

THE RISE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON

French Perceptions of the Anglo-American World in the Long Twentieth Century

Emile Chabal
University of Cambridge

Today, the term Anglo-Saxon has passed into common usage in France.* There are Anglo-Saxon economic models, Anglo-Saxon educational philosophies, and a widely-recognized Anglo-Saxon “mentality.” Despite the fact that, since the early twentieth century, few Britons or Americans would be inclined to celebrate their Anglo-Saxon identity, the French still use the term to cover a wide range of stereotypes, pre-conceptions, and judgments about the Anglo-American world. The term is employed by prominent politicians, serious academics, political commentators, and in everyday conversation. It is instinctively understood by the vast majority of the French population and is used in learned discussions, as well as popular discourse. Strange though it might appear to those who are covered by the term, the Anglo-Saxon has become a consensual part of the French language.

Almost as surprising as the widespread use of the term is the paucity of work on the subject. Although there have been significant attempts to document the long history of Franco-British and Franco-American relations, there have not been more than a few scattered articles on the use of the term Anglo-Saxon by the French.¹ Paradoxically, it would seem that a term so apparently nonsensical to outside observers has simply been ignored as a subject of study by foreign scholars, while the French have taken it to be so self-evident as to be undeserving of critical attention. This relative absence of scholarly interest has made the task of interpretation that much more urgent. For the term Anglo-Saxon is not simply a descriptive term; it is a window into French perceptions of the Anglo-American world, and of the French themselves. Over the course of the twentieth century, the character of the Anglo-Saxon has been used as a mirror for French decline and as a means of throwing into sharp



relief the central features of the French national character. That the French continue to use the term uncritically is an indication that the Anglo-Saxon represents more than a passing trend. On the contrary, the term is attached to a renewable repertoire of symbols and languages, all of which can be mobilized for specific political causes. In the late nineteenth century, for example, when a fear of “Anglo-Saxon superiority” became a popular trope, the term encapsulated the anxieties of imperial competition and offered a model for French national regeneration after defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune in 1870–71. Today, “le modèle anglo-saxon” is not simply a socio-economic vision loosely inspired by market liberalism and multiculturalism; it is also (and sometimes primarily) an image of individualism, enterprise, and atomisation.

Given its overlapping meanings and its widespread use in twentieth-century France, it is hard to build a truly representative analysis of the term Anglo-Saxon. However, with the advent of text-searchable databases, it has become much easier to follow its usage in books and the print media. In this article, I take advantage of these recent developments in archival research. Alongside books, essays, and pamphlets, I use two powerful online resources. The first is the Frantext database that allows word searches across a digitized corpus of ‘canonical’ French texts from the seventeenth century onwards. The second is the increasing number of digitized newspaper and journal archives. Together, these make it possible to examine the meanings of the term and begin to construct a meaningful historical contextualisation of its usage. I begin by briefly examining the crystallisation of the term in the second half of the nineteenth century, in particular in the 1890s when it became inextricably linked to a pervasive sense of French decline. I then show how the term acquired new meanings as it was mobilized by Catholic authors in the first decades of the twentieth century, whose critique of “modernity” relied heavily on references to the Anglo-Saxon as the most advanced incarnation of a frightening capitalist dystopia. The term’s long association with Catholic politics also helps explain its subsequent “resurrection” in the 1960s during the presidency of Charles de Gaulle. As the product of a deeply Catholic family in fin-de siècle France, de Gaulle would already have been familiar with the term and with the advent of the Cold War in the 1950s, invoking the image of the Anglo-Saxon became a useful way for him to capture both a historical and a contemporary geopolitical rivalry. Finally, I look in some depth at the meanings of the Anglo-Saxon since the 1970s, when it was mostly stripped of its racial connotations and developed into an alternative “model” that has played an important role in defining political affiliations in France.

A close analysis of the shifting meanings and uses of the term leads to several important conclusions. First, the omnipresence of the Anglo-Saxon in French political discourse has been connected to an acute and unresolved sense of French decline since the late nineteenth century, as well as to an important Anglophile component in French liberalism. Second, it has pro-

vided a highly effective Other against which to imagine French exceptionalism, particularly in the face of Anglo-American economic dominance. In more recent times, its use has continued to be one of the many ways in which France has come to terms with Americanization, the decline of its geopolitical power, and the resurgence of colonial memory. Since the establishment of English as the lingua franca of business, popular culture, and international politics in the past century, the French have had further cause for alarm. It seems that the Anglo-Saxon's dominance on the international stage has extended beyond economic and military dominance to the most cherished realms of language and culture. All is not lost, however. As the recent economic crisis demonstrated, the answer to Edmond Demolins's provocative question from a century ago "à quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?" is, more often than not, "pas beaucoup."

"Le secret de cette prodigieuse puissance d'expansion": The Emergence of the Anglo-Saxon in French Thought, 1870–1970

"La supériorité des Anglo-Saxons! Si on ne la proclame pas, on la subit et on la redoute..."²

It would be a mistake to assume that the contemporary use of the term Anglo-Saxon first emerged in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, if the subject has gone relatively unexamined in the French context, the same cannot be said for Britain and America. There is now a growing literature on the instrumentalization of the term in the Anglo-American world, above all in the nineteenth century. Scholars have shown how the idea of an Anglo-Saxon race was used to underpin expansionist policies in the American West, and how it formed part of an ideology of racial classification in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.³ Others have looked at the construction of the Anglo-Saxon as a form of anti-Irish racism in Victorian England, while Peter Mandler's recent book on the English "national character" makes clear the extent to which "Anglo-Saxonism" and "Teutonism" were in vogue in the 1850s and 60s.⁴ Mandler suggests that the term began to wane in importance as the nineteenth century drew to a close but it was nevertheless to have a long afterlife at the hands of "imperial federationists" in Britain and America: contemporaries were still dreaming of a unified Anglo-Saxon race that would populate the globe well into the 1920s and 30s.⁵ In 1900, around the time that the term was being widely discussed in France, the eminent admiral and MP Lord Charles Beresford triumphantly proclaimed:

