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## Section 2

# THE POLITICS OF BREXIT



# Chapter Five

## POPULISM, NATIONALISM AND BREXIT

Craig Calhoun

Brexit was a vote against London, globalization, and multiculturalism as much as a vote against Europe.<sup>1</sup> It was a vote against cosmopolitan elites who brought Britain into the European Union (EU), who benefited from the EU, and who were widely believed to look down on those who felt they did not. And of course it was a vote for the good old days, in complaint against a frustrating present.

The Brexit story is at once very British, especially English, and part of a troubling global pattern. Similar populist pushback against globalization is prominent on the European continent. It was a central theme of the Donald Trump campaign in the United States, where it was married to authoritarianism and open racism as well as a similar hostility to immigrants. Partially similar populism, nationalism, and indeed authoritarianism shape politics in Russia, India, and China. There is a tendency to discuss each in terms of national history, context, personalities, and cultural memes – but the explanations of each are partly international, not all idiosyncratically domestic.

### **There Will Always Be an England**

In a sense, Brexit is misnamed: England voted to leave the EU. Technically, of course, the state that held the referendum and will now negotiate withdrawal was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. But Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in Europe. It was England that decisively chose Brexit. Wales, lacking any significant independent economy, did stick with England against Europe but brought a tiny number of votes. In any case, England and Wales are not quite enough to make a Great Britain.

Curiously Brexit is an expression of English (more than British) nationalism. It came on the heels of a decades-long decline in British unity. Before the referendum, many proudly displayed the St. George's Cross – a symbol of England not Britain. Still, most supporters showed no desire for a breakup of Britain. Most seem to wish for Britain to be Great again, though their yearning for renewal of Great Britain presumes English dominance.

British nationalism, when it was ascendant, was anchored in the British Empire. The British nation was forged significantly overseas, in war and empire. These were backed up by trade and religion. But it was especially in empire that Britain was one nation (rather

than an amalgam of four).<sup>2</sup> This could still be evoked as late as the 1982 Falklands War, and military service, including in that asymmetrical conflict, remained one of its touchstones. Scots played a proud role in the British Empire and its military. But the Empire is no more, and British identity has waned. Ironically, it is strongly expressed in relation to Europe because there the issue is precisely sovereignty and not cultural integration or shared history (which can as easily be a story of conquest and conflict as of unity).

The Brexit campaign married a claim to history and cultural cohesion that was particularly English to sovereignty vested in the four-nation United Kingdom. At a popular level, sovereignty suggests simply autonomy, the ability for the country to make its own decisions about its future, its relations with others, and who can cross its borders. For better or worse, in an intensively and increasingly interdependent world, that older notion of sovereignty is hard to operationalize.

With or without the EU, the UK is enmeshed in a welter of international treaties and obligations, trading relationships, and credit flows. The fault line between cultural definitions of a mainly English national whole and the legal unity of the UK is a further complication. But relying on a simplified and old-fashioned notion of sovereignty is unlikely to make either England or the United Kingdom great again. Addressing migration flows requires international cooperation. So does achieving security against terrorism and other forms of transnational conflict and crime. No country has perfect autonomy in addressing a global issue like climate change – or for that matter financial stability.<sup>3</sup> But stating the issue this way implies that most Brexit supporters were trying to find a solution to these global problems and making a mistake about what solving them would take. It may be more accurate to say voters were genuinely worried about a long list of global and national problems but expressing their discontent rather than choosing solutions. Voting for Brexit expressed unhappiness that the problems existed – and equally unhappiness at the web of interdependence limiting the autonomy of Britain as of other modern states. For some, clinging to the ideal of autonomy was simply defensive, the desire for a bulwark against a troubling, often nasty world. But it was not really an alternative plan for tackling the list of policy issues.

For most people, voting for Brexit was expressive more than instrumental action. A Brexit vote expressed frustration, rage, resentment, and insult – as well as hope that a vanishing way of life could be saved and a proud national identity celebrated. It was not a strategic effort to secure a particular political or economic outcome. Of course voters had ideas of varying clarity about what their votes might produce. But this is not an adequate account of their motivation, all the more since many did not expect for the “leave” vote to succeed. And though the frustrations and hopes underpinning votes for Brexit in the referendum are shaped by economic fortunes, they are not directly matters of economic strategy.

Economic concerns joined with other troubles to make Brexit voters unhappy with the status quo. While the campaign was not about economic policy, economic malaise helped turn the mood of the country sour. Leaders of the Brexit campaign encouraged the unhappiness with allegations that the UK gave far more to Europe than it received in return. Implicitly, the contention was that domestic problems inside Britain were caused or at least exacerbated by the EU. Was it hard to get your children into the school you

wanted? Hard to get into social housing and harder still to buy a house? Were the queues getting longer at the doctor's office? Immigrants were seen as explanations for all these grievances. Lest anyone think the issues lay in domestic UK policy, or economy, or tax structure, the leaders of the Brexit campaign invented bogus claims like the notion that the UK sent £350M a week to the EU.<sup>4</sup> Brexit voters may have believed false claims about a number of specifics. But they were not wrong about everything. They were furious at elites for shaping the unattractive situations in which they found themselves, and, indeed, elite politicians and the businesspeople enriched by global finance (and far too many others) did do too little to create prosperity, opportunity, and security throughout Britain.

Obviously, many of the leaders of the Brexit campaign were themselves elites and elitists. Former London mayor Boris Johnson was born into wealth, educated at Eton and Oxford, and a very visible presence in the fancier reaches of London society. It is not as though he was a bus driver or shopkeeper from Sunderland. But the leaders of populist politics are seldom typical members of the populace for which they purport to speak. They are elites who articulate popular grievances and aspirations. And, of course, in this case as all, elite leaders had their own agendas quite distinct from the issues they promoted to the broader people. Perhaps above all, leaders like Johnson simply sought to advance their own prominence and careers. Certainly, they were strikingly devoid of clear plans for what to do after the referendum passed. Needless to say, there will be no £350M weekly saving handily available to stem deficits in the National Health Service or build public housing.

The England that most voted against membership of the EU is the England of vanished industry in the North, rural poverty in the Southwest, and people clinging to middle-class lifestyles in the suburbs of once-great cities that feel increasingly alien to them. Scotland has shuttered factories of its own, of course, but frustration at that fueled Scottish nationalism and was coupled with a desire to be more European. English nationalism was reinforced by resentment of Scottish nationalism. But whether on its own or claiming greatness under the banner of Britain, it grew and took on a populist character in reaction to real problems that seemed to have been brushed aside by many leaders in all major political parties.

