consists of three courts: the Court of Justice (also known as the European Court of Justice, or ECJ); the General Court; and the European Union Civil Service Tribunal. Each serves a different purpose. Of the three, it is often the ECJ to which people refer when talking or writing about the CJEU. It consists of 28 judges, appointed by each member state. The ECJ's main role is to ensure that national and EU laws, and any international agreements entered into by the EU, 'meet the spirit of the treaties, and that EU law is equally, fairly, and consistently applied through the member states' (McCormick 2014, 91). It can only rule on matters where the EU has competence, these mainly being economic matters. It has been crucial to the idea that the EU's laws and treaties take precedence over national laws in those areas where the EU has responsibility. One of its most famous decisions, the 1979 *Cassis de Dijon* case, established the principle of mutual recognition: that goods produced and marketed legally in one member state may be sold without further restrictions in all other member states. Decisions are supposed to be reached through unanimity, but votes are usually taken by simple majority. Enforcement of the Court's rulings rests with the member states – either their governments or national courts – with the Commission monitoring compliance.

What distinguishes the EU from every other international organisation are the supranational institutions of the European Commission, European Parliament and CJEU. The member states have transferred significant powers and responsibilities to these institutions, allowing them a degree of power over the running of the EU that is equal to, or in some areas more powerful than, that of the individual member states. At the same time, much of the focus of decision making remains with the intergovernmental institutions of the European Council and Council of the EU. Despite this, the EU's institutions – and in particular its supranational ones – have faced regular criticism that they are too powerful, distant, slow and unaccountable. Yet they have also been criticised for not being powerful enough (for example the EU has struggled to solve the Eurozone's problems because of a lack of the necessary enforcement powers and ability to centrally manage the Eurozone economy) and of having a decision-making process that, because of national restrictions, is

so overly consensus driven that it could be improved by stronger and more centralised decision making.

Why the UK joined and joined late

When Britain joined the EEC in 1973 it did so after a period in which it had initially ignored European integration and then made two failed attempts to join. Why then did the UK join late? Why was it twice rejected? Why did it not try to shape European integration from the beginning? And what legacy did this create for UK–EU relations? It is not as if Britain was not involved in some way at the start. One of the fathers of European integration – and after whom the European Parliament has named one of its buildings – was Sir Winston Churchill. In September 1946 at a speech at the University of Zurich he talked about the need for a United States of Europe as a way of rebuilding Europe, of strengthening it after the devastation of the Second World War and creating unity in the face of what was to become the Cold War. Why then did the country he had until only a year before led as one of its greatest prime ministers decide against participating?

Power and prestige

Britain was a victor in the Second World War. It had not been defeated unlike large swathes of the rest of Europe. It might have been left exhausted and almost bankrupt, but as far as the British were concerned they were winners. At one point, Britain had stood alone as the last European holdout against Nazism. This embedded an idea in Britain of its 'standing alone'. To some extent that is true because it was the last holdout. But like the other two large victors of the Second World War – the US and the USSR – it has tended to overlook its dependence on others to win the war. Hitler's Nazi Germany was defeated by the combined efforts of the British Empire, the US, the USSR and a host of smaller allies.

Nevertheless, the British narrative of the Second World War was that it had been a victor and should be treated as an equal to the US and USSR. But this was not Britain as known today

but Britain as the British Empire, on which Britain had drawn heavily in the war. The backbone of the British Empire was the British Indian Army, with forces from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and many other parts of the Empire serving to defend Britain and, especially in the war against Japan, the Empire. Regrettably that Commonwealth and imperial contribution to Britain's power and security can be overlooked by modern debates in the UK that can assume that Britain stood very much on its own.

Strategic lessons from the Second World War

The ability to draw on the support of the Empire and, crucially, the US, meant Britain had been able to resist the Nazis and in doing so reinforce a strategic outlook that dependence on alliances with other countries in Europe would be insufficient to protect Britain's security. The collapse of France, in particular, had reinforced this. The idea then in post-1945 of committing to the rest of Europe did not sit well with British decision makers, unless it was in the form of some commitment that directly engaged the US in European politics, and this was found in NATO. As the first NATO Secretary General (and former British Army general) Lord Ismay quipped, NATO was 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. Committing to some form of arrangement to bind Britain, France and West Germany in a political and economic union would have gone against the painful lessons Britain had recently learnt from the Second World War. As touched on further in Chapter Seven, this sense of Britain as the last holdout in Europe, and one that should always look outside of Europe for alliances that can shape the European and global order, lives on today.