The Anglo-Saxon race has held its own where its predecessors have failed because of its cool, calm, almost phlegmatic and critical way of regarding all questions, but it is just as well to remember that it is the spice of enthusiasm, of adventure and dar-

ing which is also an admixture in our blood that has kept us steadily striking out in fresh directions, ever increasing the world's knowledge and our own importance.⁶

Yet despite the very obvious parallels between Beresford's triumphal depiction of the Anglo-Saxon race and the construction of the Anglo-Saxon in France in the same period, it is hard to build any reliable causal link between the two. As we will see, almost all of those figures whose texts are discussed below visited Britain on several occasions and some had even visited the United States but we can only speculate as to their exposure to the term while travelling abroad. The fact that there is scarcely any evidence that it was in widespread use in France before 1850 does seem to suggest that the French began to notice the Anglo-Saxon only once it had taken on "global" dimensions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was of little interest while it was being used to justify internal colonisation, expansion, and racial prejudice, but once the Anglo-Saxon was at the gates of France and its empire, it became of pressing concern.

Just as we cannot know exactly the extent to which the French were aware of the use of the term Anglo-Saxon outside France, we cannot say precisely when the term Anglo-Saxon began to describe something more than a medieval language and people. Maïke Thier's pioneering work suggests that it gained this new meaning in France in the 1850s when the Second Empire was extending its imperial project into South America and especially Mexico. In publications such as the *Revue des Races Latines*, founded in 1857, "Anglo-Saxonism" was juxtaposed with "Latinity" in an attempt to place France at the heart of a global Latin world that stretched from South America and the Caribbean, to Madrid and Paris. This global context laid the foundations for the elision between Britain and the United States that would become so central to the notion of the Anglo-Saxon in later years.⁷ Thus, in the 1860s liberals such as Lucien Prévost-Paradol were already suggesting that the British and Americans, though supposedly enemy peoples, were in fact very similar "au point de vue de la race, de la langue, des mœurs et des lois."⁸ But, if the term was already in use during the Second Empire, it was only in the 1870s that it gained wider currency beyond a vocal group of imperialists. Its inclusion in the revised 1877 edition of Émile Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française* was a good indication that the term had achieved some kind of public respectability. In addition to its historical definitions as they related to medieval Anglo-Saxon history and language, Littré's *Dictionnaire* indicated that "... en parlant de la race à laquelle appartiennent les Anglais et les Américains des États-Unis, on dit souvent que ce sont des Anglo-Saxons."⁹ This definition suggested that the Anglo-Saxon had, by this time, developed into a well-articulated transnational and ethno-racial stereotype.

That the term should have emerged in France in the 1870s is hardly a coincidence. This was a period of intense soul-searching for the French, in the wake of their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the violence of the Paris

Commune. With the fear of national decline and decomposition more present than ever after 1871, nation-building projects became a priority across the political spectrum. The most complete and long-lasting of these was republicanism, which was to find its *causes célèbres* in educational reform, the separation of church and state, and the Dreyfus affair. But republicanism was not the only model of national renewal available to the late nineteenth-century French elite: Britain and the United States also offered tantalising glimpses of successful adaptation to a changing world. Although Anglophobia was very much the norm, over the course of the nineteenth century numerous French liberals had shown a growing interest in Britain and America, not simply as objects of study, but also as alternative models. Whether in the form of a liberal “Anglophilia” under the July Monarchy, Alexis de Tocqueville’s masterful study of American politics *De la démocratie en Amérique* (1835–1840), or Hippolyte Taine’s *Notes sur l’Angleterre* (1872) some prominent mid-century French liberals had made significant attempts to understand the workings of British and American politics.¹⁰

By 1871, this desire to understand France’s competitors had become more urgent. It is noteworthy, for instance, that Taine chose to publish the accounts of his three visits to England (in 1860, 1862, and 1871) shortly after defeat and civil war had ravaged France. At the same time, ethno-racial theories of human development were becoming more prominent, and widely disseminated amongst the Republic’s leading political figures.¹¹ It was no longer enough simply to analyze political systems; there was now an interest in the ‘innate’ characteristics that defined the Anglo-American individual. While Tocqueville focused on the workings of “democracy” in America, and Taine on the nature of England’s supposedly cohesive and stable polity, by the final decades of the nineteenth century there was a greater desire to understand the foundations of the Anglo-American psyche. The result was a growing interest in what we might call the “pre-political” institutions of the Anglo-American world: in particular, the family and the school. This was already implicit in Taine’s lengthy commentary on Britain’s public school system, which he developed alongside his analysis of political community.¹² But it became more obvious in the late 1890s with a renewed debate surrounding the relative merits of Anglo-Saxons and Latin races, not just on far-flung continents, but at the very heart of Europe.

The most emblematic text in the Anglo-Saxon debate was undoubtedly the polemical pamphlet *À quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (1898). It was written by Edmond Demolins—a noted commentator on French history and politics, and a disciple of sociologist Frédéric Le Play. Using a mix of rather alarming statistics, perfunctory observation, and racial typologies, Demolins argued that the Anglo-Saxon race was particularly well-suited to the modern world. Not only was it on the way to imperial dominance—a point made abundantly clear by the fact that many editions carried a map on the first page designed to show the Anglo-Saxons’ global sphere of influence, but it was also highly effective at promoting economic growth. For Demolins, this innate