Immigration was both a political issue and a social anxiety. The nastiest part of the campaign was the persistent fanning of anti-immigrant sentiment that extended into racism and open religious bias. This is something Brexit shares with populist and rightist politics on the European continent, in the United States, and in Australia. The open racism is startling after decades in which almost all public speech embraced virtues of liberal tolerance and often more active multiculturalism (whether in full sincerity or not). It no doubt reflects a sense of eroding racial and national privilege. But this is not simply free floating. It is shaped also by an economy that challenges the promise of upward mobility and makes downward mobility all too frequent. Racial and national scapegoating reflect not only cultures of entitlement but also a political economy of blocked opportunity and widespread insecurity.

Brexit was manifestly a vote against multiculturalism and for English nationalism.<sup>5</sup> A large part of the British population felt as though their country was slipping away

from them. These were disproportionately white, older, and less educated voters – but they were not all wrong. Britain has changed enormously. Both Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives and New Labour presided over transformations of political economy and culture alike. These were partly due to factors like technological innovation that were not closely linked to the Brexit campaigns. But they also reflected globalization, immigration, international conflict, and perhaps, above all, economic transformation. And the Brexit vote made clear that the cosmopolitan elites who shaped the new Britain failed to generate a new narrative, a new national self-understanding to make sense of the changes and membership in the transformed country. Such a new narrative is needed not just to explain Britain's global and European engagements but also to create legitimacy in its changed domestic landscape. Changes in inequality, for example, both material and cultural, demand some legitimating narrative. What this could be is uncertain, but right now it does not exist. And this is not just an issue for egalitarians. It is an issue for a middle class that does not think it is getting its due and for a once-strong and unionized white working class that is not sure anyone actually speaks for it.

Arguably Brexit was a vote for some version of the past. Fully 75 percent of voters aged 18–24 opted for a future in Europe. Sixty-one percent of those over 65, along with a majority of all those over 45, voted against.<sup>6</sup> It will be important for leaders implementing Brexit to reach out to the young who did not want it – and who indeed worry that it will damage their future prospects.

The vote was grounded in nostalgia. This does not mean there are not good reasons to be dissatisfied with the EU, but rather, just that they played a secondary role in this referendum. The Brexit campaign was almost entirely negative and devoid of plans for an alternative future. It played on an old idea of sovereignty, old English ideas about the difference between the island nation and the mainland of Europe, alarm over immigrants, and claims that the UK was somehow subsidizing Europe. This was cynical for some careerist politicians but sincere for others and, I think, for almost all their followers. But those who will have to live longest with the consequences wanted a different choice.

## **Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism**

Brexit is among other things a rejection of “Cool Britannia,” the 1990s branding of a cosmopolitan, creative, and united Britain as a part of a happy vision of globalization. Consider as an example British Airways's rebranding as “a global, caring company, more modern, more open, more cosmopolitan, but proud to be based in Britain”:

What is vital to this new identity is its international feel. This is indicative of BA's desire to be a global player. Also, according to BA, it shows Britain's own multicultural mix. However, the emphasis is on presenting the positive aspects of different cultures and how British Airways truly supports its operations, including its many joint ventures, in different countries. All this leads to a positive image for the 60 per cent of BA customers who are not British.<sup>7</sup>

The message was not just for foreigners. As British Airways's branding consultants point out, “The United Kingdom is not keen on being seen as the country of outmoded

traditions and old castles. The new surface shows a youthful, cosmopolitan Britain, confidently looking to the future.”<sup>8</sup>

“New Labour” was in power, but hints of the Mod ’60s and the once mighty Empire were not accidental. Public Relations firms and politicians sought to market national identity – and “cosmopolitan” was in part (if ironically) claimed as a part of British national identity.<sup>9</sup> London anchored the national brand. London was (and is) a global financial center, shopping center, cultural center, and center of advertising itself. It is multicultural, Anglophone, with a queen, traditional architecture, and four airports. In the 1990s, it had the Young British Artists and Geri Halliwell in a skimpy Union Jack dress. Cosmopolitans sought to claim this London-centered brand for Britain more generally. The queen’s Golden Jubilee was a peak event. To be sure, BritPop faded. But while Conservatives under David Cameron sought to distance themselves from Labour in many ways, they largely maintained this orientation to the national brand. The slogans changed, but the marketing effort continued. It was carried over into the government’s “Britain Is Great” campaign, joining the Department of Trade and Investment to promotion of tourism and education (and indeed, the presentation of British higher education as an export industry). It reached a second crescendo in 2012 with the queen’s diamond jubilee and the London Olympics.

The Brexit campaign mobilized a different and less happy story of Britain. Perhaps most notably, it was unwilling to accept London as a stand-in for the country as a whole. The financial and cultural industries became foci of resentment rather than celebration.

Between golden and diamond jubilees, large sections of Britain’s working class lost jobs, lost relative pay, or found only precarious employment. Large sections of the middle class found themselves in mortgaged housing with salaries barely keeping pace with inflation. Overall, there was indeed prosperity, but it was very unequally distributed. And it was easy to blame globalization. It was perhaps all the easier because globalization had a British face: London. For the unequal distribution was by geography as well as class.

Then came 9/11, the war in Iraq, Islamic terrorism homegrown in some of Britain’s ghettoized urban neighborhoods, and financial crisis. Financial crisis was less a direct cause or focus of the Brexit campaign than a background condition. It shaped a national change of mood in which migration and anxieties over Islam and terrorism became much bigger issues. The ill effects of financial crisis were prolonged by the government’s ideological insistence on a policy of austerity that lengthened Britain’s recession, slowed recovery, and hurt most those most dependent on government support. Austerity forcefully promoted by the chancellor, George Osborne, did more than anything else to undermine the socially liberal side of Cameron’s “One Nation Conservatism.” And in this, finance seemed to demonstrate both the problems with globalization and the reasons existing elites could not be trusted.

Very quickly, a long-simmering renewal of nationalism was growing stronger. Scots nationalists were treated as a specific if troubling case. But nationalism grew among members of the white working class of England as well as an old country set and more modern Tories. It was largely a celebration of England, but when it was coupled to a claim for sovereignty outside the EU, it was labeled British. This would eventually culminate in Brexit.



The new nationalism is sometimes reactionary, but not because nationalism inevitably is. It is reactionary partly because elite liberals failed to show enough care for those who did not fully share in the economic boom and suffered under the financial austerity that was unwisely and ideologically chosen as an antidote. Many workers whose families had supported the Labour Party for generations thought that New Labour made it a party of privileged professionals. It is reactionary partly because illiberal leaders were prepared to manipulate both the symbols of old identities and the genuine stresses of contemporary situations to nurture anger at immigrants and suspicion of Europe. Nasty rhetoric from elite pro-Brexit campaigners gave permission to nasty assertions of racism, hostility to immigrants, and Islamophobia (sometimes wrapped in a St. George's Cross). It is reactionary largely because it is *precisely* a reaction to capitalist globalization that leaves many unemployed or in precarious work, and that makes it hard for many to have much confidence that their ways of life will flourish in their children's future.