Europe was only one of the three circles of British power

For all his lauding of a United States of Europe, Churchill himself was not wholly of the opinion that Britain should partake in any efforts at European integration. Instead he saw Britain as sat at the heart of three overlapping circles that defined its place in the world: Europe, the US, and the British Empire

and Commonwealth. These three overlapping circles defined Britain's international relations, standing and role. But these three overlapping circles would soon be transformed.

The Empire and Commonwealth circle started to fade away with the decolonisation of the 1950s and 1960s. British trade had also long been shifting more towards the European and transatlantic marketplaces. The experiences of the Suez crisis in 1956, when Britain and France, with the cooperation of Israel, had tried to occupy the Suez Canal, which had recently been nationalised by Egypt, revealed how Britain was no longer the imperial power it had once been. The canal was seen as strategically important for the British Empire, being the gateway to British territories 'east of Suez'. British, French and Israeli military efforts went smoothly. But the US under President Eisenhower had not been informed and opposed the move as an unacceptable act of imperialism. Through pressure on the pound sterling the US caused an economic crisis for Britain that led it to quickly back down and withdraw its military forces. It was a humiliation that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who had also lied to the House of Commons over the invasion. It was a painful lesson that drove France to look more towards European cooperation and the UK towards staying close to the US.

Unsure of its role in the world

The fading of the Empire left the two circles of Europe and the US, but this was not something British politicians and decision makers were entirely comfortable with making choices over. In 1962, Dean Acheson, a former US Secretary of State, gave a speech at the US military academy at West Point that caused much angst in Britain. He said:

> Great Britain has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role. The attempt to play a separate power role apart from Europe, a role based on a special relationship with the United States, and on being head of a commonwealth which has no political structure, or unity, or strength, this role is about played out.

This did not go down well in Britain. Acheson was no enemy of Britain, being a life-long Anglophile. But his speech ran up against ideas in Britain that the country was, despite the debacle of Suez, still a global power. But note what Acheson said: 'The attempt to play a separate power role *apart* from Europe.' Acheson was asking why, instead of accepting that Britain was a European power and so engaging fully with the rest of Europe, Britain was instead pursuing a relationship with the US and a relationship with a Commonwealth 'which has no political structure, or unity, or strength'. That his speech was received with much hostility in Britain revealed how sensitive – and disputed – was the issue of Britain's decline and place in the world. Public reaction to Acheson mirrored the private reaction inside government a few years earlier to the report, *Study of Future Policy, 1960-1970* (Cabinet Office 1959), commissioned by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to look at Britain's status in the world up to 1970. The report, which in retrospect is quite accurate in its predictions, made at the time for such bleak reading for those who thought Britain would remain a global power that Macmillan had it classified and banished to the archives.

Shifting economics

Britain's relative decline (relative because it continued to grow in wealth but others overtook it by growing more quickly) had also seen a shift in its trading patterns away from the Empire and towards the markets of Western Europe. This was a slow but painful transition that conflicted with the use of the pound sterling as a global currency used – in the sterling area – by a number of countries. But that group of states had long been declining, with Australia and Canada, for example, having long since looked more to the US than the UK.

Joining the EEC in 1973 meant Britain had to cut some of the remaining imperial preferences and markets with which it had maintained close relations, such as Australia and New Zealand. No other European state had witnessed such a profound shift in its trading patterns, in part because no other European state had

(thanks to war) maintained such a global empire and international trading system.

In response to the growth of the EEC, Britain had in 1960 attempted an alternative model for European economic relations in the form of the EFTA. Originally consisting of seven countries – Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK – it was designed as an intergovernmental approach to encouraging trade between its members that avoided having supranational institutions such as the European Commission and CJEU. However, it failed to deliver the same economic gains and, crucially, political links the UK wanted to secure with the rest of Europe.

Doubts on the Left and Right

Shifting from the Empire and Commonwealth to Europe angered groups and individuals on the Right who felt the Empire was being abandoned along with Britain's global ambitions. It also raised doubts for those on the Left. In the immediate post-war era Britain's Labour government had set out to build what Prime Minister Clement Atlee had told the Labour Party conference would be the 'New Jerusalem'. A combination of a universal welfare state and Keynesian economics had led to the nationalisation of certain key industries. Having seen off the Nazis, the British state would now be mobilised to defeat the giant evils of squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease. The security lesson learnt from the Second World War of independence and separation now translated into social policy.

