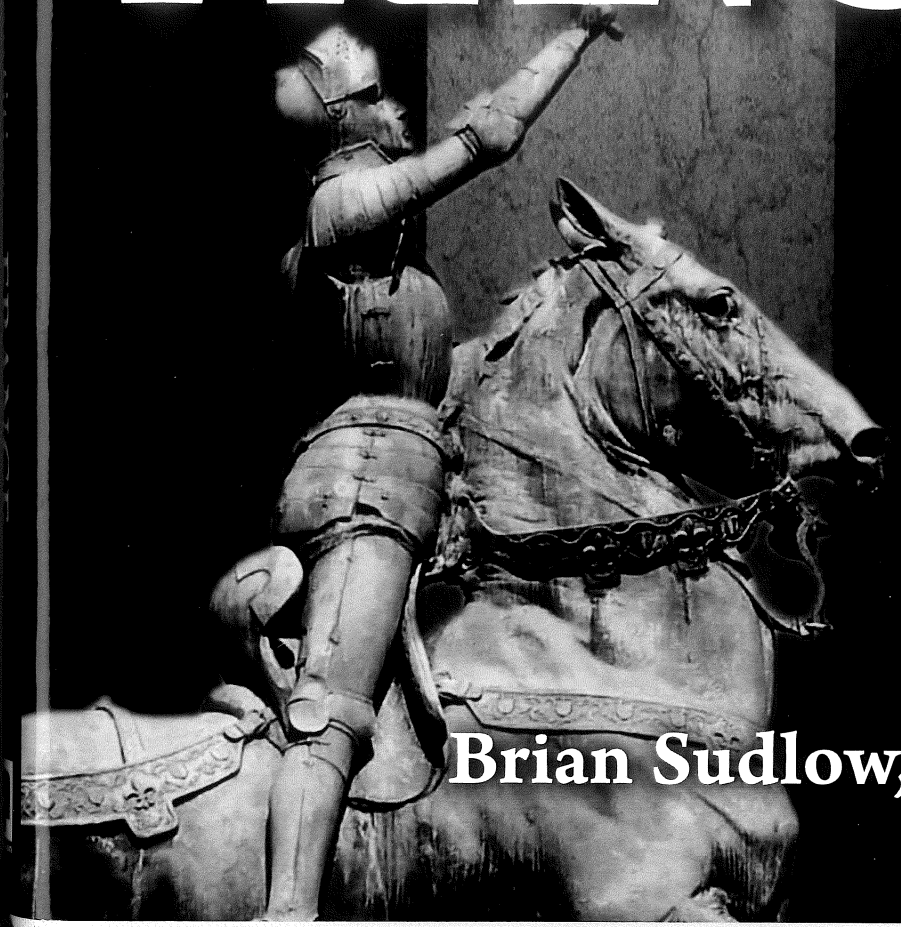
National Identities in FRANCE



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Just Say "non"? France, Britain, and Europe since the 1980s*

Emile Chabal

In November 2009, Pierre Lellouche, a well-known center-right politician and France's Minister for Europe from June 2009 to November 2010, launched one of the most memorable attacks on British attitudes toward Europe in recent years. In a flight of rhetorical hyperbole, he described the Conservative Party's position on Europe as "autistic." He added that David Cameron's "pathetic" approach would mean "castrating" Britain's position in the European Union.[1] As always, there was a political agenda behind Lellouche's attack; his party, the *Union pour un mouvement populaire* (UMP), had become increasingly hostile to the Conservatives since the latter decided in June 2009 to leave the center-right coalition in the European Parliament and join the new "European Conservatives and Reformists" bloc. Nevertheless, Lellouche's outburst highlighted two important features of Franco-British relations, both of which are central to this chapter. First, it demonstrated the dangers of mistranslation; as one or two perceptive political correspondents pointed out, Lellouche had used words such as "autistic" and "pathetic," the French equivalents of which do not carry the same negative connotations as in English.[2] Second, it confirmed the extent to which British actions in Europe have remained mysterious to the French political elite. Ironically, Lellouche is well known in France as an outspoken Anglophile, or "Atlanticist," to use the French term. He speaks English well, and, like a number of his colleagues in the UMP has openly expressed his admiration for what is known as the Anglo-Saxon model. But even he, on this occasion, was drawn into angry criticism of Britain's actions.

