a political tool. While Hay (2007) acknowledges that depoliticisation can be used as a form of control, he predominately views it as arising from a genuine belief that politicians

should delegate because politicians cannot be trusted. There is, here, the distinction between *governmental* depoliticisation and *party political* depoliticisation. While the first concerns efficient governing, the second relates to deliberate acts of depoliticisation designed to protect party unity and political capital. Party political depoliticisation is worthy of greater attention than Hay gives it, particularly since the capacity of the state to control much of the depoliticisation process means it remains highly vulnerable to political manipulation (Foster, Kerr and Byrne 2014; Flinders and Buller 2006).

This control means the process operates in the ‘shadow of hierarchy’, still heavily influenced by the dominant actor – most often, the state (Scharpf 1994; Bell and Hindmoor 2009; Marsh, Richards and Smith 2001). In this vein, Foster et al seek to reintroduce the issue of power; something which, they argue, has increasingly been misplaced as definitions of ‘politics’ have come to focus on collective action and deliberation, rather than power and control (2014, 229). In this interpretation:

Depoliticisation is a process inextricably bound up with the practice of government and the management of populations ... Thus, depoliticisation is, to us, at all times an inherently political act, involving an extension rather than a retraction of political space. (226, 227)

In this way, there are, for governments, significant advantages to depoliticisation.

However, as this article explores in-depth, there are dangers to depoliticisation. Not only are politicians still held most accountable for policy decisions and outcomes – in part reflecting the continued importance of the nation-state – but also, in cases where the public or media rejects the shifting of responsibility or the re-classification of an issue from ‘political’ to ‘non-political’, governments may find themselves forced either to re-politicize the issue or appear out-of-touch (Jessop 2014, 212). It is for

these reasons that depoliticisation at the governmental/supranational level cannot operate as Hay (2007) depicts. As European elections typically prove, second-order elections act as an evaluation of the incumbent government, which, although potentially restricted in its policy options by European regulations, is still held accountable for policy outcomes. Further, when it comes to the charged issue of immigration (which regularly rates among the top three issues voters are most concerned with), the EU is a soft target given the principle of freedom of movement is a core feature. ‘Passing the buck’ to the supranational level, therefore, is both ineffective and politically damaging, feeding the perception that politics is no longer engaged with the concerns of ordinary voters – the driver of anti-politics.

Like depoliticisation, however, the nature of anti-politics is debated. Again, Hay offers a useful starting point, considering whether the fault lies with the demand or supply side of politics (2007, 40-58). Put crudely, the question becomes whether politics is suffering because apathetic citizens are failing in their civic duty, or whether the fault lies, instead, with the political class and governing structure. Putnam’s (2000) influential ‘social capital’ theory argues the former, explaining how the atomisation of society weakens civic obligation and engagement. As Hay has countered, however, Putnam’s theory finds citizens at fault, criticising their decision not to engage fully in civic life, rather than questioning whether this disengagement results, not from apathy, but, rather, considered discontent with modern politics (2007, 45-46). What is needed, according to Hay, is an explanation that focuses on:

Potential *supply-side factors* – changes in the content of the appeals that parties make to potential voters, changes in the character of electoral competition, changes in the substantive content of the “goods” that politics offers to political “consumers”, and changes in the capacity of national-level government to deliver genuine political choice to voters (55, emphasis in original).

In this paper, depoliticising issues is one such ‘supply-side factor’. Removing issues of importance from governmental agenda, particularly when for strategic reasons, fosters anti-politics and, in turn, feeds anti-establishment movements. Citizens thus remain engaged, yet unhappy.

The argument that citizens remain engaged yet disillusioned is supported by the current state of political participation and understanding in Britain. While cynicism and mistrust have always had a foothold in British political culture, the past decades have seen this intensify. Deference and detachment have given way to disenchantment and resentful alienation. Citizens now show considerable doubt as to their capacity to affect change or influence politics at either a local or national level. According to the 2014 *Audit of Political Engagement 11* (Hansard Society 2014), although 43% of respondents would like to be ‘fairly involved’ in decisions made at a local-level, and 38% would at a national-level, only 26% actually believe they have some influence locally, with this falling to only 14% when asked about national decisions (54-57). Overall, only 31% of people agree with the statement: ‘when people like me get involved in politics they really can change the way that the UK is run’ (52).

The view that the political system fails to involve citizens is clear. However, the percentage of respondents wishing to have some influence suggests that apathy is not the major concern when it comes to political participation. This is supported by increased interest in, and knowledge of, Parliament and politics: 50% of respondents now claim to be interested in politics ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’, while the number of those who know at least ‘a fair amount’ about Parliament has risen to 48%,

the highest it has ever been (34, 38). In terms of participation, over the past year, almost 50% of respondents had engaged in some form of political or civic activity (47, 48). While these findings by no means assuage concerns over the health of British democracy, the fact that interest in, and knowledge of, politics have been rising, throws further doubt on ‘demand-side’ theories of political disenchantment. Anti-politics and anti-establishment sentiment, therefore, reflects continued engagement with the political arena.

Accepting that there remains, at the very least a *desire* to participate in civic life, it is perhaps more useful to examine attitudes towards the political system and politicians themselves – the ‘supply-side’ of the equation. Here, the situation looks bleaker. Only 34% believe that Parliament ‘holds government to account’ and the belief that Parliament ‘encourages public involvement in politics’ has fallen to just 23% (60). The insularity of Parliament becomes even clearer when considering that 67% of people agree that politicians ‘don’t understand the daily lives of people like me’ (76). Overall, satisfaction with the political system is at 33%, a number up from 27% last year and just 24% in 2012 (49), but still far from a resounding endorsement of British democracy.

Disenchantment, as opposed to disinterest, is evidently a more pressing problem and goes a long way to account for, not only the rise in participation outside the formal political arena (see for example, Bang, 2009; Norris, 2002), but also the growth of smaller parties and anti-establishment, populist politics. This challenge was so great in Britain in 2010 that Westminster saw its first coalition government in over sixty years, with the Liberal Democrats successfully positioning themselves as the party

free of the sleaze and cronyism that had come to characterise Westminster. However, the Liberal Democrats quickly lost support as they reneged on key electoral promises and, as a party of government, they no longer offered a 'protest' vote. UKIP subsequently assumed this role.

### **A new home for the disillusioned and abandoned**

With anti-politics and anti-establishment sentiment so pervasive, populism has increasingly taken hold (Mudde, 2004). In Britain, UKIP is a clear example. Much of UKIP's success is due to its anti-establishment rhetoric and engagement with the disillusioned. The Party had been growing steadily since the 2006 European elections, despite facing considerable barriers in its attempts to enter mainstream politics (Hayton, 2010); however, its real breakthrough came in the May 2014 European elections (for electoral results see European Parliament/Information Office in the United Kingdom 2014; *BBC News*, 2014). UKIP now has representation in all British regions except Northern Ireland. Given second-order elections typically act as an evaluation of the ruling government it is unsurprising the Conservative vote declined. More unexpected, however, was the lower than predicted Labour showing. Although increasing 9.67% on the Party's terrible performance in the 2009 elections, Labour's rebound was considered modest, particularly since the collapse of Liberal Democrat support (the Party lost all but one seat) should have aided the Party. Instead, in all but two regions where the Liberal Democrats lost MEPs, UKIP made gains. With such antithetical political positions between the two parties, this shift in support most likely reflected a protest vote rather than a whole-hearted endorsement of UKIP policies.

Despite the clear UKIP victory, mainstream parties downplayed the new electoral threat. London mayor, Boris Johnson (2014), went so far as to present the result as a win for the Conservative Party and an endorsement of its position on Europe. Such positive spin, however, is impossible when it comes to UKIP's entry into Westminster. The defection of Conservative MPs Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless to UKIP and the death of Labour MP Jim Dobbin, led to three by-elections in the final months of 2014. In the two elections on the 9<sup>th</sup> October, Carswell retained his Clacton seat, while in Heywood and Middleton UKIP candidate John Bickley narrowly lost to Labour, despite an enormous swing to UKIP (up from only 2.6% in the 2010 general election, to 38.7%). In the final by-election, held in November, Reckless retained his seat in Rochester and Strood (although he subsequently lost the seat in the general election). These by-elections secured UKIP's position in mainstream electoral competition (for a discussion of UKIP's progress towards mainstream politics, see, Hayton, 2010).

This position was affirmed by UKIP's third-place showing in the May 2015 General Election. Despite the fact that UKIP's representation at Westminster dropped as Reckless lost his seat, its success is not accurately reflected by its parliamentary representation, with the Party hindered by the first-past-the-post electoral system. The Party increased its share of votes by almost 10%, placing third overall with 13% of all votes cast and coming second in 125 seats. Its poor showing at Westminster reflects the quirks of Britain's electoral system, not the failure of the Party to find a strong support base or a receptive audience to its tough stance on the EU and immigration. UKIP has connected with deeply disillusioned voters and the result has been greater politicisation of the European question, as well as something of a shift in the way

major parties respond to a party that, up until recently, was outside mainstream politics.

For a minor party in British politics, these results are remarkable given the constraints of a first-past-the-post electoral system and the long-established two-and-a-half party system. Although UKIP has benefited enormously from timing, maturing in a difficult economic climate, it has also proved effective at appealing to disillusioned voters. This is in part due to the perception that, unlike the three major parties, UKIP is 'straight-talking', eschewing political correctness (sometimes to a damaging extent as former UKIP member Godfrey Bloom's 'slutgate' scandal demonstrated), willing to speak bluntly about sensitive issues like immigration. Many of these issues have been deliberately depoliticised, or, in the case of immigration, approached with great caution, by the established parties, either for the sake of party unity or the need to occupy the political centre to win elections. The ability to raise more controversial issues and campaign on populist slogans has not only helped UKIP develop significant grass-roots support, but also forced mainstream parties to raise the profile of politically sensitive issues. In doing this, UKIP, a party which, until October 2014, had no representation at Westminster, has helped raise the salience of particular issues in British politics, and, in some cases, caused a shift in mainstream political strategy. The continued importance within the societal sphere of issues that mainstream parties have sought to distance themselves from demonstrates just how difficult depoliticisation can be when opposed by alternative forces such as anti-politics and anti-establishment ideas.

UKIP's initial success came from the development and consolidation of a strong grass-roots following. This group remains the Party's core support and is dominated by white, over 55, English males (Ford and Goodwin 2014, 152). UKIP supporters are also more likely to be former Conservative voters, although the Party has attracted a significant number of 'old' Labour voters (Ford, Goodwin and Cutts, 2012). In terms of attitudes, UKIP voters show particular disregard for politicians and mainstream parties, believing them to be dishonest and out-of-touch. These characteristics suggest the Party has reached a particularly alienated sector of society, many of who feel they are excluded from their political system, a feeling which escalated under New Labour. However, with many choosing to express their anger through a refusal to vote, there was little incentive for the major parties to re-engage with this group. As Birch, Gottfried and Lodge (2013) note:

By tilting politics in favour of high-turnout groups, unequal turnout unleashes a vicious cycle of disaffection and under-representation among those groups for which participation is falling. As policy becomes less responsive to their interest, more and more decide that politics has little to say to them, which further reduces their motivation to vote, which in turn reduces the incentives for politicians to pay them much attention (16).

The effect of this cycle in Britain is clear. While in 1987, there was only a 4-point difference in voter turn-out between the highest and lowest income groups, in 2010 this had risen to a 22.7-point difference (Birch, Gottfried, Lodge 2013, 7, 8). Such inequality creates space for a populist, anti-establishment party able to tailor its agenda to the disaffected.

Farage is clearly aware of the value of this electoral base. In an interview with Ford and Goodwin (2014, 146), he rejected the idea that UKIP was simply a home for former Conservatives, instead pointing out that 'the numbers are perfectly clear. There is now a huge class dimension to the UKIP vote'. Many of the most

disillusioned appear sceptical that parties dominated by affluent career politicians are fully committed to protecting working-class interests. Instead, for some, there is a sense that Westminster has allowed immigration to the point where, not only is British culture at risk, but jobs have been taken away from British citizens. Likewise, there is a worry that traditional values have been abandoned, particularly by a new, 'compassionate' Conservative Party, which has legalised gay marriage and encouraged Britons to 'hug a hoodie'. As Ford and Goodwin demonstrate, such social and economic changes have made space for UKIP:

Far from a catch-all party, or one focused solely on winning over disgruntled Conservatives, they have tailored a Eurosceptic, anti-immigrant appeal for disadvantaged, working-class voters who feel under threat from the changes that surround them, and alienated from a seemingly unresponsive and disengaged established political class (97).

There are clearly significant tensions within not only Britain's political culture, but also its social fabric, and, while these have always existed, they appear particularly charged at present.

The intensity of the alienation felt by the 'left behind' was seen in the uproar surrounding then Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry's twitter post in November 2014 in which she posted a picture of a house with St George's flags and a white van out front (Mason 2014). Cameron, likely pleased that the controversy overshadowed the Conservative's loss to UKIP in the Rochester and Strood by-election, used the opportunity to paint Labour as a party that 'sneers at people who work hard, who are patriotic and who love their country' (Watt and Mason 2014). Farage was similarly critical, not only of Thornberry, but also of Labour and its leader, tweeting: 'What is Labour's Emily Thornberry trying to imply about **#RochesterAndStrood**? I suspect she's let Miliband's mask slip' (Farage, 20 November 2014). With Labour's positioning as the 'party of the people' now weak,

and the Conservative's well-established image of affluence, it is perhaps unsurprising that a populist, anti-establishment party has flourished.

In addition to UKIP's ability to attract voters deeply unhappy with mainstream politics, the Party has also successfully developed a platform that includes issues depoliticised by the mainstream, yet still important to parts of the electorate. This has meant depoliticisation has been ineffective, feeding anti-politics and the result is that these issues have not disappeared, despite the Government's best efforts. It should be noted, however, that when it comes to the Europe issue, given its generally low salience for voters, it has been repoliticised primarily because Farage has proved highly adept at linking Euroscepticism with issues of more immediate concern to voters, such as immigration, crime and the economy. When it comes to immigration, in particular, Farage has presented UKIP as the only party listening to 'ordinary people'. Recognising the true nature of anti-politics, Farage acknowledged at the 2013 UKIP Party Conference: 'these people aren't disconnected from politics. They're disconnected from politicians. And UKIP is the only party that isn't afraid to talk to them about it' (*The Spectator*, 20 September 2013). Additionally, in presenting immigration and European integration as a threat to the 'British way of life', he has strengthened support within England in particular, tapping into a nationalist undercurrent which mainstream parties have fought hard to ignore (Kenny 2014; Wellings, 2012). His success, aided by the Party's widespread media coverage, has meant increased attention from the societal sphere and, following on from this, a raised profile within the governmental sphere. This process is evidence of the interdependency of the 'faces of depoliticisation' (Wood and Flinders 2014).