Having nationalised the coal industry the Labour Party was therefore unlikely to consider integrating it with France or Germany. As deputy Prime Minister Herbert Morrrison is said to have argued: 'The Durham miners won't wear it.' The Westminster Parliament – defined by the idea that 'parliamentary sovereignty' means there is no higher authority in the UK – gave Labour the powers to affect widespread change to the political, social and economic landscape of Britain. While the degree to which US loans helped pay for such changes serves as a reminder that Britain's sovereignty may not have been as much as some

believed, the idea of pooling that sovereignty with other West European states was for many a non-starter.

Britain's political and constitutional setup

Britain's late membership of the EU also then owes something to Britain's unique political and constitutional culture compared to many other Western Europe states. Britain does not have a codified constitution; instead its constitution has evolved in large part by decision makers making things up as they have gone along, albeit often (but not always) with reference to history and convention. This flexibility lies at the heart of a majoritarian system of government where whichever political party can command a simple majority in the House of Commons has control of Her or His Majesty's Government. That government then has almost unquestioned authority over the UK thanks to the centralised nature of the UK state, meaning that almost all power rests in Westminster and Whitehall.

The majority in the Commons that this centralised power is based on is often the result of a minority of votes across the country because of the first past the post electoral system used to elect MPs. This has contrasted with the proportional electoral systems used elsewhere in Europe which lead to more consensus-driven politics (as seen in coalition governments) and which are sometimes backed by federal structures that distribute power away from the centre, for example in Germany.

This has led to tensions between Britain and the rest of the EU over the nature and power of such institutions as the European Commission, where non-elected political appointees exercise power that is accountable via other means than those familiar in British politics. Efforts to reform and codify the EU's powers in various treaties have also clashed with a British tradition of pragmatic uncodified constitutional change. This, to some extent, reflects a tension between English common law (law derived from custom rather than legislation) and Roman (or civil) law used elsewhere in Europe (and as a mixed system in Scotland).

Cultural and demographic differences

On top of the political, economic, security and constitutional reasons for Britain's late membership there were also demographic, cultural and 'narrative' reasons connected to the history that has prevailed in Britain of it having an 'island story' rather than a continental one. The idea of Britain as a global power (albeit in relative decline) was still a widely held idea among the public, and especially decision makers, in the post-war era. It was also noticeable in economic statistics thanks to the UK's continued links around the world, clear in military and security commitments (and between 1949 and 1963 something that was felt personally by all healthy men aged 17–21 who undertook national service – that is, conscription that sent them to parts of what was still a worldwide empire), observable in a legal and constitutional system that had global links (through the use of common law and as the legal and constitutional centre of the empire) and also in terms of demographic and family links.

This personal, and especially family connection, remained clear up to and long after Britain joined the EU. In 2006 the IPPR think tank (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006) looked into where Britons lived overseas for more than six months. Their work revealed three large concentrations: the rest of Europe, North America, and Australia and New Zealand. Large numbers were also to be found in South Africa, South Asia (especially India and Pakistan) and the Caribbean. If Britons resident in Ireland (with which the UK shares a common travel area) and Spain (home to a then estimated 761,000 Britons) are removed from the European calculation then Europe's share shrinks considerably.

The distribution reflects demographic links that connect Britain and what some term the 'Anglo-sphere' of the English-speaking world. That world is not only defined by links with what in the past was called the 'White' Commonwealth – Canada, Australia and New Zealand – but, thanks to immigration to the UK also connects it to countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. This mix of cultural, demographic, political, economic and historical links help explain why Oxford historian – and a committed European and liberal – Timothy Garton-Ash (2001) concluded

that '[t]he answer to the question "Is Britain European?" has to be "yes, but not only"'.

Late realisation

What delayed Britain's membership then was a combination of strategic outlooks, historical experiences, a different political and legal setup, economic, demographic and cultural links beyond Europe and an unwillingness to accept that relative decline meant Britain needed to think more about Europe than the wider world. The realisation that this could not be sustained and that Britain was also missing out on being able to shape what was fast emerging as the key organisation in European politics eventually moved UK decision makers towards applying for membership. Britain might have been doing well, and its people in the 1950s had, as then Prime Minister Harold Macmillan put it, 'never had it so good'. But the sense of global decline was palpable and by the 1970s the country was labelled – both at home and abroad – as the 'sick man of Europe' thanks to a series of economic booms and busts. This contrasted with the steadier growth the members of the EEC had experienced, which only added to a sense among UK decision makers of Britain's decline.