When the Conservatives came to power in May 2010, the criticisms continued, and they were strongest from the French, despite the apparent political affinities between the two ruling parties. While several European leaders cautiously greeted the change in government at Westminster, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, one of Lellouche's predecessors as Minister for Europe, warned that "there is not a two-speed Europe but a three-speed Europe. You have Europe of the euro, Europe of the countries that understand the euro, such as Poland and Sweden, and you have the English."[3] Implicit in this claim was that Britain's self-imposed isolation would be damaging for Europe, and for Britain. But, as many have pointed out, Britain has cherished its isolation; some might even argue that it has benefited from it. Certainly, de Gaulle's famous claim in 1963 that "l'Angleterre est insulaire" has often appeared as a point of pride for Britain.[4] Why, then, have the French so consistently pointed to Britain as the anti-Europe or the anti-France (and usually both)?

This question is complex, and it would be impossible in a short chapter to cover every aspect of contemporary Franco-British relations in detail.[5] Rather, the focus here will be on the way in which Franco-British relations have affected European policy in the two countries, and the European project in general. By looking at three contemporary debates that have set British and French models against each other—the definition of the nation, the weight of imperial legacies, and the issue of Euroscepticism—the aim is to explore in greater depth the impact of Franco-British relations on Europe.[6] While the immediate focus will be on France, the approach remains broadly comparative in intention since the debates examined here have usually seen a quite explicit juxtaposition of French and British models and approaches. These shed light both on the sharply contrasting conception of politics in France and Britain, and on the stereotypes that have become deeply embedded in the relationship between the two countries. As should be clear by now, the goal is not to assess the various models in question against some form of sociological or economic reality. The focus is instead on the clash of political languages, discourses, and images that have come to define the relationship between the two countries.[7] It will become apparent that these "symbolic confrontations" in Europe—too easily dismissed as the product of immediate political contingency—have profound consequences for attitudes toward the nation-state and its relation to the European project.[8]

At the same time, the debates identified here provide excellent case studies of the importance and limits of Europe in influencing national discussion. The various ways in which these two postimperial nations have struggled to find a role in Europe offers us a valuable insight into the extent to which national and supranational questions have become intertwined in twenty-first-century Europe.[9] Indeed, one could plausibly argue that definitions of the nation, the legacy of imperialism and Euroscepticism are problems shared by Europe as a whole. In this sense, Franco-British disagreements hold up a mirror to Europe; the often very public collision between supposedly conflicting French and British models and approaches simply reflects a much wider unease about the nature of a European identity, and its interaction with national identities. This is not to say that the Franco-British story is the only prism through which it is possible to examine this juxtaposition of European identities. In Western Europe, the relationship between France and Germany has been central, while specialists of Eastern Europe would no doubt stress the legacies of Communism over those of imperialism.[10] Yet, despite the welcome interest in the history and anthropology of European regions formerly considered to be peripheral, it is important not to forget the wide, and often contradictory, influence that Europe's imagined center has had on its periphery.[11] This is especially true if, as I argue, the clash between France and Britain has been more constructive than destructive. The dramatization of intra-European disagreements may not be, as some have argued, the "end of European integration" but rather a form of European pluralism more suited to the fragmented European space.[12] Seen this way, Franco-British disagreements provide a model for the kind of ideological disagreement and collision of ideas that is the precondition for an extension of the European project into the twenty-first century.

The Future of the Nation

One of the most important differences between France and Britain in the past three decades has been in the management of their respective national narratives. While in France, the question of the nation has been the source of considerable public debate, in Britain the subject has mostly been sidelined. In Britain, the nation is an unpopular concept, both among a British public notoriously uncomfortable with explicit celebrations of national pride (take, for instance, the derision which greeted Gordon Brown's suggestion of a National Day in 2006), and an academic establishment which has produced relatively few books on

Britishness, national identity or the British national narrative.[13] Even on the rare occasions that the topic of the nation is dealt with—either inside or outside the academy—the tone is invariably critical; indeed, those seen to be defending the nation too explicitly have usually been associated with the extreme-right. By contrast, in France there has been a lively debate surrounding the question of the nation in the past thirty years—a debate which has been the background to some of the most sustained disagreements between France and Britain in Europe, such as those over national subsidies, multiculturalism, and notions of citizenship.