The ability to dominate the European debate has been made easier for the Party over the past decade, as the Conservatives sought to shed the image of the ‘Euro-sceptic Party’ and depoliticise the issue by removing it, as far as possible, from the governmental and societal sphere. Since the late 1980s, England has been the heartland of British Euro-scepticism and the Conservatives the Party of opposition to European integration. However, the toxic factionalism that emerged in Thatcher’s final years of office and which created particular difficulties for her successor, John Major, showed the dangers of conflict over the European issue. In the years following New Labour’s 1997 win, the Conservatives remained divided and it was only in 2006, with the selection of Cameron as leader, that the Party began to reemerge as a serious contender for government. For the Party, the main lesson learnt from defeat appeared to be that the European issue should be avoided at all costs.

The Conservatives’ wish to disengage from the European question was aided by Labour’s own increasingly difficult position in Europe. Blair’s support for the Iraq war, as well as his decision not to push for entry into the euro, transformed the most pro-Europe government since Edward Heath’s into something of a European pariah. To avoid responsibility, controversial issues related to European integration – such as the euro and the *Draft Constitution* – were ostensibly shifted from the governmental to the public sphere through the promise of referendums. In this way, it was up to the people, not the Government, to decide the trickier questions (Wellings 2012). Of course, given the high-level of control over referendums, the extent to which responsibility was truly shifted is questionable (Vines 2014). Such a tension between image and reality highlights the extent to which ‘depoliticisation, as a process, usually takes place in the shadow of statecraft, as a form of governmental depoliticisation’

(Fawcett and Marsh 2014, 181) – an underdeveloped issue in Hay’s work. With referendums promised, but no time-period set, the issues were no longer a priority and disappeared from the Government’s agenda.

Depoliticisation of the European question, however, was never likely to be complete or long-lasting, particularly with it so linked to the highly charged issue of immigration. As Wood and Flinders (2014) outline, the faces of depoliticisation are overlapping and attempts at depoliticisation in one sphere can be hampered by continued politicisation of the issue in another. Additionally, conflict within a single sphere presents a particular problem. Both difficulties are evident in debates over Europe. In the first place, while the governmental sphere has sought to depoliticise the issue, the media has not been willing to do the same. The British press is overwhelmingly Eurosceptic (Daddow 2012). Its criticism is particularly heated when it comes to the question of immigration – a key feature of UKIP’s platform.

Clear evidence of this was seen during the lead-up to the opening of Bulgarian immigration. One of Britain’s most popular tabloids, *The Daily Mail*, ran numerous stories under provocative headlines, such as, ‘What they DIDN’T tell you about new wave of migrants heading for booming Britain’ and ‘The TRUTH revealed about Romanian and Bulgarian migrants: Nearly 50,000 applied to work in Britain in first three months of year’ (Petre and Walters 2013; Doughty 2014). Similar articles appeared across British tabloids, not only warning of the dangers of mass migration, but also placing blame with the EU. Such continual exposure to anti-Europe sentiment has proved a powerful source of ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995), perpetuating the

image of the European Union and its freedom of movement as a pernicious threat to Britain.

For the Government, the most problematic consequence of this relates to Hay's first type of depoliticisation: the transfer of governmental responsibilities to supranational bodies. Here, Hay's analysis is flawed, as this form of depoliticisation is far more difficult than he acknowledges. Claims that Westminster no longer has full control over areas subject to EU regulation (and, therefore, is not solely accountable for policy decisions) are rejected. Conversely, when governments 'stand up to Europe', they are celebrated. This places governments in a difficult position. For example, Cameron's refusal to sign-up to the euro-zone bailout caused considerable strain on UK-EU relations, yet back home, it was celebrated. *The Sun* displayed this most clearly, photoshopping Cameron's face onto the famous World War Two image of Churchill holding up his fingers to symbolize 'V, for victory', under the headline, 'Up Eurs' (Wilson and Schofield 2011). Perpetuating the image of Europe's 'awkward partner', even if it is at the expense of diplomatic relations, is clearly supported by powerful societal forces. Further, it is supported by a significant section of the British public, which, with parties threatened by anti-politics and anti-establishment movements, can only be welcomed.

The result is that the transfer of accountability from the governmental to the supranational sphere that Hay describes is impossible for British governments and depoliticisation must operate alongside other processes. Regional politics significantly affect the operation of government and, *contra* Hay's analysis of globalisation as a discursive, not material, constraint, the economic realities of British involvement in

the EU trade-area have a very real effect on policy options. Rather than Hay's privileging of discourse, therefore, there needs to be a more balanced analysis, which recognises, as Heffernan (2002, 749) does, that 'the ideational agenda advanced by actors within institutions has to go with the grain of social, political, economic environmental contexts'. Adopting a hostile stance towards the EU and talk of a potential British withdrawal has to be moderated by more diplomatic language, given the political and economic ramifications of the side-lining of UK interests or withdrawal from the EU. It is expected that withdrawal would cost Britain £3,300 per household (Hansard, 17 July 2013), with the additional danger that international companies would transfer business to a country still inside the EU trade-bloc. When it comes to UK-EU relations, the loss of control over some areas of governmental responsibility is not simply discursive; it is also a material reality of belonging to a tightly regulated regional trade-bloc, which is itself operating within an international economy.

While the mainstream has pursued an unsuccessful strategy of depoliticisation when it comes to European integration, UKIP has, instead, successfully framed the issue within its broader anti-establishment platform. At a meeting in Suffolk in 2013, Farage pointed out that UKIP's growing success was because, 'we're plain spoken, we're not bound by political correctness and we're talking about the kind of things that people are talking about around their dining room tables' (McGurran, 2013). In line with its anti-establishment stance in domestic politics, UKIP has built opposition to Europe upon the populist idea of 'us against them'. In this narrative, Britain and its people need to stand against a wasteful, 'fundamentally un-, in fact, anti-democratic form of government' that has allowed unchecked immigration to threaten Britain's

economy, welfare and social cohesion (Farage 2014). This line of argument fits well within a Europe-wide anti-politics, which has led to close scrutiny of politicians, political processes and institutions. Within this context, depoliticisation of economic and social issues connected to European integration – however desirable for political actors – is impossible. The effect of this in countries hit hardest by recession has been political instability and protests against forced austerity. In Britain, debate has instead largely focused on questions of democracy, representation and referendums – all of which perfectly suit a party fueled by anti-politics. There is perhaps an irony in the fact that an avowedly populist, anti-establishment party has achieved much of its success by defending the power of an institution it routinely criticizes. Withdrawal from the EU would mean an enormous recentralisation of power. For the moment, however, opposition to Europe outweighs opposition to Westminster amongst the UKIP leadership, even if the reverse is true for many of their voters.

### **Changing strategy**

UKIP's growth and the substantially increased attention now paid to the issues of EU membership and immigration have exposed a conflict between government strategy and the expectations of citizens. While voter turnout may not have recovered (although at 66.1%, turnout in May was the highest since 1997, but still well below the 71.4% at that election), pressure from outside the governmental sphere has shown that there remains substantial interest in British politics. Further, with smaller parties now posing a genuine threat to mainstream parties, it appears that anti-politics is having a noticeable effect on British political culture. When it comes to some of the more controversial issues, party political depoliticisation is no longer as effective as it once was. Instead, there has been a deliberate, if unwelcome, re-engagement with

issues. This is, of course, also in part a response to electoral competitions. However, the Conservative strategy of moving to the right, particularly when it comes to relations with Europe and immigration, was not enough to stem the growth of UKIP. It seems that there needs to be a more fundamental change in the relationship between politicians and voters. Removing issues from public deliberation as a matter of political expediency is ineffective in the face of continued media and social interest, particularly when these issues remain vital to electoral success.

There appears to be growing recognition that UKIP can no longer be discredited as a party of no serious substance. UKIP's success in 2014, particularly at a national level, forced a change in how sections of the mainstream engage with the Party. Up until the 2014 European elections, most of Westminster pursued a strategy of discursive depoliticisation, constructing the image of UKIP as outside proper political debate. In 2006, Cameron famously labeled UKIP a party of 'fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists', echoing former Conservative leader Michael Howard's earlier description of them as 'cranks and gadflies' (*BBC News*, 4 April 2006). The Party did not belong to the governmental sphere. However, within a political environment so hostile to career politicians, criticism from Westminster only increased support for UKIP. Depoliticisation was, again, hindered by anti-politics, and a process of the politicisation of UKIP by mainstream parties had to occur.

In light of this, Conservative strategy shifted and Cameron's rhetoric became markedly different. Following the 2014 European election, rather than painting UKIP and its supporters as 'fruitcakes' (sensible given many of them were, until recently, Tory voters), Cameron instead attacked Farage's public persona of the 'normal bloke

down the pub’, labeling him a ‘consummate politician’ (Payne 2014). Cameron seems aware of the attraction of a leader highly adept at crafting an eccentric, yet engaging, public image. Within a political culture so heavily charged with anti-politics, politicians such as Farage, who previously would have been confined to the fringes of political debate, can now capitalise on their status as ‘outsiders’.

Cameron’s change in rhetoric has been accompanied by a shift in policy and electoral strategy. Despite previous assurances that the Conservatives would not consider any electoral pact or coalition with UKIP, closer to the election, Cameron refused to rule out any deal. UKIP was too much a part of the governmental sphere to be ignored. When asked on BBC1’s *Andrew Marr Show* on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015, whether he would consider giving UKIP any Cabinet or ministerial positions, Cameron remained elusive, moving the conversation back to his desire to see a Conservative majority (*The Andrew Marr Show*, 4 January 2015). His response to Marr’s questions regarding the suitability of UKIP candidates was similarly circumspect. Although agreeing ‘they’ve clearly got some issues’, he was careful not to portray the more extreme members as representative of the entire party. The growing acceptance of UKIP as a legitimate political party has demonstrated one of the key dangers surrounding attempts at depoliticisation: the public may not agree with the redrawing of ‘the political’ (Jessop 2014). Not only may this force an unwanted process of repoliticisation, but also, in doing so, damage the actor(s) responsible for the attempted depoliticisation. Mainstream parties’ belief that UKIP, a fringe party, could be ignored and ridiculed, has been rejected by the public.

Cameron's attempt to minimise the damage by leaving open the question of a coalition with UKIP, exposed not only the Party's popularity, but also Cameron's need to address the now heavily politicised question of European integration. This presented a perfect opportunity for party political depoliticisation. The return of the European issue to the center of the political agenda has led to the resurfacing of party divisions. Cameron's first defeat in the Commons was during debate over the EU budget in 2012 and, since then, he has faced growing pressure from the sizeable Eurosceptic wing of his Party. His early strategy of adopting a harder line on Europe when it came to the bailout negotiations proved insufficient to ease discontent within the Conservatives, or the growth of UKIP. The failure to stop UKIP comes from Farage's linking of the European issue and immigration with broader questions on the nature of political representation. Cameron's eventual response to this has been grudging agreement to take the question of continued membership to the people.

The promise of referendums on European issues is well-established. However, there appears to have been a shift in their role in British politics. Traditionally, referendums on European issues (whether held or simply promised) have been used as a means of party political depoliticisation, seeking to preserve party unity by shifting responsibility from the governmental to public sphere (Oppermann 2013). In the past, this strategy has proved safe given the outcome of referendums is highly dependent on the actions of the centre (Vines 2014). However, this control appears to be weakening. Cameron's promise of an in/out referendum was not simply made in order to quell backbench dissent, but also, for the first time, in response to external pressure. It may now prove difficult for the Government to closely control the vote. Euroscepticism is particularly entrenched at present, and likely to remain so given

continued economic instability within the Eurozone. The promise of an in/out referendum, when Cameron is still firmly in favour of continued British, may prove a dangerous gamble, particularly as it potentially raises the prospect of a second referendum on Scottish independence. It is, however, perhaps a necessary one. The anti-politics climate in which Cameron governs demands that he appear willing to engage with, and trust, the people. Further, the continued strategy of externalising the issue by shifting responsibility to the public remains an effective, if increasingly dangerous, means of party control.

Rather than downplaying the issue of Europe, therefore, the referendum was a key Conservative policy in the 2015 election. In addition to this, and evidence of how seriously the UKIP threat is now taken, the Conservatives actively campaigned on the warning that, when it comes to an EU referendum, ‘only the Conservatives can deliver that referendum – Labour and the Lib Dems won’t, and UKIP can’t’ (Conservatives 2015). This is in stark contrast to the earlier strategy of avoiding the European issue and ridiculing UKIP. The tenacity with which UKIP has pursued the European issue and successfully linked it with issues of greater concern for the electorate, has forced a repoliticisation of the issue. It has also been used to further expose how out-of-touch the political Establishment is with public opinion. Already an issue which the media refused to abandon, Euroscepticism has been elevated to a matter worthy of considerable political deliberation. For UKIP, this has meant the political Establishment, which, until recently painted UKIP as a party outside formal political debate, now has a very visible presence.

## **Conclusion**

Depoliticisation is undoubtedly an important means of governing. It is, however, a process that must be understood within a broader political environment in which alternative forces, such as anti-politics, play an important role. Further, there needs to be a greater acknowledgement that depoliticisation is not simply a process of governance, but also a party political strategy. Hay's conceptualisation of depoliticisation, therefore, while useful, needs to be extended to look at, not only the influence of depoliticisation on anti-politics, but also the reverse. The affect of anti-politics on the political environment has shown some of the weaknesses of depoliticisation. Increasingly, governments will need to respond to the deeply entrenched anti-politics pervading British political culture. Failure to do so will likely see the continued defection of voters to anti-establishment parties. This is not to say that depoliticisation will not continue as a common, and useful, tool of governing. In a time when many duties are delegated across governance networks responsibilities will inevitably shift from the governmental sphere. However, party political depoliticisation is becoming increasingly difficult when it comes to matters of continued societal importance. Attempts to do this merely strengthen the public's perception of an out-of-touch, insular political elite, more concerned with political strategy than representing the people. This is particularly the case when a Eurosceptic party and press labour the Europe issue, linking it with immigration – one of the greatest concerns for voters and yet a delicate area for centrist parties.