Repeated attempts at membership

Membership of the EEC became an economic, political and strategic concern for the UK, with the first attempt at membership made in 1961. It was eventually rejected in 1963 by France's President de Gaulle. For de Gaulle, Britain was not sufficiently European. The French rejection, along with another in 1967, did not represent the positions of the rest of the EEC, all of whom supported British membership. It might also have been less about how European Britain was and more about how de Gaulle feared Britain challenging French leadership in the EEC.

Nevertheless, that de Gaulle argued Britain was not European enough was telling. Britain's late applications and their rejection meant that when Britain finally joined in 1973 – as a result of de Gaulle leaving office in 1969 – it arrived late, frustrated by delays at getting in, and found an organisation already established to

operate in a way that was more in fitting with politics elsewhere in Europe than the style found in Westminster and also designed (especially in its budget) to meet their needs, not Britain's.

The two-faced European

Pick up any book about Britain's membership of the EU and you will soon read about how that relationship has rarely been smooth. Brexit has taken this to new heights. Look more closely and you will soon see that the relationship has also been more constructive and positive than might first appear. Even opinion polling has shown support for UK membership fluctuating significantly, albeit with support for withdrawal never falling below 25 per cent (Ipsos Mori 2016). Britain has therefore often been seen as a two-faced European, sometimes also described as 'Janus faced' after the two-faced Roman god.

A good example of this two-faced approach can be found in a speech Margaret Thatcher gave in 1988 at the College of Europe in Bruges, a speech that has become known as the 'Bruges Speech' (Menon and Salter 2016). This speech is widely interpreted as an attack on the European project. One line in particular is often quoted: 'We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain only to see them re-imposed at a European level.' This was in reaction to attempts, as she saw it, by some in the EEC to push forward integrated economic and social policies that would be underpinned by unnecessary regulations that would stifle business and competitiveness. This clashed with what had become known as Thatcherism, which, among other things, emphasised deregulation and the power of free markets. Such ideas were also found in the US in the form of 'Reagonomics', named after President Ronald Reagan. The speech was therefore interpreted in Britain as Thatcher defending an Anglo-American (sometimes referred to as 'Anglo-Saxon') economic order against a more corporatist, Keynesian and interventionist European one. This was used by her press secretary to feed a domestic message that Thatcher was standing up for Britain, arguing that it was a place apart from the rest of the EEC, and that it was being held back by it. These arguments have only grown among Eurosceptics since 1988.

There is, however, another side to the speech that looks at how it shaped the EEC and later the EU. British outlooks on the speech assume it was greeted with hostility across Europe. Yet Thatcherism and Reagonomics were part of a wider series of changes in the political economy of the West that also swept across much of Europe. The speech offered a perspective that aligned with frustrations found elsewhere in the EEC. As explored below, Britain, and Thatcher especially, had pushed for the creation of the single market to encourage competition across Europe, something other member states had also embraced. Look back on the ideas Thatcher set out in the speech – especially of a deregulated EEC with central institutions that were not the overpowering ones some elsewhere might have hoped they would become – and it soon becomes clear that such ideas have been central to debates of EU politics for the last few decades. Indeed, some of the problems the EU faces today – such as in the Eurozone – stem from not having central institutions that are strong enough to assert themselves against the sovereignty and powers of the member states. Despite this Thatcher is seen to epitomise Euroscepticism in the UK while also being seen elsewhere as the champion of the EU's single market. The case can therefore be made that, like the UK, she was an awkward partner but also, through some of her actions, a quiet European.

An awkward partner

Britain's late arrival, along with the vetoes that had delayed it, meant membership did not get off to the most positive of starts. In retrospect, it looked a fitting start to the often tumultuous membership that would follow. Britain, according to this interpretation of its membership, has been 'an awkward partner' (George 1998). As we will discuss in the next section, there are reasons to critique this. Not least, as the title of George's book alludes to, Britain has been 'an' awkward partner and not 'the' awkward partner it is sometimes described as (Daddow and Oliver 2016). The indefinite article 'an' matters. Britain has not been the only awkward member state. Other EU member states have also been awkward by, for example, rejecting treaties, failing to uphold EU law, or bringing the Eurozone to the verge

of collapse. However, Britain's awkwardness certainly stands out for nine reasons.