The context for this renewed debate surrounding the national narrative in France has its roots in the intellectual and political realignments of the 1980s. In the world of French philosophy and history, the simultaneous collapse of Marxist and *marxisant* philosophies, and of an Annales-inspired historical framework, led to a renewed interest in politics, ideology, religion, and nationalism.[14] In philosophy, this meant that a whole generation of intellectuals who had come of age in 1968, and who had grown up in a climate of growing anti-Communism in the 1970s, developed a renewed interest in politics and religion.[15] Thus, an intellectual like Régis Debray—former guerrilla fighter in Latin America and, later, adviser to Socialist President François Mitterrand—became one of the foremost defenders of the French Republic and its conception of *laïcité* (secularism) by the early 1990s.[16] Around the same time, the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut—an erstwhile Maoist and *nouveau philosophe* who was made famous by his anti-Communist essays of the late 1970s—also converted himself into a fervent defender of the Republic and *laïcité*.[17] Even in the work of less polemical scholars, such as philosopher Marcel Gauchet and sociologist Dominique Schnapper, there was a quite obvious revival of interest in questions of national community, republicanism, and secularism.[18] The same was true of historians. Through the 1980s, there was a growing interest in concepts of the nation and the national narrative. Most famously, Pierre Nora's monumental *Les Lieux de mémoire* was a vast attempt to write a *national* history of France.[19] Nora was not alone. Prominent historians Maurice Agulhon and Claude Nicolet also made significant contributions to the writing of a national (and republican) history of France in the 1980s and 1990s, while a renewed interest in the political was evident in François Furet's rewriting of the French Revolution.[20] In general terms, there was a rehabilitation of historical periods when nation-building was a priority. In particular, the Third Republic,

previously a discredited and under-studied regime, was elevated to the status of crucible of the nation, and Third Republic institutions such as the school were viewed with increasing sympathy.[21]

Together with the work of philosophers and other intellectuals, this growing interest in the politics of the nation contributed to a veritable intellectual revival, frequently referred to as neorepublicanism.[22] This became increasingly important in French politics through the 1980s, as it gained strength in the intellectual and academic community. However, it truly made its presence felt in 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the bicentenary of the French Revolution, and the *affaire du foulard* (headscarf affair). Through these three key events, neorepublicanism was elevated from a significant philosophical and historiographical trend into a fully fledged political language. The beginning of the end of the Eastern Bloc in Berlin, the symbolic closing of the political divisions of the French Revolution, and the defense of *laïcité* against the encroachment of Islamic values in French society all acted as catalysts for vigorous debates in the media about what the values of the Republic should be. Questions were raised about the nature of French citizenship in the face of a globalized Europe, the role of religion in public life, and the need for a national community to tackle the fragmentation of French society. With fears of democratic disenchantment high on the agenda, a deep pessimism took hold, which by the mid-1990s was being described as France's *fracture sociale*.[23]

This was all the more paradoxical because, elsewhere in Europe at the time, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989–1991 promised a fundamental change in European politics. Some rather hopeful commentators believed that the age of nations and empires was on the brink of extinction.[24] The basic tenets of liberal democracy had triumphed and European integration promised an end to Europe's numerous political and geographical frontiers, especially for those countries formerly under Soviet control. Inevitably, this optimism was short-lived. By the early 2000s, and in the wake of the Balkan and Iraq conflicts, there was considerable pessimism about the potential for European integration, and the prospect of a new world order.[25] But what little optimism there had been all but passed France by; in the French case, one might almost say that it was the *fear* of a withering away of the nation, which led to the strident reaffirmation of French national identity in the 1990s. What, elsewhere, appeared to be a positive development—the victory of democratic values in 1989—was almost immediately seen in France with a certain

degree of scepticism. French commentators had already bemoaned the rise of a Reagan- and Thatcher-inspired *pensée néo-libérale* in the mid-1980s. In the late 1980s, some highly influential intellectual figures, one of whom was François Furet himself, were talking of France as a consensual, depoliticized "République du Centre."[26] And by the mid-1990s, a new term had emerged with which to denounce the rise of consensualism after the collapse of the Soviet Union: *la pensée unique*, a combination of bland apolitical politics and liberal capitalism.[27] While commentators inside and outside Europe were proclaiming *the end of history*, the dominant feeling among the French academic and political establishment was that Europe (and especially France) was facing *the end of politics*. Absorbed in a discussion about the future of the nation and the writing of the national narrative, the French political space seemed largely immune to the optimism of the early 1990s.

Predictably, these fears of political atrophy were exaggerated. For instance, despite claims to the contrary, France has continued to have average or above-average voter turnout in Western Europe in local and national elections.[28] Nevertheless, the fear of decline, which eventually manifested itself as a full-blown language of crisis by the late 1990s, quickly became an important part of contemporary French politics. France was "falling"; its people were "schizophrenic" and "ill"; it faced "cultural oblivion" and suffocating "taboos."[29] Lellouche himself, in 2005, warned that "17 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we are faced with a weakened France, losing influence and doubting herself."[30] In this context, it is hardly surprising that the definition of the nation became of critical importance. Neorepublicans, however, were not alone in claiming the nation for themselves; they were also responding to the threat of the extreme-right. The French far-right party, the Front National, became a powerful political presence in the 1990s, after early electoral successes in the mid-1980s. Its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, capitalized on the collapse of the Communist vote, deindustrialization, and the politics of immigration to become one of the most prominent far-right politicians in Europe. His greatest success was in the presidential election of 2002 when the world looked on in horror as the country that, during the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, had depicted itself as the birthplace of Enlightenment and democratic values allowed Le Pen to slip into the second round to face a run-off with the center-right candidate Jacques Chirac. Even if Le Pen's successes mirrored the rise of other far-right parties in Europe,

to many inside France his success seemed the final confirmation of the country's decline.