predilection for capitalism was the result of the Anglo-Saxons' social structure, which he described as a "formation particulariste." This had its roots in the historical dominance of the Anglo-Saxons over the Celts and was expressed in a close-knit family unit. The result was a race unusually well-adapted to economic and social modernity. It was not a political system that made the Anglo-Saxon distinctive; it was innate psychological and racial characteristics. In many ways, this argument was a polemical reworking of a long-standing view of Britain as a land of individualism using the language of historical ethno-racial essentialism. But Demolins's extended eulogy of the Anglo-Saxon school system—based on visits to the rather unconventional and recently-founded Bedales and Abbotsholme schools—demonstrated that educational institutions and pedagogical philosophies had also played an essential role. Anglo-Saxon education, it seemed, embodied all the finest traits of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Demolins's pamphlet was enormously successful. It went through a number of printings and was translated into English, German, Spanish, Russian, Romanian, Polish, and Arabic. It provoked vigorous responses in France and was widely read amongst the elite. This did not, of course, mean that everyone shared its glowing view of the Anglo-Saxon.¹³ But it did provide a compelling explanation for Anglo-Saxon dominance, particularly given that it was published in the year of the Fashoda Incident that saw Britain and France engaged in a very public colonial confrontation in which Britain comfortably imposed herself.¹⁴ For Demolins himself, the text was a practical guide to reform: he would go on to found l'École des Roches in 1899 based on the inspiring new pedagogical philosophies he had seen in Britain. The school still exists today, as a fee-paying boarding school, but, as Alan Pitt has argued, the positive vision of the Anglo-Saxon that was emerging amongst late nineteenth-century French liberals would play a role in the founding of an even more significant institution: the École libre des sciences politiques (often referred to as Sciences Po), which was set up in the early 1870s. It was here that liberals such as Taine, Émile Boutmy, and Paul Leroy-Beaulieu aimed to give the French elite a more practical "English-style" education.¹⁵ In hindsight, it is evident that this attempt to bring Anglo-Saxon values to French education was a great success: Sciences Po cast a long shadow over intellectual and political life in the twentieth century and it has, to this day, retained its reputation as one of France's most open and dynamic institutions of higher learning.¹⁶

In addition to its impact on pedagogy, Demolins's essay made clear that important changes were taking place in French perceptions of the Anglo-American world. For a start, Britain and America were becoming more closely associated, while Germany was increasingly detached from the Anglo-Saxon axis. Where a great deal of mid-nineteenth-century "Anglo-Saxonism" and "Teutonism" in Britain was built around an imagined ethno-historical link between the German "Saxon" peoples and the British Isles, by the time Demolins wrote his pamphlet, the Germans were receiving their own, distinct analysis: indeed, significant portions of the text were devoted to outlining the

differences between the educational system and public life of the Anglo-Saxon and the German. This divergence crystallized in the first half of the twentieth century as German antagonism once again led to war in 1914–18 and 1939–45. By the time de Gaulle gave the Anglo-Saxon a new lease on life in the 1960s, Germany had been excised from the Anglo-Saxon map, and he never used the term to describe Germany or the Germans. Like Demolins, however, de Gaulle did conflate Britain and America in the character of the Anglo-Saxon. And this despite the fact that, by the mid-twentieth century, English and American statesman and diplomats had rejected the term Anglo-Saxon in favour of the more neutral “English-speaking peoples.” This conflation of Britain and America reinforced not just a sense of Anglo-Saxon difference, but a pronounced sense of Anglo-Saxon ascendancy. It created a powerful myth of expansion, driven by colonialism and capitalism. In this respect, it is notable that what was perceived as America’s first “real” colonial interventions—in the Spanish-American War of 1898—coincided with the publication of Demolins’s book. As we will see, this fear of Anglo-Saxon dominance was to drive the return of the term to political prominence in the 1960s and again starting in the 1980s. In each case, fears of national or geopolitical decline were central to the term’s resurgence—just as they were after 1870.

This sense of a combined Anglo-American threat remained at the heart of the notion of the Anglo-Saxon through the first half of the twentieth century, even if changing contexts affected the way the term was deployed. Imperial rivalries in the Middle East and the spectre of Taylorism in the United States provided strong signs of a unified Anglo-Saxon threat in the interwar period. At the same time, by the 1930s, the Anglo-Saxons were no longer simply an ethno-racial and imperial entity; they appeared as individuals too, complete with their own distinctive personality and physical characteristics. This is clearly evident in the Frantext database and in other significant texts where many of the references to the Anglo-Saxon in the period 1870–1940 carried implicit or explicit personal and physical connotations. In the 1870s, for instance, novelist Jules Verne used the term to describe the hardy ruggedness of some of his characters:

un homme ... à la figure énergique, vrai type de l’Anglo-Saxon

ils admettaient volontiers que l’Anglo-Saxon est pétri d’un limon spécial, qui a échappé jusqu’ici à toute analyse chimique....¹⁷

Other authors focused on the Anglo-Saxon’s ways of speaking and reasoning. The novelist Paul Bourget—who was elected to the Académie française in 1894—was emblematic in this respect. He had visited Britain in the 1880s and in 1895 he published a much-read book called *Outre-Mer*, which recounted his travels in America.¹⁸ This and much of his later work featured numerous references to the Anglo-Saxon. Here are some descriptions from a novel published in 1926:

mais nous autres, anglo-saxons, nous parlons franc....

... habitué à la parole anglo-saxonne, il n'avait aucune notion de l'éloquence traditionnelle dans les pays latins ... l'anglo-saxon aime à raisonner sur des faits....

Il en appelait à ce sentiment du *fight*, une des disciplines de l'éducation anglo-saxonne....¹⁹

In contrast to these vivid images of the Anglo-Saxon's vigorous empiricism and frankness, the writer Georges Bernanos argued in the late 1930s that the Anglo-Saxon had a very particular form of reserve: "la pudeur toute physique des Anglo-Saxons, qui n'est pas pure hypocrisie mais plutôt l'effet d'une timidité héréditaire entretenue par l'éducation, la réserve verbale...."²⁰

If these literary representations of the Anglo-Saxon emphasized individual physical and character traits, others focused more clearly on collective characteristics. In a particularly apposite passage, Charles Maurras in 1914 claimed that :

Pangermanisme, panslavisme, union du monde anglo-saxon, voilà les formules qui courent....²¹

Aujourd'hui, cinq ou six grands peuples prennent sur nous des avances qui iront bientôt au double et au triple. La terre tend à devenir anglo-saxonne pour une part, germane pour une autre. Slaves du nord, slaves du sud finiront par se donner la main. L'Islam renaît, le monde jaune s'éveille....²²

In a less alarmist tone, while discussing differences in literary culture across the globe, an anonymous author from the late 1930s maintained that "dans les pays anglo-saxons un juste équilibre est maintenu entre l'éducation et la récréation...."²³ This balance was often seen to be the result of a "mentalité anglo-saxonne" which, as distinguished law professor Georges Vedel argued in the late 1940s, rested on a peculiar combination of "une foi ... réaliste" and "un sens pratique aigu."²⁴ Vedel's elision between individual and collective characteristics shows how, by the mid-twentieth century, some French writers and scholars had found a way of reconciling what they saw as Anglo-Saxon individualism with a wider, collective threat to French *civilisation*.

