Populist politicians can today circumvent the need for the press, by conveying their messages on social media. It can be a place where they can communicate an emotive Post-Truth Eurosceptic rhetoric. This book investigates if a beleaguered press in two European countries is growing similarly shrill over the same issues—in a bid to hold the readership.

Our times reflect a real coarseness in public discourse as the disillusioned and disaffected respond to and feed the bating by some politicians. It has never been more important, as journalists, to hold politicians’ feet to the fire, speak truth to power and make sure an enraged and emotional public is not duped or misled. And yet this book explores if journalists have instead fallen prey to the same manipulation by the political class.

The mainstream media is fighting for attention on a series of fronts. The likes of Matteo Salvini, the former extreme right Italian interior minister, can appeal to the emotions of his audience directly with ‘personal’ video messages on Facebook—that are then lifted directly by news websites including the offerings of the mainstream media. To what end? Sometimes journalists are just giving his Post-Truth a whole new audience. But just maybe could such mainstream media posting allow Salvini to be hoisted by his own petard? It depends.

Similarly the British audience may want to hear from the prime minister in a speech, regarding the Brexit crisis enveloping Boris Johnson’s government and the country, more often than not, before reading the perhaps
more measured, balanced story in a serious newspaper online. Everybody is posting it. In the battle for clickbait, if one newspaper does not post it, another will. That could mean more clicks and views of the subsequent story. Catch 22.

It is suggested, the public may often opt to first hear emotive and sometimes vitriolic and even racist rhetoric, with a video link posited immediately above the story—before they actually read the analysis below. If they like what they hear from Johnson or Salvini, for instance, it will be \textit{that} narrative, \textit{that} context, prefacing all with emotion, rather than what Aristotle called logic (what today would be described as facts), colouring their reading of what follows. What this book goes on to do is to analyse the discourse of newspapers online, establishing if they are feeding the Post-Truth Eurosceptic rhetoric, not just by giving the likes of Johnson and Salvini a platform, but by feeding it with their \textit{own} Post-Truth discourse. In so doing, the press, it could be argued, is self-harming.

What could be assumed at this point is that those giving Salvini or Johnson a platform, are those supporting their views: the Breitbarts and Fox News media organisations of this world. But it may also be more moderate, mainstream media organisations, like the \textit{Daily Telegraph} or \textit{Corriere della Sera}. Those giving these leaders a platform are also at least of the centre-right, so yes, this could be the \textit{Daily Telegraph} or \textit{Corriere della Sera}. What should also be investigated is if those opposed to the emotional jostling of Johnson and Salvini are responding in a similar emotive vein to them with their counter-arguments.

The media can accentuate the problem when we frame and amplify the story in a way predisposed to Johnson or Salvini. Instead it is argued that even those media organisations sympathetic to them, should challenge these politicians with a little thing journalists often convey: substantiated, corroborated facts. These facts may fly in the face of the emotive, persuasive rhetoric based on an appeal to \textit{the people}. That holding to account is crucial. It is that holding to account that is under threat, it is argued.

Johnson claimed at the height of the parliamentary crisis in the UK, that the opposition was scuppering his chance of using a no deal over Brexit, to force the EU to come to a settlement. The EU made clear there were NO negotiations ongoing at that stage—despite Johnson’s government creating the impression that they were knee-deep in serious discussions. The impression Johnson and his government left with the public on this issue is what lingered and it went largely unchallenged by a lot of the mainstream media. The media instead should have pinned him
and his government to the wall. Maybe this too is a by-product of our age: suspending at times our willingness to dig out the story. Maybe, in the rush to compete for readers online, journalists drift into the emotional rather than digging and corroborating the story. The lack of EU negotiations could and should have been a big story. Are we allowing Post-Truth to go unchallenged?

At the time of writing, Salvini’s rhetoric has backfired and his bid to become prime minister and force an election failed. Salvini succeeded in creating the opposite, uniting his enemies, who had previously refused to form a government together. The Five Star Movement deserted Salvini’s League Party and instead reformed the government with the Democratic Party. Something similar happened in Britain. The Labour Party, the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, found themselves cooperating more than they would have liked, in what turned out to be the stop Boris and Brexit show. They failed.