With anti-establishment sentiment and the growth of populist parties such as UKIP born out of anti-politics, the key issue of political disaffection appears not to be apathy and disengagement, but rather, the search for a challenge to the status quo. For

many of Britain's most alienated, particularly in England, UKIP is considered the party able to take-on this challenge. The Party has found support by presenting a platform that links opposition to Europe with issues of more immediate concern to 'ordinary voters'. Strengthening this appeal is an underlying defense of Britain. The 'left behind' are now presented with a party that appears to understand their priorities. One consequence of this is that mainstream politicians, Conservatives in particular, are gradually changing strategy when it comes to engaging with UKIP. Once largely excluded from the governmental sphere, written-off as inconsequential extremists, UKIP and its agenda are increasingly taken seriously and the Party is now one of the most significant contemporary challenges to Britain's political system.

## Chapter 6.

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**Emma Vines and David Marsh, 'Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations'<sup>288</sup>**

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<sup>288</sup> Submitted to *Critical Policy Studies*.

## **FORM E: DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORED PUBLICATION CHAPTER**

*For use in theses which include publications. This declaration must be completed for each co-authored publication and to be placed at the start of the thesis chapter in which the publication appears.*

### **Declaration for Thesis Chapter: Article five: ‘Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations’**

**Declaration by candidate**

*In the case of article two the nature and extent of my contribution to the work was the following:*

<b>Nature of contribution</b>	<b>Extent of contribution (%)</b>
<i>First author</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>Background research</i>	
<i>Discussion of concepts and theory</i>	
<i>Editor and writer</i>	

*The following co-authors contributed to the work.*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Nature of contribution</b>	<b>Extent of contribution (%)</b>	<b>Contributor is also student at UC Y/N</b>
<i>David Marsh</i>	<i>Main writer</i> <i>Contributor to theoretical basis of article</i> <i>Background research</i> <i>Discussion of concepts and theory</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>[name 2]</i>			
<i>[name 3] *</i>			

<b>Candidate’s Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>
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### **Declaration by co-authors**

*The undersigned hereby certify that:*

- (1) the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate’s contribution to this work, and the nature of the contribution of each of the co-authors.*
- (2) they meet the criteria for authorship in that they have participated in the conception, execution, or interpretation, of at least that part of the publication in their*

- field of expertise;*
- (3) they take public responsibility for their part of the publication, except for the responsible author who accepts overall responsibility for the publication;
  - (4) there are no other authors of the publication according to these criteria;
3. (5) potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed to (a) granting bodies, (b) the editor or publisher of journals or other publications, and (c) the head of the responsible academic unit; and
4. (6) the original data are stored at the following location(s) and will be held for at least five years from the date indicated below:

<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>IGPA, University of Canberra</b>
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<b>Signature 1</b>	D. Marsh (see email)	<b>Date 17-12-15</b>
<b>Signature 2</b>		
<b>Signature 3</b>		

**Thursday, 17 December 2015 at 6:04:27 PM Australian Eastern Daylight Time**

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**Subject:** FW: IGPA HDR student Emma Vines- PhD Submission- Email 2 of 2, supervisor's approval & further paperwork

**On 14/12/2015 7:41 am, "Selen.A Ercan" <Selen.Ercan@canberra.edu.au> wrote:**

Hi, please also see the email below from Dave Marsh as mentioned in my previous email to your Office. Best, Selen

**On 13/12/2015 8:29 pm, "David.Marsh" <David.Marsh@canberra.edu.au> wrote:**

Hi Selen, Can you tell Research Student Office that I don't have access to a scanner, but am happy to confirm Emma's equal contribution to our joint article, which is reflected in the fact she is first author. Best Dave

**Page 1 of 1**

## **Abstract**

Declining participation in, and increasing dissatisfaction with, formal politics and politicians have led to a growing body of literature on ‘anti-politics’. Despite this, the phenomenon remains under-conceptualised, with normative concerns dominating the discussion and a narrow understanding of ‘the political’ resulting in incomplete analyses. This article redresses this omission, undertaking a systematic study of ‘anti-politics’, focusing on four main issues: what is ‘anti-politics’ and what are its consequences?; is it new?; to the extent that it has increased, what are the causes of that increase?; and, what can be done about it? In doing so, it brings together ‘supply-side’ and ‘demand-side’ explanations, arguing it is only by recognising the role of both citizens and government in the intensification of anti-politics that the problem can begin to be addressed.

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## **Introduction**

Political Science, particularly, but by no means exclusively, in Europe, has seen increased discussion of the future of democracy. There are a number of reasons for this (Merkel, 2014), but a major one is the decline in mainstream political participation. For many, this marks a rise in ‘anti-politics’. We recognize anti-politics as an important, although not totally new, problem. However, in our view, the extant literature fails to systematically examine the issue. Instead, most contributions are driven by either a demand-side or a supply-side explanation of anti-politics, which, in turn, shapes both researcher’ specification of the problem and the ‘solutions’ they suggest. In contrast we argue that concentration solely upon either supply-side or demand-side explanations involves a misspecification of the problem. Instead, we suggest, first, that it is the interaction between the demand-side and the supply-side

which is important, and, second, that specifying the problem in this way leads to different putative ‘solutions’.

This review article is structured around four questions: what is ‘anti-politics’ and what are its consequences?; is it new?; to the extent that it has increased, what are the causes of that increase?; and, what can be done about it? The empirical evidence we consider is drawn from the British case, both because much work has come out of the UK, and, relatedly, the problem appears especially acute there (although we recognise this is a widespread issue, on Eastern Europe see Renwick, 2006, Eyal, 2000 and Tismaneanu, 2001; on Latin-America see McSherry, 1998 and Peruzzotti, 2002; on East Asia see Jayasuriya and Hewison, 2004). Overall, our argument is that there needs to be a recoupling of citizens and political authorities and a greater recognition of the interaction between supply and demand side explanations.

#### **A. WHAT IS ANTI-POLITICS AND WHAT ARE ITS CONSEQUENCES?**

Here, we address three main issues, arguing that: to understand how authors conceptualize ‘anti-politics’ we need to understand how they conceptualize ‘politics’; the nature of ‘anti-politics’ is contested; and anti-politics is clearly related to other concepts and literatures, particularly those on political participation, trust in politicians, the changing role of political parties, populism and, in the UK, the British Political Tradition (BPT).

## 1) Unpacking Anti-politics

### a) *All things to all people and, by the way, what is Politics?*

As Painter (2014) argues:

Everything gets tied up into this ‘anti-politics’ narrative. The rise of Scottish nationalism and other nationalisms such as the Catalan political identity, the success of UKIP and other far right populist forces, the struggles of mainstream parties across the continent, the appearance and growth of new urban political movements, is all rendered through a “politics” versus “anti-politics” prism.

In effect, everything which doesn’t fit into the arena of traditional politics is seen as anti-politics. Yet, as Painter argues, much of the activity seen as anti-politics is in fact very political, which raises a prior question: what is politics? In fact, much of the more critical literature on political participation (for a discussion of that literature, see, Marsh and Akram, 2015) argues that citizens are seen by some as apathetic simply because those authors operate with a very narrow definition of ‘politics’ (see Marsh, O’Toole and Jones, 2007).

The traditional distinction in the literature on what is politics is between arena and process definitions (Leftwich, 2004; for a fuller discussion of the issues raised here, see Rowe, Halupka, Ercan and Marsh, 2016). Arena definitions traditionally saw politics as occurring within designated political arenas, with the agencies involved being parties, unions, interest groups etc., the repertoires involving ‘thick’ political communities and face-to-face interaction and the targets being government or its agencies. More recently, Norris (2002) has argued that much has changed in political participation. Different agencies have become important, particularly social movements; there are new repertoires, especially online; and the targets have broadened, in particular, to include companies. Nevertheless, Norris still operates

with an arena definition, so actions are political in so far that, in the end, they influence policy outcomes.

In contrast, process definitions see politics as occurring in all social institutions where power relations are involved, so, for example, in the family, the classroom or the friendship group. This definition immediately raises a boundary problem: almost any social interaction becomes political. Rowe, Halupka, Ercan and Marsh (2016) suggest that one way to deal with this issue is to see some actions as proto-political. As such, they are not within the formal political arena, but, under certain circumstances, can move into that arena. We do not have space to discuss this argument here, although we would endorse it. Rather, our point is that, if we use an arena definition of politics, we can see anti-politics as marked, in large part, by political apathy; while, if we broaden our conception of the political in the way suggested by Rowe, Halupka, Ercan and Marsh (2016), then the problem is not apathy, but rather alienation from politics as it is practiced. This position is now becoming the dominant one in the political participation literature (see Marsh and Akram, 2015).

Actually, to return more directly to the anti-politics literature, many of the activities identified in that literature are political, even if we use a narrow arena definition. As Painter (2014) argues:

But wait, something doesn't fit. The SNP has trebled its membership. UKIP membership is up by a third. The Greens have at least doubled theirs. Millions take to the streets in Barcelona and Hong Kong. Over eighty percent of Scots voted in the independence referendum. For the first time perhaps ever, the constitution is part of mainstream political discussion in the UK. English identity is starting to find its voice. When looked at through the smoke of the mainstream, all this somehow appears to be 'anti-politics'. When looked at in a more clear-eyed fashion, it is precisely the opposite. We are living in intensely political times.

So, we need to begin by strongly questioning the very notion of anti-politics, largely because most of the phenomena located under this term are certainly not non-political,

but also, because we need to unpack the term, given that it has many, often contradictory, meanings. Consequently, we turn to a discussion of the types of, or, perhaps better, aspects of, anti-politics.

***b) Types of Anti-Politics: Top-Down or Bottom-Up***

Painter (2014) lists the developments subsumed under the term anti-politics: the decline in voting participation, party membership and other forms of traditional political participation; the difficulty of attracting high-quality political leaders; the public's contempt for politicians, reflected in, or influenced by, the media; low levels of trust in decision-makers; and the growth of civil society organizations which openly challenge both politicians and the political structure.

We return to these issues below. Here we emphasise two points: First, this list is clearly located within an arena definition of politics, ignoring the various forms of political activity outside the formal political arena which characterize current political participation. Second, it is a list; what we need is a more systematic understanding of anti-politics.

A good starting point for such a treatment is Mete's (2010) heuristic, which is, surprisingly, largely ignored in the UK literature, probably because it is rooted in Mete's interest in the rise of Italian populism. Mete begins by distinguishing between anti-politics from above, driven by political elites, and anti-politics from below, reflecting citizens' responses to politics and politicians. For Mete, anti-politics from above can either be internal to the political system, or external to it, but, in both cases, it is strongly related to populism. As such, this form of anti-politics involves the manipulation of citizens by political, economic or social elites. Anti-politics from

below can be either active, with activists questioning the existing political order, or passive, with citizens being particularly attracted to populist leaders/parties. As such, Mete (2010) proposes a taxonomy of four different meanings of the concept of anti-politics, drawing examples from Italy during the 1990s.

A critical appreciation of Mete suggests three points. First, as Mete emphasizes, there are two elements involved in any discussion of anti-politics, political authorities and citizens. However, he tends to treat this as a dualism, when, for us, it is a duality. So, anti-politics is a relational concept; it revolves around the iterative relationship between political authorities and citizens. Second, if we focus on political authorities, Mete sees their role as manipulative, and, indeed, his discussion is quite close to the relationship between depoliticization and anti-politics, discussed below. This position immediately blames politicians for the growing alienation from politics and political authorities – a popular view, but not an uncontentious one, as we shall see. Third, Mete’s distinction between active and passive anti-politics from below is too simple, and based on a narrow arena definition of politics. It fails to take account of those people who are active beyond the mainstream arena. In our view, to Mete, they would be passive, yet they are a major feature of the contemporary political scene, particularly given the switch from collective to connective political action (see Bennett and Segerberg, 2012 and Rowe, Halupka, Ercan and Marsh, 2016)

Like Mete, much of the literature sees anti-politics as involving a critique of political actors and institutions by civic organizations, the media and, crucially, citizens. This is a distinct change from the early political participation literature, which emphasised the increasing political apathy of citizens, particularly the young. Citizens were seen as largely responsible for the rise of anti-politics, although that phrase wasn’t used.

Now the blame is often attached to political parties and professional politicians, who are seen as corrupt, self-serving, inefficient, parasitic, incapable, arrogant, and remote from people's real needs. As Stoker (2006, 47) emphasizes:

Politics is often viewed as a rather grubby and unpleasant feature of modern life. People who take up politics as a trade or a vocation tend to attract more derision than admiration. Politics is something you apologize for, rather than being proud about.

Clearly then, as Fawcett and Marsh (2015) argue, the anti-politics literature now frequently demonizes politics and politicians, blaming politicians for the phenomenon, in what is usually termed the 'supply-side' explanation of anti-politics, an issue discussed below. It is also important to recognize that this is a view which fits easily with the neo-liberal position that political institutions and politicians are interested in promoting their own interests, not those of the public (see Hay, 2007).

### ***c) Anti-Politics and Related Concepts***

Here, we explore the relationship between anti-politics and a series of related literatures on: political participation; trust in politics and politicians; the changing role of political parties; populism; and, the British Political Tradition.

#### *i) Political Participation: the Alienation of Citizens from Politics as it is Done.*

There is ample evidence of a decline in mainstream political participation (Marsh and Akram, 2015), which cannot be associated just with apathy. Rather, the recent research shows that, particularly if we utilize a broader definition of politics, many citizens are engaged in non-traditional forms of political activity (see Norris 2002; Marsh and Akram, 2015).

Stoker and Hay both acknowledge this broadening of political participation and reject traditional explanations of falling mainstream participation which blame citizens; that is, the demand-side, rather than the supply-side, of politics. Stoker (2013, 122) sums up this position well, arguing:

What do we mean when we say we have an anti politics culture? In the UK we probably never especially liked doing politics or trusted politicians in the founding days of our mass democracy but what makes our situation different today is that our culture has created citizens who feel disempowered and who have lost faith in the capacity of government. We perhaps do not so much hate politics but rather have been encouraged to see it as an increasingly pointless activity.

In contrast, Putnam (2000, 347) contends that the fault lies on the demand-side, with citizens. He argues that the atomisation of society and weakening of civic engagement results in lower political participation and rejection of political offerings:

It is commonly assumed that cynicism toward government has caused our disengagement from politics, but the converse is just as likely: that we are disaffected because as we and our neighbors have dropped out, the real performance of government has suffered.

This is not an uncontentious claim, but, more importantly here, for Hay and Stoker the onus for maintaining responsive, representative government lies most with political authorities, not with citizens. In fact, Putnam's 'social capital' theory is the antithesis of Hay and Stoker's analyses.