Attempts to capture the collective dimension of the Anglo-Saxon inevitably meant that the term appeared frequently in the work of prominent Third Republic geographers as well. To take but two examples, Paul Vidal de la Blache and André Siegfried regularly used the term in their work. De la Blache suggested in his *Principes de la géographie humaine* (1921) that, even though the climate of the United States should have had an influence on the "tempérament de l'Anglo-Saxon," in reality it was not so easy to affect the "caractères primordiaux de la race."²⁵ Consequently, it was perfectly reasonable to draw strong parallels between the two sides of the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Siegfried used the term in numerous works, from his analysis of Canada entitled *Le Canada: Les deux races* (1906) to a noted study on Latin America in 1934.²⁶ In

the latter, he drew on his extensive experiences of travelling the globe to contrast a Latin character defined by “la tristesse, l’indolence, l’altruisme et l’absence,” with an Anglo-Saxon character driven by “l’optimisme, l’activité [et] la bonne volonté sociale.”²⁷

These examples indicate that, despite the diversity of references to the Anglo-Saxon, by the 1930s there seemed to be a clear sense of what he (or, more rarely, she) looked like and how he saw the world. At the same time, these examples suggest new meanings that were increasingly attributed to the character of the Anglo-Saxon in the interwar period. Where in the late nineteenth century much was made of the Anglo-Saxons’ expansionist imperial potential and the economic threat to France, by the 1930s the notion had become tied to a critique of civilisational “decadence” and “decline,” and was heavily influenced by important developments in French Catholicism. It is significant that figures such as Bernanos, Maurras, and Bourget were all associated with Action française, while Bourget was also one of many “conversions” to Catholicism amongst French intellectuals in the first three decades of the twentieth century.²⁸ There was a growing sense in these circles that America in particular, and the Anglo-Saxon in general, was the avatar of an increasingly individualistic and hyper-competitive form of capitalism and modernity that threatened to unravel the fabric of society, particularly in the light of the Great Depression.²⁹ Unsurprisingly, the construction of the Anglo-Saxon proved a useful vehicle for this critique. To emphasize the autonomy, individualism, and work ethic of the Anglo-Saxons was simultaneously to warn the French of the dangers of inviting the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon into France.

This argument is given further credence if we look beyond the rather limited corpus of canonical texts that form the heart of the Frantext database. We are fortunate that the influential journal *Esprit*—heavily associated in its early years with Emmanuel Mounier’s “personalist” Catholicism—has produced a text-searchable archive of issues back to its foundation in 1932.³⁰ A search for the term Anglo-Saxon and its variants produces a veritable cascade of results: in the period 1932–2006, over 1100 articles included the term (sometimes several times). Until 1950 alone, a search revealed that roughly 250 articles referred to the Anglo-Saxon in some form. In the majority of cases, the term was used in a purely descriptive fashion as a replacement for “Anglo-American” or in reference to one or other of the two countries seen to constitute the Anglo-Saxon. In many cases, however, the references were more specific. For instance, mention was made regularly of “le capitalisme anglo-saxon,” “la finance anglo-saxonne,” and “le mercantilisme anglo-saxon” suggesting a growing “economic” use of the term, which was consistent with *Esprit*’s commitment to a “personalist” critique of liberal capitalism.³¹ As an inflamed commentator put it in 1933:

le régime capitaliste impose l’inflation pour en profiter ... nous touchons à la forme la plus excessive de la tyrannie capitaliste.... Laisserons-nous en effet la France marcher à la remorque des anglo-saxons?³²

In other cases, there were more subtle associations. “Puritanisme” and “anglo-saxon” were frequently to be found in the same sentence—a reminder of the important dichotomy between a Protestant Anglo-Saxon empire facing up to a Catholic Latin world. A large number of references to the Anglo-Saxon were also to be found in the culture pages. Thus, when reviewing the work of Julien Green, a critic wrote in 1936 “c’est peut-être là ... la seule trace visible d’une hérédité anglo-saxonne, cette sorte d’humour glacé,” while another critic, in assessing the films of Frank Borzage in 1939, claimed that “il ne faut pas oublier le boy-scout qui sommeille au fond de tout anglo-saxon.”³³ Puritanism, the spirit of the boy scout, a certain dry humor ... where in the nineteenth century these preconceptions would have been associated with particular countries, they were now the preserve of a globalized Anglo-Saxon.

The predatory connotation of the Anglo-Saxon was renewed by World War II, when the obvious cooperation between Britain and America in the war gave the term a new lease on life. It should not be surprising to find that the first article in *Esprit* with Anglo-Saxon in the title was published in 1947 and contained a detailed analysis of a potentially-threatening Anglo-Saxon foreign policy after the war.³⁴ It was also after the war that the connection between the notion of the Anglo-Saxon and French “decline” and “crisis” once again came to the fore. In a 1953 article bluntly entitled “Pourquoi les Français n’ont pas de politique,” the noted political scientist Georges Lavau dissected the politics of the Fourth Republic, mentioning that one of the things the French lacked was a “pluralisme spontané” that amongst the Anglo-Saxons was “un instinct puissant.”³⁵ The implication was clear: that France needed greater pluralism in order to reform itself. This same argument would return in the fierce late twentieth-century debate over Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism. But there had already been some direct precedents in the pages of *Esprit*. In a remarkable essay in 1939, the mulatto poet Léon-Gontran Damas analyzed the situation of blacks in England in the following terms:

... les noirs anglais ont eu affaire au préjugé de races anglo-saxon qui diffère dans son fondement avec le préjugé de races latin. Il semble que le préjugé anglo-saxon soit plus instinctif avec ce que cela comporte à la fois d’inexplicable, d’absurde même, de désir de justifier, fût-ce par un mensonge. Mais ... l’Anglais se trouve prisonnier de son propre préjugé. Une telle position est difficilement soutenable en face de certains produits anglo-saxons de race noire qui, dans des conditions tragiquement difficiles parviennent à exécuter des travaux qui feraient honneur à n’importe quel blanc. Enfin—last but not least—the concept anglais du libéralisme a permis aux nègres anglais de prendre beaucoup plus vite, beaucoup plus sainement conscience d’eux-mêmes.³⁶

This passage highlights not only the bleeding of racial categories (Anglo-Saxons and Latins) into an argument designed specifically to criticize such categories, but also brings together Anglo-Saxon, “anglais,” and “libéralisme” in a discussion of the treatment of racial minorities. This triptych would form the basis of many debates on the value of multiculturalism over half a century later.