Johnson’s provocative rhetoric, some have argued, could be part of his undoing, with many openly calling him a liar. Salvini has suffered a similar critique. Yet the former is firmly ensconced as prime minister—and the latter has been temporarily reduced to the sidelines, but like Marie Le Pen in France, Salvini is far from done. The rhetoric of Salvini and Johnson, two far-right populist politicians seeking to rule through divisions (although bifurcation means they claim to be uniting their nations), will be the focus of analysis—and indeed the media packaging of their utterances—and indeed when the media itself is guilty of the same.

Post-Truth denotes circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief (Oxford English Dictionary 2016). Further investigation is prefaced by closer scrutiny of the history of rhetoric (Aristotle 2012; Wiesner et al. 2017; Toye 2013; Leith 2012) before exploring the Post-Truth language and discourse of a previous recent populist leader in Europe, drawing parallels and discerning differences—pre-dating the obsession with Trump, yet still possibly informing his rise.

What is developing is not just a retreat to nationhood (as Britain has proposed with Brexit) but what is now being dubbed a retreat to English nationalism—and actually a Post-Truth threat to democracy in both the UK and Italy.

At the time of writing, the Coronavirus crisis has enveloped the world. The EU has complained that member states have not sought to cooperate. The British government, despite initial denials, decided not to work with
the EU-wide scheme to respond to the crisis, including the distribution of crucial ventilators. Conversely, it has been argued the EU has failed member states. Giuseppe Conte, the Italian Prime Minister wanted the debt incurred by the pandemic pooled and argued the political crisis was so deep the existence of the EU itself was under threat. Boris’s Brexit has damaged the EU. The departure of Conte’s Italy, would sign its death warrant.

The thesis is that a beleaguered mainstream press, in the social media age, is failing to confront the emotiveness of Post-Truth and nationalism—but actually feeding it. In this case, the focus is on Euroscepticism. The thesis extends further, arguing that the response of the mainstream media could threaten its role as the gatekeeper of democracy, while actually *exacerbating* the risk of its own demise. The sanctity of veracity and holding governments to account is at stake—not only on their interaction on the European stage—but also on a much broader canvas.

The quotability of populists (in politics and indeed journalism) courting controversy has made for ‘good’ (sellable) journalism copy on one level; while sometimes demonstrating support for populist agendas on another. The UK newspapers responded to Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, refusing to countenance a general election until the act confirming a *no deal* Brexit was off the table, was on the statute book. Shrewd, not trusting Johnson, the Prime Minister, or was Corbyn *chicken*? It depends on *who* you wish to believe and how the story is framed.

‘Hypocrite’ Corbyn rejects election to break deadlock, as the *Daily Telegraph* quoted the PM on its front page. Again also drawing on a Johnson quote, the frontpage headline of the *Daily Mail* read: *Corbyn chickens out of an election*, with *The Sun* on its front reading: *Is this the most dangerous chicken in Britain?* A less accusatorial approach is taken on the left, by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*—but that is not to assume that it is always so.

How new this Post-Truth phenomenon is, is questioned at the outset (D’Ancona 2017; Romano 2017; Lewis 2016; Strong 2017; *Economist* 2016). The book explores how we may have been here before—with a view to establishing later, if in some sense, this really is a new phenomenon, born of our time or if indeed the specificities of this situation, making it somehow incomparable with what has preceded. The study systematically revisits the communicating of these populist Eurosceptic voices through the conventions of the mainstream media (Rowinski 2016, 2017).
The attention then becomes the exponential growth and speed with which social media conveys information and the dawn of a new political communications age—with populist Eurosceptic politicians growing adept at circumventing the need to converse with mainstream newspapers (favourable or viscerally opposed to them). To misquote McLuhan (2001), is the (social) media perhaps becoming the message?

Social media, it is argued, has harnessed people’s anger and fear in the echo chambers of say Facebook and Twitter, feeding them what reaffirms those emotions. However, we have arrived at a point where social media sometimes, in the form of hate speech, also fuels acts of violence (Charles 2012; Facebook 2017; Hopkins 2017). The question then has to be asked, are the mainstream media doing likewise? It is nigh impossible to quantify if hate speech in the mainstream media has increased, as journalists jostle for position in our media landscape with politicians talking directly to their people online on one hand—and bloggers and the Twitterati on the other. But if hate speech surfaces in the mainstream media, in the context of these competing voices for public attention over Europe, it will be called out.