A related issue concerns the connection between anti-politics and depoliticization and whether the removal of issues from the political arena has damaged citizens' confidence in politics. Flinders and Woods' (2014) distinction between three types of depoliticization – governmental, societal and discursive – is useful here (for a critique see Fawcett and Marsh, 2014). 'Governmental depoliticization' is further divided into three separate strands, the most important of which for us sees it as a type of

statecraft. Here, politicians use depoliticization to strengthen their position, shifting blame onto third parties and reducing their own accountability. Flinders and Wood see societal depoliticization as a process that has ‘hollowed out’, not the state, but, rather, the nature and quality of public debate. Here, as with governmental depoliticization, it is government and politicians who are to blame because of their failure to redress declining levels of interest in the political process, an issue we return to below. For Flinders and Wood, discursive depoliticization, is closely related to societal depoliticization and involves the promotion of a particular position on an issue and the ‘denial of choice’, as seen, for example, in the response to a moral panic. However, as the name suggests, the focus is no longer on institutions or actors, but on how ideas and language depoliticize certain topics by making them more or less legitimate, more or less rational and more or less contingent. Crucial for our argument here, depoliticization further decouples citizens from political authorities, as politics becomes further removed from ‘the People’.

There is a final, related, problem with the way in which the mainstream literature, and indeed the political authorities, characterize ‘authentic’ political participation. One of the key features of contemporary political participation is the use of the internet and social media. By definition, much of this activity occurs online and is ‘connective’, rather than ‘collective’ action (Bennett and Segeberg, 2013), involving a ‘thin’, rather than a ‘thick’, political community. Here, the feminist mantra is reversed and the ‘political is personal’. Halupka (2014) argues that the mainstream political participation literature sees much online action as ‘clicktivism’, or even ‘slacktivism’. Consequently, they treat it as ‘inauthentic’, viewing action as political only if it is directly attempting to influence public policy. Yet, this online activity is increasing

rapidly and, as Halupka (2015) shows elsewhere, sometimes this online activity goes offline, thus becoming more collective and attempting to influence policy. Further, some almost exclusively online groups, such as Anonymous, have sometimes engaged in activity in the political arena (Halupka, 2015).

Of course, this is not to say that the decline in mainstream political engagement is not a serious problem. Here, the British case is especially revealing. There is a clear relationship between both age and income and voting (Birch, Gottfried and Lodge, 2013, 7-8). In terms of age, the gap between the percentage of over 65s voting compared to 18-25 year olds was 40 points in 2005 and 32 points in 2010. At the same time, the income gap is increasing; in 1987, there was a 4% greater turnout among the highest income group compared to the lowest, but by 2010 the difference was 22.7%.

More revealing is the relationship between voting and socio-economic inequality. Using the Coalition's 2010 spending review, Birch, Gottfried and Lodge (2013, 13-4) identify a strong 'political inequality effect'. Although both voters and non-voters were affected by cuts, voters' household incomes fell by 11.56% on average, compared to 20% for non-voters. The differences between income groups are particularly stark. Those with an average annual household income of less than £10,000 faced a cut of 40.89%, significantly more than the next income group, £10,000-19,999, which lost 8.13%, itself significantly more than those on £60,000+, who lost only 2.67%.

On the basis of their results, Birch, Gottfried and Lodge (2013, 4) raise a point which the anti-politics literature has largely ignored: 'It might be argued that it is the rise of political inequality that represents the real "crisis" of British democracy, and that low levels of public trust in politicians and participation are merely symptoms of this wider malaise'.

*ii) Trust and the Political Elite*

There is a strong link between anti-establishment sentiment and anti-politics, with, as Stoker (2006) argues, distrust of politics becoming the new normal. With many citizens still engaged with politics, however, the result isn't a rejection of politics itself, but instead, a search for a 'new' type of politics. For many, the solution is involvement in new forms of political engagement, but, in the UK, it has also been reflected in support for minor parties, discussed in the next section.

The defection to minor parties is, in large part, related to declining confidence in mainstream politics. After a period of continuous decline under the Major Government, trust in government rebounded to 32% after the 1997 election. However, under New Labour confidence in the political establishment again collapsed and by 2009 only 16% trusted government 'just about always/most of the time', while 40% replied that they 'almost never' trusted government (Ormston and Curtice, 2015, 136, 144). These figures have improved slightly, but Ormston and Curtice (2015, 12) conclude that low levels of trust are now embedded in Britain's political culture.

iii) *Declining Political Parties and a More Fragmented Political System*

In the UK, the post-war period remained characterized by a predominantly stable two-party competition, with majority government the norm, despite growing partisan dealignment. However, the 2010 election result reflected a more fragmented political system, as did the 2015 election, despite the return to majority government. Indeed, as Andrew Geddes and Jonathan Tonge (2015, 1) emphasize, the 2015 result was a combination of fragmentation and a non-proportional electoral system. Although the Conservatives gained a majority of twelve, with seven party leaders taking part in the televised debate, the ‘new era of multi-party politics’ was clear. To Geddes and Tonge, this reflected the social and geographical fragmentation of Britain, and an election overshadowed by anti-politics.

In a climate of anti-politics, anti-establishment parties thrive. Indeed, as Mathew Flinders (2015, 242) notes: ‘the 2015 General Election took place in a context that was arguably unique in British political history due to the explicit debate concerning “anti-politics” and disengagement’; although Flinders treats the distinction between ‘anti-politics’ and ‘anti-establishment’ as a dualism, whereas we would see them as a duality.

Consequently, voters sought parties capable of offering something new. Flinders (2015, 254) argues that the election, despite an apparent ‘return to normal’, ie. majority government, demonstrated that:

The grand political narrative about the benefits of a majoritarian power-hoarding democracy no longer works ... This instability and flux ... creates a huge opportunity for a political party with the capacity to see *outside* or *beyond* the established way of “doing politics”, to offer a new political framework or philosophy ... that can close the gap that appears to have grown between the governors and large sections of the governed.

Politics is not rejected, rather ‘politics as usual’ is mistrusted and politicians are seen as out-of-touch.

The rise of UKIP, whose share of the national vote climbed from 3.2% in 2010 to 12.9% in 2015, putting the Party in third place, is important here. Given the electoral system, almost four million votes translated into only one Parliamentary seat, so UKIP has been most effective outside Westminster. Between 2010 and 2015 it acted as a pressure group, forcing the Conservatives to rethink its engagement with a party previously written off as ‘fruitcakes’. Ignoring the issue of Europe became impossible as backbench rebellion grew and UKIP emerged as a potential alternative for disaffected Conservatives – both voters and MPs. Cameron’s initial response reflected traditional methods, passing the *EU Act* (2011), before promising a referendum in order to buy off immediate opposition and attempt to retain control of the issue (Wellings and Vines, 2015).

As Vines (forthcoming) emphasises, externalising the European issue through referendum promises has proved effective in the past. However, demands for a referendum have never come so forcefully and effectively from outside Parliament. Further, although Euroscepticism has a long history in Britain (see Vines, 2014), it is particularly strong at present, with the ongoing Eurozone crisis, as well as UKIP’s success, ensuring widespread media coverage of the issue. For a Prime Minister committed to membership, despite his own misgivings towards the current state of European integration, the promise of an in/out referendum was made only reluctantly and in the context of a Coalition Government. This was a significant success for UKIP and a sign that the traditional political system is under pressure, an issue discussed below.

Despite this, Euroscepticism is not behind UKIP's rise. Rather, its support results primarily from widespread hostility towards the political Establishment and politics as it is practiced. As Whittaker and Lynch (2011, 363; see also Hayton, 2011, 30) emphasise: 'UKIP has tried to bolster its support by exploiting and mobilizing popular discontent with the major parties and the EU.'

This point is confirmed by Ford, Goodwin and Cutts' (2012, 215) evidence that UKIP voters:

Are much more likely to regard politicians as corrupt, to distrust their MPs and perceive no difference between the main parties. UKIP supporters are also more disaffected with the main parties; they are more likely to say that both Labour and the Tories used to care about people like them, but no longer do.

While the overall level of trust in Parliament is 42%, it is only 26% among UKIP supporters. Similarly, when it comes to political efficacy, 70% of UKIP supporters believe they have no say in what government does, compared to the national average of 44% (Ormston and Curtice, 2015, 17). However, this research also shows that UKIP supporters, whilst amongst the most disenchanted, retain a significant interest in, and understanding of, British politics.

UKIP directly plays on this growing disenchantment, as their leader, Nigel Farage's (*The Spectator*, 2013) speech at the 2013 UKIP Conference indicated:

On the doorstep we tell voters that UKIP councillors aren't constrained by Labour or Conservative affiliations. They are un-whipped. Free to represent the interests of the community. To fight for the right for local people to have referendums on key local issues such as fracking and the building of wind farms. And what support we find out there. What eclectic support. Look at you!

This disenchantment is common across Western democracies, but it takes a particular form in the UK, which the next two sections address. Here, however, it is important to make the point that the time-scale involved was, to an extent, different in the UK. Mudde (2004) argues that the mid-2000s in Europe were marked by a ‘populist *Zeitgeist*’ as established party systems weakened and populist movements gained strength, particularly in Italy and Greece. However, Britain was an exception, despite chronically low levels of trust in Parliament and politicians (Ormston and Curtice, 2015, 136). One crucial reason for this, which is discussed at more length in the section on the BPT, is the ideational basis of the British political system and the tradition of minimal popular involvement in politics. Although the conviction that ‘Government knows best’ may have been damaged by the generally poor opinion of politicians, the lasting effect of this idea has been the belief that ‘the People’ can have little influence over politics, even when they do become involved. Recently, however, minor parties have emerged as one outlet for frustration with ‘politics as usual’.

#### iv) *The Role of Populism?*

We can’t ignore the issue of populism which drives Mete’s analysis, as well as analyses of UKIP. Populism is a contested concept (Taggart, 2004) which is only briefly considered here. The last decade has seen a renewed attempt to bring conceptual clarity as ‘populism’ has been increasingly discussed in relation to anti-establishment sentiment and declining trust in politicians and political processes.

Mudde (2004, 543) defines populism as:

An ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.

Mudde's work is a useful starting point. He identifies two dominant (mis)understandings of populism, which lead to examples of either demagoguery or opportunism being labelled 'populism' (Mudde, 2004, 542). The former refers to instances of 'highly emotional and simplistic discourse directed at the "gut feelings" of the people', while the second reflects 'opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the People/voters – and so "buying" their support'.

The issue of elite political opportunism is particularly important here. Mudde distinguishes between 'explicitly populist' groups and those within the Establishment who simply use populist discourse to respond to pressure from an external populist movement. However, given the objective of the latter is to consolidate the Establishment's own position what he labels mainstream 'populism' would perhaps, often, be better termed 'opportunism'. To return to a UK example, for Mudde (2004, 551), Blair's New Labour was an example of centrist populism; yet this seems an excellent example of a politician adopting an opportunistic 'populist *style*, rather than populist *politics*' (Fieschi and Haywood, 2004, 3002). Despite the Party's rhetoric, the period of New Labour saw an increase in socio-economic inequality (Birch, Gottfried and Lodge, 2013, 8); fierce protection of centralised power, despite devolution; and a failure to fully implement its constitutional reform agenda (Marsh and Hall, 2008). In our view, this use of populist rhetoric represents a defence of the BPT; an attempt to retain centralized authority by manipulating citizens. More importantly, here it also seems to be a cause of disenchantment and a decline of trust in political authorities.

v) *Anti-Politics and the BPT*

The argument about the BPT is rehearsed extensively, both by us, and others, but, while we will not deal with it at length here, we need to briefly introduce it. The argument is that the institutions and processes of British politics are underpinned by a particular understanding of, and narrative about, democracy. This narrative revolves around a limited liberal notion of representation, the core of which is a commitment to free and fair elections, and a conservative notion of responsibility, which stresses that ‘Government knows best’. This analysis of British politics is contested (see, for example, Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Bevir and Rhodes, 2006), but, has been rigorously defended by a number of scholars (Tant, 1993; Marsh, Richards and Smith, 2001; Marsh and Hall, 2007; Hall, 2011; Vines, 2014; Richards and Smith, 2015).

Two other points are important before we move on. First, Marsh and Hall (2015) also explore the relationship between the British political and socio-economic elites and the BPT, arguing that the latter serves the interest of those elites, and, indeed, this is one reason why the BPT has proved so resilient, despite challenges. Second, Marsh and Hall argue that, despite this, the BPT is more challenged than it was previously for a number of reasons, one of which is the rise of anti-politics.

This latter point brings us to the work of Richards and Smith (2015) who directly consider the relationship between the BPT and anti-politics. In large part, their article is a response to Flinders’ (2015) argument that the anti-politics phenomenon reflects the failure of citizens to appreciate the difficulties of modern governance, so, citizens have unrealistic demands and expectations in a period of ‘late modernity’ (not

Flinders' term), marked by increased complexity and risk; and the decline in civic values, which evokes Putnam's ideas on the decline of social capital.

Richards and Smith take issue with this argument on empirical grounds, in particular, using Whiteley's (2012) research, which highlights a significant decline in the electorate's expectations of what government can and should provide. This is perhaps unsurprising given the growth of the neo-liberal narrative about state failure(s) (see Beetham, 2013), together with the examples of government failures.

More importantly, Richards and Smith's argue that the reason for disillusionment lies not with citizens, but rather with politics, and particularly the political system. They contend that a key problem is that politics and democracy are confused and conflated and that there is too much politics and not enough democracy. As such, they accept the argument that the BPT focuses on strong government, not responsive or accountable government (2015, 45), contending:

The substantial accrual of power at the centre of the UK government, sustained by a bi-partisan consensus has, as numerous critics have observed, remained largely unchallenged. Both the executive and the legislature have operated within a self-regulating arena legitimised on the grounds that it protects against outside, potentially undemocratic, influence.

For them, this centralization of power, and the political class's limited conception of democracy, has isolated it from citizens; the former are out of touch with the latter and the latter are well aware of that, hence growing disillusionment. This doesn't mean that citizens don't care about 'politics'. Richards and Smith (2015, 42) argue: 'People care that they are safe when they leave their house, that the streets are cleaned and that their children receive a good education'. The problem is that they don't care

about politics as it is practiced in Whitehall and Westminster. What is needed is a politics which responds more directly to the wishes of citizens.