Any history of the use of the term Anglo-Saxon must include Charles de Gaulle, whose liberal use of the term virtually guaranteed its contemporary relevance. Sudhir Hazareesingh may not be entirely correct to suggest that it is “grâce à (ou à cause de) [de Gaulle] que les Français se hérissent instinctivement face au ‘modèle’ anglo-saxon.”³⁷ As I have suggested, this reaction dates back to the nineteenth century. But we can certainly agree with Colin Jones that it was de Gaulle who “more than any other single individual ... anglo-saxonized Britain in French eyes.”³⁸ This claim is borne out by Frantext: de Gaulle’s writings account for roughly 140 of the 600 or so uses of the term Anglo-Saxon in the entire database. In most cases, de Gaulle used it as an easy way to describe joint Anglo-American offensives and policies. However, as time went on, his view of the Anglo-Saxons became increasingly negative. Not without bitterness, he announced in the second volume of his memoirs, published in 1956, “... jamais les anglo-saxons ne consentirent à nous traiter comme des alliés véritables. Jamais ils ne nous consultèrent ... sur aucune de leurs dispositions.”³⁹ By the time he wrote his third volume, his feelings had become clearer still. As he put it on two occasions: “... la façon dont les anglo-saxons se comportaient à notre égard justifiait que nous jetions un pavé dans leur mare diplomatique...” and “... l’obstination des anglo-saxons à détenir seuls les leviers de commande était tout à fait excessive...”⁴⁰ This hostility was replicated in de Gaulle’s speeches. In 1952, he contended that it was imperative to stop “les puissances anglo-saxonnes d’imposer à cette Europe, dont elles ne font pas partie, une communauté fictive et bourrée d’explosifs.”⁴¹ Opposition would not be difficult to mobilize, however, as the Latin people were at least as powerful as the Anglo-Saxons. As he put it in 1954:

Les Latins sont dans le monde ... quelque deux cent cinquante millions. C’est autant que les Anglo-Saxons, autant que les Slaves, trois fois plus que les Germains. Leur puissance culturelle est la première du monde. Leurs virtualités économiques sont très grandes. S’ils pouvaient s’organiser ils constitueraient cette grande valeur d’équilibre faute de laquelle le monde risque de périr.⁴²

This last quotation indicated the remarkable extent to which the tension between Anglo-Saxon and Latin that emerged in the final quarter of the nineteenth century remained intact and relevant almost a century later.

That de Gaulle should have been attached to the term Anglo-Saxon is perhaps not surprising. The term fit conveniently with his historical vision and the exigencies of contemporary geopolitics. For a start, de Gaulle was a child of the early Third Republic. Born in 1890 to a deeply Catholic and conservative family, he would presumably have grown up with the term Anglo-Saxon. This, and his memory of British betrayals and military victories (Agincourt, Waterloo, Mers-el-Kebir) contributed to his well-documented Anglophobia.⁴³ Moreover, de Gaulle had a keen sense of history. He saw himself as invested with a historical purpose, and he believed strongly in the importance of “primordial” communities—hence his “certain idea of France” and his commit-

ment to a Europe that stretched from the “Atlantic to the Urals.”⁴⁴ Given his attachment to such cultural constructs, the notion of the Anglo-Saxon appealed to him since it could explain cultural characteristics with reference to ancient ethno-racial histories, and made the Anglo-Saxons profoundly different to the Latin people whatever the context.

Finally, and equally importantly, the use of the term Anglo-Saxon provided a way of conceptualizing the post-war Anglo-American relationship. While in power, de Gaulle often saw Britain as America’s “Trojan Horse,” and it was largely on these grounds that he rejected British applications to the Common Market in 1963 and 1967. The concept of the Anglo-Saxon was useful to him because it allowed him to conflate the two countries into one widely-recognized entity: once the British were marked as Anglo-Saxons, their natural affinity with the Americans would be self-evident. It is thus logical that many of the references to the Anglo-Saxon in the period of de Gaulle’s rule (1958–1969) were in connection with nuclear armament, the most obvious and symbolic example of Anglo-American cooperation.⁴⁵ To de Gaulle, it seemed that a hitherto incomplete Anglo-Saxon hegemony would finally be guaranteed in a nuclear age. Did this mean that Demolins’s gloomy predictions were about to come true? Since de Gaulle’s death in 1970, the answer to this question has very much depended on one’s perspective on France. But one thing is clear: it was with de Gaulle that the term Anglo-Saxon came of age in French political and popular discourse.

A World of Difference? “Le modèle anglo-saxon”

After 1970, the term Anglo-Saxon found its way into a bewildering range of contexts. As its racial connotations were buried, it became increasingly used as an adjective that could be attached to fields as varied as cultural policy and economic theory. Over time, its usage began to revolve around a phrase that has now become extremely common: “le modèle anglo-saxon.” Its simplistic and reductive implications notwithstanding, the prevalence of the expression “modèle anglo-saxon” has made it impossible to ignore. It has come to form an essential component of the contemporary language of politics in France. It has provided a counter-weight to an equally mythical “modèle français,” and has offered an almost endless repertoire of tropes, metaphors, images, and words that have both reinforced and undermined French self-perceptions. Inevitably, because of its very broad scope, “le modèle anglo-saxon” is not easy to define. My intention here is to draw out several different, interconnected meanings of the term, particularly its economic, social, and cultural connotations. Taken together, these bring the story of the Anglo-Saxon up to the present day.