Maybe the mainstream media is being slowly sidelined? If it has started to develop a shrill Eurosceptic Post-truth rhetoric of its own is central to the investigation, competing in the race for emotiveness against the populists on one hand and the alternative media voices, bloggers and their niche markets, on another.

The press may have also failed to challenge the comedic rhetoric of the affable populists (Lewis 2016; Kaltwasser 2014; Moffitt and Tormey 2014; Freedland 2016), not calling out the lies at the outset. False premises formulated by populist politicians, go unchallenged, demonstrating a lack of rigorous background research by interviewers. Populist liars are sometimes given equal weighting to those who then respond to those lies. This further legitimises Post-Truth, in what journalists deem balance or impartiality. Instead it is often a false equivalence (Lewis 2016; Freedland 2016; D’Ancona 2017), a concept explored in due course.

A detailed critical discourse analysis of Post-truth Eurosceptic language in the press, examines news stories, editorials and commentaries in both Britain and Italy, around major Europe-related issues, including:

- Italian coverage ahead of the 2014 and 2019 European elections;
- The 2018 Italian general election;
The 2016 UK referendum on EU membership;
The 2017 UK general election;
The 2019 parliamentary debate following the UK Supreme Court ruling that the proroguing of the British Parliament was illegal.

The unravelling of politics in our emotionally fuelled age, from the economic downturn (Mason 2015; Pettifor 2017) to now and comprehension of what is driving those emotional reactions in the rejection of the mainstream political class (Ahmed 2014; Mishra 2017; Nussbaum 2016), is very much necessary, as a means of contextualising and unravelling the power struggles, lurking below the surface of subsequent political and indeed media discourse to be analysed.

A methodology, exploring the synergies that can combine in the specific context of Post-truth Eurosceptic discourse, sometimes ultimately fuelling hate, is implemented. From persuasion, use of metaphor and argumentation (Rowinski 2017; Mautner 2008; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Wodak and Reisigl 2001; Wodak 2015; Musolff 2004) a wider paradigm is needed to include the growing intensity, considering fear, anger, compulsion and hate, providing analysis of these emotions in the political sphere and ultimately in the discursive construction of Europe (and indeed fellow Europeans) in the press.

In the author’s last book (Rowinski 2017), a persuasion and the indulgences of national prejudice surfaced in the newspapers. In a much coarser age, it is expected that the discourse will reflect that.

In the death throes of what could be deemed a depressing post-apocalyptic book, there is a ray of hope. The national newspapers, both in Italy and Britain have a chance to change. The mainstream media has a chance to effectively indulge in stringent self-regulation, going to back to basics. Solid journalism. We have to do better than what is happening at present.

This is an existential threat, not just to journalism, but its role as guardian and gatekeeper of democracy and the centrality of veracity, on which our world is built. Without it, the walls may tumble and a laughing, amenable autocracy can be welcomed in unchallenged. Facts, their sanctity and the regaining of trust, lost to who knows who, out in the digital ether, is paramount—or else we may just hand over the reins to the algorithms on Facebook and a large smiling piece of artificial intelligence.

It’s time. There is a chance. We need to go back to basics.
**Post-Truth**

*Post-truth* received the accolade of joint US-UK word of the Year in 2016, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. *Post-truth* (Adjective): “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”.

*Post-Truth*: Generally applied to politics, specifically the US election and the EU referendum. Taking place in a time when the truth has become an irrelevant concept (Oxford English Dictionary 2016). The neologism *Post-Truth* needs some investigation at the outset, in order to establish more clearly what this study will explore. The dictionary reported in 2016 that the use of the word had increased by 2000% over that year. The word itself will not be the focus of this investigation but rather the manifestation of the phenomenon in language spoken by politicians; by politicians quoted in the mainstream newspaper media (MSM); and by the language used by the MSM. One of the questions posed will be: has the rise of social media changed the game?