Above all, it was Le Pen's conception of national identity that posed a threat. His was a vision of a political community that owed much to a long tradition of extreme-right politics in France—from Charles Maurras in the interwar years to Pierre Poujade in the postwar period. He offered voters an ethnic and racial conception of France, resolutely hostile to immigrants and Europe.[31] By contrast, neorepublicans had built a history and philosophy of national unity based on an explicit reaffirmation of certain core French republican principles inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as *laïcité* (secularism), unity and national integration, and the primacy of rational politics. The resulting clash in visions has meant that the question of the nation in all its forms has rarely been far from the public sphere in France since the 1980s. Indeed, by the mid-1990s, neorepublicanism was no longer simply the preserve of left- or former left-wing intellectuals. The right had also developed many of the same themes. Chirac invoked republican solidarity in his campaigns against Le Pen in the mid-1990s, while those further to the right, such as Philippe de Villiers, used neorepublicanism to support their non-Front National version of parochial, anti-European, and very often anti-Islamic national identity. More recently, the laws banning the headscarf (2005) and *burqa* (2010) have pushed a neorepublican conception of citizenship back to prominence.[32] By the same token, with the Front National's regular successes in local and national elections and Sarkozy's polemical *grand débat* on national identity in 2009, an extreme-right vision of the nation has continuously been at the forefront of political consciousness. Thus, whether in the form of Le Pen's populist nationalism, or neorepublicans' sophisticated discussions of national solidarity and republican unity, the nation has remained at the very heart of French politics.[33] Seen from this perspective, the story of European integration and the liberal democratic horizon of the 1990s were little more than brief deviations from a story of French nation-building that dates back to the nineteenth century.[34]

Postcolonialisms and the Threat of the *Anglo-Saxon*

Thus far, it would seem that neither Britain nor Europe feature prominently in this eminently Franco-French battle between different conceptions of the nation. However, this would be to ignore the central role Britain and Europe have played as images, placeholders,

scapegoats, and enemies. Above all, the construction of a mythical Anglo-Saxon model in France has been intimately linked with the rise of neorepublicanism. This Anglo-Saxon model has been used both as a way of validating its opposite—a so-called French model—and as a way of justifying French policies and attitudes toward Europe. Unfortunately, despite the widespread use of the term Anglo-Saxon since the late nineteenth century, there is very little scholarly work on the subject.[35] Nevertheless, today the term Anglo-Saxon has passed into common usage in France. There are Anglo-Saxon economic models, Anglo-Saxon educational philosophies, and a widely recognized Anglo-Saxon mentality. Despite the fact that few Britons or Americans today would be inclined to celebrate their Anglo-Saxon identity, the French use the term to cover a wide range of stereotypes, preconceptions, and judgments about the Anglo-American world. The term is used by national politicians, serious academics, political commentators, and in everyday conversation on the street. It is instinctively understood by the vast majority of the French population and is used, quite easily, in learned discussions, as well as popular discourse.

One of the best examples of the use of the term Anglo-Saxon in a debate surrounding the nation is with respect to France's handling of its postcolonial memory. Here, too, the approaches followed by Britain and France have diverged in the past three decades. While the identities of both nations have been challenged by extra-European and postcolonial-settled immigration, as well as the growing place of Islam, France has been beset by a growing number of memory battles.[36] These have ranged from second- and third-generation immigrant children reclaiming the memory of the Algerian War, to citizens of France's overseas territories seeking reparations for slavery.[37] In such a rapidly changing context—and the repression of French colonial memory until the 1990s made the change all the more disorientating—it is easy to see how the nation once again became a key reference-point, either in the form of Le Pen's defensive ethnic nationalism, or neorepublicanism's stress on national solidarity. However, in addition to this internal challenge to France's national identity, there has been a growing awareness and discussion in France of the different approach to the problem of settled postcolonial immigration and colonial memory in Britain. In the UK, there has been relatively little interest in the construction of an imagined national community along the lines of neorepublicanism. Instead, the dominant paradigm within which the legacy of colonialism has been understood has been that of multiculturalism, a loose

and weakly articulated concept, broadly inspired by the theoretical apparatus of American liberalism.[38] As numerous commentators have observed, multiculturalism and its legislative counterpart race relations, have given Britain different answers to many of the questions of religious pluralism, and immigrant identity that have recently emerged in France.[39]