Struggling to fit with the setup of the EU

An awkward relationship was to some extent assured thanks to the terms on which Britain eventually joined the EEC, a result of its late membership meaning it was beholden to both how the EEC had been setup and the terms of membership the other member states had been able to set for it. An appreciation of how difficult EEC membership could be in terms of changing this agenda or shifting policies appears to have only dawned on British decision makers once the UK was a member. In one of the biggest tensions, Britain found it had to pay into an EEC budget that had been configured largely towards agricultural interests elsewhere in the EEC and which left Britain contributing more to (and receiving a lot less back) than any other state except Germany, and this despite being at the time one of the poorest.

Trying to change the EU and fit in caused tensions in UK politics

In 1974 the British government changed from one led by the pro-European Conservative Edward Heath to a Labour one led by Harold Wilson. Wilson and Labour had submitted Britain's second application for EEC membership in 1967, but not without causing tensions within the Labour party. Wilson, faced with a slim parliamentary majority and a UK-EEC membership that needed adjusting, felt the best way to manage the issue was to seek a renegotiated relationship which would then be put to the British people in an in/out referendum. This was to be the first time a UK-wide referendum was held. The eventual renegotiation did secure some changes, with 'Structural Adjustment Funds' being created to pay for projects in some of the EEC's poorest regions, which included a number of areas in the UK. Overall, however, the situation remained much as it had before, with the renegotiation sold to the British people as a successful exercise in UK diplomacy at securing concessions.

The eventual referendum, held on 5 June 1975, saw 67 per cent of Britain that voted do so to remain in the EEC (on a turnout of 63.9 per cent). This provided Labour with only a short reprieve from its tensions over EEC membership. In the hope of maintaining cabinet unity, Harold Wilson had allowed ministers to campaign on differing sides. The divisions this helped bring to the surface added to pressures, not least from Labour's move towards a more Left-wing agenda, which led in the early 1980s to a group of pro-European Labour MPs splitting away to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). By the 1983 general election Labour was campaigning for withdrawal from the EEC.

A transactional approach to membership

Labour's renegotiation and referendum were only the beginning of a history of demands for special treatment from the EU. Tellingly, Labour ministers viewed the UK–EEC relationship as a 'business arrangement' (Wall 2012, 516). Despite this, the 1975 renegotiation had not substantially reduced the amount the UK paid to the EEC. Relations were therefore again strained when in the early 1980s Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher pushed the EEC to restructure its budget so that the UK would not have to pay as much in. The 'rebate' which she secured for the UK's contributions followed fraught negotiations in which Thatcher famously declared that she wanted 'my money back'. To the rest of the EEC, especially other net contributors, this was evidence of Britain pursuing a purely national as opposed to collective approach to European integration. The rebate, and the way it was secured, has caused a degree of resentment ever since.

Britain has secured many opt-outs

Throughout its membership, Britain has been able to secure opt-outs and exclusions from common EU policies, most famously from the European single currency and Schengen. It was also able to negotiate an opt-out from some areas of cooperation in justice and home affairs and later from the 'Charter of Fundamental Rights', which was an attempt by the EU to create a bill of rights for itself. British officials often resisted the use of the word 'federal' to refer to anything within the EU because it carried connotations of a 'federal Europe', which in Britain had become associated with centralisation of power in Brussels and the emergence of a United States of Europe. The rest of the EU went along with many of these opt-outs, but not without unease.

There was therefore a sense of exasperation when, as explored in Chapter Three, David Cameron demanded as part of the UK's EU renegotiation of 2015–16, that the EU consider removal of a British exemption from the Treaty of Rome's preamble that made clear the contracting parties were 'determined to lay the foundations of an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe'. Again, the words 'ever-closer union' had to some within the British debate come to mean the centralisation of power and creation of a federal United States of Europe. This is not to argue that other EU member states have been unable to secure exemptions. Denmark, for example, was also able to secure an opt-out from the euro along with other areas such as defence cooperation. But Britain was the member state that always made the most demands and disrupted the application of common EU ideas across the Union. The willingness of the EU to eventually acquiesce to Britain in a way it would not for other member states generated elsewhere in the EU a feeling of unfairness and special treatment, something the British themselves often failed to appreciate.