The thesis advanced is that sections of the MSM are themselves taking on the language of Post-Truth, as opposed to only acting as a conduit for politicians to do so. What has to first be understood is if Post-Truth itself is anything new and for what reasons. Much of the literature focuses on the United States and the rise of Trump and in that particular cultural context of the right responding to the liberal elite and within it large swathes of the MSM (*The Economist* 2016; Lewis 2016; Laybats and Tredinnick 2016).

The phenomenon of Post-Truth within the academy is starting to undergo investigation. Romano (2017) focuses on how the Australian media should counter the post-truth of Pauline Hanson. Several academic journal editorials comment on the phenomenon, without offering an analysis of the language used (Laybats and Tredinnick 2016; Social Studies of Science 2017). To take just one example, there was a forerunner in the art of emotive specifically Eurosceptic rhetoric in the form of satirist-cum-politician, Beppe Grillo in Italy. This is pertinent to both the focus on Euroscepticism and the comparative nature of this particular investigation. As the author has previously established (Rowinski 2016, 2017; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013), there are many Euroscepticisms specific to the contexts of different national narratives (Billig 1995; Heer and Wodak 2008; Fossum and Schlesinger 2007). For Post-Truth political and
media discourses to be unravelled more effectively, the specific cultural terrains giving rise to them must be scrutinised first. That means returning the focus to Europe, rather than the preoccupation with the United States.

The term Post-Truth is of itself not new. Blogger David Roberts coined the phrase “post-truth politics” suggesting voters were more likely to choose a party aligned to their identity and values, consciously seeking out evidence to support its proposals, rather than assess the facts and then choose the party. Robert’s focus was on climate change and how the right in the United States were keen to discredit the claims advanced by the liberal left media. The term *truthiness*, was popularised by Stephen Colbert, describing statements people feel are *intuitively true*—regardless of whether they are backed up by facts (Lewis 2016; Davis 2017).

There is the notion of Post-Truth emanating from when those who wish to *challenge an elite*, are given a voice. Returning to the dictionary definition, there was the circumstance of the vote for Brexit. Former Times journalist and Conservative government minister, Michael Gove, dismissed the importance of economists in establishing what life would be like in Britain after Brexit (Calcutt 2016; Laybats and Tredinnick 2016; Chatham House 2017). Then a Conservative minister, Boris Johnson, argued the UK would save £350 m a day, if the country left the EU, which was incorrect and ignoring the EU rebate, which reduced the amount by some £100 m (Freedland 2016). Johnson was also the *Telegraph*’s Brussels correspondent in the nineties. Former colleague, Sarah Helm recalled: “Johnson’s half truths created a new reality…correspondents witnessed Johnson shaping the narrative that morphed into our present-day populist Euroscepticism”. (Freedland 2016) Elsewhere the notion of decrying the elite found a clear voice, with the enigmatic leader of Italy’s Five Star Movement, Beppe Grillo lumping the Italian political and media elite together as *La Casta*, the caste (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013; Barlett et al. 2013).

The roots of Post-Truth also need consideration. As Calcutt (2016) argues, some thirty years ago, academics started to discredit truth as “one of the grand narratives which clever people could no longer bring themselves to believe in…a new intellectual orthodoxy permitted only truths – always plural, frequently personalised, inevitably relativized”. Calcutt (2016) and AC Grayling (Coughlan 2017) argue that post-modernism and relativism are at the roots of Post-Truth, the irony being that these developments were harvested by the left—and are now being exploited
by the far right. In relation to the core focus of the proposed study—the impact of Post-Truth on the discursive construction of Euroscepticism in the MSM, it should be noted how some journalists followed academics in rejecting objectivity in the mid-nineties (Calcutt 2016).

What is also not new is the re-evaluation of truth. Baudrillard suggested, 35 years ago that “we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning (1994: 79). What may be happening and different—and its manifestation in language will be the focus—is what film-maker Adam Curtis calls the filter bubble of contemporary mediated digital content and its influence on forming and entrenching opinion (Curtis 2016). As Laybats and Tredinnick (2016) argue: “The filter bubble of social media is perhaps only a mirror of the filter bubble that individuals have always created for themselves by choosing to prioritise relationships and to consume information content that reinforces their existing values, opinions and beliefs”. The difference is perhaps the scale on which this is now possible, amplified very quickly, so “where information proliferates freely, inevitably, so also do untruths” (Laybats and Tredinnick 2016). Appeals to emotion can be amplified within seconds on social media and that includes the bravado of populist politicians like Grillo, Johnson and Salvini.

