

Paper Presented at the 2019 ASN World Convention, Columbia University 2-4 May 2019

Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Authors

## **RHETORIC OF ECONOMIC NATIONALISM**

Gordana Uzelac

*London Metropolitan University*

*g.uzelac@londonmet.ac.uk*

It is a 'well-known fact' - at least among economists, political economists, and in public perception - that economic liberalism and economic nationalism are antitheses. In circles of economic liberals, economic nationalism is a term used to describe 'policies they did not like' (Helleiner, 2002: 308-9), and 'everything that did not fit in with the liberal definition of economy and development' (Koffman, 1990). Liberals generally see it as a rise in protectionism, neo-mercantilism (Pryke, 2012), or an idea that 'economic activities are and should be subordinate to the goals of state building and the interests of the state' (Gilpin, 1987: 31). Seen in such a way, economic nationalism is construed as the main obstacle to true free market economies.

Yet when the future president of the USA chanted with his followers "America first!" during his campaign, not many hard-core economic liberals in the US pointed their fingers and protested. Nor did many protest when the same future president eloquently said:

You know, they have a word – it's sort of became old-fashioned – it's called a nationalist. And I say, really, we're not supposed to use that word. You know what I am? I'm a nationalist, okay? I'm a nationalist. Nationalist. Nothing wrong. Use that word. Use that word. (Trump, 7 November 2016).

On the other side of the Pond, that time mayor of one of the main financial centres of the world – London – led the 'Leave' campaign, claiming it was time for Britain to "take back control" from that "bureaucratic supranational institution" better known as the EU. This highly positioned member of the party that was a leading force behind the ideology and policy of neoliberalism did not have any problem finding supporters among his party's ranks.

The politics and practice of the 21<sup>st</sup> century show us that our rooted understanding of economic nationalism has to be re-examined. This paper follows recent approaches that rightly see economic nationalism as a form of nationalism, rather than of an economy. Hence, it claims that economic nationalism cannot be seen as a set of policies, but as a variety of discourses practised by various agencies including those that describe themselves as neo- or economic liberal, and are thus proponents of free-market society. It holds that economy is not only about production, consumption, and distribution, but also a source of symbols, myths and memories burdened with values and norms that are defined as national. And it is these symbolic forms of economy that are the focus of the rhetoric of economic nationalism.

If economic nationalism is a form of nationalism, then the question of its emergence becomes crucial to address. Karl Polanyi's concepts of "embeddedness" and "double movement" give an interesting framework for examining possible answers to that question. This paper will propose that economic nationalism as an ideology emerges when forces that try to dis-embed economy create consequences deemed too damaging and threatening to a nation. In these circumstances, those who see themselves as defenders of the nation form an ideology that attempts to re-embed economy. Once the effect of the economic crisis subsides, economic nationalism in a free-market society assumes its usual banal and everyday form.

The emergence of economic nationalism in Britain is not new, but it has gained new fervour since the economic crisis of 2008 and, unsurprisingly, since the start of the EU referendum campaign in February 2016. The new form of political ideology that was emerging around the so-called Brexit block often used a rhetoric seemingly incompatible with the official ideology and practice of a free-market society. In order to examine the main ideas, concepts, explanations and vocabulary of economic nationalism in Britain, this paper analyses speeches and writings of one of the main proponents of this ideology – Boris Johnson. The paper concludes that the rhetoric of economic nationalism used and developed in Britain cannot be seen as incompatible with the ideology and practice of a free-market society, but rather as a buffer that attempts to compensate for their failures.

### **Defining the problem**

Every discussion on economic nationalism starts with the work of Friedrich List. In his book entitled *The National System of Political Economy* (1844), List sketched what will be seen as one of the first comprehensive theories of economic nationalism. As it happens, List's ideas have subsequently been interpreted in a multitude of ways with contradicting conclusions. The mainstream economic theories for a long time have seen List's work as a classic example of economic nationalism, which was defined as an ideology opposed to the free market, that promotes autarky, tariffs, protectionism and neo-mercantilism. Economy textbooks often listed economic nationalism, alongside economic liberalism and Marxism, as one of the main ideologies in political economy (Nakano, 2004: 212). But at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a renewed interest in the concept of economic nationalism emerged – mainly within the ranks of international political economists – that developed a different view and understanding of not only List's ideas, but of the phenomenon itself.

This new group of theorists agrees with the known assertion advocated by List – namely tariff protection of infant industry (Helleiner, 2002: 311). However, they emphasise that List argued for some form of protectionism only in situations when an agricultural country starts to develop its industry. That is the period when it needs to protect itself from those already industrially developed, and it should enter the competitive market place only once the industry has sufficiently grown. This is the point from which the most common, and banal, understanding of economic nationalism originates – when it is equated with a set of protectionist policies and neo-mercantilism. It is also where many economic historians have interpreted List's views as being directly opposite and conflictual to the classic ideas of economic liberalism. After all, any protectionist policy by definition is seen as constraining the free market.

More informed scholars of List's work – like Helleiner (2002), Pryke (2012), Harlen (1999) and many others – argue that this call for protectionism in developing economies is not what puts List in direct opposition to views of economic liberals. After all, List was a proponent of free trade, but he also held that being fully free trade is only safe under certain conditions (Harlen, 1999: 734). Indeed, some of the main theorists of economic liberalism – such as John Stuart Mill – also accept the need for some protectionism in infant economies (Helleiner, 2002: 311).

What really distinguished List's political economy from the then dominant views of economic liberals was his nationalist ontology. List's argument with cosmopolitan liberals stemmed from their perception of individuals merely as producers and consumers, 'not as citizens of states or members of nations' (List cited in Helleiner, 2002: 311). While economic liberalism was exclusively interested in bringing prosperity to every individual and the whole world, List held that the goal of economy is not just profit, but also prosperity of *national* culture and power. As Helleiner succinctly describes: 'His was an ideology that started from the standpoint that the world was divided into nations, each of which has a distinctive national interests which were defined not just in material terms but also in terms of power and the expression of national culture and identities' (2002: 312). This reading of List's work, to paraphrase George T. Crane (1998), brought the nation back into the discussion of economic nationalism.

Renewed discussion on economic nationalism has since produced a range of empirical works – and consequently definitions – of the phenomenon. So, for example, Nakano (2004: 222) claims that 'the ultimate end [of economic nationalism] is augmentation of national power for national unity and autonomy rather than maximisation of economic welfare or military power'. Gilpin (2001: 14) famously stated how economic nationalism can only be seen as a 'central idea that economic activities are and should be subordinate to the goal of the state building and the interests of the state'. Pryke (2012: 285) on the other hand claims that economic nationalism 'should be considered as a set of practices designated to create, bolster and protect national economies in the context of world markets.' Crane (1998: 75) sees economic nationalism 'in the general sense of constructing an imagined economic community', that is, 'a national identity that draws heavily on economic metaphors and expectations' (ibid., 73). Helleiner and Pickel's (2005: 9), rather clumsily, claim that nationalism is 'a combination of discourse, action and structure'. Or, to put it simply, it's everything.

Even from this brief discussion of the origins and development of the debate on economic nationalism, it is obvious that there is not much of a consensus about the nature of the concept. We can see that several fallacies clouded this debate that was taking place in the intersection of several disciplines – economy, political economy, history, international relations and sociology, among others – that do not have a good record of mutual understanding. The main fallacies of theories concerning Economic nationalism can be identified as: first, treating economic nationalism as a type of economy, instead of as a type of nationalism; second, conflating the nation with the state; and finally, conflating ideology with policy.<sup>1</sup>

This renewed reading of the 19<sup>th</sup> century political economy classics revealed a serious problem with the nature of economic nationalism as a phenomenon. If economic nationalism is seen as Gilpin (1987) defines it above then most, if not all, economic liberals can also be seen as nationalists 'because they believed that ... policies [that promote free market] would enforce the power and wealth of their nation-states' (Nakano, 2012: 212). Therefore, it is understandable that, depending on the socio-economic circumstances of a particular nation-state, different economic policies are advocated as benefiting

---

<sup>1</sup> Another obvious fallacy is clearly seen in Helleiner and Pickel's definition where economic nationalism is defined as a discourse, social structure and agency. However, conflation of structure and agency would require more detailed analysis, for which there is no much space here.

particular economies. For example, as List (1999) himself was claiming, the insistence of British economists on free market at the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century directly benefited their nation, seeing as it was the most industrialised in the world.

Traditionally, policies like tariffs, quotas, subsidies, legal regulation of markets, restrictions on foreign investments, reorganisation of industries, autarky and similar economic policies are immediately identified as economic nationalism. But as Helleiner (2002: 323) writes, policies that Economic nationalism 'indorses might change in different context'. The most blatant example of this view witnessed from the current US administration was when the government, despite putting free trade on its ideological pedestal, introduced in June 2018 steel and aluminium tariffs on China, the EU, Canada and Mexico. On the other hand, Abdelal (2001) gives an example of post-Soviet Lithuania who severed many of its ties with Russia in the 1990s, even against its immediate economic benefits, and opted for the introduction of free trade with the West judging that open market was in its national interest in the long run.

This clearly leads us to the conclusion that economic nationalism can be linked to various economic policies, and that there is no limit to the number of economic policies seen as nationalist. In given circumstances, all policies could be judged as contributing to the development of national power, wealth and prestige. This leads to the conclusion that economic nationalism is a type of *nationalism*, not a type of economy (Pickle, 2003).

The second fallacy in theorising Economic nationalism is clearly visible from the Gilpin's definition stated above: conflation of the state with the nation. What Gilpin is describing would more appropriately be called economic statism or, rather, economic etatism. The state and the nation are, as we know, different phenomena, a fact which is, according to Crane (1998: 56) systematically neglected in a so-called 'instrumentalist approach to economic nationalism'. This approach is shared by many realist, liberal and Marxist theories that view the state 'for good or ill, as manipulating the economy in an effort to strengthen the nation' (ibid.). While nation-state is the most dominant form of political organisation in today's world, the two parts of the same concept do not necessarily have the same origins, form or internal dynamic. While the state is the central actor in a political economy, the nation is the central focus of nationalism.

And this brings us to the next most common fallacy: conflating ideology with policy. If we accept that economic nationalism is a form of nationalism that has the nation at its core, then economic nationalism can only be systematically analysed as a form of ideology. This point is not always clear. In his brilliant analysis of post-Soviet countries, Abdelal (2001) initially defines economic nationalism as a form of nationalism and clearly makes the distinction between the state and the nation. He sees nationalisms as 'attempts to ascribe political, economic, and cultural meanings to societies' understanding of themselves' (2001: 25). Here, nationalism is 'a proposal for the content of national identity' (ibid.: 1) always contested, defined and redefined. It attempts to define criteria of membership; define who the members are and who are not; specify the type of government most beneficial for the flourishing of the nation; interpret national interests and goals; and define the main threats. And while Abdelal so far clearly depicts characteristics and functions of a particular ideology, he then slips into this: 'Economic

nationalism, then, is *economic policy* that follows the national purpose and direction. It is a set of policies that results from a shared national identity, or from the predominance of a specific nationalism in the politics of the state' (emphasis added, 2001: 33). A few lines later, he continues: 'Economic nationalism is an *economic policy outcome*, a *result* of the politics of nationalism within a society' (emphases added, *ibid.*). Aside the fact that it is difficult to see anything, including nationalism, as both a policy and a result of that policy, this transition from defining nationalism as a form of ideology that promotes specific description of national identity to a set of policies and its outcome is rather mysterious but not unique. As we have seen earlier, a whole line of theorists was inclined to equate economic nationalism with autarky, protectionism and mercantilism, that is, with particular economic policies (for example, Seers 1983; Kofman 1997; Macesich 1985). These would be much better described as nationalist economies rather than as economic nationalism. But this does leave us with a question that must be addressed: what are the specifics of economic nationalism compared to any other nationalism? One would think that it would be logical to seek answers to this question among the theories of nationalism.