Reactionary nationalism is not a good or particularly effective reaction to loss of jobs, competition for space in housing estates, or the unfamiliarity of immigrant neighbors. But it is naive of cosmopolitans not to expect a reaction and not to focus more on making national identity a positive framework for the incorporation of diverse groups and the deepening of democratic politics. It is naive of people who belong to an elite culture – in this case the culture of urban Oxbridge and London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) graduates – to understand themselves as transcending belonging (just as it is naive to understand their positions as entirely the result of merit rather than privilege). It is naive not to expect that others who belong to different sorts of communities, who are invested in different sorts of identities, will seek to sustain them – whether these are white English workers or the descendants of immigrants from Pakistan. To offer the unemployed an ethical obligation to be cosmopolitan rather than an economic opportunity to work together with people of different backgrounds is not an effective approach to social integration.

Of course, there were many complaints about the EU as such. With its expensive bureaucracy, almost willful inefficiencies, and dysfunctional politics it has given more than a little justification to the frustration. Still, on the basis of almost all research and evidence, the UK was a net beneficiary of EU membership.<sup>10</sup> The Brexit campaign was one in which accuracy of evidence did not much matter. Politicians uttered outlandish claims, the media gleefully repeated them more often than it checked facts, and even after many were debunked, voters happily embraced those that fit their preconceptions. But the real point is not postvidentiary political campaigns – a bad thing, but not as novel as some think. The real point is the preconceptions.

The Brexit campaign was not driven by arguments about costs and benefits. It was driven by resentment and frustration and anger. It was emotional and expressive. And the grievances expressed had real foundations even if the EU was a partially misplaced target and no practical solutions were offered. In this the Brexit campaign was a close cousin to Trump's quest for the US presidency. Trump was in the UK as the referendum results came in and drew sustenance from the success of kindred forces. Both are part of a still wider populist surge that expresses frustration with radically intensified inequality, stagnant incomes, and declining economic security for middle- and working-class people

in ostensibly prosperous countries. Populism expresses frustration equally with a version of globalization that has shifted power away from their countries and political elites who for perhaps 40 years told them there was no alternative. Not least, populism expresses anger with politicians who seemed not to have much time or attention for the complaints of those being bypassed by globalization. In the UK this includes members of the native working class who were once stalwart supporters of the Labour Party. In Scotland many voted Nationalist. In England they voted for Brexit. Very likely nationalism will not be able to solve their problems, but at least nationalist politicians pay attention to them.

Demagogues have steered this populism to the right in the UK, but like most populism, it does not come intrinsically from one side of the political spectrum or the other (and indeed reveals that the notion of a clear Left–Right distinction may be misleading). Unattractively, demagogues have played up the nativism and indeed racism that also inform populist nationalism. They have built on resentment of urban elites who prided themselves on their cosmopolitan sophistication and made clear they regarded their less cosmopolitan countrymen as backward. Those urban elites included most mainstream politicians, so it is not surprising they struggled to be credible in this campaign.

This is not a uniquely English set of frustrations and wishful thinking or political responses. Populism and nationalism are prominent around the world partly because since the 1970s inequality has grown sharply and the middle and working classes of once-prosperous countries have seen living standards stagnate and economic security disappear. At the same time, migration has increased globally – largely because of globalization itself as well as wars Western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom chose to fight in the Middle East. And the world quite simply looks scary. Nationalism flourishes precisely when people feel threatened by international forces. Populism flourishes when people feel betrayed by elites.

Britain was at the center of a 1990s global boom in talk of cosmopolitanism. This was a period of renewal in the cultural and financial life of British cities – especially London – with yuppies, art galleries, and startling improvement in restaurants. Reference to “cosmopolitan Britain” became standard speech – as in “cosmopolitan Britain has emerged as one of the world’s most diverse and innovative food and drink markets.”<sup>11</sup> These references evoked sophisticated, metropolitan culture versus the noncosmopolitan hinterlands, multicultural Britain versus monocultural English, Scottish, or Welsh national identity.

This was not only a matter of revaluing the different historically British national cultures but also of incorporating immigrants from former colonies, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. Cool and cosmopolitan Britain was (ostensibly) postracial and enthusiastically diverse. Cosmopolitanism put the accent on black and brown faces at Cambridge and Oxford, in Parliament, and reading the television news – happy images only somewhat undercut by more concentrated and less happy black and brown faces in Brixton, Bradford, and other less thriving locales.

By this time, multiculturalism in Britain was becoming a label for two very different agendas and realities. On the one hand, it signaled a cosmopolitan vision of mixing: metropolitan life enriched by the presence of an ever-growing variety of ethnic restaurants. But on the other hand, it also denoted the targeting of government policy to specific

cultural communities and a notion of cultural self-determination. Along with this, a serious housing shortage helped concentrate many immigrants and minorities in specific neighborhoods. Many cosmopolitans thought the latter sort of multiculturalism had gone too far.

Perhaps most of all, cosmopolitanism evoked a positive orientation toward European integration and engagement with the rest of the world. LSE (the London School of Economics and Political Science for those without this cosmopolitan knowledge) was a sort of academic headquarters for this, with a range of intellectual exchanges and conferences, new master's programs focusing on fields like human rights and nongovernmental organization (NGO) management, a clutch of international celebrity professors, and, not coincidentally, fee-paying students from all over the world. LSE became, in a sense, the first really European university.

Academic cosmopolitan theories focused on global governance and global justice, but popular cosmopolitanism was complicit in a "new Gilded Age." Supported by neoliberal policies and a financial bubble, the City of London grew as never before, and traders celebrated with magnums of astonishingly expensive expense-accounted wine. Britain was especially well placed to embrace this cosmopolitanism because English was increasingly the world language, because it had joined the EU without losing its special relationship with the United States, because it was a major financial center, and because its former Empire gave it unusually strong connections around the world.

Cosmopolitanism was embraced by prosperous urbanites. The ideological dominance of cosmopolitanism in the cities – again, especially London – obscured the extent to which the rest of England experienced the benefits of cultural diversity less, worried more about what seemed the refusal of some immigrant communities to assimilate, and mourned the passing of a certain comfortable Englishness. Even the cosmopolitans acknowledged losses: "It is a fine tradition, the great British 'cuppa'. But in an increasingly cosmopolitan London, it seems to be more and more difficult to get a decent cup of tea."<sup>12</sup> Coffee seemed to be the cosmopolitan drink, and urban Britons learned to appreciate £3 lattes.