We have considerable sympathy with Richard and Smiths' argument, but it raises some important issues. First, they see the BPT as, to a large extent, causing the rise of anti-politics in the UK, whereas we would argue that the relationship is better seen as symbiotic. Second, in our view, they underestimate the extent to which the BPT is under pressure and the role anti-politics is playing in this challenge.

They see the main challenge to the BPT as coming from the increased importance of the internet. Here, it is important to flag an argument we consider below: recent developments in the internet may give more, not less, power to elites, particularly, economic elites. More importantly, the anti-politics phenomenon may be more significant than Richards and Smith acknowledge, in large part because they do not discuss the raft of critical political participation literature discussed earlier. In our view, these new forms, which are not all internet-driven, represent a sea-change in political participation, in ways particularly highlighted by Bang (2009), who identifies a new type of political participator, the Everyday Maker (EMs), whose engagement with politics is highly personal and local. EMs reflect a decoupling of political authorities and citizens, which is very important for the future of democracy. Richard and Smith (2015) acknowledge this decoupling, but they see the answer in terms of more responsive government. We are normatively committed to such a change, and agree with many of their arguments. However, recoupling citizens and political authorities involves a two-way process, an issue we explore in the last section.

## B. IS ANTI-POLITICS NEW?

There is always an issue when one identifies a contemporary trend: is it really new? One problem is that there is rarely as good evidence from the past as from the data-rich present. Nevertheless, in our view, while anti-politics is not new, it is more pervasive than in the past.

Certainly, there is a long history of criticism of political authority, particularly in the anarchist tradition. However, in the more recent period, as Hay (2007) emphasises, the influence of neo-liberalism is crucial. Hay argues that neo-liberal ideas, as propagated by economists, essentially suggest that the state and government are the problem and the market the solution. Given this dominant narrative, Hay argues that it is unsurprising that citizens are reluctant to be involved in politics – ‘if it doesn’t matter why get involved’?

The UK is an interesting case here and our starting place must be Almond and Verba’s *The Civic Culture* (1963), a pioneering work on attitudes to democracy across countries. The research for the book was conducted in 1959 and compared the political cultures of the UK, America, Germany, Italy and Mexico. Their findings were highly flattering about British political culture, contending that, not only was the British citizenry engaged and satisfied with their democracy, but also, that its leaders were highly responsive and citizens deferential.

Clark, Stoker, Jennings and Moss (University of Southampton, 2015) use evidence from the Mass Observation Archive to assess whether anti-politics is a recent phenomenon, in part throwing Almond and Verba's conclusions into relief. Using responses from 60 panelists about their view of formal politics on five occasions between 1945 and 1950 and four occasions between 1996 and 2014, they found considerable evidence of anti-politics between 1945-50. While turnout was 90% in the 1951 General Election, citizens didn't think very highly of politicians. A common theme then, as now, was that politicians were self-serving and not straight-talking. The respondents were particularly scathing about political parties, and politicians were seen as talking and arguing, when what was needed was action. So, the emphasis was not upon discussion and deliberation, but, rather, upon leadership.

Returning to the earlier issue of depoliticization and anti-politics, in terms of their empirical results, Clark, Stoker, Jennings and Moss (Political Studies Association, 2015) argue:

Anti-politics existed in the period immediately after the Second World War without depoliticisation. Furthermore, if anything, it seems to have been related positively not to depoliticisation but to politicisation. High voter turnout may have been influenced by governmental politicisation, in that citizens perceived governments to be responsible and powerful. But negativity towards politicians and parties appears to have been influenced by societal politicisation, in that citizens wanted less talk by 'partymen' and more action by 'statesmen'.

This returns us to our discussion of the BPT. It seems that these respondents wanted what the BPT promises: strong, decisive leadership. The point is, however, that the respondents didn't think this was being delivered, just the opposite. Today, while we continue to see this, we also see a greater decoupling of political authorities from citizens and the opening up of new avenues of political participation, in part due to the decline in arena processes, such as political parties, but also because online

resources have caused a shift to connective, not collective, action. Much has changed since Almond and Verba (1963) emphasised the deference of UK political culture. It will be really interesting, therefore, to see whether, in the more recent period, the Southampton research shows that respondents have changed their views and want a more active citizenry.

### **C WHAT CAUSES ANTI-POLITICS?**

It is common to distinguish between supply-side and demand-side explanations of anti-politics. We have dealt with many of these issues above, so only briefly rehearse the arguments. Demand-side explanations focus on issues such as the putative decline in social capital and/or collective institutions. So, citizens' involvement in politics is reducing, at the same time when citizens are much more questioning and less deferential. In addition, to many, like Flinders (2015), demands from the citizenry are increasing, at a time when it is becoming harder for political authorities to deliver.

In contrast, supply-side explanations tend to argue that there is process problem, resulting from a combination of: a narrow political elite; spin and a 24-hour media-cycle; and depoliticization. For authors like Richards and Smith (2015), this results from the continued dominance of the BPT and the failures of politicians. To others, like Flinders (2015), it is crucial to acknowledge that the complexities of the contemporary world make governing very difficult.

It should be clear from our previous discussion that we would take issue with a number of points raised by both explanations. However, our main point here is that to focus exclusively on either demand-side or supply-side explanations is inadequate. To do so, is to treat a duality as a dualism. The crucial question concerns the relationship

between political authorities and citizens; or, to put it another way, how the supply-side and the demand-side interact.

If we blame citizens and suggest that we need to rediscover strong, collective political organizations, then we are railing against the dying of the light, given that citizens are engaged in different ways and connective action has largely replaced collective action. In contrast, if we blame politicians, we are failing to recognize that governing is more difficult in a time when wicked problems abound. It is important to consider, and address, both sides of the relationship if we are to recouple citizens and political authorities.

#### **D WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

While anti-politics may be the wrong term, because it is rooted in a very narrow conception of ‘politics’, democracy faces major problems because citizens and political authorities are decoupled. So, the key question becomes: how can we re-engage citizens and recouple the government and citizens? As we saw, many see the problem as a supply-side one and suggest varying, if related, responses. Here we focus on three: constitutional reform; challenging the dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm; and greater recognition of the legitimacy and power of online, connective, participation.

For Stoker (2006), the answer is constitutional reform, ensuring more participatory governance, with citizens more actively involved in the process of governing. We are strongly normatively committed to such moves and argue, in line with Rutter, Sims and Marshall (2012), that, if people are involved in the policy-making process, then they have more stake in the outputs and, thus, policy outcomes are likely to be more

effective. However, Stoker's work with the Southampton group suggests an issue here, which we previously flagged. In the post-war period citizens bought into the need for strong, decisive, leadership, and thought that the political system wasn't delivering such leadership. If results from the contemporary period are similar, it might suggest that the BPT is still powerful and citizens don't necessarily want deliberative governance.

While Hay (2007) is not opposed to constitutional reform, he sees the limited involvement of citizens in formal politics as 'rational', given that the rise of neo-liberal ideas has 'convinced' citizens that the state has little to offer outside areas like defence and law and order. Given this perspective, reinforced as it is by most of the media, what is needed is, in effect, a hegemonic struggle to challenge neo-liberalism, and the role of economists within that hegemony, by emphasising what the state does well and what a broad social democratic politics has to offer.

Richards and Smith (2015) point the finger very directly at the politicians and the failure of the political system. They emphasize that government has failed to respond to citizens' concerns and produce relevant policy outcomes. They don't see the internet as the answer to the democratic deficit, as some of its early advocates did, nevertheless, they argue (2015, 48):

Hitherto, the relationship of politicians with citizens has effectively been uni-dimensional, through voting. The emergence of a new, more open, digital society at least provides the potential for more complex political relationships with vastly different time horizons. Citizens are able to challenge information and have new ways of setting the political debate. These may at the moment be used by a minority, but they are part of a potential shift in the balance of power.

We have sympathy with all of these putative ‘solutions’, but need to introduce a few notes of scepticism. First, and most broadly, the problem with the Stoker solution is the extent to which it underestimates the extent of the changes that have occurred in contemporary citizens’ views and experience of politics. In particular, a key question here is whether such changes would re-engage citizens who have engagement norms, rather than duty norms (Marsh and Akram, 2015). This returns us to the concerns of Bang (2011). For Bang, a crucial issue is that the nature of politics and governance is changing and this means a different relationship between governors and citizens. Stoker, and, indeed, Hay and Richards and Smith, focus on changing the input side of politics, to involve more citizens in the policy-making process, but this will not solve the problems on the output side of politics, a point we return to below.

Second, particularly here taking issue with Richards and Smith, while we acknowledged earlier the importance of the internet in current political participation, two recent developments identified by Halupka (forthcoming) mean that we need to be more circumspect. Halupka (forthcoming) identifies how the consumption of information is increasingly shaping political behaviour, with people viewing being informed about an issue as a means of participating in a movement. He (forthcoming) argues that contemporary citizens are confronted by a constant stream of information, yet only have a superficial understanding of the complexities involved in issues. As such, there is increasing ‘knowledge homogeneity’, discussed further below.

This second issue is not unrelated to the first, and deals with ‘the shrinking of the web’. If we look at recent trends in digital infrastructure and online business models, we find that there has been a predilection for streamlining user-end services. Only five years ago, the internet was a different place, home to a range of websites

providing a unique service, which served to differentiate them within the broader online market. However, recent business practices have been driven by two central notions: the embedding of sites; and the rise of aggregation services. The first was commented upon by Bennett and Segerberg (2013) in their exploration of the connective action framework. They suggest that such a model is supported by loose, thin, wide-reaching, communicative networks, which allow for the fast distribution of information and resources. Here, key social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, Reddit etc.) allow users to publish and share content across platforms. For example, your tweet on Twitter can appear on your Facebook site, which might link to your Instagram account, which can be posted onto Reddit. These popular sites allow content to effortlessly move across digital platforms, a process aided by the existence of social buttons and embedded hyperlinks. Information is quickly and widely shared, but, as Halupka (forthcoming) warns, there is a dark-side to this shrinking web.

This returns us to a neglected theme in the political participation literature, how economic power constrains democracy. While initially, as Halupka argues, the internet expanded outwards, growing in response to users' needs, now the most popular and powerful sites expand upwards, embedding new functionality into existing structures. Consequently, these sites become 'one-stop-shops' and there is increasing 'knowledge homogeneity' as dominant forces monopolise the web and the spread of information. As a result, although citizens are exposed to much more information, it comes from far fewer sites. Overall, although citizens' may become more self-assured about their knowledge of events and issues, this knowledge may, in fact, be increasingly shallow and filtered by a few, dominant, companies. This

possible future doesn't fit well with Richards and Smith's (2015) view that the internet may be an answer to anti-politics.

This highlights a big weakness in anti-politics literature: its almost exclusive focus on politics, to the omission of socio-economics. Marsh and Hall (2015) have explored elsewhere the synergies between the BPT and the interest of the economic, as well as the political, elite. Similarly, as we saw earlier, Birch, Gottfried and Lodge (2013) showed the clear relationship between political disengagement and socio-economic background. All three observations suggest to us that any attempt to address political engagement also needs to address the issue of economic inequality. To put it another way, the economic elite is not unhappy with a disengaged majority – an example, in our view, of governmental depoliticization.

Of course, the authors who see anti-politics as a demand-side problem have different 'solutions.' Flinders (2011) is perhaps the best example. He emphasises the increased complexities of governing at a time when the risks for both government and citizens are growing. As such, this position shares something with Bang's (2011) argument about the problems of 'late modernity', but, unlike Bang, Flinders argues that the expectations that citizens have of government are growing. In contrast, Bang's EMs expect less of government and, rather, do it themselves; an argument which sits much better with Whiteley's (2012) evidence that citizens' expectations of government are significantly falling.

For Flinders (2011), the answer to the decline in civic virtues, in duty norms, in Bang's terms, is democratic [re]-education, particularly of a younger generation: 'that

has become complacent and parochial, and ... forgotten the alternatives to democratic politics'. In essence, as Richards and Smith (2015) argue, this is a well-rehearsed argument that, among the young, the focus is upon rights, not responsibilities. The problem with this argument, as Richards and Smith emphasise, is that young people, and indeed older people, are much more active, in less traditional forms of political participation, than Flinders acknowledges. The 'solution' isn't to re-educate them, but to recouple them with political authorities.

Here, we want to return to Bang's (2011) distinction between input and output politics. Flinders, in blaming citizens, focuses on output politics, seeing political authorities as struggling to deal with an increasingly difficult environment, while citizens fail to appreciate these problems and politicians' attempts to address them, instead demanding more for themselves. In contrast, the other authors, bar Bang, considered in this section, see the problem as lying with the politicians and reflecting their failure to respond to the needs of citizens. Instead, we want to argue, following Bang, that we need to recognise both the input and the output side, and address the relationship between them, if we are to address the current democratic problems.

It is clear that there is a decoupling on the output side which is increasing with the growth of anti-politics and decline in trust in politics and politicians. The tendency, as we saw, in much of the literature is to blame politicians, but, in our view, this is a two-way process. Politicians do not tell the truth about the difficulties involved in solving the increasingly complex problems of late modernity. No government, or opposition, can have all the answers and the modern tendency to make politics quickly, in response, in part, to the 24-hour media cycle, exacerbates this problem. At the same time, and in part as a consequence of the tendency of governments to claim

that they have the answers, citizens don't fully recognise the problems of governing. Even more importantly, to the extent that Bang is right in his characterization of many, especially young, 'lay-people' as EMs, these EMs pursue their own ends and their own solutions to their own problems. To Bang, EMs are reflexive actors who know best about the issues which concern them, but Halupka's arguments throw that assumption into relief, given that he emphasizes the current 'knowledge homogeneity'. At the same time, we must recognize that citizens need to recouple with political authorities, because most policies have to be aggregated-up, developed for all citizens – if everyone acts as EMs, or in Bang's terms, if politics is just personal, then any notion of society becomes problematic.

This diagnosis of the problem, as involving the uncoupling of citizens and political authorities suggests different types of solutions; solutions that fit well with Rutter, Sims and Marshall's (2012) research on how to produce more successful policy. Policy-making needs to be more considered, to accept that there are no easy answers and that good policy may involve experimentation and the recognition that failures will inevitably occur; and, crucially, politicians and citizens need to recognize this point.

At the same time, we need to consider how to increase trust between citizens and political authorities. This surely involves the type of reforms suggested by many of the authors considered here, to allow citizens more say, to the extent that they want it, in policy-making. However, we also need to educate citizens about the complexities facing governments, so that they recognise that many government failures that citizens identify, and which lead them to expect less of government, are part of a

learning experience for governments, as well as for citizens. Of course, we acknowledge that achieving such a recoupling will be, at the very least, extremely difficult. However, as always, the first step is to recognise the nature of the problem.