### **Economic nationalism in theories of nationalism**

Disappointingly, theorists of nations and nationalism are not much interested in the concept of economic nationalism. This concept appears only occasionally in these theories and without much effort to systematically develop and explain the concept. Additionally, at a closer inspection, the most popular theories of nations and nationalism have strange relationships with economy in general.

Most modernist theories take a structuralist approach, in that economy is seen as, to borrow the term, a superstructure and nationalism as its intended or unintended consequence, depending on the author. The modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation experienced by the Western World most dramatically in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be seen in these theories – most clearly exemplified through work of Ernest Gellner – as preconditions that triggered the formation of nations and their nationalisms. Gellner (1983: 1) famously defines nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy, a political principle 'which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent'. As we can see, nationalism as a phenomenon is clearly restricted to the sphere of culture and politics. More than that, nationalism here is reduced to a particular function of, to paraphrase Eugene Weber (1976), turning displaced peasants into a nation by instilling into them, through the obligatory education system, national 'high' culture. All with one purpose: enhancement of the free-market economy. Eric Hobsbawm's approach to nationalism does not contradict this view. Here nationalism is a reaction to rapid transformations of society that occurred as a consequence of industrialisation which weakened and destroyed existing social patterns (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 4-5). Benedict Anderson follows this route when he describes the nation as a particular form of imagined community made possible by 'half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity' (1991: 42-3). Tom Nairn (1997), claims that the unequal development of capitalism triggers nationalism in the periphery, and Michael Hechter (1975) sees the origins in internal colonialism. What all these theories of nations

and nationalism have in common is an emphasis on the crucial role of economy in general – and industrialism and free market in particular – in the rise of nationalism, as well as definitions of nationalism in purely political and cultural terms. When characteristics and variations of nationalism are discussed, the role of economy and economic relations in industrialised world is largely neglected. Liah Greenfeld (2001: 4) makes this point when she claims:

‘Nationalism, being essentially a matter of perception and thus culture, and corresponding chronologically to the development of capitalism and industrialisation, is therefore seen as either a reflection or a functional prerequisite of economic modernization. Put crudely, it is believed to be *caused* by capitalism and industrialisation.’

But not all authors follow this route. Anthony D. Smith recognises the importance of economy in the formation and definition of a nation. He defines the nation as ‘a group of human beings, possessing common and distinctive elements of culture, *a unified economic system*, citizenship rights for all members, a sentiment of solidarity arising out of common experiences, and occupying common territory’ (emphasis added, Smith, 1998: 188). Here, nationalism contains ‘the drive for economic autarky’ (Smith, 1983: 171) and plays a crucial role in the formation of a national economy that creates necessary material substance for the nation. However, as Crane (1998: 56) put, ‘it ignores the ways in which national identity is expressed in, and simultaneously challenged by, economic practice’.

Liah Greenfeld (2001) is one of the rare theorists of nations and nationalism who places economy in the centre of her analysis of the nature and role of nationalism. In her view, economy is not merely a factor in the formation of nationalism, but rather nationalism is a crucial factor in the development of a particular growth oriented economy. Greenfeld reorders the line of argument dominant in structuralist views by defining nationalism as the main force behind industrialised growth-oriented society. She writes: ‘Only when economic achievement, competitiveness, and prosperity are defined as positive and important national values’ can such economy flourish (ibid: 23). And that is exactly the role of nationalism: it provides main motivation and a new system of ethics for the growth of the nation. In short, following Max Weber’s argument, Greenfeld describes nationalism as the source of ‘the spirit of capitalism’ (ibid., 21). But just few pages later, without much explanation as to why, she refers to the origins of this phenomenon using the term ‘economic nationalism’: ‘early economic nationalism in England’, she writes, ‘was focused exclusively on the common good of the nation, to which the good of its individual members was, as it would be for the opponents of economic liberalism several centuries later, held to be subservient’ (ibid., 26). Greenfeld rightly points out the simplistic treatment of economy by major theories of nations and nationalism, but she herself leaves one important question unanswered: is economic nationalism a particular type of nationalism, or, is every nationalism seen as economic?

It seems that theories of nations and nationalism do not add much clarity to the nature of *economic* nationalism. Economy in general is mostly approached as a structural condition for the emergence of nations and nationalism and then largely ignored. The relationship with these terms is described as one directional. As Helleiren & Pickel, (2005: 4) write ‘[n]ationalism studies have not devoted systematic attention to the ways in which national identity shapes and affects economic processes’. It is difficult to

criticise these theorists much, since I would be the first to admit ignorance and lack of interest in anything related to the economy. As a sociologist, I follow a long line of classics in the field whose analysis opens with economic conditions of rapid industrialisation as a given, who then turn their attention to its political and cultural consequences, such as poverty, inequality, exploitation, urbanisation and of course, the formation of nations and nationalism. It seems as if the economy has somehow been separated from a study of society. Karl Polanyi would call it “disembedded”.

### **Polanyi's perspective on relationship between economy and society**

In 1944 (2001) Karl Polanyi published a book entitled *The Great Transformation*. It is one of the seminal works in political economy that attempts to explain the collapse of, as he calls it, “the hundred years’ peace”. The same forces that brought relative peace between major world powers for one hundred years then went on to produce two world wars and a devastating world crisis in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He also formed one of the most influential critiques of what he calls economic liberalist creed that is rooted on the concept of self-regulated market. In his detailed and convincing argument, Polanyi points to the main problem in the idea of the self-regulating market. He writes: ‘the idea of self-adjusting market implies a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness’ (2001: 3). Polanyi claims that the economic system that commercialised not just the production of goods, but also labour, land and money – and created interrelated markets for each – cannot regulate itself without bringing the whole of society to the brink of collapse. A society that organises itself on the principles of economic liberalism ‘chooses to base itself on a motive rarely acknowledged as valid in the history of human societies, and certainly never before raised to the level of justification of action and behaviour in everyday life, namely, gain’ (2001:31). The implementation of such a principle and the expansion of market to all spheres of social life has created what Polanyi describes as ‘unprecedented havoc’, and an ‘abyss of human degradation’ (ibid.: 41). This is not the only effect. Polanyi claims that the attempt to implement economic liberal doctrines that demand liberation of markets from the constraints of the state has the consequence of forming separate economic and political spheres. This free market economy, hence, tends to ‘dis-embed’ itself from the society.

Polanyi claims that in situations when society finds itself threatened by free-market forces, it protects itself by reacting ‘against a dislocation which attacked the fabric of society, and which would have destroyed the very organisation of production that the market has called into being’ (ibid.: 136). The society, Polanyi argues, reacts by ‘using protective legislation, restrictive associations, and other instruments of intervention as its methods’ (ibid.: 138-9). These measures act as countermeasures that re-embed economy into society. Polanyi termed this paradox “double movement”: ‘the market expanded continuously but this movement was met by a countermovement checking the expansion in definite directions’ (ibid.: 136). These implemented measures are incompatible with the free-market system and can only be seen as interventionism and protectionism. The result is the creation of a



welfare state that implements 'social policies protecting incomes, health and shelter' (Hopkin, 2017: 468).

'Market economy can only exist in market society' (Polanyi, 2001: 71) and the implementation of free market economy directly erodes existing values and norms, in order to 'institute a culture of greed and self-interest' (Rodrigues, 2004: 195). This is a moment when, for Polanyi, class issues become important. With economic liberalism promoting the idea of self-regulated markets, it also, propagates freedom of labour, and directly influences the introduction of (at the time, not so) universal suffrage. Polanyi states that this results in a class division in which the middle class is 'the bearer of the nascent market economy' and the working class became 'an influential factor in the state' (Polanyi, 2001: 139). Polanyi calls this 'localisation of influence and power', and it functions as long as the market economy continues to operate without major problems. But when this is no longer the case and problems arise, society becomes polarised around class lines. Polanyi (ibid.: 140) writes:

'Two vital functions of society – the political and the economic – were being used and abused as weapons in a struggle for sectional interests. It was out of such a perilous deadlock that in the twentieth century the fascist crisis sprang.'

Fred Block (2001: xxi) writes that Polanyi 'grasped the ways that aggressive forms of nationalism had been fostered and supported by a certain set of global economic arrangements'. Nakano (2004: 222) interprets Polanyi's view in a similar way, claiming that 'society endangered by the international financial market, which is the product of the cosmopolitan creed of economic liberalism, will cause a movement towards belligerent nationalism'. 'In truth' Polanyi (2001: 198) writes, 'the new nationalism was the corollary of the new internationalism'. International forces of the free market can therefore be easily seen as consolidating national life. 'The continued march toward liberalisation', Goff (2005: 186) writes, 'can trigger policies of economic nationalism'.

This is, admittedly, a crude attempt to summarise Polanyi's main argument. Luckily, there are numerous works that do so in far more detail (Block, 2001; Block and Somers, 2016; Dale, 2008 and 2013; Behrent, 2016; Hodgson, 2017, among others). Polanyi's work has produced a wide range of debates in many disciplines and this has, unsurprisingly, resulted in various interpretations of his ideas, often with opposing conclusions. Hence, for example, Hodgson (2017: 13) thinks that Polanyi's concept of embeddedness 'has largely reached a dead end', Dale (2008) reads "embedded economy" as Tonnies's *Gemeinschaft*, and Rodrigues (2004: 197) rightly claims how 'all real existing economies can only be embedded'. In fact, this paper is not concerned with polemics of how Polanyi should or should not be read, what the true meaning of "double movement" is or is not, and how Polanyi defines "reality of society". However, it should be noted that interest in Polanyi's work is very much current and is triggered by similarities in socio-economic conditions and situations that Polanyi described in his seminal work that can be observed today.

Firstly, Polanyi warns us that the concept of a self-regulating market is a utopia. He warns us that the dis-embedded economy is equally fictitious. Nevertheless, Polanyi also shows us that economic liberal ideology persistently advocates both. If Polanyi is correct, 'the absence of proper social integration,

above all between the political and economic spheres, [is] generating crisis' (Dale, 2008: 506). If this is the case, we could expect an increase in measures from agencies in both the political and cultural spheres that will attempt to re-embed economy into society.<sup>2</sup>

We are living in the age of neoliberalism. Harvey (2005: 2) defines neoliberalism as 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free market and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices' .