These were the Tony Blair years. In praise after Blair stepped down as prime minister, *The Economist* said that "Mr Blair has helped make Britain a more tolerant, more cosmopolitan place."<sup>13</sup> When Blair's supporters wanted to criticize his eventual successor, they wrote (wrongly as it happens) that Gordon "Brown's thinking is neither cosmopolitan nor sophisticated, and he is a loner with few strong links to leading intellectual contemporaries."<sup>14</sup>

Blair supporter Tony Giddens argued that "the battleground of the twenty-first century will pit fundamentalism against cosmopolitan tolerance. In a globalising world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently, from ourselves. Cosmopolitans welcome and embrace this cultural complexity. Fundamentalists find it disturbing and dangerous. Whether in the areas of religion, ethnic identity, or nationalism, they take refuge in a renewed and purified tradition – and, quite often, violence."<sup>15</sup>

This was not simply a New Labour theme: a Liberal Democrat politician articulated in harsher terms much the same distinction Giddens had made:

**Chauvinist:** reactionary, isolationist, anti-European, anti-immigration, anti-asylum, thinks one party has all the answers, pro-hanging, anti-abortion, convinced ‘prison works’, little Englander, centralisation, nostalgic for a past world.

**Cosmopolitan:** outward-looking, internationalist, pro-European, pro-immigration, pro-asylum, pluralist, anti-hanging, pro-choice, believes in rehabilitation, multi-culturalist, devolutionary, anti-ID cards, anti-war, tolerant, progressive, forward-thinking.

Chauvinist and cosmopolitan: these, to me, are the big societal divides today.<sup>16</sup>

In other words: old versus new, traditional versus modern, bad versus good. But the claims to sophistication many cosmopolitans made for themselves could not help but communicate to others of more traditional tastes that the cosmopolitans considered them backward. This added insult to economic deprivation.

Cosmopolitanism in the discourse of the early twenty-first century was in many ways similar to talk of modernisation fifty years earlier. It embodied the same progressivist assumptions and often the same tendency to unreflexively identify the good with the new. It elided a personal attitude with a social process. To be modern was presented not just as a style but also an ethical virtue – with little attention to the material conditions that supported cosmopolitan modernity. There were two key differences: cosmopolitanism in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century had less of a plan for how the good qualities of life in the “advanced” countries (and dynamic cities) might spread to those less well-off. And where modernization theory opposed primordialism but praised national integration, recent cosmopolitans commonly showed only contempt for nationalists. They ceded the terrain of patriotism to those they called “chauvinists.”<sup>17</sup>

The coalition government of 2010–2015 resumed aspects of neoliberal economic policy from which New Labour had partially backed away. But it too was enthusiastically cosmopolitan.<sup>18</sup> Both Cameron and Nick Clegg embraced the view that Britain’s future was global, that Europe was a crucial condition of global greatness, and that London would lead the way. To be sure, there were dissidents among the Conservatives; indeed, it was to blunt their challenge that Cameron promised the Brexit referendum. It was a hasty promise. Whether a referendum was a good idea or not, little thought went into constitutional questions, whether a simple majority decision was appropriate, whether and when an act of parliament was required, or even, how to phrase the proposition put to voters: to leave was an action. To remain seemed passive.

The Conservative government from 2015 was always divided on Europe. In many ways, the intraparty divisions among the Conservatives gave the issue more traction nationally. They made taking sides seem an important career move for Tories who hoped for better jobs in future governments. Theresa May, the future prime minister, sided with the leave campaign but (perhaps cannily) expended no effort to advance it. As home minister she had been responsible for elevating the standing of immigration as an issue, publicizing it, and stating hard-to-reach goals for reducing net numbers. While Cameron led the campaign to stay in Britain, he did it in a narrow, instrumental way. He negotiated for a better deal, and he failed to articulate positive reasons why the EU was actually a good thing.

## The Great Wen

Arguably, the EU was a scapegoat for English anger at London, the version of globalization it has helped lead and symbolize, and at the politicians who have championed cosmopolitanism at the expense of solidarity with significant parts of their own country.

London is home to 251 overseas banks and runs a financial services trade surplus of more than \$100 billion.<sup>19</sup> London has generated the bulk of Britain's economic growth for more than a generation – and kept most of the proceeds. It is also home to Britain's remarkably centralized government. If business and community leaders in Britain's impoverished northeast or southwest want to innovate and invest to stimulate local economic growth, they have to work with the bureaucracy in the London borough of Westminster. Britain's great cultural institutions from the British Museum to the National Theatre are overwhelmingly concentrated in London. All of Britain's top five universities are in or within commuting range of London. Londoners now joke about seceding from England (thus confirming what people in the rest of the country always thought).

London has had a long love–hate affair with the rest of England. In the early nineteenth century, the great English populist William Cobbett called it the Great Wen, a cyst growing on the face of England. Speaking for the country against the city (and the City), Cobbett decried the rapid growth of London, the concentration of power and people, and its promotion of a system credit and debt that financed wars and the further enrichment of the already wealthy at the expense of ordinary, hardworking English people. He railed against immigrants, calling for renewal of the English sport of boxing as a bulwark against “cutters and stabbers and poisoners” from the Continent, “particularly the crying, canting, perfumiate, cut-throat Italians.”<sup>20</sup>

London has long absorbed immigrants – from all around the UK as well as the European Continent and throughout the Empire. Immigrants totaled perhaps 40 per cent of its population at the time of the referendum and were mainstays of the service and construction industries.<sup>21</sup> Relatively wealthy residents rely on them for service in restaurants and do not think of them as competitors. And London immigrants were less compartmentalized into quasi ghetto residential areas than in the great cities of the rest of the country. They were distributed across the class spectrum as well, with City of London bankers as emblematic as Uber drivers. This was not the pattern in most of England. The England of Brexit has had vastly more trouble than London in absorbing immigrants – largely because the economy offers fewer opportunities for immigrants and citizens alike. And this helps explain why immigration was so much less of an acute issue for Londoners.

Neither was London's economy typical of Britain's. With the surrounding southeast region, it dominates in UK economic growth. In the last few decades, finance has been ever more clearly in the lead than in the past. London has some of the world's most expensive real estate and richest residents (and absentee property owners). It has been one of the world's most global and cosmopolitan cities for centuries, and is currently home to nearly a million continental Europeans (out of perhaps 1.3 million in the UK as a whole).<sup>22</sup> It voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. The rest of England did not.

Though the English have long loved to disparage what they see as the centralization of French government, for most purposes power and functional administration are much more centralized in the UK. All manner of local projects can only move forward if they pass through Westminster gaining the support not just of politicians but also, perhaps even more importantly, of bureaucrats. Perhaps ironically, central government gained power in the Thatcher years and after, while local government was significantly dismantled. Manufacturing, mining, and other industries with stronger roots in various regions declined precipitously. And the finance industry flourished. London's primacy in Britain grew.