That the adjective Anglo-Saxon has become even more widely used in the past three decades is beyond doubt. The *Esprit* database returns roughly twice

the number of results for the period after 1970 as it does for the four preceding decades, while the archives of the influential daily newspaper *Le Monde* since 1990 show over 500 results for “modèle anglo-saxon” alone, and many thousands for Anglo-Saxon and its variants. The archive of the left-leaning weekly magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*—which allows us to visualize the number of results for a given search term for every year since 1965—shows a predictable rise in the use of the term Anglo-Saxon, reaching a high point in the first decade of the twenty-first century. If it were possible, a survey of TV and radio broadcasts would almost certainly reveal a similar trend. On the basis of these figures, it would be fair to conclude that the term is used several times a day in the French press—in articles, editorials, interviews, and comment pieces. However, looking more closely at the deluge of results reveals that, despite its ubiquity, the term Anglo-Saxon, and especially the phrase “modèle anglo-saxon,” has carried with it strong economic connotations. These have usually revolved around an implicit or explicit association between Anglo-Saxon and “(neo-)liberalism,” “free market,” “monetarism,” and “free trade.”

This has been particularly true on the left of the political spectrum. For instance, a search in the archives of the staunchly left-wing *Le Monde Diplomatique* since 1978 turns up references to the “myopie du monétarisme qui règne dans le monde anglo-saxon” (in 1981), the “tentatives d’hégémonie mondiale du capitalisme anglo-saxon” (in 1982) and the “modèle capitaliste anglo-saxon—choix privilégié par les multinationales” (in 1992).⁴⁶ These are complemented by frequent references to a “libéralisme anglo-saxon,” which was usually seen to be a dangerous affront to a French “modèle social.” As a journalist put it in a flattering review of a book on the subject in 1993: “la France risque de glisser vers un modèle social inspiré de l’ultralibéralisme anglo-saxon.”⁴⁷ As the 1990s wore on, this language became increasingly alarmist: commentators warned of the hegemony of a “néolibéralisme anglo-saxon” or a predatory “capitalisme anglo-saxon,” particularly in the wake of the public sector strikes of 1995. Articles cautioned against the “flexibilisation généralisée du travail selon le modèle anglo-saxon” (in 1996) and the decision of the French government to fall in line with “le ‘modèle’ anglo-saxon ... dont les ravages sont désormais patents” (in 1997).⁴⁸ In a handy summary, Serge Halimi (the editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* since 2008), argued in 1998 that

Munies de ce pauvre logiciel intellectuel et d’une boîte à outils ne contenant que quatre gros marteaux (déréglementations, privatisations, baisse des impôts, libre-échange), les organisations économiques internationales s’affairèrent, cherchant à transformer le monde à l’image du “modèle anglo-saxon.”⁴⁹

Here, in a nutshell, is the economic interpretation of the “modèle anglo-saxon.” One suspects that it is a model Demolins would have recognized almost a century ago and it bears a striking resemblance to the Catholic “personalist” critique of capitalism we saw in the pages of *Esprit* in the 1930s.

Yet the construction of a “modèle anglo-saxon” has not been the sole preserve of left-leaning publications such as *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Since the 1990s, there have been scholarly books and articles with titles such as *Le Modèle anglo-saxon en question* and *Forces et faiblesses du capitalisme anglo-saxon*, as well as a steady stream of academic conferences and papers that have examined the “modèle anglo-saxon,” especially in contrast to a “modèle nordique,” “modèle rhénan,” “modèle scandinave” and, of course, a “modèle français.”⁵⁰ Inevitably, this tendency to essentialize an Anglo-Saxon economic model has been further exacerbated by political contingency: French politicians have frequently invoked the spectre of an “ultralibéralisme anglo-saxon” in discussions on reform of the welfare state and public sector institutions, and the fear of Anglo-Saxon capitalism in all its forms has provided a powerful mobilizing symbol. Nowhere was this more evident than in the discussions surrounding the European Constitution in 2005 when apprehension about the “anglo-saxonization” of Europe was an important factor in securing a “no” vote.⁵¹ Already before the referendum Gaullist President Jacques Chirac had sought to reassure voters that

... la solution du laisser-aller, c'est-à-dire une solution conduisant à une Europe poussée par le courant ultralibéral, anglo-saxon, atlantiste ... ce n'est pas celle que nous voulons. La deuxième voie, c'est une Europe humaniste....⁵²

Shortly after the referendum, the first line of a front-page editorial in *Le Monde* reinforced the sense that the fear of the Anglo-Saxon had been at the heart of the campaign:

L'ampleur du non au référendum du 29 mai s'explique, en bonne partie, par un refus du “modèle anglo-saxon,” perçu par les salariés français comme un univers de concurrence impitoyable, où l'emploi se paye de salaires très faibles, d'emplois précaires et d'une hyper-flexibilité du travail.⁵³

Clearly, then, by the first decade of the twenty-first century the “modèle anglo-saxon” had become a significant political battleground. To take a stand for or against the Anglo-Saxon “way” was to take sides in a pressing debate about the ethics of economic development. As Éric Besson, the Socialist secretary in charge of economic affairs in 2005, put it, it was up to the French to show that “il existe un autre modèle économique que le modèle anglo-saxon.”⁵⁴

This interest in the economic aspects of the “modèle anglo-saxon” was renewed in the economic crisis of 2008–2009. Whereas in 2005 Socialist politicians had warned that a Sarkozy government would take as its reference “le modèle anglo-saxon, préconisant une société de marché sans règles, supposée annoncer des lendemains qui chantent pour une économie libérée,” in 2009 Sarkozy himself was singing the praises of the “modèle français.”⁵⁵ Even the traditionally free-market British weekly *The Economist*, in a rare use of the term