Philosopher professor, AC Grayling, has reflected (Coughlan 2017) on the climate that has precipitated Post-Truth, which perhaps suggests a different climate to at least recent history:

“The world changed after 2008,” says Prof Grayling - politics since the financial crash has been shaped by a “toxic” growth in income inequality. As well as the gap between rich and poor, he says a deep sense of grievance has grown among middle-income families, who have faced a long stagnation in earnings. With a groundswell of economic resentment, he says, it is not difficult to “inflame” emotions over issues such as immigration and to cast doubt on mainstream politicians. (Coughlan 2017)

And Grayling alludes to the social media environment, which he suggests creates a new relationship to information. Grayling argues it is no longer the soundbite (drawing from broadcast journalism) but rather the “I-bite” where strong opinion overshadows evidence (Coughlan 2017). Grayling argues:
The whole post-truth phenomenon is about ‘My opinion is worth more than the facts.’ It’s about how I feel about things. It’s terribly narcissistic. It’s been empowered by the fact that you can publish your opinion. You used to need a pot of paint and a balaclava to publish your opinion, if you couldn’t get a publisher. But all you need now is an I-phone. Everyone can publish their opinion – and if you disagree with me, it’s an attack on me and not my ideas. The fact that you can muscle your way on to the front row and be noticed becomes a kind of celebrity. (Coughlan 2017)

The legendary former Sunday Times editor, Howard Evans, did comment on the implications for the quality of journalism, in the Post-Truth age (Jackson 2017):

“In terms of truth of journalism it is a very perilous time,” said Evans. “We have those people who don’t have the brains to distinguish facts [from fiction]. Then we have the bad performers in the press, particularly numerous in the UK … Then you have got the assault [on the media].” He later added that the combination of factors meant the media had “never known a worse situation than this…”

Media discussion on Post-Truth focuses on the phenomenon among populist politicians and indeed how journalists should respond (The Economist 2016; Lewis 2016; Freedland 2016) but not on the manifestation of the phenomenon in the journalism produced—the focus in this investigation.

Lewis’s (2016) Nieman Report, entitled, Post-Truth Politics, does start wading into the issues of widespread misinformation, in relation to politicians. However, the exposition does in part offer analyses transferable to the arena of Post-Truth journalism and some valuable contextualisation, helping to explain how we got here.

As was apparent from research conducted by the author, the discursive construction of Europe in the media often starts from different national vantage points and different facts are used to support those often nationally based premises over Europe (Rowinski 2017; Billig 1995; Heer and Wodak 2008). “Epistemic competition is as much about choosing which truths can be considered salient and important as about which claims can be considered true and false, and these choices have important consequences” (Social Studies of Science 2017). Post-Truth may be a way in journalism, of reaffirming national, Eurosceptic perspectives. In reaffirming certain truths, others (regarding the narrative of a country in
Europe) can be sidelined in what Nietzsche described as *active forgetting* (Heer and Wodak 2008: 4) and by Davies (1997: 25–26) as a *mechanism of elimination*:

These are the normal mechanisms of propaganda. They devalue the diversity and the shifting patterns of European history; they rule out interpretations suggested by the full historical record; they turn their readers into a mutual admiration society.

Late US Democratic senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, remarked that ‘everyone was entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts’ (Lewis 2016: 2). Lewis also noted that the presidential election that saw Trump victorious “has been characterized by competing sets of facts”. The same was evident in Britain’s EU referendum, vis-à-vis the £350 m Brexit battle bus claim.

In deepening our understanding of Post-Truth, in relation to the discursive mainstream media construction of Europe, distinctions will be drawn. Post-Truth, when articulated through the language of journalism can occur when: replicating and giving a platform to politicians, appealing to public sentiment; and when the media is of itself appealing to that sentiment. Coupled with this, the analysis will investigate if this appeal to emotion and public sentiment is coupled with an attack on the Separation of Powers, which could threaten democracy in the UK and Italy. Is the sovereignty of Parliament questioned? Are the Speakers of Parliamentary houses and their bid to remain impartial in debates, questioned? An example of pertinence would be the *Daily Mail* story headlined, *Enemies of the People*, when the judges who ruled the UK Parliament should ultimately have a say over Brexit, suffered systematic character assassination. This falls outside of the case studies analysed, but is a case in point.