My aim here is not to determine which of these two models is superior, or even which one corresponds more closely to reality. Rather, I want to see in this public collision of two models a key moment in a long Franco-British rivalry which has set a pragmatic British approach against a high-minded French language of neorepublicanism and the nation. This is certainly the way this debate has been seen by many French commentators, who have frequently painted multiculturalism as an undesirable alternative to the French republican model of integration. Sometimes—as has been the case with authors such as Dominique Schnapper—this has been done through a conceptual rehabilitation of the nation as a source of solidarity and social cohesion.[40] In other cases, a critique of multiculturalism has been brought together alongside a larger critique of modernity, globalization, and consumer culture: all are seen as vital components of a deeply problematic Anglo-Saxon model of society and economy.[41] More polemical commentators have gone further still. Much has been made in the last twenty years of the threat of *le communautarisme*, a dystopian reading of multiculturalism that stresses its potential for fragmenting and tearing apart French society.[42] Journalists, politicians, and academics of the right and left have regularly warned of the challenge (*défi*) and temptation (*tentation*) of "communautarisme," to the extent that in 2003 a semiofficial pressure group called *L'Observatoire du communautarisme* was set up to monitor potential *dérives communautaires* in France.[43] In almost all discussions surrounding *le communautarisme*, British and American models have been invoked, either explicitly or implicitly. To the despair of many empirical sociologists in France, the vast majority of discussions surrounding the question of immigrant communities since the 1980s have revolved around the benefits or disadvantages of adopting an Anglo-Saxon multicultural model. The threat of Islamic terrorism in Britain in the first years of the twenty-first century seemed to confirm warnings about the dangers of multiculturalism. More than ever, it seemed, there was need for a *color-blind* French model of integration that would prevent the breakdown of the nation-state. As the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration—the government body in charge of

integration and social cohesion—put it in 2002: "We need to maintain the French republican tradition, in its secular and contractualist form [...] Disintegration is always a threat to the Republic."[44]

All was not well at home, however. While a broad consensus developed around the benefits of a French model of integration, a number of important dissenting voices warned of an impending crisis of integration. The widespread urban unrest in 2005 seemed to confirm these predictions. At the time of the violence, foreign commentators—many of whom were British—rushed to indict the French model, accused of allowing racism to develop behind a façade of color-blind integration.[45] This claim was fiercely rebuffed by French intellectuals and academics such as Emmanuel Todd who had been strongly associated with neorepublicanism in the preceding years.[46] But the criticisms, nevertheless, raised serious questions about the virtues of the French model.[47] And yet, even in this debate, an English term—"the ghetto"—made its way into French political vocabulary.[48] Unruly *banlieues* were rebranded as *ghettos*, thereby ensuring that a critique of Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism (which was seen to have given birth to the ghetto) would remain prominent, even as outsiders attacked the French model. To warn of the dangers of ghettoization was also to warn of the perils of multiculturalism.

It was not simply the *banlieues* that called into question this so-called French model. There was the lengthy headscarf affair, which lasted for over a decade and mobilized neorepublicans such as Debray and Finkielkraut in defense of *laïcité* until the headscarf was finally banned in schools in 2005. This debate received a new lease of life in 2010, when President Nicolas Sarkozy set up a government commission on the *burqa*, which again resulted in legislation. Not surprisingly, both laws were widely criticized outside France as another example of excessive legislative rigor, and suppression of ethnic identities.[49] Much the same has been said of the French state's refusal to collect statistics using ethnic criteria, which is seen to have distorted the reality of ethnic minorities in France.[50] In both cases, the criticism has come primarily from the Anglo-American world, and the message has almost always been that there are two opposing models for dealing with postcolonial immigration and colonial memory. Without a doubt, these two models—multiculturalism and republican integration—have been distorted in translation, caricatured for political purposes, and represent gross over-simplifications of intellectual traditions and sociological realities.

They remain, nonetheless, crucial in understanding how Britain and France have come to terms with their status as postimperial nations.