Has been the bane of many prime ministers' time in office

As touched on above, Britain's demands for special treatment stemmed from a domestic political debate that rarely embraced European integration and was often deeply divided over it. As a result, the issue of Britain's relations with the EU has caused problems for successive prime ministers and shaped their premierships. Divisions within Labour over Europe weakened both Harold Wilson and James Callaghan; Margaret Thatcher's downfall was in part because of divisions with her cabinet over Britain's attitude to the idea of a single European currency; it was the source of bitter splits and divisions within John Major's government; it caused tensions between the pro-European Blair and the more wary Gordon Brown; the vote for Brexit brought

down David Cameron; and the problems of implementing Brexit have defined Theresa May's troubled premiership. No wonder then that British leaders have appeared weary of dealing with EU matters and confronting some of the causes that can make the relationship with the EU a troubled one.

Euroscepticism has defined public and media debate

Public opinion on UK membership has been erratic but support for leaving has never gone below 25 per cent (Ipsos Mori 2016). The British public has therefore never been consistently positive about UK membership. This has not been helped by a media which has moved from supporting membership, albeit with a long-running suspicion of motivations from elsewhere on the continent, to one which has been largely negative, alarmist and sensationalist about its claims of the effect Brussels and the EU has on everyday life in the UK (Daddow 2012).

This media and public suspicion has rarely been met by a strong pro-European message from leading politicians. Tony Blair, one of Britain's most pro-European prime ministers, was once described as an 'anti-anti-European' (Donnelley 2005) because he was willing to attack Eurosceptics but rarely willing to go beyond this by actively making a pro-European case to the British people. Like many prime ministers, when Blair did speak positively of Europe he did so when speaking elsewhere in Europe. Pro-European campaign groups have often been weak in comparison to the better-resourced and -organised Eurosceptic ones. The result has been a political culture in which UK politicians have been willing to take credit for any positive developments in the EU, but on the whole were more inclined to attack it to score easy political points and blame it for unpopular things they might have done anyway. There has also been a strong temptation to blame the EU for the UK's own problems. In 2013, Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London, argued that one of the benefits of leaving the EU would be that 'we would have to recognize that most of our problems are not caused by Brussels' (Johnson 2013).

Britain has been willing to say no

It has not just been in political debate where relations have been strained. Britain has also appeared to be awkward because it has been more willing than others in the EU to voice concerns, delay proposals and, ultimately, say no or veto a deal. It has often been said that other member states were prepared to hide behind that willingness and so allow the UK to play the 'bad cop' in European integration. As a large state Britain could not be easily ignored. Part of this willingness also stems from Britain's majoritarian and more confrontational political system, as discussed earlier. Compromises are publicly avoided, instead happening in the UK system in more private networks within and between government and Parliament (Russell and Gover 2017).

Britain has too often looked to the US

Britain's commitment to a 'special relationship' with the US has posed dilemmas when Europe and the US have moved in opposite directions. When faced with such a dilemma Britain has often been willing to side with the US, as happened under Tony Blair over his decision to back the US over the 2003 Iraq War. This might, as noted earlier, be in order to ensure the US remains committed to Europe, but this has also brought with it accusations that the UK is an American 'Trojan Horse' intended to undermine any EU efforts that do not align with those of the US. For example, efforts to create EU cooperation in foreign, security and defence matters have long been weakened by UK opposition, which stems from a concern that such efforts would undermine NATO and the US commitment to Europe.

Awkward because of its size

Britain is not the only member state to have joined after the EU was founded (19 other member states joined after Britain did in 1973), faced difficulties in joining (countries in Eastern Europe, for example, complained that their accession was a particularly difficult one), feel distant from the core (countries

such as Bulgaria and the Baltic states worry about this), be an island with an insular outlook (Malta, Cyprus, Ireland), struggle with the EU's policies, budget or treaties (the citizens of France, the Netherlands, and Ireland have each rejected EU treaties in referendums), have links with the US (Atlanticism is a norm in European politics), seen large numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers (southern European states have been confronted with a far bigger refugee crisis in recent years), or seen a rise in Eurosceptic parties (the leaders of France's Front National have twice – in 2002 and 2017 – made it to the second round of the French presidential election). What has made Britain different and awkward has been the combination of these with its size. As one of the largest member states its votes, budget contributions, and positions matter more than those of many other member states. Whatever the cause of the UK's awkward behaviour, once triggered it cannot be easily ignored.