## CHAPTER 7.

### CONCLUSION: DISRUPTED STABILITY, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE?

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Britain's political system is undoubtedly under pressure. The question, therefore, is whether its political actors will use this as an opportunity for change. Given past performance, it is easy to believe top-down change remains unlikely; and yet, remarkably for a historically obedient citizenry, it appears bottom-up pressure for reform is growing. Change may prove unavoidable since, despite the election of a majority government following a period of coalition, the major parties continue to face defections and challenges from minor parties. This is occurring within a climate of anti-politics and the intensification of anti-establishment sentiment among an increasingly hostile electorate. Despite a restrictive electoral system, the two-party system no longer has the iron-grip it has long held.

As a system born out of a revolution which reasserted the power of the privileged over the 'common person', the Crown-in-Parliament has never demanded responsive government, or the sharing of power with the masses. In a democracy often applauded for its longevity, what should not, and, potentially cannot, continue, is the marginalisation of 'the People'. Anti-politics is placing pressure on the insularity of power, with anti-establishment sentiment focusing not only on the political elite, but also powerful societal and economic influences, such as the media and big business. With popular discontent growing, the once quiet and passive masses appear to be trying to make themselves heard. The question, then, is whether the elite will heed them, or, instead, continue to turn a deaf-ear.

This conclusion both summarises the argument presented throughout the thesis, and considers this question of whether change is afoot in British politics. It reflects on the 2015 General Election, as well as the lessons of previous referendum promises and whether these still hold true in the lead-up to the June 2016 vote. It also returns to the major parties, asking whether they will be able to operate as normal, or, whether, as the selection of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Leader perhaps suggests, they are capable of trying something new. In an insular political system sustained by popular acceptance that ‘Government knows best’, political parties have rarely had to be truly responsive. Does the breakdown of this political culture, therefore, signal that change is inevitable; or do continuity and stability remain the order of the day in the narrow minds of the political elite?

## **1. THE META-THEORETICAL ISSUE: STABILITY AND CHANGE IN BRITISH POLITICS**

At its heart, this is a thesis built around the question of stability and change. Even when not explicitly addressed, the issue has been ever-present. In particular, the concept of ‘traditions’ is, at its core, an analytical tool designed not only to understand the motivations and actions of political actors, but also, more fundamentally, the way change occurs.

As has been demonstrated, stability is the primary concern of British politics. This has been a concern shared by politicians and citizens alike, with the longevity and resilience of the British political system a source of national pride and, for many English in particular, a source of identity. Yet, there is a danger here of neglecting the issue of change. Stability, in Britain, and elsewhere, often depends upon change, albeit of the conservative and evolutionary type. To adopt a ‘punctuated equilibrium’

approach to change, therefore, is unsatisfactory; change occurs, as far as possible, with tradition in mind.<sup>289</sup> Likewise, popular analyses of traditions like Bevir and Rhodes',<sup>290</sup> which view change as ubiquitous, fail to adequately address the vital issue of stability. What is needed instead, therefore, is a more holistic conceptualisation of a Tradition which recognises the iterative relationship between stability and change and, relatedly, between structure and agency.

Actors may be able to affect change, yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, in Britain, such change has often been minimal and occurred with the objective of returning political equilibrium and preventing further, major, disruptions to the system. Political actors, although capable of actioning change, do so with reference to their environment – in this case, an environment imbued with the tenets of the BPT. Referendums have been shown to be the perfect example of this process. While, on the surface, they represent a deviation from 'politics as usual' and the undermining of the BPT, introducing an element of popular sovereignty to a system otherwise concerned with responsible, not responsive government, they have been used according to a conservative, Dicean view, which sees them as a means of blocking change and avoiding dissent. As Wilson foresaw in 1975, a referendum used to legitimate already-formed government policy quietened continued debate on what needed to be a settled issue and prevented serious disruption to party unity. Here was an example of an actor affecting change – the introduction of national referendums to British politics – in such a way that this change was designed to safeguard stability, the BPT, and the Government's own position.

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<sup>289</sup> David Marsh, 'Stability and change: the last dualism?', *Critical Policy Studies*, (2010): 4:1, 86-101; See also, footnote 116.

<sup>290</sup> Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *Governance Stories*, (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

Unlike in 1975, today we are witnessing greater change and a growing rejection of the status quo. There have, of course, been previous periods of significant change to the political system, with the obvious example of devolution,<sup>291</sup> and, yet, the current dissatisfaction with politics threatens to see a more fundamental, nationwide shift in British politics.

Already, minor parties are placing pressure on the two-party system, with Britain experiencing a period of an unlikely (and ultimately ill-fated) Conservative-Liberal Democrats Coalition. Further, a referendum will be held on EU membership, with earlier traditional, conservative attempts to restore stability, such as the *EU Act*, failing. The BPT appears to be under-pressure and major parties would be ill-advised to ignore the growing momentum behind calls for change – not only for their own electoral success, but also for the health of British democracy,<sup>292</sup> which, one would hope, is a consideration for political actors. Stability may always be the driving force behind government, yet, the changes that are required to maintain it, particularly within a climate of anti-politics, may now need to be far more widespread and radical than before. Such reform, as article five discussed, will likely need to be not only constitutional and procedural, but also, involve a fundamental rethink of what constitutes ‘the political’. As Marsh and Hall explain, change is possible when ‘the efficacy of the British political system and the view of democracy that underpins it is

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<sup>291</sup> David Marsh and Matthew Hall, ‘The British Political Tradition: Explaining the fate of New Labour’s constitutional reform agenda’, *British Politics*, (2007): 2:2, 215-238, 227.

<sup>292</sup> See David Marsh, Matthew Hall and Emma Vines, ‘The British Political Tradition: Challenges and Responses’ (forthcoming).

increasingly questioned'.<sup>293</sup> As this thesis has examined in relation to the challenge of European integration, 'the People' are starting to ask questions.

## **2. LESSONS FROM THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

Analysing issues broadly related to European integration tells us about far more than just Britain's relationship with the EU. It brings to light aspects of the political system, perhaps most importantly, the place of 'the People' and their relationship with both their political representatives and their democracy itself. Additionally, it tells us something about how stability and change operate in the British political system, as well as the priorities of, and influences on, political actors. Ultimately, as the thesis has demonstrated, it exposes the existence of a dominant political tradition – the BPT – which has shaped both the political system and the broader political culture, keeping popular participation to a minimum and creating an 'awkward partner' in the integration project. This section reflects on this issue, considering, in particular, what this thesis has argued in regards to the conflict between parliamentary and popular sovereignty, and the dominance of the former over the latter.

### **2.1 *A dominant tradition***

Individuals do not act independently. Of course, this is not to say that individuals lack all autonomy, but, rather, such a historical institutionalist approach recognises that, while actors can change their environment, they are influenced by their material, structural, and ideational context. Understanding this context, therefore, is vital when attempting to explain political developments and, as this thesis has explained, it is for

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

this reason that the concept of ‘traditions’ is useful. It provides a framework through which stability and change can be understood, as actions are contextualised and dominant ideas and influences exposed.

In Britain, we find a dominant tradition. It is insular, elitist and unresponsive. Political actors generally come from a privileged socio-economic position, have strong ties to dominant societal and economic interests and are fiercely protective of their own centralised power. When it comes to the place of ‘the People’, government is expected to be responsible, not responsive, and this feeds into a wider societal apathy and acceptance that ‘Government knows best’. Popular involvement is not a priority; protecting the status quo is crucial.

As this thesis has explored, European integration, as a challenge to the system, exposes what political actors seek to protect – the BPT. Participation in a supranational body requires the decentralisation of power, leading to a breach of parliamentary sovereignty, the driving principle behind British democracy. The result is that, as articles one, three and four, in particular, show, British Eurosceptics condemn the ‘anti-democratic’ nature of Europe, elevating the issue to one of national importance and a threat to the ‘British way of life’ or Anglo-British identity. In reality, what is most threatened is a British Political Tradition which does not welcome decentralisation or the sharing of power.

In terms of the growing literature surrounding traditions, the result of this analysis is that, although arguments such as Bevir and Rhodes’,<sup>294</sup> which identify competing

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<sup>294</sup> Bevir and Rhodes, *Governance Stories*; Bevir and Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*.

traditions, are both valuable and, to an extent, correct, they fail to recognise that, above these traditions, there is one which dominates and most influences action. Further, *contra* their conceptualisation of autonomous actors, this thesis has shown how political decisions often follow a predictable path, shaped by the institutional reality actors operate within.

Given the prominence of Bevir and Rhodes' analysis, it is worth briefly returning to their argument and reconsidering it in light of the arguments made in this thesis. As article three discusses, Bevir and Rhodes' own study of civil servants exposes similarities in these actors' privileged socio-economic background, as well as shared concerns and understandings of Britain's political culture, which is preoccupied with maintaining 'business as usual'.<sup>295</sup> In their own words:

The civil servants *domesticate the successive waves of reform by filtering them through their traditional belief* about the generalist and efficiency. The beliefs and practices of civil servants have changed but the changes have been refracted through familiar prisms. These prisms are sustained in part through the socialisation of young entrants to the civil service.<sup>296</sup>

Their own interviews show this socialisation to be of a particular, conservative nature, which better reflects an over-arching tradition constraining the effects of competing traditions, rather than the beliefs of autonomous actors. Additionally, this has certainly been the case when it comes to the challenges considered in this thesis.

In this thesis, therefore, in contrast to Bevir and Rhodes' popular constructivist approach, individuals' actions are shown to be constrained by the dominant culture, and change is consequently difficult, although not impossible. All this suggests that, beyond an individual's own belief system, ideology or position, there are

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<sup>295</sup> Bevir and Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance*.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. 190, 191 [emphasis added].

institutionalised expectations and limitations. Change, when it occurs, often conforms to a particular path. ‘It is’, as Hall argues:

The interplay between continuity and change in terms of balance and potential contradictions that affects outcomes at any given time ... path dependency forms the context in which change occurs. Prior stability, the manner in which it is narrated and the way it is experienced by agents affects the likely nature, extent and permanence of change.<sup>297</sup>

Particular actions and solutions are preferred and outside influences, especially those which fail to conform to the dominant Tradition, need to be either subsumed by the system, or defeated. European integration is one such threat and has predominantly been dealt with according to the dominant ideas and narratives about British democracy outlined in the introduction to this thesis and present throughout the five articles and appendix.

## ***2.2 The tension between parliamentary and popular sovereignty***

In such a system, it is necessary for power to be centralised and elitist. Ultimately, the result is that ‘the People’, (or, as the great political thinker Edmund Burke branded them, the ‘swinish multitude’),<sup>298</sup> need to remain peripheral to the system. As this thesis has demonstrated, it is parliamentary, not popular, sovereignty which dominates; and responsible, not responsive, government which characterises the political system and culture. Here, again, the challenge of European integration helps expose this reality.

Even when it comes to what appear to be novel, popular devices, such as referendums, the BPT continues to operate. One key issue explored throughout this thesis has been whether referendums on European integration have, as proposed in

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<sup>297</sup> Matthew Hall, *Political Traditions and UK Politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 80, 81.

<sup>298</sup> Edmund Burke cited in *HANSARD* HC Deb, 13 February 1995, vol 254 cc668-768.

articles one and two, undermined parliamentary sovereignty. Are ‘the People’ now the ultimate defenders of British sovereignty; or does popular participation remain too much at the whim of government? As has been argued, with the exception of the 2016 referendum, the answer is firmly the latter.

Contrary to the ‘fusion’ of parliamentary and popular sovereignty identified in articles one and two, the remainder of this thesis has demonstrated that, when instigated by political leaders as a means of party political strategy, referendums are, in fact, only superficial extensions of popular sovereignty and a means of depoliticising a contentious issue and protecting the traditional operation of the system. With the outcome often predetermined by the position of major parties, as well as the entire process tightly controlled, referendums generally only provide post-facto legitimisation to government decisions. In contrast to Wellings and Gifford’s analyses,<sup>299</sup> parliamentary sovereignty is, far from being undermined by popular sovereignty, strengthened and defended by it. Further, when it comes to past referendums on questions to do with Europe, or the *EU Act*, they are designed to stall integration – something that, again, strengthens centralised power and parliamentary sovereignty. Consequently, when it comes to identifying avenues of popular participation in relation to Europe, greater care needs to be taken. Beneath the popular façade is the reality that referendums have, in the past, consistently been used to defend the BPT, the party system and the status quo. Power remains centralised, with Westminster sharing control only when necessary and in carefully calculated ways.

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<sup>299</sup> Ben Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism: Losing the Peace*, (London: Peter Lang, 2012); Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014).

### 3. A TRADITION UNDER PRESSURE

It is clear that ‘the People’ have been kept on the periphery of their democratic system and taught to believe that ‘Government knows best’. However, it seems that this is becoming increasingly difficult. As Richards and Smith question in their article, discussed at length in article five: ‘what happens when a system of strong government based on a view that the rulers know best fails to maintain the respect of the electorate?’<sup>300</sup> The answer is: ‘politics as usual’ breaks-down and anti-politics, combined with anti-establishment feelings, challenges the traditional order.

When it comes to the European question, we are beginning to see that anti-politics has some potential to force governments (still often in carefully controlled ways) to decentralise a degree of power. In the same way as devolution was the necessary price of keeping the Union together, promising an in-out referendum was an attempt to appease an increasingly Eurosceptic Conservative Party and public, while simultaneously appearing to ‘care’ about the views of the populace and diffuse the ‘UKIP threat’.

#### ***3.1 Are unhappy Europeans challenging the BPT?***

With the BPT built upon centralised power and the longevity of Britain’s political system and independence integral to the national imagination, it is easy to understand why ‘rule from Brussels’ is resisted. Integration into a supranational body appears to violate the all-important principle of parliamentary sovereignty. Consequently, while economics drive the pro-integration argument, Euroscepticism is, as this thesis has demonstrated, in large part, concerned with the idea that European integration is

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<sup>300</sup> Richards and Smith, ‘In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition’, 45.

contrary to British democracy. While Britain's reluctant participation in European integration is well documented, what is novel to this thesis is the direct linking of the European question with the concept of the BPT, as well as a more focused look at the effects of the ill-health of British democracy on Britain's future participation in Europe. Further, it revises the increasingly popular 'populist Euroscepticism' argument.<sup>301</sup> In this, it demonstrates the danger in classifying acts as mainstream, populist Euroscepticism simply because populist rhetoric or referendums are used. As developed in articles four and five, the populist 'break-through' in British politics has primarily occurred, not because of opposition to Europe, but, rather, because of external, anti-establishment pressure symptomatic of anti-politics.