In the same way that the rise of the Front National's ethnic conception of the nation acted as a catalyst for neorepublicanism, so an alternative Anglo-Saxon multicultural model provided the necessary counterpart to a reinvigorated model of republican integration. While in Britain, integration was often portrayed as yet another manifestation of a French love of abstract principles, sometimes dangerously detached from reality, the French invoked a pathological Anglo-Saxon *communautarisme* that threatened to damage the fabric of the nation. Seen from this perspective, it is clear that neorepublicanism has not simply been a Franco-French battle for the soul of the nation. It has also offered a means to absorb and criticize the influence of alternative models from abroad. Moreover, the very public clash between two different approaches to the question of settled postcolonial immigration and colonial memory have provided two diverging roadmaps for Europe. This has been particularly true in countries such as the Netherlands where there has been a vigorous debate about the value of multiculturalism in the wake of the late populist leader Pim Fortuyn's attacks on Islam, the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, and the success of Geert Wilders' extreme-right Party for Freedom in the Dutch legislative elections of 2010.[51] Some scholars have even recently talked about the end of "integration *à la sauce hollandaise*."[52] It is hard to miss the reference to French integration. It is a recognition that, while neither the French or British models accurately reflect the reality on the ground, the collision between them in Europe has contributed to the opening of a complex (and often defensive) discussion surrounding Europe's postcolonial identity in other countries as well.[53]

Euroscepticism and the French "no"

The first part of this chapter outlined the contours of a Franco-French debate on the meaning of the nation. The second part dealt with the (mis)use of French and British models of postcolonial integration. This final part looks at how these debates have affected French attitudes toward Europe. There can be little doubt that both the renewed interest in the nation and the mythical *modèle Anglo-Saxon* have been central to the increasingly vocal Eurosceptic movement in France. For those whose vision of the nation was in accord with that of Le Pen and the Front National, Euroscepticism was a natural extension

of their position; since the fall of Communism, the Front National has consistently opposed European integration on the grounds that it compromises the sovereignty of France.[54] But for those operating beyond the world of French radical protest politics, Euroscepticism was a relatively new phenomenon. Indeed, projects for European integration had been strongly associated with France in the 1980s because of Jacques Delors, a former minister in the Mitterrand government, and President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995.[55] A number of important steps were taken toward monetary, fiscal, and social integration under Delors' leadership, and his policies remained broadly popular in France—to the extent that opinion polls had him as the most popular presidential candidate to succeed Mitterrand in 1995.[56] He chose not to stand, fearing he could not win the election, but already by this stage there were signs that the French had become uneasy with further European integration.[57]

This was made clear when the "yes" vote in the French referendum on the Maastricht Treaty on economic union in 1992 passed by a slim margin (51.04 percent), with large swathes of the extreme-right and extreme-left voting against the Treaty. More significant for our purposes was the opposition of neorepublican standard bearers such as Emmanuel Todd. It came as little surprise, then, that in 1999 Todd was to be a founding member of the Eurosceptic Fondation Marc Bloch (later renamed Fondation du 2 Mars), a think tank whose aim was to act as a forum for the development of a "pensée critique" and oppose the hegemony of the Fondation Saint-Simon, an earlier think tank set up under the auspices of François Furet in 1982.[58] The Fondation Marc Bloch's first *université d'été* in September 1998 indicated the degree to which it had succeeded in mobilizing France's intellectual elite; it was, in the words of one journalist, by far the most intellectual of any *université d'été* that year, bringing together figures as diverse as Régis Debray and Max Gallo under the common banner of republican values and an opposition to the single currency and greater European integration.[59] In the years following its inauguration, the foundation acted as a vital vehicle for the diffusion of neorepublican ideals with a strongly Eurosceptic bent. It sponsored a wide range of publications, including works by political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff, philosopher Henri Peña-Ruíz, dissident Socialist politician Jean-Pierre-Chevènement, and Malek Boutih, a former leader of antiracism NGO *SOS Racisme*.[60] Some titles dealt directly with the European problem, such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Henri Guiano's pamphlet *La France est-elle soluble*

dans l'Europe? (1999); others defended a neorepublican conception of the nation-state as a bulwark against globalization or further European integration. Over time, the Foundation came to be a voice for this novel form of neorepublican French Euroscepticism.[61] As Philippe Cohen, secretary-general in 1998, put it: "Our convictions are not necessarily 'anti-European' (*antieuropéens*), but rather 'anti-Europeanist' (*antieuropéistes*) in the sense of an opposition to Europe as it is being constructed today."[62] This quotation captures in a nutshell the conceptual relationship between neorepublicanism, Euroscepticism, and the notion of the Anglo-Saxon, which has often been at the heart of contemporary French criticisms of the European Union. It makes clear that it is the European component of France's national narrative that has been threatened by a mythical Anglo-Saxon model, and that the only adequate response can be a return to Europe's true (French) roots.