Anglo-Saxon outside France, had to admit in a 2009 editorial that the financial crisis had been a highly-effective way of “laying low les Anglo-Saxons.”⁵⁶ After more than two decades of French declinism, announced by essays such as Nicolas Baverez’s *La France qui tombe* (2003) and Jacques Julliard’s *Le Malheur français* (2005), the “modèle anglo-saxon” was now on the back foot. With the Americans and the British struggling to control their finances, and embroiled in costly and unpopular wars abroad, the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon looked decidedly shaky. As one journalist put it, the financial crisis seemed to mark the “défaite du capitalisme anglo-saxon.”⁵⁷

We do not know what the economic future will hold—nor do we know how this might affect French perceptions of the Anglo-Saxon. However, it would be reductive to limit the contemporary definition of the Anglo-Saxon simply to its economic dimensions. The apparent superiority of the Anglo-Saxon has been expressed as much in social organisation as in economic ideology. More often than not, the “modèle anglo-saxon” has been seen as a potent mix of an economic ideal—free market capitalism—and a social model—multiculturalism. Just as Anglo-Saxon economic successes have been heightened by France’s supposed decline, so too have the benefits of Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism been thrown into sharp relief by France’s *crise d’intégration*. While the majority of the results for Anglo-Saxon in the text and article databases I used were in reference to economics, a significant number of them involved social policy, in particular, the integration of migrants. Despite lengthy protestations by sociologists bemoaning the unsophisticated and unempirical juxtaposition of different “models,” the problem of cultural integration, like that of economic policy, has facilitated the rehabilitation of the adjective Anglo-Saxon.⁵⁸

Even in more scholarly articles in publications like *Esprit*, there have been frequent and relatively unproblematic uses of the term Anglo-Saxon with reference to the question of integration. In a surprising moment of comparative reductionism, the world-renowned specialist of political Islam, Oliver Roy, wrote in 1993 that “les modèles anglo-saxons, hollandais et allemands, [sont] tous communautaristes à différents degrés....”⁵⁹ Another article in *Esprit*, five years later, argued that

[les] débats sur l’avenir du social ... opposent de plus en plus un modèle anglo-saxon privilégiant le seul rapport à l’économique, l’intégration des individus par le marché et acceptant que se creusent les inégalités, aux tenants européens d’une lecture purement politique du social en termes de solidarité.... Le modèle anglo-saxon consiste à conduire à son extrémité l’exigence d’une liaison productive de la relation entre le social et l’économique....⁶⁰

As well as highlighting the assumptions behind a “modèle anglo-saxon d’intégration,” this passage also unambiguously lays out the intimate relationship between an Anglo-Saxon social structure and a corresponding form of capitalism.

There are further echoes of this elision between the social and the economic outside the pages of *Esprit*. For example, in a recent book by political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff entitled *La République enlisée* (2005), several pages are devoted to the supposed “anglo-saxonisation des rapports sociaux” in French society. Taguieff takes this process to mean a growing sense of atomisation and the celebration of discrete community identities. Perhaps inevitably, these are both seen to be caused by the inexorable rise of an Anglo-Saxon market and consumer capitalism.⁶¹ Geographers, too, have emphasized the relationship between the social and the economic, primarily by focusing on the importance of family structures. For instance, Emmanuel Todd in his *L'Illusion économique* (1998) argued that German and Japanese families differ fundamentally from “la famille nucléaire absolue, libérale et non égalitaire [qui] est caractéristique du monde anglo-saxon.” In his view, the Anglo-Saxon family combines “une autonomisation précoce des enfants” and “une absence de règle d'héritage stricte,” the result of which is a particular propensity for “le capitalisme individualiste de type anglo-saxon....”⁶² Once again, the parallel with earlier writers is striking: it was Demolins who, almost exactly a century earlier, argued that Anglo-Saxon capitalism had emerged from family structures, which encouraged “le sentiment de la dignité ... de l'indépendance et ... de l'effort.”⁶³

The nefarious consequences of Anglo-Saxon capitalism have been further highlighted in the tendency to associate the latter with the development of “communautarisme,” a polemical term widely used in contemporary French politics. For Taguieff and others the term refers to an unusually dystopic reading of Anglo-American multiculturalism that emphasizes its tendency towards fragmentation along community lines, and its encouragement of radical ethnic and religious identities. As many have pointed out, this bears little relation to an actual empirical reality and should be differentiated from “communitarianism” in English, which refers to a specific strand of liberal political thought. Rather, “communautarisme” has been used in France as a rallying cry for a widespread “neo-republican” revival, which places a French republican model alongside a “modèle anglo-saxon” that threatens to bring Anglo-Saxon “communautarisme” to France.⁶⁴

The spectre of *communautarisme* never seemed as great as in the months following the urban unrest of 2005. But where the debate surrounding the referendum on the European Constitution had led to an intense questioning of the merits of an Anglo-Saxon economic model, the riots and violence in many French cities seemed to cast Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism in a better light. To some, the conclusion was clear: “le modèle d'intégration à la française, c'est fini” announced an opinion piece by the demographer Michèle Tribalat, in which she argued that it was no longer possible for France to pretend that it could avoid riots “à l'anglo-saxonne.”⁶⁵ For others, such as the then president of the Haut Conseil à l'intégration Blandine Kriegel, this was the occasion to defend a French republican model against a version of “la

cit   d  mocratique moderne ... ‘tendance,’ qui se pratique chez nos voisins anglo-saxons.” In a memorable passage, she launched a three-pronged attack on the *mod  le anglo-saxon*:

   force de nous proposer avec enthousiasme le mod  le anglo-saxon on oublie deux ou trois petites choses: 1 - Les   tats-Unis ont inscrit la s  gr  gation ... dans la loi de leurs   tats du Sud, pas la R  publique fran  aise. 2. Ils ont commenc   la lutte contre la s  gr  gation il y a quarante ans. Il y a un an, la Cour des comptes estimait que la soci  t   fran  aise n’avait pas encore v  ritablement r  fl  chi    l’immigration. 3. Les responsables du mod  le communautariste en Hollande ou en Angleterre s’interrogent sur les causes du meurtre de Th  o Van Gogh et sur les meurtres ethniques....⁶⁶