A quiet European

There are six counterpoints that show how Britain has been a more positive and constructive player in European integration than it is often credited with.

Popularity vs effectiveness

It would be a mistake to confuse popularity with effectiveness. You can be deeply unpopular (or at least have a public appearance of being so) or be seen as awkward, but still be effective and constructive at getting your way. There is little doubt that deeply divisive political differences exist in the UK about membership of the EU and that these have caused tensions with the rest of the EU, but that does not always affect what Britain gets done in Brussels. Britain is widely judged to have been one of the most effective players in getting what it wants: more opt-outs and exclusions than any other member state, a substantial rebate on the budget, renegotiation of its relationship in 1975 and again in 2016 (something no other member state has ever secured) and, as discussed in detail further below, success in shaping a large number of policy areas to British aims.

Has had to assert itself to be taken seriously

Britain's abrasiveness in the earlier phases of its membership was because it had to overcome an unwillingness to take seriously its position as a new member state, which is a common problem faced by all new member states. Britain challenged the accepted order of the EU, one which had been shaped around the needs of France and Germany. One of the strongest backers of Britain's membership had been the European Commission, whose leaders hoped Britain would act as a counter-balance to French efforts to lead the EU. There was therefore an unwillingness on both sides to come to terms with the UK as an EU member state.

Atlanticism is the norm in the EU

Atlanticism has long been a strong norm within European politics. In siding with the US Britain has not always been alone. When Britain decided to support the US over the 2003 Iraq War it was backed by a large number of governments in other EU member states (although, arguably, perhaps not their publics). This division led US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to talk of 'Old Europe and New Europe', with 'New Europe' including large numbers of new member states from central and Eastern Europe. Like Britain, and indeed most other EU states, they have looked first and foremost to the US for their defence and not to the EU. It was also for this reason that soldiers from Britain and a large number of other EU states fought in the war in Afghanistan. It was to show their countries' commitments to the future of the Atlantic alliance and the security it brings to them, the EU and Europe.

Britain has won on many policy areas

The favourite example of Britain shaping the EU, and one made repeatedly in Britain, is the role Britain played in creating the EU's Single Market and the advancement of economic reforms across Europe. That even some British Eurosceptics have been keen on the UK retaining access to the single market highlights how much some in Britain feel the country invested in the

project. As noted earlier, Margaret Thatcher's extolling of the free market in her Bruges Speech was in line with the trend in the EU's political economy. Feelings that the EU had become a servant of Anglo-Saxon free-market economics were so strong in France that they played a part in France's 2005 referendum rejection of the European constitution. Other areas where Britain has been a strong advocate of the EU's work are as diverse as climate change through to animal rights.

Any complaints that Britain has been and can be outvoted in the EU ignores that a Westminster-style zero-sum mentality of win/lose is not how the consensus system of the EU (or of many other EU member states) works. It also ignores that the UK has been closer to most final EU policy outcomes than most other EU governments (Hix 2015b). That Britain has over the past few years found itself somewhat at odds with EU decisions reflects in no small part a disengagement by the UK government, but thanks to the consensus system Britain was on the winning side 87 per cent of the time (Hix and Hagemann 2015).

Has been a good enforcer of EU laws

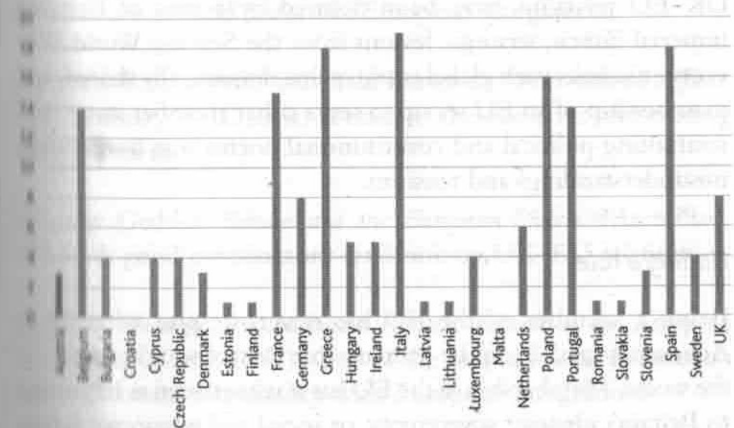
Britain has not only been good at shaping EU policy, it has also been good at implementing EU law. Part of Britain's difficulties with the EU may stem from the fact that it is too often a good European when it comes to EU law, the enforcement of which has provoked a long litany of complaints in the media. The European Commission can take a member state to the CJEU for failure to fulfil its EU legal obligations. As Figure 2.2 shows, states such as Italy, Greece and Spain have typically had the worst records. The UK's record has long been a good one and during the period 2012–16 equalled that of Germany, the two having the best records of any of the large member states.