### Euroscepticism

Literature on *Euroscepticism* does not reflect sufficiently on the discursive construction of it by the media, in both Britain and Italy, something the author has tried to address (Rowinski 2016, 2017). Newspapers and their online versions are themselves discursively constructing their nation’s relationship with European integration—not just reflecting it—and in recent years this has meant an ever-stronger articulation of Euroscepticism.
The origin of the term *Euroscepticism* appears to be a series of articles in *The Times* in 1985 and 1986 (Spiering 2004: 127). It was a term used to refer to a section of the British right within the Conservative party that was increasingly opposed to the second wave of integration initiated by the Delors Commission.

It is necessary to comprehend how European history itself has been discursively constructed, posing questions already about what we (within our national spheres) understand by Europe (Gifford 2014; Ginzborg 2003; Mudde 2012; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008; Fossum and Schlesinger 2007) leading us to subsequent comprehensions of Euroscepticism(s) as a further articulation of that understanding. Our collective memory of Europe (seen through the prism of nation) has subsequently coloured our understanding—and in some instances led to various and sometimes very different manifestations of Euroscepticism (Rowinski 2016, 2017; Gifford 2014)—and it is suspected, possibly different articulations of Post-Truth.

In terms of historical narrative, coherence is constructed for us. Heer and Wodak (2008: 2) refer to how memory is a highly active system of connected cortical, sensory and motor processes. In this context, the repetition of specific stimulus patterns is seen as a significant structuring factor in perception and a basic element in learning processes. The visual system responds with heightened awareness to structures and sequences of events, which have shown themselves to be coherent and ordered in earlier experience (ibid.: 245).

Within this historical narrative, it has been argued that prejudices are internalised. Heer and Wodak (2008: 3) refer to van Dijk’s (1998) socio-cognitive model, internalising this way. Hence prejudices, stereotyping and ideologies can be explained through the internalisation of cognitive schemata. Once cognitive and emotional schemata are acquired and reinforced through socialisation, they can only be prised open with difficulty. Heer and Wodak (2008: 4) argue there are studies that show how “*collective memory* exists as the sum of ‘real’ group memories and how groups preserve their stability and construct of identity by integrating positive memories and rejecting negative ones”. It is worth relating this briefly to the dictionary definition of Post-Truth: “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”. The dictionary also refers to: “Taking place in a time when the truth has become an irrelevant concept”.
The truth—or at least certain uncomfortable truths—are possibly disbanded in this *active forgetting* (ibid.: 6) as a way of dealing with the past. Political and journalistic actors seeking to control the discourse on European integration may practice *Geschichtspolitik*, functionalising (aspects of) history for political ends (ibid.: 5).

There is the conundrum of whether Euroscepticism should be operationalized in absolute or relative terms, raising the question of how opposed to (or supportive of) a particular EU policy (such as the euro or a cohesive response to Covid19) one has to be (and compared to whom) “in order to be classified as *Eurosceptic*” (Katz 2008: 3). Katz (ibid.: 3) cautions against commentators interpreting parties that problematize an aspect of European integration at any one time, as then Eurosceptic “which is clearly not axiomatically the case”. He (ibid.: 3) concedes that one assesses trends in Euroscepticism temporally “given that the EU is a dynamic concept, making the *Europe* about which one might be *sceptical* a moving target?” As Szerbiak and Taggart (2008: 5) concede: “that what constitutes Euroscepticism in one country may not be the same as what constitutes it in another. In other words, we accepted the need for measures that were contextually sensitive.” This is of pertinence, when we consider how the Brexit Party and indeed the cabal now controlling the Conservative government were in favour of Britain withdrawing from the EU—whereas their recent, close Italian partner in the European Parliament, Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement (M5S), only ever contemplated leaving the euro—but never the EU itself. And just as what constitutes Euroscepticism in one country may not be the same as another, the same may be the case in the articulation of Post-Truth and its manifestation in the language of the media.