Opponents of Brexit campaigned in part by stressing negative consequences for the finance industry and the City of London. They were right that the potential for damage was large. And they were right that the prosperity of the financial sector had been basic to the overall prosperity of Britain, especially since the 1970s. But they greatly overestimated how much the rest of England would care – or would want finance to thrive. They did not really seem to think through whether “Brexit will be bad for banks” was a compelling pitch in most of Britain.

The first problem was simply that the “overall prosperity” of the London finance industry helped mask sharp regional and other differences. In the 1970s about a quarter of wealth had been held in financial instruments. By the time of the financial crisis and the Brexit vote this had risen to three-quarters. This “financialization” accompanied and indeed helped cause sharply rising inequality. Wealth was narrowly concentrated in geographic as well as class terms. The era of financialization was one of unremitting decline in British manufacturing, which had once been the source of more widely distributed prosperity. But financialization had bid up the price of real estate to previously unimagined levels. This was partly a ripple effect of purchases by the wealthy, both British and increasingly expatriate. But rising housing prices were equally produced by Britain's transition to a country of homeowners – based on mortgage loans.

In public opinion on the eve of Brexit, the finance industry suffered straightforward resentment. It was envied for its wealth, and there was more than a little suspicion that its gains were ill-gotten. Images of crass excess had circulated widely before the financial crisis. And in the crisis itself, bank failures spread suffering much more widely through the country than the preceding prosperity had done. Speculative trading was widely understood to be at the center of each. People might or might not recognize how much government fiscal policy favored the wealthy. Conservative success in the 2015 election suggests that the negative effects of voluntary austerity were not widely understood. But what was visible to everyone was that there was no recession in London commercial activity. Construction cranes, if anything, became a more prominent part of the London skyline in the five years before the referendum as the commercial real estate market boomed.

London is the world's single most important center of global finance. This leadership – and the income it brings – may now be at risk, assuming Britain does in fact leave the EU. This may well have adverse effects for the whole country and for many of those who supported Brexit. But it is not surprising that helping the finance industry was weak motivation during the campaign. Even more basically, Brexit voters distrusted arguments that leaving Europe would be bad for Britain's economy – something almost

all mainstream economists suggested. This reflected partly the general distrust of experts that Michael Gove celebrated when economists challenged his (since disproved) assertions about the scale of British contributions to Europe. “People in this country have had enough of experts,” he said.<sup>23</sup> The numbers Gove cited implied that he also thought the British people had had enough of facts. But he may have been right about experts. And economic experts in particular were in rather bad public repute since the financial crisis. Not only had most famously failed to anticipate it but also economists had joined business leaders and government officials in celebrating a particular version of so-called “neoliberal” globalization as though it were the only possible form economic prosperity could take. It was not only Thatcher who said “there is no alternative.”

Frustration over Europe expressed anger over a situation much bigger than Europe. England could not vote to withdraw from London or neoliberalism or globalization. But the problems many wanted to fix were rooted in these at least as much as in the EU. Withdrawing from Europe was partly a stand-in. As often, appealing to populism and nationalism pointed to a specious or at least inadequate policy solution. Those who have benefited from globalization – the well educated and well-off, especially those linked to growing service industries in the southeast rather than old money in the Tory constituencies of middle England and the southwest – voted disproportionately to stay in Europe. But it is telling that there were not enough of them. Those with jobs mostly voted to remain in Europe. Those without jobs, or who were retired, voted heavily to leave. And so did many who worried about the future of their jobs or the prospects of their children.

## **The Damage Done**

Intellectual and policy elites were in denial, but Brexit happened anyway. More precisely, the UK electorate voted, by a clear majority in a record turnout, to separate from the EU. This is not actually legally binding, which leaves EU supporters with a glimmer of hope that Parliament or the prime minister might balk at actually giving the notification required under the Treaty on European Union. In any case, withdrawing will take sustained negotiations. Flotillas of lawyers will be employed. Along with those financial speculators who bet correctly on the outcome, the lawyers will be among the few clear beneficiaries of Brexit.

The referendum did considerable damage independent of the potential consummation of Brexit itself and whatever actual institutional and market arrangements may be put in place in its wake. Much of this is down to the campaigns, which were not just poorly run but outright travesties on both sides. That the Brexit campaign was marked by the UK’s first political murder in decades highlights the nastiness of the rhetoric used and the emotions aroused.<sup>24</sup> But more generally, it simply cannot be said that either the remain or leave campaigns rose to the challenge of educating and informing the British public.

The remain campaign relied heavily on trying to scare people into voting for the status quo. Indeed, it was foolish of the Cameron government to allow the seemingly passive term “remain” to define the potential future of the UK in Europe rather than asserting an active goal for building a better future. Hardly anyone in the remain camp



presented an idealistic argument for a European future.<sup>25</sup> The leave campaign had its own trouble bringing disparate protagonists together. Mainstream Tory politicians were determined to marginalize Nigel Farage and the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The Labour leadership seemed half-hearted.

One result is that after Brexit, people are unsure what they voted for. To a quite remarkable degree the entire campaign failed to engage the question of exactly what would happen in the implementation of Brexit. This resulted in several days of chaotic and morbidly comic political theater topped by Gove's flamboyant betrayal of Johnson. Many citizens declared openly they had voted to leave but did not expect to win. Others revealed more surprising expectations, such as that trade with China would quickly replace lost trade with Europe, or the UK government would make up for the loss of EU funding for all important projects. Google reported that after the referendum, searches spiked dramatically for the question "what is the EU?", which one might have thought those who did not know would have asked earlier.<sup>26</sup>

Only after the referendum was there sustained discussion of basic questions like whether an act of parliament was needed to formally give notice to the EU under Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on European Union. Many people seemed to think actual withdrawal would be more or less immediate, but of course the referendum was not legally binding. Parliament could in principle have acted unilaterally to revoke the 1972 European Communities Act, but in reality the British relationship to Europe is too complicated and consequential for this. Years of negotiations will be required. This leaves open the possibility that Britain will never actually withdraw. However, not only would disregarding the referendum be politically difficult in Britain but also the other EU member states are not inclined to wait around for Britain to sort out its position. Their leaders have strong incentives to move on with Brexit quickly and turn their attention to reorganizing the EU itself. In any case, the issue is not just "exiting" but also developing new agreements on trade and a host of other matters. Britain may want out of the EU, but it does not want to cease all relations with Europe.