Since the so-called "Washington Consensus" of the 1990s when the WTO set neoliberal standards, governments around the world have increasingly implemented policies of low taxation, privatisation, financial deregulation, and the like (Pryke, 2012: 285). Rapidly changing conditions of global economy have brought about transformations of national economies too (Pickel, 2003). In the 1980s and 1990s, Margaret Thatcher's government in the UK and Ronald Reagan's in the USA brought about, among other changes, the demise of trade unionism and a rapid increase in economic inequalities. Combined with the 'acceleration of European economic integration', Britain was subjected to 'a double dose of "market fundamentalism"' (Hopkin, 2017: 468). From 1982 until 2005, the top 1% of income earners in Britain 'have doubled their share of the national income from 6.5% to 13%' (Harvey, 2005: 17). These deregulated financial markets in 2008 gave rise to one of the world's most devastating economic crises. The impact of these neoliberal policies on Britain, Hopkin (2017) claims, were clearly visible: 'The Gini coefficient for disposable income inequality increased from 0.25 in 1979 to 0.34 in 1991 (469), 'between 2008 and 2014 median real wages fell by around 8-10%' (470) and, hence, and concludes that 'in the course of the 1980s Britain became a much more unequal society' (469). In February 2019, Richard Pertington in *The Guardian* describes a report from the Office for National Statistics that states how 'the average income of the poorest fifth of the population after inflation contracted by 1.6% in the last financial year ending in 2018, while the average income of the richest fifth rose by 4.7%' . No wonder then, that Polanyi's warnings seem prophetic today.

For this paper, Polanyi's ideas are mostly inspirational and directional. However, keeping these points in mind, the focus will now turn to the idea that economic nationalism is one of the forces that arises in particular economic circumstances as an attempt to keep economy embedded into society.

### **Economic nationalism and embeddedness**

---

<sup>2</sup> I would not like to enter here into a debate about the rather peculiar distinction between economy and society as two distinct spheres of social world, since Polanyi himself states, economy is never truly disembedded from the rest of society. For more about these conceptual issues, see Hodgson (2017), Behrent (2016), Dale (2008), among others.

In summing up the discussion of Economic nationalism so far, we can claim that it is a type of nationalism, in that it is an ideology advocating full integration of economy within national politics and culture. Economic nationalism emerges in times of increased economic strife as a response to perceived threats to national wealth and power. It is now time to examine what type of nationalism Economic nationalism is.

Stephen Shulman (2000) and Rawi Abdelal (2001) followed similar lines of argument and proposed interesting frameworks for analysing economic nationalism. Shulman is mainly interested in examining economic nationalism as a response to rapid international economic integration, or, simply, as a response to globalisation. From the start, he (2000: 365) argues that 'nationalists confront a complex set of considerations in the sphere of international economic integration and are by no means uniformly hostile to free trade and close economic ties with other states and nations'. He challenges those views that confront economic liberalism and economic nationalism with, as he calls it, 'a major paradox' and poses an argument that 'economic integration and globalization have proceeded so swiftly not despite nationalism, but in part because of it' (Shulman, 2000: 368). Here, Shulman mostly follows Anthony D. Smith's definition of nationalism, and proposes that 'nationalists are people who demonstrate great pride in the culture, territory, history, and destiny of a nation and desire to preserve or strengthen its unity, identity, and autonomy' (ibid.). He argues that pursuit of these core national values can, in various situations, result in economic closeness as well as in economic openness towards international integrative forces.

Abdelal (2001: 19) starts his analysis with the observation that 'the economic relations among states are politicized by societies' debates about the meaning of their nations and the purposes of their states'. Nationalisms, he continues, 'are proposals for what the content of national identity should be', that is, 'attempts to ascribe political, economic, and cultural meanings to societies' understanding of themselves' (ibid.: 25). Abdelal always sees nationalisms as contested and relational. Within a single nation, there are inevitably different interpretations of what nation is and what its national interests are. These definitions of memberships, culture, main threats, purposes and goals are negotiated and renegotiated in relation to specific significant others – which may be other nationalisms, states, nations, or, one could include, against the international system itself. From this, Abdelal defines nationalism's four primary effects on governments' foreign economic policies:

'it endows economic policy with fundamental social purpose, related to protecting and cultivating the nation; it engenders economic sacrifice necessary to achieve societal goals; it lengthens the time horizons of a national community; and, most significantly, it specifies direction for policy, away from the group that a nation conceives of as "other" and, often, toward another cultural space'. (2005: 21)

Both Shulman and Abdelal treat economic nationalism as a type of nationalism, that is, as a type of ideology that has national interests – however defined – at the centre of its concerns. But they both understand that economic nationalism is more than the appropriation of carefully defined aspects of the culture – its values, symbols and memories imbued by strong emotions – as national. It is more than making national culture congruent with the political boundaries of a nation. Shulman and Abdelal also

understand the crucial role that the economic sphere plays in defining a nation – in both its interests and culture. They understand that at the same time as these values, norms and sensations are defined as national, they also direct and constrain tendencies in economy. That is what is meant by economy embedded in the rest of society.

While Polanyi is clear that there is no such thing as a disembedded economy, this is not due to a lack of trying, as neoliberal tendencies these days clearly show. Economy is embedded within national community in the same way as its culture or politics are. It is defined and, most importantly, felt as national, as “our own”. The economic sphere contributes to the definition of national symbols and values just as the cultural sphere does. For example, Helleiren (2002: 318) describes how, already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Adam Muller argued that money not only served an economic purpose, but also ‘linked citizens to each other’. At the same time, a central national bank became a symbolic representation for national economy and stability. The resulting banknote monopoly, Helleiren continues (2002: 321) was ‘used in symbolic ways for strengthening national identities’. Discussions surrounding the selection of images on banknotes – then, as much as today – are of national importance. They are, after all, the most mass-produced objects that nearly all members of a nation handle on a daily basis (ibid.: 322). Klaus Müller (2005) shows this clearly with the example of Germany in the post-WWII period, when the national currency – *Deutschmark* – and work ethic became main symbols of national unity and a source of national pride (ibid.: 151). Jacqui True (2005) shows with the example of New Zealand’s “nation branding” how economic globalisation can strengthen economic nationalism by turning brands into national symbols. Takeshi Nakano (2004: 220) argues that the economic development of a nation acts as a national symbol when ‘performance of economic system can influence the social imaginary of national identity’.

The importance of symbols, as we know from Durkheim, is not as much in what they represent, as in what emotions and sentiments they arouse. They are reminders and containers of emotional energy that transform citizens into members of a national community. And it is economic nationalism that embeds these ‘sentiments of identity, autonomy, unity, pride, prestige and distinctiveness, if not superiority and uniqueness’ (Müller, 2005: 141) from the economic sphere into national culture and politics. Liah Greenfeld (2001: 3) also stresses the emotional impact that nationalism can have on the members of a nation when she claims how ‘[t]he inclusive nature of nationalism and its core principles of fundamental equality and popular sovereignty (however interpreted and implemented) give people with a national identity a sense of dignity’ and that sense of dignity, she continues, ‘has much to do with economic growth’. Patricia M. Goff (2005) adds to this a sentiment of national security, and claims that increased liberalisation threatens exactly that. She writes:

The threat is not increased competition from outside national borders. Rather, it is that membership in a powerful, rules-based multilateral entity will result in national practices and policies being aligned with those of other governments (2005: 186-7).

She explains how, while economic sovereignty of many nations – especially those within the EU – might be voluntarily breached these days, territorial sovereignty is mostly intact, with cultural and food sovereignty often perceived as being threatened by forces of global integration (ibid.: 187). She then

continues that, 'threats to national security and autonomy take on different forms, economic nationalism fashions appropriate responses' (ibid.).

In everyday life, most national symbols go unnoticed. Most people handle money on a daily basis, but few pay attention to the images depicted on banknotes, and if they do notice them, most neither recognise these symbols nor know much about them. These, like all other national symbols are part and parcel of what Billig (1995) calls banal nationalism. These symbols are deeply ingrained and routinised, or as Billig calls "enhabited" – as long as they are not perceived as being under threat. But as Stiglitz (2001: x) argues, increased 'liberalisation could impose enormous risks on a country, and ... those risks were borne disproportionately by the poor'. Fred Block expands on this view:

When state policies move in the direction of disembedding through placing greater reliance on market self-regulation, ordinary people are forced to bear higher costs, workers and their families are made more vulnerable to unemployment, farmers are exposed to greater competition from imports, and both groups are required to get by with reduced entitlements to assistance (2001: xxvii).

Following Polanyi's arguments, these would be the conditions suitable for the rise of economic nationalism: an ideological tool that keeps economy embedded, with politics and culture defined as national. This embedded economy allows social relations of reciprocity and redistribution to resurface and makes society visible again (Behrent, 2016: 442). An embedded economy would be one in which social relations are embedded in the market system, instead of the economy being embedded in social relations (Polanyi, 2001: 57).

At this point we can query who creates, defines or advocates economic nationalism. Frederic Solt (2011: 822) blames the state: 'states generate nationalist sentiments to respond to the threat of unrest posed by high levels of economic inequality'. He then quotes Carlton Hayes who wrote how 'on the multitudes nationalism could be made to act as a sort of laughing gas' (ibid.). Solt is not the only one who sees the state as the main actor in the promotion of economic nationalism but focusing on the state alone obscures the vision of the dynamic political life of the nation. As Abdelal (2001) rightly stated, nationalisms are always contested. They are contested not only by other forms of nationalism, but also by economic nationalisms defined and promoted by various, often antagonistic, governmental and non-governmental agencies and individuals. While some of those nationalisms may be appropriated by state agencies and used to justify implemented policies, many are quickly forgotten.

Summing up the main characteristics of economic nationalism, Helleiren (2002: 323) focuses on the importance of the context in which economic nationalism arises. He argues that differences in social and economic conditions result in a multitude of forms assumed by economic nationalisms. His analysis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cases led him to conclude that each economic nationalist that he analysed 'placed emphasis on different nationalist value such as the promotion of national prosperity, the quest for national power, or the promotion of national identities and culture' (ibid.). Or, to quote Abdelal (2005: 24) 'national purposes vary ... and so must economic nationalisms'. Hence, if we are interested in more closely examining the content of an economic nationalism, we should turn our attention to one in particular, and examine empirically the context in which it emerges and its rhetoric.

## Methodology

We do not have to look hard to find suitable examples of economic nationalism. The examination of the rhetoric of economic nationalism in this research is conducted on writings of Boris Johnson in the period from February to June 2016. Why Boris Johnson and why this period of time? By selecting one particular person in order to examine the structure of economic nationalism's rhetoric obviously presupposes that these writings *are* an expression of economic nationalism in the first place. It also presupposes that whatever is found in these selected narratives would be claimed as rhetoric of economic nationalism. That indeed is not just an issue with the research strategy of this paper, but also of any similar qualitative analysis. In my defence, nationalism in Boris Johnson's thought has been pointed out many times in the past few years (for example, by Philip Stephens in *The Financial Times* on 4 October 2018).