Hyperbole notwithstanding, this sentiment was echoed elsewhere: the famous lawyer Robert Badinter complained that journalists were taking great pleasure in finding “dans les rat  s de l’int  gration    la fran  aise la confirmation de la sup  riorit   suppos  e du mod  le anglo-saxon,” while Malek Boutih, former president of anti-racism NGO SOS-Racisme deplored the “machine administrative faisant du communautarisme    l’anglo-saxonne.”⁶⁷ Even the Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin maintained “nous n’avons pas vocation    devenir un pays anglo-saxon ... nous avons un mod  le r  publicain sans   quivalent dans le monde.”⁶⁸ On both sides of the debate, it seemed that the term Anglo-Saxon was being mobilized and manipulated to fit a specific political context. Without losing many of its fundamental associations, journalists and politicians were attaching the term to a wide range of processes, ideas, theories, and problems related to French society on issues as varied as the question of whether to allow the collection of statistical data on “ethnic” grounds (currently prohibited) and “affirmative action” policies in French higher education (especially the case of Sciences Po’s so-called “Promotion ZEP”). In each case, attitudes towards the “mod  le anglo-saxon” marked the political fault lines.

In addition to society and economics there have been numerous other fields in which the term Anglo-Saxon has been readily deployed in recent years. These include legal systems (“le syst  me juridique anglo-saxon”), music (“le rock anglo-saxon”), and literature (“litt  rature anglo-saxonne”). None of this is especially new. While journalists and critics used the adjective Anglo-Saxon before the 1970s to describe particular literary or cinematographic qualities, in more recent years they have focused not so much on a specific Anglo-Saxon style, but rather on the hegemony of an Anglo-Saxon approach to culture in general. Various French campaigns have reinforced the sense that French attitudes to culture differ fundamentally from those of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. It was the French, for example, who led the campaign to exclude cultural products from free trade agreements at the Uruguay round of GATT talks in 1996, and it is French commentators who have been most vocal in their opposition to Google’s project to digitize books. In a stinging comment piece in 2005, historian and former head of the Biblioth  que nationale

de France, Jean-Noël Jeanneney saw clearly the links between Google's project and the imaginary Anglo-Saxon:

... les critères du choix seront puissamment marqués ... par le regard qui est celui des Anglo-Saxons, avec ses couleurs spécifiques par rapport à la diversité des civilisations.... La production scientifique anglo-saxonne, déjà dominante dans une quantité de domaines, s'en trouvera forcément survalorisée, avec un avantage écrasant à l'anglais par rapport aux autres langues de culture, notamment européennes.⁶⁹

This quotation brings together many of the key meanings and associations behind the term Anglo-Saxon. There is the fear of superiority, expressed both in the "survalorisation" of Anglo-Saxon scientific production, and in the crushing hegemony of the English language. There is an implicit critique of "diversité" (both social and cultural), which is placed in contrast to a French notion of "civilisation." Jeanneney even hints that the Anglo-Saxon is "watching" over the world's cultural production. We are left with the impression that Google has become a predatory and omniscient "virtual" Anglo-Saxon.

La Mentalité Anglo-Saxonne and the Spectre of Decline

While the analysis presented in this article is limited to printed matter, further research would undoubtedly reveal that the most frequent use of the term Anglo-Saxon, both as a noun and adjective, is in the spoken word where it escapes editorial scrutiny. Thus, while there are few print references to the expression "mentalité anglo-saxonne," it is widely used in contemporary France. It seems appropriate therefore to close by attempting a brief sketch of this "mentalité." Seen in its best light, it combines pragmatism, hard-work, independence, eclecticism, and adaptability. It suggests an openness to the outside world and an unwillingness to be bound by history, tradition or "civilization." Above all, it derives its strength from its plurality of outlooks and contexts. Seen in its least flattering light, however, a "mentalité anglo-saxonne" is economic, unprincipled, hyper-competitive, and acquisitive. It suggests a self-centered mindset that neither practices nor preaches any form of solidarity. Moreover, this predatory Anglo-Saxon is bent on undermining France and French influence in the world.

It is this final point that connects the Anglo-Saxon of the late nineteenth century with his twenty-first-century counterpart. Over the course of the long twentieth century, moments of perceived French decline have been accompanied by renewed references to a mythical Anglo-Saxon. In both the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, this sense of decline was led by a marginal group of French liberals—many of whom looked enviously at their Anglo-Saxon cousins—but their fears resonated throughout the political space. In the political debates that ensued, the term Anglo-Saxon was used as a marker of

political affiliation, and collected a range of positive and negative meanings. Acting as a mirror for decline, the Anglo-Saxon became a mix of half-truths and partially-accurate stereotypes. In much the same way the British have used the term “the Continent” to describe an imagined Europe, the French have used the Anglo-Saxon as a way of understanding their relation to an increasingly hegemonic Anglo-American culture.

At the same time, the term Anglo-Saxon has been used to reinforce a feeling that there is something of an *exception française*.⁷⁰ For some, this has been a cause for celebration: it is precisely because the French cannot be like the Anglo-Saxon that they have remained superior. For others, however, this is a source of concern. For many, the prospect of France drowning in an Anglo-Saxon “melting-pot” has seemed very real. Whether in the form of Demolins’s map of colonial expansion or contemporary fears about the disappearance of the French language, the image of the Anglo-Saxon has regularly been used to indicate that France and the French are backward-looking and poorly-adapted to the modern world. The question over whether such fears are well-founded is well beyond the scope of this article. In many cases, it seems that French politics of the last three decades has become wrapped in overlapping layers of nostalgia that have encouraged an acute sense of declinism and crisis.⁷¹ Fortunately, the evidence presented here suggests that the Anglo-Saxon has a long life ahead—and, if this is the case, there will be many more opportunities to celebrate and deplore French exceptionalism.

EMILE CHABAL is a Research Fellow in French Political History at St John's College, University of Cambridge. He is currently working on a monograph that examines the transformation of French political culture since the 1970s. He has published, amongst other things, on French republicanism, Franco-British relations, the politics of postcolonialism and local politics in the Languedoc.

Notes

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