The leave vote triggered the collapse of the previous Conservative government, only a year after its resounding election. Its leaders seem to have done little or no planning on how to proceed in the event the leave vote won. Cameron, the prime minister who called the referendum – foolishly and it appears without deep thought – himself quickly resigned as prime minister. The Tories managed expeditiously to select May. She took an interesting gamble in naming pro-Brexit standard-bearer Johnson her foreign secretary. He will likely be erratic and prone to grandstanding, but not revolutionary. Putting him in charge of implementing Brexit (albeit in collaboration with others) follows a principle of "you made this mess, you clean it up" without actually compromising any policy on which the prime minister feels strongly. And it arguably buys the prime minister some distance from the specific negotiations. Johnson will need to negotiate a Brexit that works for Britain or be replaced. But May will not be able to delegate and escape responsibility for all the difficult decisions that have to be taken.

Brexit will almost certainly lead to the hegemony of a more emphatically right-wing Conservative Party. Cameron wanted to be a modernizer and a globalist, and in some ways he was. He combined his economic neoliberalism with social liberalism. He was



good on gay rights, for example, though arguably this was just one more change that worried those nostalgic for an older Britain. He ran a poor campaign against Brexit and now will leave Parliament. The career prospects of other Tory moderates look dim. Those in ascendancy are from the harder right. They campaigned as populists (even those with inherited wealth and Eton/Oxford educations) and to their shame did not steer clear of racism and xenophobia. But they are likely to rule as a more conventional hard right. Their nationalism will blend with strong cultural conservatism – particularly, it is interesting to note, among those from less elite state school backgrounds. Tight visa regulations are likely to get tighter. The new prime minister was the old home secretary who tried to enforce immigration limits. Already, she has signaled that she may challenge the place of foreign students in UK higher education.

Still, the Conservative Party has options. It may try to balance the economic dominance of London by promoting home construction and industry elsewhere, which would not be a bad thing. It could build on the efforts launched under the previous government to support infrastructural projects intended to create jobs and long-term economic growth in the North. But because there were no clear plans, what will happen now or in the near and even middle-term future is a muddle.

On becoming prime minister, May offered an opaque slogan – “Brexit means Brexit” – in place of clear policy. Muddling through will very likely bring eventual separation of the UK from the EU, but this is not guaranteed, and many opponents of departure offer theories of how this outcome can be escaped. Still, there is now a secretary of state for exiting the European Union. The domestic stakes are at least as large as the external, since the United Kingdom itself could be dissolved.

As wags have started saying, on 23 June (or even in the early hours of the 24th), they went to sleep in Great Britain and woke up in Little England. The UK’s new rulers will be almost as exclusively English as those who voted for Brexit. Scotland very clearly would rather remain part of the EU, and this may lead to another referendum on its separation from the UK. The current leadership in Scotland is wisely not rushing to this, but would like to know a bit more of what the UK will do. It is possible that Brexit will give impetus to Irish unification, but again it is too early to tell. Catholics were unsurprisingly more pro-EU than Protestants, partly because they recognized leaving Europe would mean more domination by England. But Protestant loyalists were split and were not solidly pro-Brexit. Few have fond memories of border checkpoints separating them from the South. And many see their future more closely aligned with the Europeans across the border than with the rather distant (and not always fondly regarded) English.

The Labour Party had already lost the majority it long enjoyed in Scotland to the Scottish National Party. Brexit reaffirmed its direct situation. Becoming an almost entirely English party would all but eliminate its chances to win national elections on its own. The Labour leadership faces strong challenges now, partly because it is seen as failing to mount any clear campaign on Brexit. Jeremy Corbyn and his colleagues have the advantage of hundreds of thousands of new members, but the disadvantage of almost complete estrangement from the Parliamentary Labour Party. The new members are mostly young people who are intuitively clear that the existing more “mainstream” elites lack a clear plan to change the neoliberal structure of globalization. Labour will try to

reclaim the loyalty of the erstwhile working class (increasingly cast as a marginalized stratum of once unionized workers in geographically disadvantaged places).<sup>27</sup> But Labour is deeply split between, in effect, a London party – not just pro-EU but cosmopolitan, multicultural, and proimmigrant, and a party of the rest of the England (and Wales).

The Brexit campaign has both revealed and deepened a range of other divisions. One is between the English and the many immigrants and expatriates living and working (and paying taxes) in the country. These divisions overlap race and religion. “Muslim” and “Christian” matter as ethnic markers even for nonreligious people. Even before the referendum, British antiterrorist policy focused uncomfortably on Muslims. It will be important to build trust among those who feel they do not fit the image of England embraced by the leave campaign. It is telling that Sadiq Kahn, London’s new Muslim mayor used the 2016 Pride parade as an occasion to emphasize tolerance and inclusion not only for gay residents but also for EU citizens.

But the question for the future is not just one of ethnicity, religion, or lifestyle. It is also one of political economy and global engagement. In the short run the economic impact of Brexit was felt mainly through an instant devaluation of the pound. Sterling lost 10 percent of its value – good for exports (including overseas students paying university fees) but a problem in other ways. Share markets rebounded from an initial fall. The more enduring implications will not be known until the terms of an actual separation from Europe are negotiated, assuming one does indeed take place. Will the UK have a Norway-like access to the unified market, albeit without a role in decision-making? This would minimize the economic impact.

Brexit supporters have suggested that any losses in European trade can be made up with increased global trade. This is true, but three challenges stand in the way. First, Brexit did not bring any new advantages for non-European trade. British industry was already trying to sell to China. Second, the EU was by far Britain’s largest trading partner. It would take dramatic gains to make up for even moderate losses. And third, to the extent the Brexit vote revealed a streak of insularity and suspicion of globalization, this may make advancing in new markets harder. Better, it would seem, for Britain not to lose ground in Europe in the first place – but whether this will happen depends significantly on still very uncertain negotiations.

## **The Future of Europe? And the World?**

Europe is not standing still. Guy Verhofstadt, the former Belgian prime minister appointed the European Parliament’s lead negotiator on Brexit, is a strong EU federalist.<sup>28</sup> He will likely want simply to conclude negotiations with as little disruption to the EU as possible. Europe has other problems, and only modest incentives to be patient with Britain. And the UK must negotiate not only with the EU as such but with 27 different countries.

Disintegrative pressure is increasing within the EU. There are signs that several – including “core” countries like France, Italy, and the Netherlands – may hold referenda of their own. It is entirely possible Brexit will be remembered as an early step in the unraveling of the EU. Alternatively, there could be a “two-speed” Europe: a new (or renewed) core Europe could form, building on the Holy Roman and Hapsburg Empires,

and the founding members of the EU. There might be a secondary status for other countries that wanted some trade advantages but without equally strong political ties – or without the demands of meeting all criteria for inclusion in the euro or fiscal union.