The EU's design reflects British aims

Britain's budget rebate might be seen as one of Britain's most awkward and destructive contributions because it enshrines a transactional approach to the EU of *juste retour*. This ignores that the EU has long faced, and will continue to face, awkward

demands from its member states for *juste retour*. The UK has been one of the strongest backers of reforming a budget that once favoured *juste retour* for French agriculture, among others. Britain's strong support for EU enlargement, along with that of NATO, has brought about an EU that stretches across most of Europe.

Figure 2.2: Judgements concerning failure of a member state to fulfil its obligations (2012–16)



Source: Court of Justice of the European Union (2017).

Support for widening the EU was also premised on the idea it would prevent the deepening of the EU because it would make further integration more difficult. This has meant finding consensus within the EU has become increasingly difficult, creating problems for the EU when trying to manage problems such as those in the Eurozone. This can, to some extent, be blamed on Britain.

At the same time, most of the problems within the Eurozone cannot be attributed to the UK's behaviour. Nor can the need to agree a balanced relationship between the nine non-Eurozone members of the EU and the 19 within the Eurozone. This was not only about relations with the UK, although because of its size the UK was again at the forefront of tensions.

Conclusion

How then can it be explained that a country that on the one hand has often succeeded in getting what it wants from the EU has at the same time been home to such a divisive debate about Europe? There are three groups of reasons.

Historical legacies

UK–EU relations have been defined by a mix of Britain's imperial hubris, strategic lessons from the Second World War, economic links with global markets that dramatically shifted, late membership of an EU set up to serve other member states, and contrasting political and constitutional norms that have caused misunderstandings and tensions.

Finding a role

Being a member of the EU has never, despite what Dean Acheson hoped, been the primary role Britain sought to play in the world. Membership of the EU has not been seen as important to Britain's identity, sovereignty, or social and economic future as it has in many other EU member states.

A constraining public debate

Despite a referendum in 1975, the British public has rarely been engaged in detailed discussion about the EU. British politicians have wanted to avoid raising the topic, in part because of the tensions it confronts Britain with over the roles it wants to play in the world and also because it has become an increasingly toxic subject. It should not be forgotten that across Europe the past decades have seen a move from what has been called a 'permissive consensus' about European integration, in which European publics were content to allow integration, to a 'constraining dissensus' where publics have become more divided and unlikely to sanction integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009). British politics has shown this very clearly.

Further readings

Chris Bickerton, *The European Union: A Citizens Guide* (Penguin, 2016). Provides a penetrating analysis of the complex and byzantine ways in which the EU works.

Christopher Booker and Richard North, *The Great Deception: Can the European Union Survive?* (Continuum, 2005). Gives a strongly Eurosceptic take on Britain's relationship with the EU and the origins and history of European integration.

Timothy Garton-Ash, 'Is Britain European?' *International Affairs*, 77(1), January 2001. Looks at many of the questions surrounding Britain's identity.

Andrew Geddes, *Britain and the European Union* (Macmillan, 2013). A good introductory textbook on UK–EU relations.

Stephen George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (OUP, 1998). One of the best accounts of Britain's often awkward relationship with European integration.

Daniel Kenealy, John Peterson and Richard Corbett, *The European Union: how does it work?* (OUP, 2015). A comprehensive overview of how the EU works, which combines theoretical analysis with detailed descriptions of the EU's institutions and policies.

John Pinder and Simon Usherwood, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2013). A quick and accessible way to understand the EU, its institutions, its development and the debates that shape it.

Brendan Simms, *Britain's Europe: A Thousand Years of Conflict and Cooperation* (Allen Lane, 2016). Simms's history shows Britain (and before it, England's) struggle to shape Europe.