There are other reasons for selecting Boris Johnson. Johnson is a high-ranking member of the current ruling Conservative party, a party that is seen as leading advocate of neoliberal ideology. Their iconic leader, Margaret Thatcher, actively implemented neo-liberal views on political and economic scene. No better expression of that view can be found but in her famous proclamation of how 'there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families' (*Sunday Times*, 31 October 1987). Hence, it is interesting to find a member of this same party openly advocating ideas and policies that could be labelled as expressions of economic nationalism.

The selection of Boris Johnson's writings is also guided by the fact that more extreme politicians who are labelled as nationalists in this same period might blur the boundaries between economic nationalism and views that are seen as chauvinistic or racist.

The sources in this research are selected from one particular time-frame: Johnson's writings and proclamations from February to June 2016. That is, from the moment that David Cameron proclaimed that a referendum on the UK membership in the EU would take place until the referendum itself. Our expectation was that the campaign would trigger an intensive debate about the future of Britain, with Boris Johnson positioning himself as a leading Leave figure.

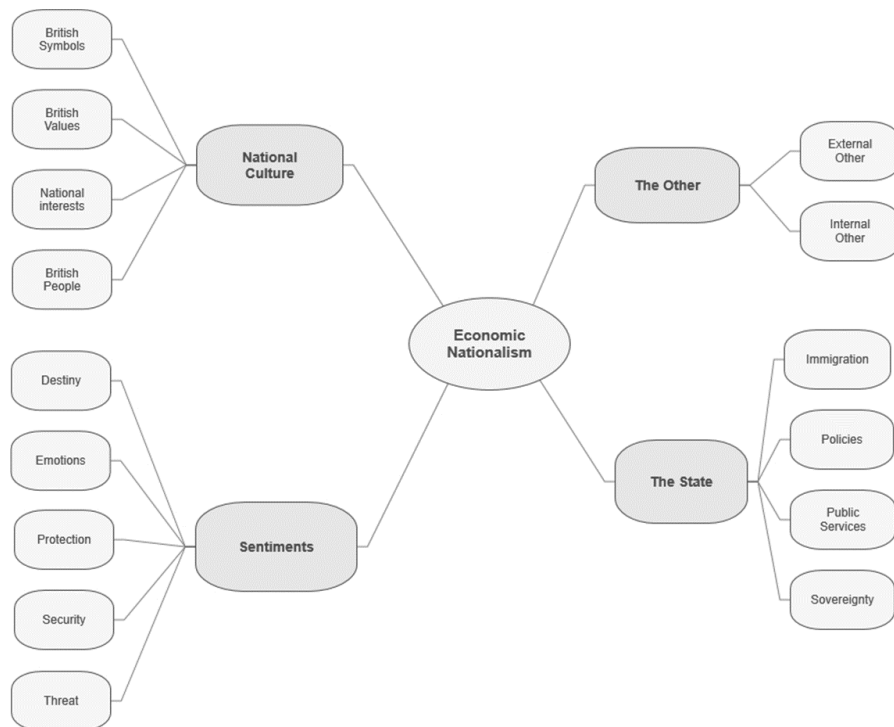
The analysis also focused on only those newspaper articles authored by Boris Johnson, and generally avoided newspaper articles written by others or interviews. As the focus was on examining the rhetoric of an ideology, there is an assumption that such ideology needs adequate space to be developed and presented. Hence, rather than searching for quick commentaries and attempts of Johnson's wit, this analysis focuses on analysis of his column printed in *The Telegraph* and on official statements, letters and proclamations signed by Boris Johnson. As a result, from February to June 2016, we collected 16 columns and nine other writings of Boris Johnson as the data set.

These sources are all imported in and analysed by NVivo where both quantitative and qualitative content analysis is applied. For the qualitative part, we used thematic analysis with the objective of describing data in rich detail through open coding. This generated a wider list of analytical themes that are presented below.

## Analysis

The picture below (figure 1) shows themes identified in publications by Boris Johnson in which he elaborated on his rationale behind the Leave campaign. The analysis revealed four main organising themes in this ideology: National Culture; The Other; The State; and Sentiments. The theme of “National Culture” refers to discussions on British symbols, values, national interests or references to British people. The term “The Other” is used in reference to both external and internal groups that are portrayed as opposite to either Britain as a state, British nation or British people. The main themes identified in reference to “The State” were immigration, prescribed policies, public services and issue of sovereignty. Finally, the most appropriate term to describe issues of destiny, emotions, protection, security and threat would be “Sentiments”. In this chapter we will examine each of these organising themes in detail.

Figure 1: Thematic network



From Tables 1 and 2 below, we can see that as the referendum campaign progressed, so did the publications that addressed these issues. Johnson became more prolific with every month, reaching a peak in June 2016. Already in this rather superficial level of analysis, we can see that the topic of “The

Other” tends to get the most attention throughout the timeframe of analysis, and in both types of his written sources.

Table 1: Time frame of analysis

Type of source	February (2)	March (2)	April (3)	May (7)	June (11)	Total (25)
<b>National culture</b>	1	1	2	5	5	14
<b>Sentiments</b>	2	2	2	5	8	19
<b>The Other</b>	2	2	3	6	9	22
<b>The State</b>	2	2	2	6	9	21
<b>Total (unique)</b>	2	2	3	7	10	24

Table 2: Type of source

Type of source	Column (16)	Publication (9)	Total (25)
<b>National culture</b>	10	4	14
<b>Sentiments</b>	14	5	19
<b>The Other</b>	16	6	22
<b>The State</b>	14	7	21
<b>Total (unique)</b>	16	8	24

From Table 3 we can get some sense of interrelations between these themes. The table counts the number of words coded with each code as well as the number of words coded for more than one code. We can see here that “The State” received the most attention in these sources and “National Culture” the least. There is not much interrelation between these four themes, except some between The State and Sentiments.

Table 3: Matrix Coding – Number of words

	National culture	Sentiments	The Other	The State
<b>National culture</b>	1285	6	0	31
<b>Sentiments</b>	6	2627	57	105
<b>The Other</b>	0	57	6931	23
<b>The State</b>	31	105	23	7075

If we now examine the frequency of words most commonly used in these sources (see Table 4), the term “people”, perhaps unsurprisingly, leads the table. The second most frequent term is “control”. In the 24 sources that were analysed, “control” is used 211 times, which would make it appear almost nine times per publication. Even this initial quantitative analysis starts to point towards some of the



main characteristics of the ideology constructed by Johnson around the Leave campaign. Coupled with two other terms on the list (“take” and “back”), the slogan “taking back control” seems to be at the core of this ideology. As expected, the terms “European” and “Britain” feature high on this list and indicate the most significant “Other” in this campaign. It is also important to point out that “Immigration” came out as the ninth most commonly-used term, appearing 123 times in these sources, which was just over five times per publication.

Table 4: Ten most frequent words

	Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
1	<b>people</b>	281	1.43	people, people', peoples
2	<b>control</b>	211	1.07	control, controlled, controls
3	<b>countries</b>	184	0.93	countries, country
4	<b>voting</b>	160	0.81	vote, voted, votes, voting
5	<b>European</b>	137	0.70	European, Europeans
6	<b>Britain</b>	136	0.69	Britain
7	<b>take</b>	136	0.69	take, taking
8	<b>single</b>	130	0.66	single, 'single
9	<b>immigration</b>	123	0.62	immigrant, immigrants, immigration
10	<b>back</b>	121	0.61	back

This brief quantitative analysis of the data set could only give us the ‘bare bones’ of the ideology developed in these sources. It is now time to turn attention to each of the themes separately and examine how they are represented and what messages were sent out to the voters.

### National Culture

In this ideology, national culture receives the least attention of the four themes. In fact, apart from mentioning British people quite often, “national interests” are mentioned just ten times, “British values” four and British symbols only twice. The only British symbol that is mentioned is currency – the pound – and in the context that Britain managed to save it from the Euro (2016/05/22 and 2016/05/31).

Johnson describes Britain as ‘a great country’ (2016/05/31), but he is also very keen to emphasise its cosmopolitan character. He writes how Britain stands ‘in the tradition of the liberal cosmopolitan European enlightenment – not just of Locke and Wilkes, but of Rousseau and Voltaire’ (2016/05/09). He can be seen to be even more precise when he calls it a “dynamic liberal cosmopolitan open global free-trading prosperous Britain” (2016/05/09). This cosmopolitanism is stressed again when Johnson ‘cannot stress too much that Britain is part of Europe - and always will be’ (2016/06/27). Yet, this openness and cosmopolitan nature of Britain is obviously limited by boundaries of its national freedom:

'we are quite fond of liberty, too' (2016/03/14), and in the referendum: 'we are fighting for freedom' (2016/05/09).

From the outset, Johnson clearly states how British national interests can only be achieved from outside the European Union, as membership in the EU, in essence, means surrender of national interests to the interests of all:

It is one of the features of [the EU] membership that we must not only accept that about 60 per cent of our legislation - primary and secondary - comes from the EU. We must also accept a fatal loss of flexibility, an inability to take decisions that might be in our national interest - and an inability even to make good our own mistakes ... It is time to ignore the doomsters, get out, go global (2016/04/04)

In these writings, national interests are presented as directly opposed to interests of the EU. The EU is the main obstacle: Britain wants 'better jobs, better housing, better health, education and a better quality of life for our constituents for whom (let's be frank) the EU is not always the number one issue' (2016/02/22); Britain wants 'a fairer immigration system' which 'allows us to pick people on the basis of skills' (2016/05/26); it wants 'wages [that] will be higher for working people outside the EU [...] because pay will no longer be undercut by uncontrolled migration' (2016/05/31); it needs 'unshackled British business sector' (2016/05/15) and for all of that to achieve, Britain needs 'devolution of powers back to nations and people, and a return to intergovernmentalism' (2016/05/09). Such Britain, in this view, can

trade as much as ever before, if not more. We will be able to love our fellow Europeans, marry them, live with them, share the joy of discovering our different cultures and languages – but we will not be subject to the jurisdiction of a single court and legal system that is proving increasingly erratic and that is imitated by no other trading group (2016/05/09)

This is where Johnson brings in historical references that stipulate a very specific place for Britain within Europe. He writes: 'We have spent 500 years trying to stop continental European powers uniting against us. There is no reason (if everyone is sensible) why that should happen now, and every reason for friendliness' (2016/05/15). Paraphrasing Winston Churchill, Johnson succinctly summarises British national interests: "interested, associated, but not absorbed" (ibid.) Outside of the EU, Britain's future is painted in bright colours:

As time goes on, I find more and more people can see that Britain would have a great future outside the EU - trading freely with the EU and the rest of the world, while engaging fully at an intergovernmental level with all the political and diplomatic questions in Europe. On every major question it is possible to take back control - and thrive (2016/06/13).