The EU has helped create its own problems. For a generation, its leaders have behaved almost as though their goal were to encourage populist revolt. In 2005 they brought a bloated basic law to referenda and were out of touch enough to be altogether startled at its defeat. All but impervious to reform efforts, the EU has built a cumbersome, insular, and easy-to-criticize bureaucracy. It has done better at opening capital markets than protecting labor (though in the era of neoliberalism and austerity, the EU has demanded more protection for workers than the UK government wanted to give). Still, the EU has succeeded not just in the mission of postwar reconstruction and preventing wars among European powers (inherited from the Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community). It has played an important role in providing Europeans with an impressively high standard of living and thriving cultural institutions.

The EU has also been important globally. It is among the strongest leaders in the struggle to address climate change. It is in the forefront of defending human rights. It is a primary supporter of humanitarian action – though its failures when refugee flows brought humanitarian issues close to home have brought that commitment into question.<sup>29</sup> But suffice it to say these are not the top issues for populist voters. And the EU has faltered in confronting two of the biggest crises of recent years. In the face of global financial crisis, it abandoned the idea of solidarity as its richer members sought to protect their national interests rather than help countries like Greece. This exacerbated structural problems. Notably, the eurozone linked economies at very different levels of development without the political integration or governance needed for cohesive action.

Member states found it hard to agree on common policies. The signal failure in this regard came with Europe's inability to develop a common immigration and refugee policy. This started with unwillingness to provide adequate support to Greece and Italy as they bore the brunt of new arrivals. It continued with a botched attempt to distribute refugees by national quotas (the UK was signally ungenerous). The failure continued to such a degree that some countries began to fortify internal European borders.

Brexit is likely to reinforce increasing nationalism in Europe. It will be even more difficult for the EU to address shared policy needs. And individual counties will more often reveal their own fears of globalization and cooperation, and sometimes their own racism and xenophobia. Populist movements are already challenging established political elites, parties, and governments across the Continent. It may seem paradoxical to see such an international trend in anti-internationalist politics, but it is not. The various populist and nationalist challenges respond to similar unsettling effects of globalization – more marked because the globalization proceeded on neoliberal grounds, minimally managed by nation-states.

Brexit is partly a symptom of the declining purchase of the great institutional structures put in place after World War II. These include not only the EU but also the welfare states for which the UK and Europe have been justly admired. National institutions have been slow to adapt to changing economic circumstances and other challenges. They need

rebuilding. But it is a huge question whether European countries withdrawing from the EU – like the UK – will have the will and capacities to fully rebuild their institutions on their own. As the EU faces nationalist challenges, its difficulties are exacerbated by the growing weaknesses of national welfare states run on the bases of market logics rather than principles of solidarity.

These are all global issues. Global institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund are also creatures of the postwar era and in need of renewal – if not reimagining. They have been slow to adapt to finance-led globalization and the rise of non-Western countries. Rising powers outside the long-dominant Euro-American nexus are creating new institutions, like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, often without full Western participation. Multilateral cooperation is weak at a time when it is more needed than ever to deal with climate change, security issues, crime (including financial crime), and migration.

Brexit is part of a populist–nationalist current that will make it harder to achieve effective policies and management of practical affairs in an interdependent world. The UK has remained a major contributor to effective global integration even while it declined as a global power. Europe has been key to building and leading existing global institutions. If internal problems and insularity mean either plays a smaller role, the world will suffer.

Nationalism is once again revealed to be a response to extranational challenges, not simply a product of national culture and traditions. It is a way of trying to secure some defense against anxiety-provoking globalization – not simply its opposite. Populism, likewise, is less a positive political program than “an expression of anger, solidarity and sometimes aspirations.”<sup>30</sup> Yet populism is not an anomaly; rather, it is a recurrent response to problems with large-scale capitalism and centralized state power. Brexit offered few realistic solutions to the problems that frustrated those who voted for it. But that does not mean their grievances had no foundation.

Populism and nationalism are not inherently right or left wing. They are ideologically labile and available to demagogues of right or left to steer. The Right steered Brexit and steers many similar movements around the world. There are obvious analogies on the European continent (as well as a few Left-populist parties). The Trump campaign and the Tea Party movement before it fit a broadly similar pattern. In all these cases, frustrations with global economic trends are mixed with cultural and security concerns and a sense of not being taken seriously by national elites. In all these cases, too, mobilization has drawn on and released racial anger and ethnic resentments. If the decline of the British Empire is in the background of Brexit (and reversing it in the fantasies of surprisingly many backers), so the decline of US hegemony shapes Trump’s effort to make American great again. And indeed, so frustration with the loss of Soviet power shapes Vladimir Putin’s populist push to strengthen Russia. Analogies are less precise but not absent with Recep Erdogan’s Turkey, Narendra Modi’s India, and Jinping Xi’s China. In every case, populism is a powerful aspect of elite attempts to mobilize mass support. Yet in every case, the masses are frustrated partly with the inability of previous elites to give them the respect and opportunities they desired.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter is expanded from Calhoun, "Brexit Is a Mutiny against the Cosmopolitan Elite," *World Post*, June 27, 2016.
- 2 See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
- 3 On different models of sovereignty, see David Held, "Law of States, Law of Peoples: Three Models of Sovereignty," *Legal Theory* 8 (2): 2002, 1–44. Arguably sovereignty needs to be rethought, perhaps as the ability to wield effective influence in international decisions, not as a myth of autonomy.
- 4 For Gove's claim and its debunking, see <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/reality-check/2016/may/23/does-the-eu-really-cost-the-uk-350m-a-week>. (accessed September 17, 2016).
- 5 It has to be said that this is a bit more complicated than it appears. UK's Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) citizens felt less kinship with continental Europe and were themselves less likely to take advantage of free movement with Europe. The Europeans who came to Britain were mostly white. Some BAME citizens of the UK having an easier time of migration. Some saw them as competition or a burden on poor communities. Some expressed the view that while they themselves had worked hard to succeed in Britain, other newcomers would contribute less than they received. Moreover, after the Conservative set out to limit overall immigration, the UK restricted access for people from its former colonies. Some British voters of South Asian ancestry thought restrictions on European migrants might actually lead to policies making it easier for them to bring family members. Not surprisingly, still, British citizens of immigrant backgrounds voted mostly to remain in the EU. See A. Kirk and D. Dunford, "EU Referendum: How the Results Compare to the UK's Educated, Old, and Immigrant Populations," *The Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/eu-referendum-how-the-results-compare-to-the-uks-educated-old-an/> and N. Parveen, "Why Do Some Ethnic Minority Voters Want to Leave the EU?," *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/01/british-asians-views-eu-referendum-figures-brexite> (both accessed September 18, 2016).
- 6 See "How Brexit Vote Broke Down," *Politico*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/graphics-how-the-uk-voted-eu-referendum-brexite-demographics-age-education-party-london-final-results/> (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 7 Bob Ayling (CEO, British Airways), in *British Airways News*, June 10, 1997; see also <http://www.euran.com/BC/art&BritishAirways.htm> (accessed April 7, 2007).
- 8 See <http://www.jyanet.com/cap/0614fe1.htm> (accessed January 15, 2007).
- 9 Advertising campaigns designed to brand nations have become common, in fact, situating countries in global communications and global markets. With their logos and slogans, nations are marketing themselves not just to tourists but also to investors and sometimes to their own citizens. Nearly every nation claims to be cosmopolitan but with distinctive arts and culture and delightful local scenery. See Melissa Aronczyk, "Nations, New and Improved: Branding National Identity," in *Practicing Culture*, ed. C. Calhoun and R. Sennett (Abingdon and Oxon: Routledge, 2007). The nation branding around the Olympics – whether in China, Greece, or very notably in London 2012 – always includes a reminder to citizens to feel good about themselves, and their government.
- 10 See the BBC's summary: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8036097.stm>.
- 11 UK Ministry for Trade and Investment, online at [http://www.investoverseas.org/United\\_Kingdom/UK\\_Sectors/Food\\_and\\_Drink.htm](http://www.investoverseas.org/United_Kingdom/UK_Sectors/Food_and_Drink.htm). Examples can readily be multiplied from almost any market imaginable: "With a more cosmopolitan Britain driven by 'lifestyle' and 'design' home and garden television programmes," (<http://hiddenwires.co.uk/resources/articles2004/articles20040503-05.html>). In Britain, as elsewhere, though, the years after 2001 marked a change. "Suddenly the celebration of postnational, cosmopolitan Britain has been eclipsed by the return of 'security and identity' issues," as David Goodhart put it in 2006, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3445](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3445).