Diamanti and Bordignon (2005) found that *immigration* was the argument most utilised by Eurosceptic parties, finding a correlation between fear of immigrants and falling support for EU integration. They also found a rise in xenophobia, alongside increasing distrust of institutions to respond. Ipsos-Mori (2014) asked in 14 countries, what percentage of the population did people think were immigrants. In the UK, people thought 24%. It was actually 13%. Immigration was the key focus in UK newspaper coverage just before the referendum (Deacon 2016).

The issue of *free movement* of labour is an integral part of being an EU member—but one that has become an issue for Britain since 2004 (Springford 2013). The UK was one of just three EU countries not
to impose transitional restrictions, as eight further former Warsaw pact nations, joined. Migration from these eight was much larger than envisaged. There are around 1.1 million people from these countries in the UK. However, studies have found little evidence that the large arrival after 2004 increased unemployment among Britons or reduced Briton’s average wages (Springford 2013).

The notion that EU migrants in the UK are benefit tourists is misplaced. David Cameron, ahead of the referendum, failed to renegotiate EU free movement rules on benefits. In terms of EU immigrant ‘benefit tourism’: 0.2% claim unemployment benefit but have never worked in the UK; 0.4% are on unemployment benefit six months after arriving in the UK, rising to 0.8% after a year (Springford 2013).

Some 2.1% of EU migrants claim child benefit and 1%, tax credits. A fifth of British nationals are claiming both. The western Europeans and subsequent 2004 eastern European influx are better educated than the average Briton. More have finished secondary education and university degrees (Springford 2013; Sumption and Somerville 2009). An LSE study (Wadsworth et al. 2016) corroborates further. EU immigrants are more educated, younger, more likely to be in work and less likely to claim benefits than the UK-born, with about 44% having some form of higher education compared with 23% of the UK-born. The study by Wadsworth et al. (2016) also concludes: “New evidence in this report shows that the areas of the UK with large increases in EU immigration did not suffer greater falls in the jobs and pay of UK-born workers. The big falls in wages after 2008 are due to the global financial crisis and a weak economic recovery, not to immigration”.

The British labour market has ‘hollowed out’. Most new jobs are created at the top end and conversely in low-skilled work (Springford 2013). Springford’s research (2013) shows that EU immigrants are net contributors to the treasury. The post-2004 employment rate is higher than that of British nationals, with 88% in work, as opposed to 77 for UK citizens.

Further corroboration is offered in Devlin et al. (2014) and their Home Office report. In their forward they write: “Assessing the impact of migration on the employment outcomes of the UK workers is a hugely challenging analytical issue. It is difficult to isolate the effects of migration from the other factors that simultaneously affect labour market outcomes. Even if one is confident that the effect of migration has been isolated, it is hard to be sure that what is measured is a causal estimate of the impact
of migration on labour market outcomes, and not the reverse. Moreover, assessing aggregate national impacts may mask impacts that vary markedly across localities”.

This is worth bearing in mind, when analysing the Eurosceptic framing and presentation of information in the British mainstream media.

In the executive summary of the report (Devlin et al. 2014: 4) stipulate: “To date there has been little evidence in the literature of a statistically significant impact from EU migration on native employment outcomes, although significant EU migration is still a relatively recent phenomenon and this does not imply that impacts do not occur in some circumstances”.

However Devlin et al. (2014: 14) also then add: “The evidence also suggests that where there has been a displacement effect from a particular cohort of migrants, this dissipates over time – that is, any displacement impacts from one set of new arrivals gradually decline as the labour market adjusts, as predicted by economic theory”.

The Migration Observatory also produced a report entitled: A Decade of Immigration in the British Press (Allen 2016). The study noted a sharp increase in the frequency of discussion of migrants from Europe after 2013, with a particular spike in 2014, when migrants from Romania and Bulgaria achieved full access to the UK labour market. The report suggests that press depictions of migrants have focused on concern about high levels of net migration and particularly EU migration. This numerical focus has eclipsed a waning focus on ‘illegal’ migration and become the leading migration form in UK national newspapers. The second most frequent way the press described immigrants was with the terms “EU” or ‘European’ after the most popular: illegal.