The supranational institutions of the EU, together with 'American presidents, business leaders, fat cats of every description', are here described as underestimating British people (2016/04/24) when they assume that British people will not be able to recognise their interests. The British are 'traditionally

welcoming' (2016/05/22) and 'generous but feel their generosity has been abused. They are right' (2016/05/26). Hence, Johnson refers to himself as one of those 'who are speaking up for the people' and places himself between the people and those amorphous and anonymous institutions that are 'ever more remote from ordinary voters' (2016/05/09). After all:

Most businesses (in fact most Britons) have absolutely no idea who works in the Commission, or how to get in touch with them, and they wouldn't know their Euro-MP from the man on the moon (2016/05/15).

Hence it is for the benefit of the people, this ideology states, that Britain leaves the EU (2016/05/31).

The definition of national culture in this ideology is very much relational. British national culture – its symbols, values, interests and members – is defined exclusively in relation to its differences with the EU as an Institution, or to Europe itself. All similarities are either ignored or underplayed. If any doubt as to the distinctiveness of British national culture remains, then there is the historical reference strongly emphasising the confrontational nature of past relationships with Europe. For us, it is interesting to note that the economic aspects of national interest play a significant role either when Britain is envisaged freely trading outside of Europe, or when Europe itself is reduced to a trading group. It then seems understandable that the only national symbol mentioned in this ideology is the pound sterling.

## **The Other**

This relational characteristic of the ideology is clearly confirmed upon examination of both the internal and external groups that are portrayed as opposing the British people.

### ***Internal Other***

Looking at the basic themes of "Internal Other", a lack of reference to the Labour Party is immediately apparent. Even the two references to the Labour Party was triggered by the mayoral elections in London, rather than by issues related to the referendum. Obviously, this ideology was aimed beyond the traditional party divisions in Britain. It targeted nearly all British people – regardless of party preference. However there were some notable exceptions. It was, as expected, contrasted with the Remain Camp, and, unexpectedly, against big businesses.

Table 5: The Other

The Other	22	172
Perception of external Others	18	143
Germany	3	4
Perception of EU	18	131
Change	6	13
Delegitimation	11	32
Description	14	33
Euro	8	11
Single Market	7	12
Unification	12	28
Values	2	2
perception of Europe	3	4
USA	1	4
Perception of Internal Other	13	29
Business	7	13
Labour	2	8
Remain Camp	6	7

The Leave campaign does not devote much space on the opposing Remain camp and, when it does, it is deemed irrelevant and quickly disqualified. Johnson writes: ‘The Remainers have nothing to say. Their mouths just open and shut, wordlessly’ (2016/06/13) and then asks ‘What is the Remain camp offering? Nothing. No change, no improvement, no reform; nothing but the steady and miserable erosion of parliamentary democracy in this country’ (2016/06/20). This static no-change stance allows Johnson to dismiss the Remain arguments with a dose of cynicism. As this ideology already incorporates the definition of British people as liberal cosmopolitans that will always be European, it only needs to deal with two of the Remainers’ arguments:

The first is the so-called economic argument. The Remainers accept that there is a loss of political independence, but they claim that this trade-off is economically beneficial. [...] The second argument we might broadly call the peace-in-Europe argument – that the EU is associated with 70 years of stability, and we need to stay in to prevent German tanks crossing the French border (2016/05/09).

Then Johnson asks: who are those Remainers, and who funds them? He then makes a distinction between “the people” and “the elites” and those ‘elites who urge a vote for Remain [and] will never have to face the problems the EU forces on the rest of us’ (2016/05/15). After setting himself easily into the “us the people” side, Johnson explains:

You only have to look at who funds the IN campaign to realise this: the undeserving rich, the investment banks that crashed the world economy in 2008 and who bankrupted the people of Greece, and the multinational corporations who spend millions on lobbying the corrupt Brussels system (2016/06/03).

Johnson calls them shortly “the fat cats” And with that, the main internal “enemy” of the people is set.

Figure 2: "Fat cats"



These 'FTSE100 fat cats' are here turned into main villains: 'FTSE100 fat cats will sign up for remaining in the EU: they are getting personally richer and richer - by mainlining immigrant labour for their firms and manipulating EU regulation that only the big players can understand - while those at the bottom have seen a real terms fall in their wages' (2016/05/15). If we are not careful, we might slip into the mistake of concluding that this is an ideology standing on class divisions. These fat cats are those who are 'taking home 150 times as much as his or her average employee - and in some cases far more'. Johnson describes them as those people who 'have so much more money than other people in the same company that they are flying in private jets and building subterranean swimming pools, while many of their employees cannot afford to buy any kind of home at all. There is one gentleman out there who is on 810 times the average of his employees' (2016/05/15). The bankers are not far from his reach since it is 'the bankers who are funding the IN campaign' (2016/05/31); these 'very large banks and multinational companies profit from the EU system.'

Johnson ties up these 'fat cats' tightly with the EU: 'the European Commission conspires with big business to regulate out the competition; the lobbyists, the fat cats, the people who were responsible for the VW diesel emissions scandal; and all the billions of pounds of fraud and waste of the EU budget' (2016/06/06). Apparently 'the UK is set to pay out between £7 billion and £43 billion by 2021 in tax refunds to big businesses which have successfully used the European Court and EU law to escape taxes lawfully imposed on them in Britain' (2016/06/14).

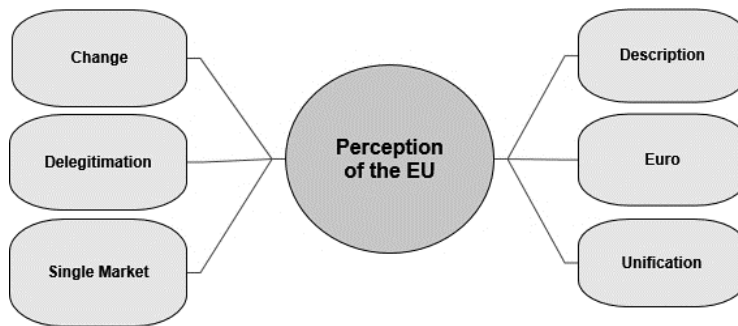
This might at first glance look as if Johnson propagates an anti-business ideology. Instead, he steadily builds opposition between "big business" and the rest of us. 'Although some very large banks and multinational companies profit from the EU system,' the argument goes, 'the situation is very different for small and medium sized businesses, the backbone of the economy' (2016/06/05). He explains: 'the current system works for huge multinationals who spend millions lobbying in Brussels to rig the rules against entrepreneurs and to keep wages down' (2016/05/31). Not only are these businesses corrupt, but they are also multinational, obviously set to exploit that what is quintessentially 'British' – the working class and small entrepreneurs. The undertone of this message is not only based around class and wealth distinction, but also nationality.

### **External Other**

When the “External Other” is defined, the main target, of course, is the EU. While there are only four references each to the USA, Germany, and Europe in general, the analysis found 124 references to the EU. In addition, all references to the USA are found in a single publication and as a response to Barak Obama’s public statement in which he, rather clumsily, endorsed that Britain remain in the EU. References to Europe in general were used mostly just to enhance cosmopolitan nature of the Leave campaign. Here Johnson refers to it as ‘Europe - the home of the greatest and richest culture in the world, to which Britain is and will be an eternal contributor’ (2016/02/22). Being cosmopolitan and European, of course, does not mean an Englishman can’t make few jokes about Germans and French. So, what ‘did they do when the Berlin wall came down, and the French panicked about the inevitability of German unification? “More Europe!” And what are they saying now, when the ensuing single currency has become a disaster? “More Europe!”’ (2016/05/09). Here Germany is painted as the one who in the EU ‘pays the piper [and hence] calls the tune’ (2016/05/29). It seems that the EU is helpless since the ‘European Central Bank is under attack from the Bundesbank and German Government’ (2016/06/05). With these carefully-phrased references, this “cosmopolitan” ideology targets those old animosities between various European countries and plays on well-rooted stereotypes of Germany as the aggressor, and of France as always needing British help to defend itself.

The depiction of the EU as “The Other” is much more thorough and systematic. Within this organisational chart, several basic themes can be identified:

Figure 3: Perception of the EU as External Other



It seems that the EU represents for Johnson an eternal source of inspiration for name-calling. Let me list some of those: ‘Nanny in Brussels’ (2016/02/22), ‘Nurse in Brussels’ (2016/02/22), ‘the machine’ (2016/02/22), ‘some errant minicab with a driver who cannot speak English and who is taking us remorselessly and expensively in the wrong direction’ (2016/02/29), ‘Euroelites’ (2016/02/29), ‘a political construct that has changed out of all recognition since we joined in 1972’ (2016/02/29), ‘the hierarchs of Brussels’ (2016/03/07), ‘the sausage machine of EU law-making’ (2016/04/24), ‘an engine for job destruction’ (2016/06/05) and, my personal favourite, ‘the champagne-guzzling orgy of backslapping in Brussels’ (2016/06/20), to mention just a few.

Here the EU is described as 'unabashed, unrepentant, undemocratic and, above all, unreformed' (2016/06/06), it 'has such low innovation, low productivity, and low growth' (2016/05/15); it is an 'ever-closer union' (2016/02/22) and yet

an anachronism. It is increasingly antidemocratic; its supranational system is being imitated nowhere else on earth; and its economic policies are causing misery in many parts of the EU. It is sclerotic, opaque, elitist: different nations bound together by a centralised bureaucracy that ordinary people can neither understand nor vote out' (2016/06/13).

The EU is where we 'have had anti-German riots in Greece, where Angela Merkel was burned in effigy. In France, relations with Germany are said to be at a post-war nadir and support for the National Front is at an all-time high' (2016/02/29). 'The riots have now spread to France' (2016/05/29), Johnson warns his readers, in 'Austria the far-right have just won an election for the first time since the 1930s. The French National Front are on the march in France, and Marine le Pen may do well in the Presidential elections' (2016/05/09). And then Johnson concludes: 'You could not say that EU integration is promoting either mutual understanding or moderation, and the economic consequence range from nugatory to disastrous' (2016/05/09). This situation, Johnson claims, is exacerbated by the Euro: 'The single currency is also the cause of tensions between European countries, and rhetoric of a virulence and nastiness we have not seen since the Second World War (2016/02/29). The Euro here was called 'a nightmare' (2016/02/29) and 'a disaster' (2016/05/09), and one that Britain miraculously avoided by just staying out of it.

The EU has changed, and it 'had plainly changed out of all recognition from the Common Market that [Britain] had voted for in 1975' (2016/05/22). What this view depicts is an EU that has rapidly expanded its sphere of influence 'so that there is virtually no aspect of public policy that is untouched' (2016/03/07). Another of Johnson's puns indicates one of the main issues that this ideology has with the EU:

the truth is it is not we who have changed. It is the EU that has changed out of all recognition; and to keep insisting that the EU is about economics is like saying the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate (2016/05/09).

There is an obvious dissatisfaction with the way that the EU has changed. This is why Johnson calls for reform of the EU, for the EU to change back to what it was. And if the EU does not change 'it will continue to decline with damaging consequences for all its members' (2016/06/05).