What Wellings and Gifford identify as 'mainstream populism',<sup>302</sup> developing since Britain's entry into the EEC, is, in fact, little more than strategic, opportunistic rhetoric designed to protect the status quo. As the introduction to this thesis, as well as articles three and four discuss, 'populism' requires more than the discourse of 'us and them'; it needs to be driven by a serious desire for reform of the position of 'the People' in relation to their democracy and the political elite. Further, as argued at length, referendums do not automatically equate with populism. This thesis has instead proposed that, rather than opposition to European integration since the 1970s, it is primarily the growth of anti-politics and anti-establishment sentiment in general that has placed pressure on the BPT and political actors, leading to increasingly vocal

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<sup>301</sup> See in particular, Wellings, *English Nationalism and Euroscepticism*; Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

calls for more responsive government and the eventual spread of Europe's 'populist *Zeitgeist*'<sup>303</sup> to Britain.

What we see, as articles four and five argued, is that there is a strong connection between anti-establishment sentiment and anti-politics, with the former a symptom of the latter. Dissatisfaction with the political elite reflects a more fundamental anti-politics, in which, as Stoker demonstrates, distrust of politics becomes the new normal.<sup>304</sup> With many citizens still engaged with politics, however, the result isn't a rejection of politics itself, but, instead, a search for a 'new' type of politics. With the political mainstream proving, as Richards and Smith demonstrate, astonishingly stubborn and incapable of modernisation or change,<sup>305</sup> one answer, as discussed in article five, has been to turn to minor parties and push for alternative, and, often, informal, avenues of participation.<sup>306</sup>

Significant challenges to parliamentary sovereignty do not, therefore, date from Britain's entry into the EEC, but, rather, have emerged primarily over the last five years. Consequently, in terms of a major, fundamental challenge to the ideational basis of the political system, the turning point in this thesis has been roughly dated to the 2010 General Election. This is, of course, arguable; however, when considering anti-politics, it is important to attempt to identify when the long-term, steady build-up of anger towards politicians began to have serious, practical effects on British politics.

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<sup>303</sup> Cas Mudde, 'The Populist *Zeitgeist*', *Government & Opposition*, (2012): 39:4, 541-563; Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*.

<sup>304</sup> Gerry Stoker, *Why politics matters*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

<sup>305</sup> Richards and Smith, 'In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition'.

<sup>306</sup> Henrik Bang, "'Yes we can': identity politics and project politics for a late-modern world' *Urban Research & Practice*, (2009): 2:2, 117-137; Max Halupka, 'Clicktivism: A Systematic Heuristic', *Policy & Internet*, (2014): 6:2, 115-132.

Here, one notable event was the failure of either major party to win a majority. This represented a considerable disruption to the strong two-party system and long tradition of majority government. With distrust and unhappiness towards politicians at a peak after the Expenses Scandal, neither Labour nor the Conservatives could convince the electorate that they were best placed to safeguard the needs of the ‘ordinary person’. Instead, Nick Clegg brought the Liberal Democrats to prominence, positioning them as both the moral minority and the party which offered a ‘protest’ vote against the state of politics in general. Clegg’s incredible initial success highlighted how desperate voters were for something new – a reality at odds with the BPT and the long-established agreement that, not only does ‘Government knows best’, but also, that the choice between two parties is enough.

Alongside the Liberal Democrats’ break-through was the rise of UKIP – explored at length in this thesis. Starting at the grass-roots level, UKIP took advantage of the Liberal Democrats’ collapse, beginning its consolidation at the local council level, before taking first place in the 2014 European Parliament elections and then third place in the 2015 General Election. As argued, UKIP’s true appeal isn’t its Eurosceptic platform – although, of course, this finds a receptive audience in Britain, and England especially – but rather, its populist, anti-establishment approach to politics. UKIP’s remarkable growth reflects the intensity of anti-politics and its practical effects. For this Party, the ‘us and them’ it can best capitalise on is not ‘Britain and Brussels’, but, rather, ‘the People and Westminster’. What began as a single-issue pressure group has developed into a fully-fledged populist party, most basically because, as article four argues, it has tapped into anti-politics.

### 3.2 *In or out in 2016?*

Alongside its entry into Westminster, UKIP's greatest success has been its contribution to the debate over an in-out referendum. As Cameron's reticence has shown, the idea of entrusting 'the People' with such power is contrary to his conception of British democracy. The issue may be connected with the fundamental question of democratic representation, yet this is an issue for the elite, not the masses. When it comes to the conflict evident in the *EU Act*, between the alleged extension of popular sovereignty and the reassertion of parliamentary sovereignty, it is clear which form of sovereignty takes priority.

And yet, an in-out referendum has been promised and will be held this June. This has been the result, not of a change of heart, but of weakening party loyalty and strengthening external pressure. In a climate of anti-politics, politicians need to appear 'in-touch'. Allowing a referendum, therefore, not only quietens rebellious backbenchers and eases pressure from UKIP, but also gives the appearance that the Conservatives are a party that cares about 'the People'.<sup>307</sup> While these are goals Cameron sought to achieve, a referendum was not the way he hoped to go about it. It is too much of a gamble and, because the referendum promise is not simply a means of political control, it is too great a break with the political tradition in which he operates.<sup>308</sup>

With this break in the BPT considered unavoidable, all that could be done was for the renegotiation of membership to seek to restrengthen parliamentary sovereignty. The

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<sup>307</sup> See appendix.

<sup>308</sup> It should also be noted that Labour has been similarly protective of centralised power, refusing to even countenance the idea of a referendum, despite its beginnings as a progressive, popular, 'Party of the People'; see, Vernon Bogdanor, 'Why the left should support a referendum on Europe'. *The Guardian*, 27 January 2013.

driving goal was access to the free trade area without European interference in British social and political affairs, as well as greater control over immigration by restricting the EU's freedom of movement. As Chancellor George Osborne indicated, at its core, the UK negotiations were about creating a 'two-tier Europe' – something which, up till now, Britain has consistently criticised and rejected.<sup>309</sup> This approach was evident in Cameron's letter to the President of the European Council,<sup>310</sup> Donald Tusk, which outlined four areas Britain would seek reform: 1. economic governance; 2. competitiveness; 3. sovereignty; and, 4. immigration.

Britain's attitude towards the EU and integration was made most clear through the three proposals under the heading 'Sovereignty'. First, was a return to the thorny issue of 'ever closer union', with Cameron seeking 'to make clear that this commitment will no longer apply to the United Kingdom. I want to do this in a formal, legally-binding and irreversible way'.<sup>311</sup> Both the second and third proposal related to the position and power of national parliaments in relation to the EU, and a reduction in legislation, based on the principle, 'Europe where necessary, national where possible'.<sup>312</sup> The letter ended with a subtle reminder that, 'the United Kingdom is the EU's second largest economy, the fifth biggest in the world. We bring an enormous contribution – political, economic, financial – to the European Union'.<sup>313</sup> There was a clear expectation that Britain's demands would be met; and yet, as Brexiters have

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<sup>309</sup> Roger Liddle, *The risk of Brexit, Britain and Europe in 2015*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 10.

<sup>310</sup> Available at: Sebastian Payne, 'Read: David Cameron's letter to Donald Tusk outlining EU reform proposals, *The Spectator*, 10 November 2015, [http://issuu.com/spectator1828/docs/donald\\_tusk\\_letter\\_001\\_d5d09dcc167f11](http://issuu.com/spectator1828/docs/donald_tusk_letter_001_d5d09dcc167f11) accessed: 16 November 2015.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

been keen to argue,<sup>314</sup> the concessions achieved by Cameron were minimal. More significant reform may prove a considerable challenge. While it is likely in the best interests of the EU to preserve British membership, as Roger Liddle points out, ‘the dominant mood in Brussels and among [Britain’s] partners is one of extreme irritation with Cameron, almost bordering on contempt, for what they see as a cavalier stance on Europe, driven purely by domestic politics’.<sup>315</sup> Should Britain remain within the Union, therefore, Cameron’s further attempts at reform may be frustrated by other member states.

The aim was the return of significant powers to Britain, although what is notable here is that, when it comes to this issue of recentralisation of power, no comment has been made as to where the powers will go. Despite the existence of multi-level, devolved, governance, there appears to be an assumption that powers will be returned to Westminster. Here again, we see the hope that even a possible negative result for the Government – a vote to withdraw – will, in the end, strengthen Parliament. However, with the SNP threatening a second independence referendum should Britain withdraw,<sup>316</sup> the very future of the Union is potentially at stake. Further, the very fact that these negotiations are occurring under the threat of a ‘Brexit’ says something new about the state of British politics. British Euroscepticism, linked with wider antipathy towards the political system, seems to be causing a change in the political system, forcing Parliament to go against its own wishes by allowing a popular vote.

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<sup>314</sup> *HANSARD*, 3 February, 2016.

<sup>315</sup> Liddle, *The risk of Brexit, Britain and Europe in 2015*, 25.

<sup>316</sup> *BBC News*, ‘Sturgeon: EU exit could trigger demand for Scottish independence referendum’, 21 February 2016.

One consequence of this weakened control is that Parliament will need to present a careful, nuanced argument to the British people when it comes to the case for continued membership, particularly given the damage the defection of high-profile Conservatives, such as Boris Johnson, has caused. As article four mentioned, it initially seemed unlikely that Britain would vote for withdrawal, however, the polls show it may be a very close vote, with the gap between the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ vote extremely narrow. Whereas in October 2014 polls showed that 56% were in favour of continued membership and 36% in favour of withdrawal,<sup>317</sup> only twelve months later this gap had all but disappeared. As of October 2015, the percentage of those wanting withdrawal following the renegotiation of membership was, according to some polls, 39%, compared to 40% who wish to remain, 4% who would not vote and 17% who remain undecided.<sup>318</sup> The major parties, therefore, would be mistaken to see the outcome as a foregone conclusion. Euroscepticism is more widespread than in 1975, with citizens more educated (or, at least, more exposed to (mis)information) about the implications of EU membership, particularly in regards to the economic cost of bailouts, and the effects on immigration. Further, the major parties are strongly disliked; and UKIP, although currently destabilised following the May election, presents a far more well-known, popular, Eurosceptic force than the loose coalition of anti-Marketeters of 1975. To safely win the vote, major parties need to grapple not only with the economic side of membership, but with the reasons such a vote has been called in the first place – anti-politics and anti-establishment fervour.

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<sup>317</sup> Liddle, *The risk of Brexit, Britain and Europe in 2015*, 39.

<sup>318</sup> YouGov, ‘Prospect EU referendum’, 28-29 October 2015, available at: <https://yougov.co.uk/news/categories/politics/> accessed 19 November 2015.

#### 4. CAN THERE BE A RETURN TO STABILITY?

With anti-politics having an effect and changes occurring in British politics, it seems reforms need to be made. The question then becomes: what change is necessary? Potential reforms were discussed in article five. Most importantly, alongside a greater recognition of ‘non-formal’ participation and online activity, there needs to be, as this thesis has argued, greater responsiveness from governments. As article five argues, the recoupling of political authorities and citizens requires changes to both the ‘demand-side’ and ‘supply-side’ of anti-politics. The following section considers some ways in which this may be achieved.

##### 4.1 *Is the two-party system in terminal decline?*

In answering the question of necessary reforms, perhaps the best place to start is with the major parties and whether parties, as they currently exist, are in terminal decline.<sup>319</sup> The party system has undergone radical shifts over the past century, with party identification weakening as social and class structures shift, and as party membership declines and new forms of participation take over.<sup>320</sup> As Matthew Flinders notes, ‘political parties were once synonymous with democratic politics but their social position and role has clearly changed from the mass-based organisations of the twentieth century’.<sup>321</sup> However, despite this, elections have remained a predominantly stable two-party competition and majority government the norm.

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<sup>319</sup> See for an extended discussion, Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void. The Hollowing of Western Democracy*, (London: Verso, 2013),

<sup>320</sup> Mathew Flinders, ‘The General Rejection? Political Disengagement, Disaffected Democrats and “Doing Politics” Differently’ in Andrew Geddes and Jonathan Tonge (eds), *Britain Votes 2015*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): doi:10.1093/pa/gsv024, 241-254.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* 241.

The 2010 election was, however, a turning point and signalled a more unstable political system. This fragmentation had only broadened by the 2015 election. This may seem an unusual observation given the return to majority government, however, as Geddes and Tonge explain, the 2015 result was a combination of fragmentation and a non-proportional electoral system.<sup>322</sup> With a majority of only twelve seats, the Conservatives by no means swept to victory and, with seven party leaders taking part in the televised debate, the ‘new era of multi-party politics’ was clear.<sup>323</sup> This indicated, according to Geddes and Tonge, the social and geographical fragmentation of Britain,<sup>324</sup> as well as the election taking place under the cloud of anti-politics in which anti-establishment parties thrive.<sup>325</sup> Despite the apparent ‘return to normal’ of majority government, therefore, if nothing changes over the course of the Conservative’s term, the next election may very well see a return to non-majority government.

There are significant consequences of such instability, most fundamentally, the increasing difficulty of ‘politics as usual’. This is an area which will continue to be explored. As discussed, party political depoliticisation, the protection of elite interests and ignoring the needs of ‘ordinary people’ appear to be increasingly unacceptable. Minor parties, such as UKIP and the SNP, have recognised this, and, as a result, they have drawn in disaffected and disenchanted voters. UKIP may have been kept out of Parliament by an out-dated electoral system, yet, if the Conservatives fail to change over the next five years of government, they may again find themselves challenged at the polls. Likewise, Labour finds itself in a far more difficult position, facing the

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<sup>322</sup> Geddes and Tonge, ‘Introduction: Single party Government in a Fragmented System’ in *Britain Votes 2015*, 1-4.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> Flinders, ‘The General Rejection?’.

momentous task of re-capturing voters who have defected to the SNP, as well as overcoming the effects of proposed boundary changes. Given their political fortunes in England, failure to convince SNP voters that they have changed means Labour may find themselves out of power for some time to come, unless they are able to return ‘Old Labour’, ‘Middle England’, voters to the fold. Corbyn may prove one avenue to this goal.