The UK has left the EU. What remains to be established is if there will be a deal with the EU at the end of 2020, at the time of going to press, and if a close relationship is articulated in that deal, or indeed not. The British government’s stance strongly suggests it will not sign up to free movement and will therefore not have full access to the single market (Springford 2013; Ashworth-Hayes, April 2016). There is currently no further public discussion on these issues and the possible implications for jobs and trade. Springford (2013: 9) noted UK politicians were facing a hostile public “fed misleading stories on immigration by a hostile press”. Ashworth-Hayes (April 2016) argues: “Eurosceptics have no basis for saying that Britain could quit the EU, dispense with free movement and maintain full access to the single market”.
Indeed the British government positions seem to categorically rule out free movement, as it is bound to complying with a single market.

Ashworth-Hayes (April 2016) makes clear that no country has thus far succeeded in controlling free movement and remained in the single market. Switzerland tried and failed (Ashworth-Hayes, April 2016; Sodha 2015). When the UK joined the then EEC in 1973, in the 1957 Treaty of Rome signed, it clearly stipulated in article 1c “an internal market characterized by the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital”. The preamble also referred to “ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe”.

As Sodha (2015) explains, free movement, post-war, was designed to allow people to move from countries with unemployment, to ones that were suffering labour shortages, boosting European growth and helping to prevent war, by getting people to mix across borders. Leave campaigner, Bavarian-born, Gisela Stuart admitted, the principle had succeeded (Sodha 2015). Stuart, a Labour MP confirmed that the founding fathers of post-war Europe: “wanted it to be a construct that also had a political integration and for that you needed people to move because the minute people cross boundaries and borders, you had deeper integration…both a social as well as economic aim” (Sodha 2015).

The free movement debate was part of the discussion in the UK media, ahead of the 2016 EU referendum and the need to control EU immigration to Britain. Issues revolving around EU migrants from certain states to Italy, such as Romania and Bulgaria, have caused controversy and are the source of stories there.

Looking at Euroscepticism from the vantage point of the different political structures in Italy and Britain offers us a further perspective that may prove pertinent in subsequent analysis. Britain has its majoritarian two-party system and Italy its coalition governments (Hallin and Mancini 2004), which often result in very similar policies to the previous government as the long reign of the Christian Democrats and then Berlusconi, can attest to (Ginzborg 2003).

Aspinwall’s comment (2000: 433) is pertinent to Italy therefore: “In those countries characterised by power sharing governments, a range of institutional mechanisms enables the ‘Eurosceptic social voice’ to be ‘filtered out’” (Aspinwall 2000: 433). Yet it has been argued by several, that in a series of Berlusconi governments in Italy, the junior partner of the then Northern League, was pivotal in creating a more caustic Eurosceptic environment in Italy overall (Giordano 2004; Ginzborg 2003).
In comparison, British governments Gifford (2014: 3–4) operating in a system of one-party rule have to give greater consideration to backbench Eurosceptic opinion than proportional representation systems, which tend to produce broad, centrist governments. Instead, because of strong opposition within party ranks, particularly if they have small majorities, there has been a tendency to adopt negative positions towards European integration.

From this perspective, the significance of Euroscepticism is to be found in a specific set of British institutional dynamics that has allowed Eurosceptic factionalism in the main parties to take on a particular significance. In summary, peculiarities of the British political system creates comparatively core opportunities for Eurosceptics to influence mainstream party positions and government policy, and is that much harder to ‘filter out.’ (Gifford 2014: 4)

In Italy, the minor yet increasingly muscular Euroscepticism of the Northern League has spawned the largest Italian political party, in the now no longer secessionist northern, but plain Italy-wide League, trouncing Berlusconi’s Forza Italia at the 2017 election covered later and embedding a deep Euroscepticism in the Italian body politic. This contradicts Gifford’s (2014) thesis of countries like Italy that use proportional representation, producing broad, centrist governments. Instead what has happened is that a series of Berlusconi governments had to secede power to the extremist Eurosceptic positions of the then Northern League, in order to cling to power and that narrative coloured those administrations and spawned Salvini’s subsequent success.

Conversely in Britain the once marginalised UKIP, was eclipsed by Nigel Farage’s new party, the Brexit Party. The Conservatives took a gamble and lurched sharply to the right and became pathologically Eurosceptic and that won them a large government majority in 2019, covered fleetingly in the conclusions of this book.

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