This resentment of the direction taken by the EU unsurprisingly is transposed to the Single Market. Johnson sees 'the Single Market [as] a microcosm of low growth. It is blighted by chronically high unemployment' (2016/05/15), it is 'too often an excuse for a morass of politically driven legislation that costs UK business about £600 million a week' (2016/05/29). 'The only continent with lower growth', he continues, 'is currently Antarctica' (2016/05/29). Britain's economic interests then are firmly placed outside of the EU: 'When it comes to the single market, you don't have to be in it to win it' (2016/06/13). He elaborates: 'plenty of non-EU countries had done better than Britain at exporting to the vaunted "single market"; [...] global free trade was legally impossible for Britain while in the EU;

and in the end it was hard to resist the conclusion that the EU was an anachronism - outdated in a digital age in which people could shop across frontiers at the click of a mouse' (2016/05/22).

However, in the context of this debate, it is not free trade and free market that bother Johnson: 'We are now way beyond that stage' (2016/02/22). The main problem is 'that the "single market" is in reality a political project that is turning inexorably into a single government of Europe (2016/06/13). And that is also the main threat for Britain: political unification of Europe.

Through his *Telegraph* column, Johnson subtly constructs a picture in which, behind the closed doors and backs of Britain, "they" are planning political unification of Europe. The rhetoric leaves just enough space for suspicion that does not require much of evidence. Apparently, everything starts with the Euro: 'there are explicit plans to try to save the euro by creating an ever-tighter political and fiscal union, with legislative consequences that would embroil Britain, even though we are out of the eurozone' (2016/02/29). But that is obviously not the end of the ambition since, '[e]very so often the hierarchs of Brussels publish a manifesto or programme, sketching out the route map to further integration' (2016/03/07). He openly states that the main aim of the EU is the 'United States of Europe, a single federal polity' (2016/03/14). This is repeated again and again, just in different forms. Hence, for example, Johnson writes how "they" are 'conducting a giant experiment of trying to fuse so many countries into one' (2016/04/04); "they" are getting 'on with the business of building a federal superstate' (2016/04/24). He knows that 'the EU plans "more Europe", a fiscal and political union, in which Britain would inevitably be involved' (2016/04/24). 'They want to go on with the work of building a unitary state' (2016/04/24), he claims and then warns:

the Brussels authorities had set an ambitious agenda to go further and faster with a United States of Europe. Reading the fine print, the British discovered that there was nothing they could do to veto such moves - towards a fiscal and political union, as detailed in the "Five Presidents' Report". Nor could they stop further centralisation from applying to Britain (2016/05/22).

The rhetoric here is one of inevitability and powerlessness. The picture of the near future for Britain is one in which – through an economic union of the single market and euro – Britain is trapped into a political union. But it is interesting that such a political unity is not necessarily seen as a threat to British identity, but as a union that 'will be both horrifically anti-democratic and expensive' (2016/05/29). The last detail of this picture – that adds a big dose of helplessness – is the revelation that Britain can only blame itself for this situation: 'Our veto on further centralisation was one of our strongest cards. It has been given away' (2016/06/05). And that is why 'claims of UK "influence" in Brussels' are for Johnson 'laughable, given that only 3.6 per cent of EU commission officials actually came from the UK' (2016/05/22). There is therefore no other way but to conclude that 'in its centralising tendencies the European project is going against the tide of events and history' (2016/06/06).

Another tactic of dealing with the EU is disqualification. This is achieved, for example, by ridiculing the institution and its procedures.



Johnson 'informed readers about euro-condoms and the great war against the British prawn cocktail flavour crisp' (2016/02/22). And he elaborates: 'EU rules sound simply ludicrous, like the rule that you can't recycle a teabag, or that children under eight cannot blow up balloons, or the limits on the power of vacuum cleaners. Sometimes they can be truly infuriating - like the time I discovered, in 2013, that there was nothing we could do to bring in better-designed cab windows for trucks, to stop cyclists being crushed. It had to be done at a European level, and the French were opposed' (2016/02/22). There is apparently 'the directive that will seriously damage the UK art market; there is the famous directive on the power of vacuum cleaners and toasters; and dozens of others, none of which we can veto' (2016/06/06).

The incompetence of the officials and the EU institutions is another favoured method of disqualification. The EU 'system of regulation is so remote and opaque that they are able to use it to their advantage, to maintain their oligarchic position and, by keeping out competition, to push their pay packets even higher' (2016/05/15). Cynically, Johnson adds: 'The EU has done trade deals with the Palestinian authority and San Marino. Bravo. But it has failed to conclude agreements with India, China or even America' (2016/05/09). And when competency, procedures and rationale are disqualified, there is only one conclusion: a 'vote to stay is a vote to keep sending more and more money to a dysfunctional bureaucracy that has no proper democratic oversight' (2016/06/05).

The EU is that textbook significant "Other" against which the ideology is formed and shaped. The EU is depicted as intentionally created in opposition to Britain. It is the place where Britain is frequently 'outvoted in the council of ministers, and [...] outnumbered in the Commission' (2016/03/14). It is a place where '27 non-EU countries [...] enjoyed faster growth in exporting goods to the EU than Britain' (2016/05/15). While, obviously, the gains are minimal, this view depicts Britain paying for much more than its share: 'We already know the official bill for our membership is due to rise to £20.65 billion per year by 2020-2021' (2016/06/05).

As with most ideologies, a well-defined enemy, or at least an opponent, is a job half done. The picture of the Other is an ideal reference point for defining one's own group and its programme. Unlike the well-documented cases of the rise of nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, here the Other is neither an empire nor another nation. In this case, the main external Other is a supranational organisation. What is the role of the nation-state in that ideology and how was its role envisioned outside of that supranational institution?

## **The State**

Under this organisational theme, we included all topics relating to the organisation, functioning and main problems related to the British State. Here we identified four main themes: Sovereignty; Public Services; Policies; and Immigration. As these are in fact interrelated topics, which we will shortly demonstrate, we will mainly focus on two of the themes: Sovereignty and Immigration.

Table 6: The State

☐ The State	21	167
☐ Immigration	16	45
☐ Beyond control	15	33
☐ Proposed Policies	8	28
☐ Brexit	7	19
☐ Risk	4	9
☐ Public Services	4	6
☐ NHS	8	12
☐ Sovereignty	19	88
☐ Control	18	58
☐ Loss of economic sovereignty	2	5
☐ Loss of sovereignty	7	20
☐ Popular Sovereignty	5	5

### ***Sovereignty***

Terminological peculiarities of modern monarchies aside, this ideology places sovereignty firmly in hands of the people: ‘the choice belongs to those who are really sovereign - the people of the UK’ (2016/02/22). Moreover, it clearly presents national sovereignty as a zero-sum game with the EU. ‘The more the EU does, the less room there is for national decision-making’ (2016/02/22). This is one of the critical pillars of this ideology. As Johnson explains himself:

‘the key issue was sovereignty, I remember people giving me pitying looks. No one cares about sovereignty, they said. Well, losing sovereignty is just a fancy way of talking about losing control - and I think people care passionately about it’ (2016/04/04).

Loss of sovereignty and loss of control became key themes in this ideology. In Johnson’s publications, there are 22 references to ‘loss of control’ and 20 references to ‘loss of sovereignty’. These losses are meticulously listed and repeated many times. First of all the British people lost their ‘sovereign right to sack - at elections - the people who make the big political decisions’ (2016/06/06). Britain has lost a seat in many international bodies, from the IMF, the UN and the WTO to even the North East Atlantic Fisheries Management Board. And while ‘Iceland has a seat; Norway has a seat; the Faroe Islands have a seat. The UK is represented by the Commission’ (2016/06/20). Britain is losing, Johnson points out, sovereignty over its own laws where ‘the EU is now generating 60 per cent of the laws passing through parliament’ (2016/05/09). The British State also lost the ‘most basic power of a state – to decide who has the right to live and work in your country’ (2016/05/09). It is now the ‘rogue European Court [who] controls not just immigration policy but how we implement asylum policy under the Charter of Fundamental Rights’ (2016/05/26). Britain, it seems, has lost complete control of its economy as well since ‘the sole and entire responsibility for UK trade policy is in the hands of the EU commission’ (2016/05/09). And then with a perfect example of triviality, Johnson crashes all illusion of Britain still retaining some dose of sovereignty: ‘the Chancellor of the Exchequer has to go around personally

asking other finance ministers to allow him to cut VAT on tampons, and as far as I can see we still have not secured consent' (2016/05/09). In short, 'the EU infiltrates just about every area of public policy' (2016/02/22).

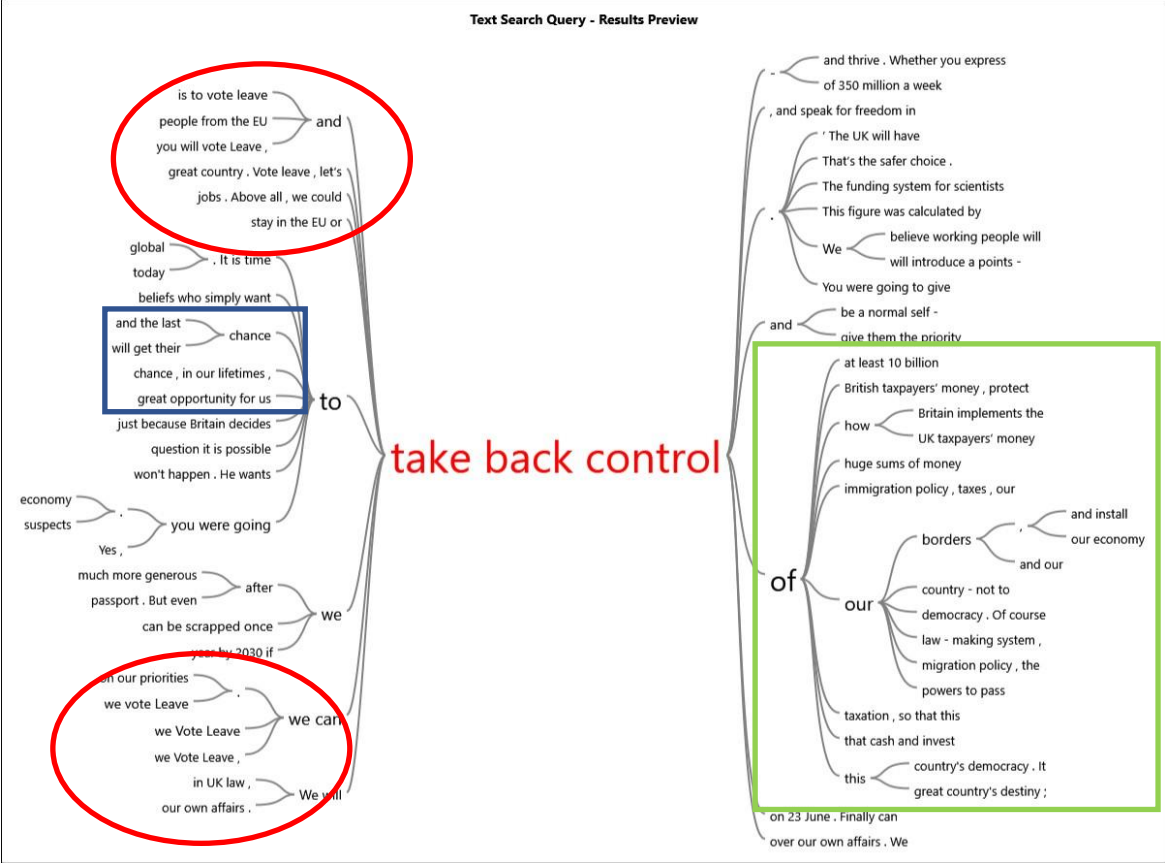
Here, Johnson offers an angle that is designed to trigger outrage among the British population over losing control of their own country. One of the most blatant examples is published in his column on 7 March 2016:

We have seen recently how the Home Secretary has lost the power to deport murderers, or to conduct surveillance of would-be terrorists, because that might put the UK in breach of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Johnson addresses the British voter directly: 'you found yourself momentarily oppressed by the sheer weight of the Remain propaganda - all that relentless misery about this country and its inability to stand on its own two feet' (2016/06/06). He attacks the Remainers' claim that the temporary loss of sovereignty also equates to greater economic prosperity. Johnson calls this 'simply false' (2016/05/09). He openly attacks one of the concepts on which the EU is established – that of "pooling sovereignty" – when he calls it 'a fraud and a cheat' (2016/03/14). He claims how Britain is 'not really sharing control with other EU governments: the problem is rather that all governments have lost control to the unelected federal machine'. And that machine is anonymous and unreachable: '[w]e don't know who they are, or what language they speak, and we certainly don't know what we can do to remove them at an election' (2016/03/14). It is then absolutely clear that the only way out of this helpless situation is to "take back control".