The Foundation and its aims suffered a setback in the presidential election of 2002 when the politician they had endorsed—Jean-Pierre Chevènement—received less than 5 percent of the popular vote and fatally divided the left-wing vote, allowing Le Pen to reach the second round.[63] But the emphatic "no" vote in the referendum on the European Constitution in 2005 proved that the unease expressed by intellectuals in the late 1990s was more than simply a minority concern; 55 percent rejected the proposed constitution after a lengthy, highly public and fiercely fought contest. The "no" came as a shock to France's predominantly pro-European elite, and ultimately killed the Constitution project altogether. The reasons for the French "no" have been extensively researched. Statistically, the most significant conclusion was that Euroscepticism had grown among France's large public-sector workforce. At the time of the referendum for the Maastricht Treaty, this constituency had voted predominantly "yes," ensuring that the "yes" vote gained a slender majority. In 2005, this same constituency voted "no."[64] This shift indicated the extent to which the 2005 "no" vote was motivated by two interconnected concerns: a fear of losing sovereignty and citizenship to a stronger Europe, and a fear of the hidden Anglo-Saxon liberal agenda implicit in the Constitution itself. The latter, in particular, found a sympathetic audience among France's lower public-sector employees, threatened with various reforms of the French state designed to streamline and reduce the vast number of French *fonctionnaires* (civil servants). In the words of a front-page editorial in *Le Monde*, a few days after the referendum:

> The extent of the "no" vote in the referendum of the 29 May can very largely be explained by a rejection of the Anglo-Saxon model, seen by many workers as a world of cutthroat competition, where jobs are poorly paid, precarious and excessively flexible. All of this was understood to be underpinned by social inequalities which, while acceptable to the British, would be unacceptable here.[65]

This analysis captured the growing unease surrounding the referendum. Many of those who voted "no" in France did so because they feared that British influence in Europe would bring an aggressive brand of Anglo-Saxon liberalism to France—a liberalism that was seen already to have infected France's technocratic elites. In the complex set of reasons that explain France's rejection of the European Constitution, the most explicitly European questions—such as reform of the EU's governing bodies or enlargement—remained subservient to a potent matrix of stereotypes of the Anglo-Saxon.[66] One might even go so far as to argue that, in 2005, a fear of a "British" Europe was as important as a fear of Europe itself.

At the same time, the French "no" also brought to the fore the problem of Euroscepticism, one that is facing many European countries in the twenty-first century. Until the 1980s, France did not have a strong Eurosceptic movement outside the extremes, but by the late 1990s, Europe had become a more divisive issue. Notably, in the run up to the 2005 referendum several significant members of the Socialist Party—including Laurent Fabius and Jean-Pierre Chevènement—campaigned for a "no" vote. Tellingly, their criticisms reflected the two trends outlined above: Fabius attacked the constitution for its neoliberalism, and claimed that "if we vote 'yes', Europe's Anglo-Saxon tendencies (*dérive anglo-saxonne*) will grow ever stronger," while Chevènement claimed that a European Constitution would threaten the Republic, and "undermine the very basis of democracy."[67] However, it is significant that neither of these figures wanted to cast themselves as purely anti-European. Instead, their criticisms echoed those of Philippe Cohen; they wanted Europe, but not a neoliberal, Anglo-Saxon, antirepublican Europe. This is different to their British Eurosceptic counterparts in, for example, the Bruges Group of anti-European intellectuals, or the United Kingdom Independence Party. Especially since the oppositional tactics of Margaret Thatcher—whose European nemesis was Delors—British Euroscepticism has been built on hostility to European political integration as a whole, especially where this is seen to encourage a

superstate based in Brussels. By contrast, many of those who supported the "no" campaign in France in 2005, were seeking not withdrawal or disengagement with Europe, but a *better* Europe. For those on the political extremes, Europe was to be condemned as a whole; but for many of those who voted "no," Europe was seen to be going in the *wrong* direction. Alongside a fear of Anglo-Saxon liberalism, there were also concerns among the French electorate about enlargement to the East and the accession of Turkey. Yet even here, the spectre of the Anglo-Saxon was not far away for both policies were supported by Britain. In the context of the debates outlined above, it is easy to see how enlargement appeared as another variant of multiculturalism, except this time imposed on Europe, and leading to a sort of diluted and weak European melting-pot.