- 12 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10237248> (accessed December 27, 2007).
- 13 [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9149782](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9149782) (accessed December 27, 2007). In fact, Blair was something of an ambivalent cosmopolitan with a strong communitarian side.
- 14 [http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article\\_details.php?id=9662](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=9662) (accessed December 27, 2007).
- 15 Giddens, *Runaway World* (Cambridge: Polity).
- 16 Stephen Tall, from his blog, <http://oxfordliberal.blogspot.com/2006/01/new-cosmopolitan-politics-smart-career.html> (accessed December 21, 2007); Tall credited Robin Cook as his inspiration.
- 17 Gordon Brown made an attempt to develop a capacious understanding of Britishness and British values. "Liberty, tolerance, and fair play," he wrote in 2004, "these are the core values of Britishness," (<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/jul/08/britishidentity>. economy; accessed September 17, 2016). Later he would speak of "British jobs for British people." Many self-declared cosmopolitans saw this as opening the door to the kind of nationalist discourse that would dominate in the Brexit campaign. In fact, throughout the New Labour years Brown was worried about a fatal opposition of urban, elite sophistication to the majority of Britain. In his 2004 speech, he specifically recognized the same set of issues that would bedevil his campaign in 2010 and remain current through the Brexit referendum: "our relationship with Europe, devolution and the constitution, asylum and immigration." The main addition to these was the financial crisis and the extension of suffering through George Osborne's austerity policy.
- 18 The coalition will be remembered for strides in recognition of diverse sexual identities and for important international policies, like William Hague's campaign against sexual violence in conflict.
- 19 <https://www.thecityuk.com/news/thecityuk-uk-trade-surplus-in-financial-services-highest-ever/> (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 20 Not above inconsistency (like other populist leaders and politicians of more than a few stripes), Cobbett railed against immigrants not only in England but also when he was for a time an English immigrant to America. On Cobbett's diagnosis of the ills of finance and social change in the England of his day, and some parallels to the present, see Calhoun, "Beyond Left and Right: A Cobbett for Our Times," in *William Cobbett, Romanticism, and the Enlightenment*, ed. J. Grande and J. Stevenson, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015). The quoted passage comes from a letter to Windham cited in Adam Chill, *Boundaries of Britishness: Boxing, Minorities, and Identity in Late-Georgian Britain*, PhD diss., Boston College, 2007, p. 89. To his credit, Cobbett moderated his stance on immigration later in his life enough to rightly challenge those who would deny rights to the Irish and forget the role of the British Empire in producing both Irish poverty and migration. See Patty Seleski, "Identity, Immigration, and the State: Irish Immigrants and English Settlement in London, 1790–1840," in *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia, and Identity in Modern British Culture*, ed. G. K. Behlmer and F. M. Leventhal, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- 21 S. Kohli, "London Has More People Than Ever – and 44% of Them Are Ethnic Minorities," *Quartz*, <http://qz.com/337508/london-has-more-people-than-ever-and-44-are-ethnic-minorities/> (accessed September 19, 2016).
- 22 See K. de Freitas-Tamura, "'Brexit' Vote Worries European Up-and-Comers Lured to Britain," *New York Times*, May 15, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/europe/brexit-referendum-European-millennials-migrants.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/europe/brexit-referendum-European-millennials-migrants.html?_r=1) (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 23 *Financial Times*, June 3, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/3be49734-29cb-11e6-83e4-abc22d5d108c> (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 24 Jo Cox, Labour Member of Parliament for Batley and Spen, was shot and stabbed to death outside a meeting in her constituency by a murderer who called out "Britain First!"

- 25 Gordon Brown did make an attempt in *Britain: Leading Not Leaving*. Deerpark Press, 2016, and a number of speeches and newspaper essays. See also the *Report* of the LSE Commission on the Future of Europe.
- 26 A. Selyuch, "After the Brexit Vote, Britain Asks Google: 'What Is the EU?'" *NPR*, June 24, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/06/24/480949383/britains-google-searches-for-what-is-the-eu-spike-after-brexit-vote> (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 27 A central theme for New Labour was reaching out beyond this older working class in the awareness that it could no longer deliver election victories – and pursuing simply the protection of it could not deliver opportunities to future generations. But even if it was hard to see this older, once manufacturing-based working class as a dynamic force for the future, it remains a sizable block of citizens – and voters – and relatively concentrated in certain geographic regions.
- 28 Indeed, he has been dubbed Nigel Farage's "worst enemy," and Farage described him (in typical exaggeration) as "anti-British to the core," R. Smith, "Who Is Guy Verhofstadt?" *Express*, September 14, 2016, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/708996/Guy-Verhofstadt-Brexit-negotiator-Belgian-MEP-EU-Parliament-who-is-Farage-enemy> (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 29 P. DeLargy, "Europe's Humanitarian Response to Refugee and Migrant Flows: Volunteerism Thrives As International System Falls Short," *Humanitarian Exchange*, 67, September 2016 (accessed September 18, 2016).
- 30 Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).