
**Populism in the UK: A Critical Analysis of the Discursive Logics of the UK
Independence Party**

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Abstract

Recent political events in the United Kingdom have given rise to an explosion of interest in the use of the concept of populism. These applications overwhelmingly take populism as a form of ideology and in doing so make several essentialist assumptions that betray the usefulness of the term and which reduce it to a mere descriptor of particular phenomena. This work seeks to re-establish the analytical and critical value of populism using a refinement of Laclauian discourse theory via the ‘Logics’ framework of critical explanation. This piece contributes to theoretical debates by showing that populism is best understood as a political logic that organises a discourse in a particular configuration, one in which other political and fantasmatic logics must be accounted for in order to unearth and preserve the context-specificity of populism in a given case and produce an overarching substantive-critical account. In applying this framework to the case of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), this work also makes a methodological contribution to the field by providing a means to identify populist logics by coding patterns of articulation with a particular focus on ‘equivalence’ and ‘difference’. What is demonstrated is the adoption of a populist political logic by UKIP from 2011 to 2016 and in doing so extended the affective reach of a traditionally nationalistic programme. This reading expands current understandings of UKIP which overstress the ‘weighting’ of populist and nationalistic aspects against one another, and instead provides a multifaceted, diachronic portrayal that explicates, amongst other things, points of friction and symbiosis between populism and other logics such as nationalism. It is then shown how these logics were appropriated in the Brexit referendum by the ‘Vote Leave’ campaign. Finally, these cases are utilised to re-evaluate ongoing theoretical debates in populism research.

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Introduction

Populism is on the rise. This is the claim that besets academic, political and media circles at present. The explosion of its usage in the parlance of these spheres is grounded in the ambiguity of the term and the ease with which it can be used as a blanket term for ‘radical’ movements, ‘insurgent’ politics, or ‘extremist’ ideologies. A vast array of ideologically disparate political figures are routinely identified as populist or accused of engaging in populism, particularly when those figures are new to the political stage. The usage of the term is widely applied as a derogatory label, yet curiously it simultaneously denotes the emergence of something unexpected in the political order. When Donald Trump became President of the USA or when the UK voted to leave the European Union, these events were marked as an insurrection of populism into ‘normal’ politics. To declare these events and their associated actors as populist is in some sense to suggest that, following a global financial crisis and the subsequent unimaginably difficult years of austerity, we should be surprised that challenges to the existing regime or ruptures in politics-as-usual should occur and that these challenges represent such novelties that they should be labelled differently. This perhaps explains the proliferation of populism as a signifier that functions in a performative sense in so far that it carries a certain normative weight. Explorations into the performative role of populism are necessary in charting the ‘populist hype’ and the place that populism takes, as a signifier, in different discourses and contexts (Mondon & Glynos, 2019). This represents one rich branch of populism research.

However, the aim of this work is to engage with the use of populism as a concept that is supposed to capture some important aspect of political practices. Whilst the term is being bandied about in the media and political circles as an ambiguous signifier, academic approaches have equally struggled to adequately grasp the specificity of populism as a concept in its own right. What is meant here is that approaches to populism at present are largely

concerned with identifying ‘cases’ of populism which can then be compared and contrasted, revealing, at best, relative ‘extents’ of populism. Moreover, such approaches suffer a certain reification and reduction of the concept, imbuing it with essentialised features (xenophobia, nativism, moralism) that far from being taken for granted, require explanation in the cases being studied (Borriello & Mazzolini, 2019; De Cleen, 2019). This largely includes unhelpful generalisations about its supposed anti-democratic nature (Mondon & Glynos, 2019) and an equivocation of populist and nationalist discourses, thus removing the analytic contribution of populism to the study of these phenomena (Stavrakakis et al, 2017).

In this sense the challenge posed here is not one that revels in the ambiguity surrounding the concept – indeed the narrative that there is a strong, almost irresolvable, ambiguity surrounding the term is an unhelpful mythologisation. Definitions of populism almost universally rally around a conception that speaks of a political programme in which a threatened or otherwise oppressed ‘people’ oppose an illegitimate ‘elite’ (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013b). The provocation that this work intends to illicit is the *explanatory* deficit that plagues analyses of purportedly populist phenomena. The goal of this provocation is to aid in the shift of debates on populism away from definitional quagmires and toward a reframing of the problem of populism as one of productive added value. A certain *thinness* is prevalent in the application of definitions of populism, where identifying a reified populist ‘core’ betrays a more textured and critical explanatory account.