It has become commonplace to argue that domestic concerns have remained more important than European issues at the time of European elections and referendums. The 2005 referendum was no exception. As numerous scholars have pointed out, there was a strong protest vote against Chirac, and a generalized sense of "social sclerosis" in France.[68] Nevertheless, despite widespread discussion in the French press, few scholars have made a sustained case for the importance of the *Anglo-Saxon* in understanding recent attitudes to Europe in France. What is particular about the French case is the importance of an outside model—in this case, an *Anglo-Saxon* model—in helping to crystallize opposition to Europe. This is not a new phenomenon. We saw how a fear of the Anglo-Saxon social model of multiculturalism was instrumental in the reaffirmation of the *nation* as the key concept in contemporary French politics. With the "no" to the European Constitution, France showed that its perceptions of Britain as the bearer of Anglo-Saxon liberalism could also influence its attitudes toward Europe. Notwithstanding vigorous efforts to keep it out of French politics, by 2005 it seemed as if the mythical Anglo-Saxon had become a major political actor in France.

Conclusion. Europe: a Grand Illusion?

The aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate the various ways in which images of Britain and Europe have played a part in contemporary French politics. In so doing, it has become clear that even apparently parochial discussions, such as those surrounding the French nation, have interacted with national and supranational models and stereotypes. But, if the spectre of the Anglo-Saxon has often had highly

negative connotations, it has also frequently been invoked positively by those seeking to criticize current French politics and society. For instance, critics of French economic policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s frequently painted the Anglo-Saxon world as a desirable model in their attempts to undermine some of the sacred cows of the French economy (state planning, high taxation, etc.)[69] Of course, the pendulum could just as easily swing back the other way, as it did during the economic crisis of 2008–2009. Where, in 2005, Socialist politicians were warning that a Sarkozy government would take as its reference "the Anglo-Saxon model, which encourages an unconstrained market society, and which will supposedly offer us a bright future in a free market," in 2009 Sarkozy himself was singing the praises of the "modèle français."[70] Even the traditionally free-market British weekly *The Economist*, in a rare use of the term Anglo-Saxon outside France, had to admit in a 2009 editorial that the financial crisis had been a highly effective way of "laying low *les Anglo-Saxons*."[71] Could it be that the financial crisis marked the "défaite du capitalisme anglo-saxon," as some French commentators suggested?[72] Or will France soon look again to the Anglo-Saxon as a model for reform? Either way, it seems likely the notion of the Anglo-Saxon will remain a vital way of provoking political polemic in France.

Behind this age-old story of Franco-British stereotypes, however, lies a more important question: to what extent has this kind of very public disagreement between nation-states been damaging to the European project as a whole? This is certainly the view of a number of highly influential commentators, many of whom have been broadly in favor of European integration. In 1995, the renowned historian of France and Europe, Tony Judt, argued that the nation was a much more potent concept than any kind of imagined European project. He confidently predicted that Europe "in its strong form" had "had its day"; on the contrary, the nation-state would survive and prosper despite the onward march of European integration.[73] Ten years later, with France leading an anti-European backlash against the Constitution, Judt's predictions seemed to have come true. European integration, of every kind, appeared to have come to a grinding halt and, as this chapter has made clear, the nation had once again become a vital reference-point in member-states such as France. There had been important divisions among European nations over responses to the Balkan conflict, and the second Iraq War. Even sympathetic outside observers such as Stanley Hoffmann found it difficult to see

how the "European Sisyphus" could become relevant to citizens of member-states, while French philosopher Étienne Balibar claimed that an integrated Europe, though "necessary," had become "impossible."[74] Now with twenty-five members, Europe seemed to be coming apart at the seams.

Nevertheless, I would like to close by suggesting that, while Europe in its *strong form* has suffered greatly from the rise of sustained Euroscepticism, the playing-out of Franco-British rivalry in Europe has, in fact, been productive for Europe as a whole. The very explicit juxtaposition of British and French models has bequeathed to other European member-states—especially new entrants—a wide range of symbols, languages, approaches, and policies. Whether on the questions of European enlargement and the Common Agricultural Policy, or in relation to multiculturalism and minority rights, the very public clash between French and British models has left space for new member-states to formulate their own policies at the intersection of Franco-British quarrels. To those, like Judt, who believe a strong Europe should present a unified ideological front, the ever-present disagreements between two of Europe's most important member-states must be considered a resounding failure. However, I would argue that it is precisely the success of the European project which has allowed this kind of ideological pluralism to be contained within the realm of the European Union. If we accept that an expanded Europe must be a plural Europe, we might even see the current managing of Franco-British disputes as a model for the development of Europe. Perhaps the search for a "European citizenship," which has been so important to intellectuals such as Jürgen Habermas, should not simply be an attempt to unify European memory and peoples, but also an acknowledgment of the continent's pluralism.[75] Or could this simply be a rather British way of seeing Europe?

Notes

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