The expression "take back control" is the Leave campaign's main slogan, and the main proposed line of action of this ideology. It appears in 13 out of 24 publications examined here, and in total, it is used 33 times.

Figure 4: Word tree of "take back control"



The word tree above shows neatly the idea behind the concept of “taking back control”. First, it is apparent that voting Leave is equated with “taking back control”. Second, it is presented as a once-in-a-lifetime option. And finally, “taking back control” means regaining full sovereignty over Britain. It means regaining control of British taxpayers’ money and how that money is spent (2016/06/14), control over immigration (2016/05/31) and borders (2016/06/20), of ‘our country’ (2016/04/04), democracy (2016/04/04), law making (2016/06/13), taxations (2016/06/06), cash and investment (2016/05/31) – in short, of our own destiny (2016/06/20).

It is important to address one of these issues that has steered a lot of debate and caused, and still is causing, one of the defining issues of Brexit – namely, immigration.

**Immigration**

For most of politicians, the biggest danger in discussing the issue of immigration comes from the fact that the discussion on how to control state boundaries very easily turns into the categorisation of people into who are wanted, and unwanted. Johnson is aware of this, and in his writings he tackles the issue of immigration from several viewpoints.

First, the issue of immigration is presented as putting strain on public services, and in particular on the NHS. Johnson clearly states: 'uncontrolled immigration from the EU has put a massive strain on the NHS' (2016/04/04). 'More and more people', he claims, 'will exercise their unfettered rights to come to this country, putting more pressure on our public services. And eventually – when we are unable to take it any more – the UK will utter a faint sheepish cough of protest' (2016/04/24). It is obviously this surge of immigrants that is to be blamed for 'causing the housing crisis, and the almost overwhelming pressure to destroy the green belt' (2016/05/29).

In this argument, numbers matter. Numbers like '330,000 [migrants] a year', 'national population [of] a predicted 70 or 80 million' (2016/05/22); '270,000 immigrants from the EU - and 184,000 net' (2016/05/29). He puts these numbers in perspective: 300,000 'a city the size of Newcastle' (2016/06/13). But very soon these thousands become much higher numbers: 'Millions of people in southern Europe [...] are giving up hope of their countries escaping recession. Unsurprisingly, migrants from those countries are disproportionately coming to Britain' (2016/06/05). 'Since 2004', Johnson writes, '1.25 million people have been added to the population due to EU migration. That is bigger than the city of Birmingham' (2016/05/26). If one is not sufficiently taken aback with these figures, Johnson has some more:

On top of this, between 2005 and 2014, there were 475,000 live births to mothers who were EU citizens. This is the equivalent of adding a city the size of Manchester to the UK population. The cost of maternity services alone to these families is likely to exceed £1.3 billion (2016/06/03).

But worse is yet to come 'when countries in the pipeline to join the EU become members in the near future. British taxpayers are already paying nearly £2 billion for Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey to join the EU. The European Commission recently announced an acceleration of these plans and is already extending visa-free travel to the border with Syria and Iraq. This is dangerous' (2016/06/05).

To sum up, this argument relies on demonstrating how uncontrolled immigration does not allow Britain to get the workers it needs, but instead, it provides a flood of migrants that are just a burden on British public services: 'we find ourselves hard pressed to recruit people who might work in our NHS, as opposed to make use of its services – because we have absolutely no power to control the numbers who are coming with no job offers and no qualifications from the 28 EU countries' (2016/05/09).

Second, the issue of who is allowed to enter the country is presented as a choice between controlled and uncontrolled crime. 'It is the borderfree Europe, obviously', Johnson claims, 'that makes it so much easier for our enemies to move around. As Ronald K Noble, the former head of Interpol, has said, the Schengen area is "like a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe"' (2016/02/29). He is assuring his readers that 'The European Court of Justice can interfere with our ability to deport criminals and others whose presence here is not conducive to the public good. For example, it has hindered our ability to deport the terrorist recruiter Abu Hamza's daughter-in-law, even though she was convicted of a very serious offence' (2016/06/01). And he concludes: 'it is a short hop from a common policy on free movement of workers to a common policy on deporting terrorists' (2016/03/07).

Finally, restricting the free movement of EU citizens is presented as a protection for British workers and their wages. The following passage neatly brings together the themes of immigration, big business and the EU:

So what is it these fat cats like about the EU? Broadly two things. They like uncontrolled immigration, because it helps to keep wages down at the bottom end and so to control costs, and therefore to ensure that there is even more dosh for those at the top. A steady supply of hard-working immigrant labour means they don't have to worry quite so much about the skills or aspirations or self-confidence of young people growing up in this country. And as denizens of Learjets and executive lounges, they are not usually exposed to some of the pressures of large-scale immigration, such as in A&E, or schools, or housing (2016/05/15).

We can then see that in this ideology, immigration is not opposed to along cultural, religious or ethnic lines. On the contrary, Johnson repeatedly claims that he is not against immigration. He is only against uncontrolled immigration. However innocent this may seem, immigration in this ideology is turned into the primary scapegoat, and takes the blame for the economic difficulties faced by the British population. It is the cause of low wages and a lack of employment, it takes the blame for the impoverished NHS and the housing crisis. On top of that, it is immigration that is spreading crime and terrorism.

The only way to therefore tackle the problem – that is, immigration – is to leave the EU, as apparently, ‘the simple reality [is] that inside the EU we cannot control immigration - it is literally impossible because we have no choice but to accept the principle of free movement and the European Court has ultimate control over our immigration policy’ (2016/05/26).

With this, the circle is closed and the culprit is known.

## Sentiments

Table 7: Sentiments

Sentiments	19	64
● Destiny	2	4
● Emotions	15	30
● Protection	3	5
● Security	1	1
● Threat	5	24

The last major theme identified in our analysis is labelled as “Sentiments”. It is a common term to indicate enduring views usually informed by specific types of emotion.<sup>3</sup> Basic themes in this section therefore include notions of destiny, emotion, protection, security and threat. If we look at the coding table (Table 7), we can also see that these are not mentioned much, except for emotions and threat. The issue of threat has already been covered, in that the main threat for the British people comes from the

<sup>3</sup> For more about “sentiments” and “emotions”, see Turner (2009).

EU. The EU is the source of unification and federalisation, which are threats to the British economy (2016/02/29), as well as being the source of uncontrolled immigration. This threat is described, among others as 'unrecognisable', 'irreversible' and 'unstoppable' (2016/02/22) and it 'has left us dangerously and permanently exposed to being forced to hand over more money and accept damaging new laws' (2016/06/05).

Table 8: Emotions

Emotions	15	30
Courage	1	2
Dignity	1	1
Embarrassment	1	1
Fear	9	17
Pride	3	6
Self-belief	2	2
Shame	1	1

The only other theme that received some attention is "Emotions". But even here we can see that this is not about dignity, as indicated by Liah Greenfeld, or prestige, as Shulman would argue. This ideology is about fear.

Are you frit? Are you frightened? Have they spooked you yet? It is now obvious that the Remain campaign is intended to provoke only one emotion in the breast of the British public and that is fear (2016/02/29).

Fear enters this ideology in two ways: one directly and the other through the back door. The only time that the word itself appears on the pages of Johnson's columns is in relation to the infamous "Project Fear". "Project Fear" refers to all the warnings issued by the Remain Campaign about the possible consequences of Brexit. Johnson lists some of them: they 'have warned us', he says, 'that leaving the EU would jeopardise police, judicial and intelligence cooperation. We have even been told that the EU has been responsible, over the past 70 years, for "keeping the peace in Europe". In every case the message is that Brexit is simply too scary' (2016/02/29). Claims about a possible rise in house prices, food prices, and 'World War Three and other nonexistent bogeymen' Johnson dismisses as hysterical (2016/05/22). This ideology disqualifies every warning of possible crises after Brexit with ease. Johnson reduces these warnings to 'an unending and intensifying diet of fear' (2016/06/13).

Those who are issuing these warnings are labelled as 'the agents of Project Fear' (2016/02/29), 'a highly nervous UK government' who resorted to 'scare tactics' (2016/05/22), 'the gloommongers' (2016/06/06), or as 'a cushy elite of politicians and lobbyists and bureaucrats' (2016/06/20). Their 'threats are so wildly exaggerated as to be nonsense' (2016/02/29). 'Project Fear turned out to be a giant hoax' (2016/05/22).

Just a few days before the referendum, Johnson states that 'the Remain campaign has become more and more hysterical in its threats and warnings, to the point where very few people now believe in them' (2016/06/20).

One would think that the story about fear would then be finished. But indicated, we can observe how fear returned into the frame – without actual mention of the word once. In his writings, Johnson plays masterfully with the fear of unification and the fear of increased immigration.

'Britain will remain trapped in the EU nightmare' (2016/06/06) Johnson warns British voters. He does not leave voters in any doubt, and claims it is the last moment to stop those who are 'building an economic government of Europe' (2016/06/20). Worse, he claims '[t]here are plans for a European army' (2016/06/06) and then, of course, it is not surprising that 'people are already talking about the plan to create a true "political union" with common EU rules on company law, property taxes, and many other areas of policy in which Britain will have no choice but to comply' (2016/06/06).