To wield populism more usefully there is a series of maneuverers that must be taken. First the cloud of ambiguity surrounding populism needs to be dispelled by highlighting the convergence of different approaches around a broad schematic. Here we show how ideational, strategic, and discursive frameworks largely agree on definitions of populism as concerning the privileging of the general will of the people over the rule of an illegitimate elite. Second, instead of reifying populism as a term through the identification of cases to which this rough

schematic reflects, we must instead ask what role populism is performing as a descriptor of these cases and how it adds value to the explanations of these phenomena overall. Briefly, we may ask how it is that a people are constructed in a given scenario; how it is that a crisis is articulated by particular actors that warrant this deployment of the people against the elite; how the relationship between people and elite is manifested, and so on. Such questions elevate our understanding of a given political moment from simply describing it as populist per a predetermined set of criteria, to critically explaining *how* this particular populism manifests.

With these components in place, we are moved to a much stronger vantage point from which we can ask questions about not only the populist aspects of a particular phenomenon, but more crucially we can explore the interactions and synergies between these populist elements and the wider case. Avoiding isolating populism from necessarily interwoven moments, we can study its interaction with nationalist elements, neoliberal elements, inclusive or exclusive dimensions and so on. For example, the ‘immigrant’ is often reduced to a nationalistic signifier with nationalistic appeal, but we show how in the case of UKIP it became a central lynchpin in combining nationalistic and populist elements, broadening and animating more nuanced appeals to questions of democracy and control. This more holistic reading can speak more clearly as to the effectiveness of these discourses whilst opening the door to what might be called strategic challenges – that is, to normative and ethical questions concerning those phenomena and with them clues as to their prevention or expansion. In essence, the key to this shift in focus towards a fuller explanatory model lies in the move away from seeking an essentialised ‘contents’ of populism and toward an understanding of how those contents are articulated “whatever those contents are” (Laclau, 2005: 33).

This mode of analysing populism is rooted in the post-structuralist discourse approach as theorised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. As shall be seen, the ontological foundations of discourse theory provide the necessary understanding through which to ground

questions concerning the meaning of populism and other adjoining political signifiers given the specificity of the contexts within which we examine them. However, this research does not intend to take Laclauian methods as they stand and ‘apply’ them to a case as it were. Instead, the Laclauian move is operationalised via the Logics approach to discourse theory as developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth whose work allows for a rigorous methodology to be deployed utilising the often more abstract aspects of Laclau’s ontology. These ‘logics’ provide us with a grammar with which to describe and examine the relationships between different discursive practices. It is at this level that populism is implemented in this framework – as a particular *political logic* that is shaped by and shapes surrounding logics. The key task of the analyst under these conditions is to uncover and flesh out the *articulation* of populism with other components of the case.

The Logics approach is a problem-driven species of methodology that seeks to illuminate the specificities of a given case as problematised by the researcher. This research is inspired and animated by the events leading to, and including, the Brexit referendum of 2016. Given the (supposed) shock outcome of the vote to leave the European Union, it was not long before commentators began to attribute Brexit to a populist rupture in British politics. Framed predominantly as a discussion into ‘what went wrong’ that allowed for the victory of the Leave campaign, populism here acts a signifier of dissatisfaction with the outcome whilst offering little in terms of analytic value (Koller et al., 2019: 1-4). Analyses often begin with reducing populism to something akin to nativism or nationalism and from there discussing how these elements were central to the result (Iakhnis et al., 2018).¹ Such research is profoundly useful in helping to explain the various threads of the discourses surrounding Britain’s problematic

¹ One archetypal version of this can be found in an article in which the author, discussing a racist poster used to damn immigration in the Brexit campaign, claims that such an approach was “populism, pure and simple, spreading false information and demagogic” (Joppke, 2020). How these qualities pertain to populism is not given, yet they are also equated with right-nationalist political strategy, begging the question as to what populism specifically adds to this analysis.

relationship with the EU and how such discourses attracted voters, but they do not appear to address the specifically *populist* charge indicated in such works (Freedon, 2017).

Moreover, there has been surprisingly little attention paid to the role of UKIP in provoking a referendum in the first instance to allow for such a populist ‘rupture’ to occur. The sitting Conservative government gained an overall majority at parliament in the 2015 General Elections, during which it promised a national referendum over the nation’s membership of the EU. This promise was made in lieu of the performance of the UKIP at local, national, and supranational elections in previous years. They represented a substantial threat to a core base of Eurosceptic voters as well as to the unity of the party itself – indeed two Conservative MPs had defected to UKIP by the end of 2014, wounding the party severely at a pivotal moment in the electoral cycle. Brexit itself, and any supposed populist elements contained therein, are direct consequences of the rise of UKIP as a political force. In sum, the rise of UKIP is strongly correlated with a fundamental shift in the British political landscape and will have enormous ramifications for the entire country for generations to come. Both UKIP and Brexit have been portrayed as populist interruptions in the ‘normal’ functioning of British politics. The puzzle then is this: given the gravity of these two interlinked phenomena, it is crucial that we take the populist charge seriously and ask *how* populism pertains to these developments – firstly, as an accurate description of their occurrence, and secondly, as a means by which we can come to understand and explain these occurrences.