The selection of a radically different type of leader is certainly a gamble, particularly as Corbyn continues to grapple with dissension within his own Party. However, the gamble may prove one worth making. At the very least, it has reopened old debates and political discussion appears to have shifted, at least slightly, as a greater gap opens up between the political parties. This may encourage something of a re-engagement of voters, in particular, among Old Labour voters. As Kenny notes:

One of the more neglected facts of the debate ... is whether there is a connection between the disengagement of some groups of citizens from politics and the apparent decline of political disagreements rooted in broader conflicts between rival ideas, visions and narratives about British society.<sup>326</sup>

Perhaps, then, an unpolished politician whose left-wing, anti-austerity position challenges the dominant neoliberal agenda so entrenched in British politics and society will, if nothing else, lead to a greater predominance of ‘ideas’ in political debate. This, in turn, may see increased popular interest and engagement as voters are presented with a greater distinction between the two major parties. This does not, however, mean the recovery of the two-party system will be straightforward, or indeed, possible.

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<sup>326</sup> Michael Kenny, ‘Taking the Temperature of the UK’s Political Elite’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, (2009): 62:1, 149-61, 151.

#### ***4.2 A different type of politics***

In addition to a change in personalities, there also needs to be a change in the way Westminster views politics and participation. There needs, therefore, to be a shift in both the ideational and structural nature of British politics, with Westminster no longer its sole home. In short, as this thesis has argued, there needs to be a re-appraisal of the role of ‘the People’. The in-out referendum is a start, yet, reform needs to be far more widespread and this is an area for continued study and policy development. One solution would be a radical decentralisation of power and greater localism,<sup>327</sup> but in addition to this, as article five argued at length, our understanding of ‘the political’ itself needs to be expanded to accommodate new forms of participation and a new type of politics.

When it comes to the popular level, pressure for this has already begun. Alongside the shift towards populist, minor parties and a rejection of two-party politics, there has also been, as Richards and Smith identify, a broader process of democratisation, driven, in large part, by the opening up of information.<sup>328</sup> This is a process which mainstream politicians, in trying to protect their elite position, have utterly failed to keep up with. To reinvigorate democracy, Richards and Smith argue: ‘there is a need to reimagine the political institutions and culture, so that “the people” build a genuine political participation, where they are trusted to be involved in decision-making and not just rubber-stamping the appointment of a new government’.<sup>329</sup> One avenue to this is recognising that what is often pejoratively termed ‘non-formal participation’, is, in fact, a genuine connection with ‘the political’. Whether individuals choose to

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<sup>327</sup> Tim Finch and Carey Oppenheim (eds), ‘A Future for Politics: Ways to reform our political system, by the UK’s leading think tanks’, *IPPR*, (2009).

<sup>328</sup> Richards and Smith, ‘In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition’.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

participate through on-line activities,<sup>330</sup> local projects,<sup>331</sup> or, indeed, self-reflexive, non-voting, or the transfer of allegiance to minor parties,<sup>332</sup> these actions cannot be dismissed and should not be denigrated as signs of ‘apathy’ or ‘disengagement’. ‘The People’ are engaged, they are simply unhappy.

## **5. SO WHERE ARE ‘THE PEOPLE’?**

British politics has long been dominated by an insular elite; and, as Rousseau’s observation quoted at the beginning of this thesis noted, with the exception of popular votes every five years, ‘the People’ are largely disempowered. Three centuries later, the political tradition born out of the Glorious Revolution continues and the consequence of a highly centralised, insular Parliament is a weak bond between citizen and representative – a ‘social contract’ that politicians readily cast aside when not in their interests.

Today, however, we see this being challenged in important ways. What has been one of the world’s most stable and enduring democracies is under pressure from popular dissatisfaction. At last, change may be unavoidable. Major parties cannot continue acting so unresponsively in the face of strengthening anti-establishment feeling and the resultant growth of minor parties. For Labour, doing so will likely mean a long period in opposition; while for the Conservatives, reliance on long-established

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<sup>330</sup> Max Halupka, ‘Clicktivism: A Systematic Heuristic’, *Policy & Internet*, (2014): 6:2, 115-132.

<sup>331</sup> Henrik Bang, “‘Yes we can’: identity politics and project politics for a late-modern world’ *Urban Research & Practice*, (2009): 2:2, 117-137.

<sup>332</sup> Richards and Smith, ‘In Defence of British Politics Against the British Political Tradition’.

political strategies and customs may prove increasingly difficult.<sup>333</sup> Reform is needed and, at its heart, this reform needs to be driven by a concerted effort to re-engage with citizens. This may require the decentralisation of power and greater popular participation, or, more importantly, the prioritising of the relationship between government and ‘the People’ over the protection of elite interests. Whatever shape reform takes, the political elite needs to recognise that the British public is waking up, and they’re starting to wonder whether Government really does know best.

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<sup>333</sup> Already some parliamentary traditions seem to be breaking-down, with the House of Lords voting against the Conservative Government’s proposed tax cuts – a violation of long-established parliamentary tradition.

## APPENDIX

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Emma Vines, 'Nationalism, populism and the British political tradition', *British Politics*, (2015): 10:3, 367-372.

As identity politics and issues of sovereignty dominate British politics, the Union faces a level of domestic political upheaval not seen since its birth. The ramifications of the Scottish referendum will be felt intensely across the Union, with demands for constitutional and political change extending well beyond Scottish borders. The need to understand the nature of the identities and nationalisms that have persisted beneath a multi-national Britishness is thus increasingly important. However, so too is the way in which reform is approached by those operating within the British political system. This contribution seeks to do both. Accepting Wellings' (2012) contention that an English nationalism has manifested itself through opposition to European integration, this article proceeds to contest the idea, shared by Gifford (2014a, b), that a consequence of this nationalism has been a shift from insular, representative democracy, to an institutionalisation of populist politics.

While the question of English devolution has remained the elephant in the room since New Labour's devolution settlement was introduced, the substantial reforms promised to Scotland by Westminster have also seen demands that the 'West Lothian Question' finally be addressed (Wintour, 2014). Given the forthcoming political reforms, unravelling what has become known as the 'English Question' is now more important than ever. This cannot be done, however, through the lens of domestic British politics alone. Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland did not produce the backlash some expected from the English (Bryant, 2003). A consequence of this has been widespread acceptance of the idea that English nationalism is, at most, nothing more than an anxiety that occasionally flares up before subsiding (Aughey, 2010). This has allowed questions related to English representation, devolution and identity to be avoided by politicians; many of whom fear the consequences of an uncontained English nationalism to not only the integrity of the Union, but also, their own political

position and power. One practical consequence of this, as Kenny (2014) identifies, has been the missed opportunity to reconnect with a deeply disillusioned and alienated English electorate who, often ignored by the political mainstream, are increasingly turning their backs on politics or finding the answer in populist alternatives such as UKIP – a party potentially positioned to exploit the very regressive, protectionist Englishness that Westminster politicians hoped to avoid (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). Beyond this – though undoubtedly connected – has been a failure to recognise alternative strands of English nationalism, in particular, the links between English nationalism and Euroscepticism.

Debates over European integration have intensified in recent years, largely due to economic concerns and the political and economic costs of bailouts and uncertainty over the continued viability of the Eurozone. Such concerns have been particularly prevalent in England and have contributed to the transformation of UKIP from a fringe, single-issue party to an increasingly serious political contender, which took victory at the European elections in May (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). This intensified Euroscepticism has also encouraged the PM, David Cameron, to promise an in/out referendum should the Conservatives win the 2015 election. Beneath these more immediate economic and political developments, however, are concerns that have existed ever since Britain first discussed membership to the EEC in the 1960s. These questions go to the heart of British democracy and English identity and, as Wellings develops (Wellings, 2010, 2012), have manifested themselves into a coherent form of English nationalism. By seizing on issues of Britain's historical character and identity, Eurosceptics have portrayed European integration as fundamentally incompatible with their own sense of Anglo-British identity, which is built upon a defence of parliamentary sovereignty and British independence. While Kenny (2014) is right to

argue that English nationalism (or, ‘nationhood’) is a multi-causal phenomenon, driven by a variety of constitutional, political, social and cultural changes, Wellings (2012) is also justified in feeling that the link between English nationalism and Euroscepticism remains underdeveloped. Where this contribution diverges from both Wellings’ and Gifford’s arguments, however, is from the idea that Eurosceptic English nationalism is a populist phenomenon that has had a fundamental affect on the British political system. In fact, the response from the British political Establishment to widespread Euroscepticism – both among the public and from members of their own parties – has demonstrated a strict adherence to the protection of a British Political Tradition that emphasises a narrow understanding of representative democracy and is highly protective of elite power and the status quo. This is shown through an examination of the political Establishment’s response to the recent growth of UKIP, a party that has found England particularly receptive of its populist, Eurosceptic message.

The notion of a British Political Tradition (BPT) – both its nature and very existence – is far from uncontested. Most basically, a ‘tradition’ can be understood as ‘the generally accepted ideas, beliefs, assumptions, discourses, customs and practices within a nation and its political system’ (Hall, 2011, p. 118). This, in turn, will have an effect on the behaviour of actors operating within the political system. While there is debate over the nature of the tradition(s) operating within Britain (see for example Marsh et al, 2001; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Hall, 2011), here, the following analysis of English nationalism is done through the lens of a single, dominant tradition characterised by: ‘strong, rather than responsible, government, and an elite, or leadership, democracy, rather than participatory democracy’ (Marsh and Hall, 2007, p. 224). Additionally, when necessary, reform will be done for the purposes of

protecting the status quo and preventing the need for further, and potentially more radical, reform (Hall, 2011, p. 132). ‘Populist’ displays by the political elite – whether rhetorical, or through devices such as referenda – are thus ultimately in defence of the BPT and centralised political power. Further, with referenda able to be tightly controlled, they are a useful tool when seeking to diffuse damaging intra-party conflict, while also appearing mindful of the role the public should play in determining how they are governed (Oppermann, 2013; Vines, 2014). Consequently, responding to Eurosceptic outcries has provided politicians with an ideal opportunity to appear interested in popular opinion while also protecting party unity, given that, so far, the most extreme consequence of Euroscepticism has been the repatriation of particular powers from Brussels – a process that ultimately strengthens Westminster and the power of those within it. This has not, however, had any significant structural effect on British democracy or, indeed, prompted any substantial ideational change amongst the political Establishment when it comes to the virtues of popular sovereignty.

Most recently, the absence of any significant change to the BPT can be seen in the response by mainstream parties to the considerable growth of UKIP. Although concerns over European integration have likely increased in voters’ minds given the flow-on effect of economic challenges facing the European Union – leading some to question whether the traditional model of the second-order election still holds (Whitaker and Lynch, 2011) – UKIP’s success can be attributed far more to its ability to capitalise on voter disillusionment with mainstream politics. In their recent examination of UKIP, Ford and Goodwin (2014) convincingly argue that the Party’s growth is largely due to its success in connecting with the group they term the ‘left behinders’ – the white English working-class. This group struggled to identify with

the re-branded New Labour under Blair, which adopted a cosmopolitan, Europhilic attitude and was seen by many as abandoning their traditional working-class base. Similarly, the Conservatives' own attempts to shed the image of 'the nasty party' under Cameron led to the adoption of more socially liberal positions on issues such as gay marriage, as well as an initial move away from 'hard' Euroscepticism (Ford and Goodwin, 2014, Ch. 3). This created space for a populist party espousing conservative, 'one nation' views, which also spent considerable energy on distancing itself from initial comparisons with the overtly racist BNP. The success of this strategy was seen in May 2014, when the Party won the European elections.

The response from the political Establishment, however, has largely been to downplay the significance of UKIP and focus on what its success means for Europe. In doing so, they have ignored the far greater significance of UKIP's rise and an issue that would require significant political and constitutional reform to resolve: the alienation of the electorate and the increasingly toxic anti-political culture that has developed within Britain. Following the election, senior Conservatives sought to negate the importance of the results, arguing that they demonstrated the public's wish to see widespread reform in Europe and the return of significant powers to national parliaments, policies supported by a Eurosceptic Conservative Party. London's mayor, Boris Johnson, went so far as to call the results 'a triumphant vindication of David Cameron and the Conservatives' (Johnson, 2014). This attitude is in line with past behaviour from the political Establishment – co-opting populist rhetoric and displays to bring them back into the mainstream. In this way, any populist 'threat' can be contained and the BPT protected. A consequence of this, however, is the absence of any significant ideational shift by mainstream political actors, who continue to act according to the narrow understanding of representative democracy operating within Britain and in accordance

with the principle at the heart of the BPT: ‘government knows best’ (Tant, 1993; Marsh et al, 2001; Marsh and Hall, 2007; Hall, 2011).

In the absence of any ideational shift among the political Establishment, attempts to embed genuine populism within the British political system will continue to be met by fierce resistance. In this, the political Establishment is aided by the structural constraints of the British political system – constraints that have assisted the continuation of the BPT despite periodic opposition to it. Although the success of UKIP reveals the intensity of popular disaffection, the parties at Westminster remain shielded by an electoral system designed to preserve two-party politics and prevent the destabilising influence of minor parties (Lynch, 2007). UKIP faces a considerable battle if it is to overcome the bias of a first-past-the-post electoral system and become a mainstream political power. And although this does not entirely negate its influence at a national level, it does substantially reduce it. The Party may continue to exert pressure on the political Establishment on issues such as Europe and immigration; however, decisions ultimately remain in the hands of the Westminster elite who demonstrated their opposition to electoral reform during the AV referendum campaign.

In capturing the disillusioned, white, English working-class vote, UKIP have tapped into the Eurosceptic Englishness that both Wellings and Gifford identify and which has been deliberately avoided by the political mainstream. However, the ability of the political Establishment to so far contain the influence of UKIP and ignore what this represents in regard to the health of British democracy demonstrates the continued influence of the BPT – both in terms of its ideational hold on the political mainstream and the structural constraints that sustain it. English nationalism and Euroscepticism

may be closely linked, yet the idea that this has caused a noticeable shift in British politics remains largely unconvincing. The British political system remains wedded to the BPT and thus hostile to popular sovereignty and anything beyond the use of nominally populist rhetoric or devices – both of which can be tightly controlled by the political elite when an issue needs to be externalised for the sake of party unity, and the outcome is ultimately a stronger Westminster. Perhaps the upheaval caused by the Scottish referendum and reform to the way political power is shared across the Union, combined with an increasingly alienated electorate, will provide the necessary impetus for fundamental change; however, more likely is that such reforms will continue to be informed as far as possible by the BPT. While devo-max will allow Scotland unprecedented control over their governmental system, England, it appears, is likely to see the continuation of an insular political system dominated by a political Establishment increasingly at odds with those they have been elected to represent.

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