The bogeyman in Johnson's story of immigration comes from 'southern Europe. Young people there are leaving in huge numbers and coming to Britain. As the euro crisis deepens, this problem will only get worse' (2016/05/31). Johnson invites his reader to 'imagine where Britain will be after another twenty years of immigration out of control and more power and money taken away from us' (2016/05/31). These are not presented as empty threats since, as he says, 'the European Commission [...] is already extending visa-free travel to the border with Syria and Iraq. This is dangerous and is not in our interests' (2016/06/01). But that is not all, since:

On Sunday it was revealed that the Government is actively considering granting approximately 1 million Turkish citizens visa-free travel to the UK. The Government admitted this was 'a risk'. The Government also described the possibility of visa-free access for '1.8 million Kosovars' to be 'a drop in that larger ocean' and noted the Commission was planning to 'slipstream' Kosovo 'behind Turkey' (2016/06/16).

So beware, they are already among us: '[t]here are dangerous people living in the UK who we cannot currently remove because of EU law' (2016/06/01).

It would only be fair to claim that there were two Project Fears. But what this analysis reveals is that this ideology easily dismissed any fears of economic collapse or loss. Possible consequences of Brexit for the economy and finance were ignored while consequences of further economic and political union with the EU on the one hand, and continuation of uncontrolled immigration on the other, was heightened. There are three possible explanations, which would require a much broader analysis of the advocates of these ideas, in order to be confirmed. One explanation could be self-reliance and confidence that Britain as a State and the British people would emerge again as economic leaders on the world market with an economy liberated from supranational restrictions. This could possibly follow on from the idea of economic nationalism as a proponent of economic autarky, as many classical economic liberals argued.

On the other hand, dismissing possible economic crises as irrelevant factors in weighing the pros and cons of Brexit could indicate what Abdelal (2001: 2) defined as one of the main effects of nationalism.



'Nationalism', he writes, 'also engenders the economic sacrifice necessary to achieve societal goals, to realize nationalists' vision of the future'. But there is also Goff's (2005) view that perceived threats could trigger nationalism that would prioritise national security over national enrichment.

Two long years of chaos after the 2016 referendum, with daily debates between entrenched Leavers and Remainers, gives a hint that there is something making the sacrifice argument more viable.

## Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to better understand economic nationalism as a phenomenon. In its first part, the concept was examined within the context of current debates that viewed economic nationalism as a form of nationalism and, hence, as an ideology that attempts to keep economy embedded within the political and cultural spheres of the nation. It is argued that economic nationalism cannot be reduced to any set of economic policies, since economic nationalism can advocate any policies deemed beneficial for the nation. The paper also shows that the relationship between the economic sphere and nationalism is reciprocal: while the economic sphere can influence the form and content of a rising nationalism, so can economic nationalism advocate forms of economic life deemed to be national. The paper claims that, just as with any other form of nationalism, economic nationalism is not a prerogative of the state. As an ideology, economic nationalism is always relational and contested, that is, it is always formulated in relation to a particular Other or Others, and it is always contested by other forms of nationalism.

In everyday situations, economic nationalism, just as other forms of nationalism, assumes its banal form. However, following Polanyi's argument, we entertained the idea that economic nationalism becomes more visible in situations when forces are perceived to be pulling the economy away from norms, values and traditions defined as national and are perceived as damaging the same fabric of a national society.

The final question, then, that this paper wanted to answer was about the content of economic nationalism. If economic nationalism is not about specific policies, what is it about? We followed the argument proposed by Helleiren and others that the content of economic nationalism is contextual. What economic nationalism demands would depend on the particular socio-economic situation in which the nation is seen in. For that reason, we selected a case study of the Brexit campaign led by Boris Johnson in Britain prior to the EU referendum.

At this point, mainly for the sake of space, we will not go into a detailed discussion on whether Boris Johnson's writings as a whole can be perceived as an ideology. It will suffice to say that it is a programme that won 52% of votes on the 2016 referendum and hence has every right to be seen as a distinctive ideology. Cynically, I could also say that it masks more than it reveals and offers simple solutions for complex issues, which definitely makes it a good contender for being called an ideology. However, we do need to examine whether this ideology is a form of nationalism, and if so, whether it can be seen as *economic* nationalism.

Johnson does not use the word “nation” much – only four times in the entire data set – but as we have seen earlier, he uses the term “people” a lot. We will avoid the trap of immediately labelling it a populist ideology, however these writings are not directed at just any people – but specifically to the British. Yet not all British people are addressed – it is mostly directed at the working class and entrepreneurs. It is an anti-establishment ideology that polarises “the people” with politicians, fat cats of multinational companies and bankers. It polarises Britain with the EU. It polarises British people with immigrants. It has at its centre the interests of the British nation, preservation of its identity and sovereignty. Subtly, it interweaves historical references with old national stereotypes and fears. Name it as you will, but it has the nation at its core.

So, why would such nationalism need to be labelled as economic? When the main concepts within this ideology are examined, a peculiar mixture appears. This nationalism seems to be about the liberation of the economy from the constraints of supranational overregulation; and about the inability of British people to run their economy as they think would be the most beneficial. The EU is perceived as a constrictor of a truly free market and trade. At first glance, it seems like this is an ideology that propagates pure economic liberal ideas. However closer examination uncovers proposals that are autarkic and protectionists in nature, such as when Johnson despairs over the inability of the British government to protect its steel industry from the Chinese and to introduce tariffs because of EU regulations (2016/04/04). One is left to wonder if the problem with the EU regulation is in the amount, or that it is European. There is an obvious mixture of proposed economic policies that cannot be easily placed in one type of political economy or the other. But, whatever it is, this nationalism clearly states that as soon as British people regain control over their economy, things will improve.

Sovereignty and immigration seem to be the main themes in this type of nationalism. But if we carefully examine the line of argument within this ideology, demands for the return of full national sovereignty and control over immigration are only presented as solutions to accumulated deep social divisions and other serious issues that pervade Britain today. What *is* really underlying this argument is the collapse of public services, including the NHS, low wages, economic stagnation, unemployment, poverty, widening differences in wealth, and an inefficient government, just to name a few. This can be considered to be a type of economic nationalism as it is an ideology of economic inequality.

Another reason that it can be called an example of economic nationalism is because the ideology paints a picture of a runaway economy that only serves the interests of a few multinationals, but not society as a whole. It sees the economy as arranged for the maximisation of profit for very few, and against the interests of the working class and small entrepreneurs, that is, against the British people. The solution to these problems is simple since the culprits are well known. The problem is not internal, but external: the EU, immigrants and multinational business. “Taking back control” of borders, laws and finances is the solution.

The rhetoric used and developed in this ideology cannot be seen as incompatible with the ideology and practice of a free-market society. Rather, it is a buffer that attempts to compensate for the failures of a free-market society.



## REFERENCES

- Abdelal, Rawi (2001) *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet states in comparative perspective*. Ithaca and London: Cornell university press
- Abdelal, Rawi (2005) 'Nationalism and international political economy in Euroasia', in Helleiner, Eric & Pickel, Andreas (Eds) *Economic nationalism in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press
- Anderson, Benedict (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Behrent, Michael C. (2016) 'Karl Polanyi and Reality of Society' . *History and Theory*. Vol 55, 433-451
- Billig, Michael (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Block, Fred (2001) 'Introduction' , in Karl Polanyi (1944 [2001]) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Block, Fred and Somers, Margaret R. (2017) *The Power of Market Fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's Critique*. Harvard University Press.
- Crane, George T. (1998) 'Economic Nationalism: Bringing the Nation Back in' . *Millennium*. Vol. 27 (1), pp. 55-75.
- Dale, Gareth (2008) 'Karl Polanyi's The Great Transformation: perverse effects, protectionism and Gemeinschaft' . *Economy and Society*, 37(4), pp 495-524.
- Dale, Gareth (2013) *Karl Polanyi: The Limits of the Market*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gilpin, Robert (1987) *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Granovetter, Mark (1985) 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness' . *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 91(3), pp. 481-510.
- Greenfeld, Liah (2001) *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press
- Harlen, Christine Mergerum (1999) 'A Reappraisal of Classical Economic Nationalism and Economic Liberalism' . *International Studies Quarterly*. Vol 43, pp. 733-744
- Hechter, Michael (1975) *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Helleiner, Eric and Pickel, Andreas (eds) (2005) *Economic nationalism in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

Helleiner, Eric (2002) 'Economic nationalism as a Challenge to Economic Liberalism? Lessons from the 19th Century'. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol 46, 307-329.

Helleiner, Eric (2005) 'Conclusion: The meaning and contemporary significance of economic nationalism', in Helleiner, Eric & Pickel, Andreas (Eds) (2005) *Economic nationalism in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University

Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric (1990) *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hodgson, Geoffrey M. (2017) 'Karl Polanyi on Economy and Society: A Critical Analysis of Core Concepts'. *Review of Social Economy*. Vol. 75(1), pp 1-25.

Hopkin, Jonathan (2017) 'When Polanyi met Farage: Market Fundamentalism, Economic Nationalism, and Brexit's from the European Union'. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. Vol 19(3), pp. 465-478

Kofman, Jan (1997) *Economic nationalism and Development: Central and Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

List, Friedrich (1999 [1840]) *National System of Political Economy*. Roseville: Dry Bones Press.

Macesich, George (1985) *Economic nationalism and Stability*. New York: Praeger.

Muller, Klaus (2005) 'Nationalist Undercurrents in German Economic Liberalism', in Helleiner, Eric & Pickel, Andreas (Eds) *Economic nationalism in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

Nairn, Tom (1997) *Faces of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

Nakano, Takeshi (2004) 'Theorising Economic Nationalism'. *Nations and Nationalism*. 10 (3), pp. 211-229

Pertington, Richard (2019) 'UK income inequality increasing as benefits cuts hit poorest'. *The Guardian* (26 February 2019) <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2019/feb/26/uk-income-inequality-benefits-income-ons> (accessed on 23 April 2019)

Polanyi, Karl (1944 [2001]) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Pryke, Sam (2012) 'Economic Nationalism: Theory, History and Prospects' . *Global policy*, Vol 3(3) pp. 281-291.

Rodrigues, Joao (2004) 'Endogenous Preferences and Embeddedness: A Reappraisal of Karl Polanyi' . *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 38 (1), pp. 189-200.

Seers, Dudley (1983) *The Political Economy of Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Anthony D. (1983) *Theories of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Holmes and Meier.

Smith, Anthony D. (1998) *Nationalism and Modernism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Solt, Frederic (2011) 'Diversionary Nationalism: economic inequality and the formation of national pride' . *The Journal of Politics*, vol 73 (2) pp. 821-830.

Stephens, Philip (2018) 'Boris Johnson and the flight to English nationalism' . *The Financial Times*, 4 October 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/3cb2d7c8-c714-11e8-ba8f-ee390057b8c9> (accessed on 23 April 2019).

Stiglitz, E. Joseph (2001) 'Forward' , in Polanyi, Karl (1944 [2001]) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Turner, Jonathan H. (2000) The Sociology of Emotions: Basic Theoretical Arguments. *Emotion Review*. Vol. 1 (4), pp. 340-354.

USA Today (7 November 2016) 'I am a nationalist': Trump's embrace of controversial label sparks uproar <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/10/24/trump-says-hes-nationalist-what-means-why-its-controversial/1748521002/>

Weber, Eugene (1976) *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.