UKIP here serves as both the instrument and target of a problematisation of populism. First, we can explore the discourse of UKIP in order to examine claims that they constitute an example of populism. This work will utilise the conference speeches of the party leadership to excavate the logics being used to frame the party’s discourse. It is here that the role of the populist logic is explored in relation to the wider discourse in which it sits. To further investigate how these practices evolved over time, this analysis is expanded to include their

role in the Brexit referendum campaign. Finally, this investigation can be used to problematise and pin-down what work ‘populism’ is doing as a concept – to clarify its formal status and substantial contribution to the study of these cases.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 makes an excursion into the typology of competing, though as we shall see somewhat aligned, approaches to populism studies where the case shall be made for the merits of a discursive conception of populism, which classifies it as a political logic that has a particular formal structure, as opposed to containing a set of substantive qualities.

This Laclauian reading however shall be both problematised and complemented in Chapter 2 through the introduction of the Logics approach. This approach consists of a methodological schema which can harness the theoretical insights of Laclau’s discursive approach. This method allows for the operationalisation of a host of discursive tools in order to construct not only the populist logic but other orbiting logics, such as nationalism, from the discursive practices identified. It is through the interaction of these logics that we find what is lacking in the work on populism: a way with which to elicit the functioning, efficacy, and ‘grip’ of a populist discourse, but which maintains a concept of populism that can be distinguished from other political logics.

Chapters 3 and 4 harness these insights to give a thorough discursive analysis of UKIP via the speeches of its most prominent leader, Nigel Farage. Chapter 3 shall produce a series of logics that define and give texture to the functioning of the UKIP discourse from 2008-2010. Here we claim that no clear populist thread can be determined as the party largely relies on a nationalistic telling of its opposition to the EU, framed largely in terms of self-determination and the inherent value of national independence. Nonetheless, we highlight the presence of a

number of populist signifiers that reveal the potential for a populist discourse to emerge. Chapter 4 builds on this reading by moving through the period 2011-2016. Here we demonstrate the construction and sedimentation of a robust and consistent populist logic that comes to systematically organise all other elements of the discourse. This is shown to have been achieved through the construction of a political frontier that divides the people from the elite via the introduction of ‘immigration’ and ‘control’ as key nodal points.

Chapter 5 utilises this analysis and the logics that are produced from it to provide a novel reading of the ‘Leave’ side of the Brexit referendum campaign. Through the speeches of ‘Vote Leave’ leaders Boris Johnson MP (now PM) and Michael Gove MP, we depict a discourse that transitioned from one that was primarily organised as nationalist toward one primarily organised as populist. Moreover, we show this transition as one that replicates the shifts of the UKIP discourse over several years but in the space of several months, against the prevailing narrative that Vote Leave tried to distance itself from such associations. Moving in the opposite direction however, we find that the UKIP-backed groups (Leave.EU and Grassroots Out) increasingly adopted a radical-right nationalist discourse which overshadowed any remaining populist propensities.

Finally, in Chapter 6 we mark the end of our analysis of UKIP by showing the absence of a populist logic post-Brexit. We use the departure of Farage from the party as a catalyst to deliberate on the role of the leader in populist discourses, proposing that we should designate this function as ‘prime articulator’. This term combines the leader as an agent of articulation with the role of the empty signifier in order to demonstrate why particular ‘charismatic leaders’ produce or are produced by populist discourses. The preceding analysis then provides for a theoretical discussion of the interplay and distinction between nationalist and populist logics and argue for an improved framework of populist analysis in which a spatialised reading of the relations between key elements of the discourse is reinforced with reference to fantasmatic

logics which imbue each instance of populism with its own specificity. In so doing we hope to provide a way to maintain conceptual clarity between different political logics, such as populism and nationalism, whilst restoring the value of populism as a productive concept.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

There can, at present, be no doubt about the importance of populism. But no one is quite clear what it is. (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969: 1)

Any excursion into the idea of ‘populism’ must begin by acknowledging the extent to which the term has been, and largely remains, contested. One of the earliest attempts to provide an analysis of the concept by Ionescu and Gellner begins with the above statement and whilst its importance is still espoused, the ambiguity they identified only nominally plagues the literature on populism.

This chapter begins by charting three distinctive lines of attack by academics in their many attempts to conceptualise populism. It will be argued that in recent years there has been a great deal of convergence over what attributes can be assigned to the idea of populism, yet that this convergence has occurred as a result of a visible move by theorists away from narrow substance-based focuses and towards structural accounts of the concept. The discursive account of populism shall be presented from this structural context, focusing primarily on the influence of Laclau upon both the discursive approach and in the field of populism more generally. We will look at how recent discursive theoretical accounts have been utilised to describe and critically examine political phenomena and the conditions of possibility of their emergence through the interpretation of populism as a particular ‘logic’.

We provide a three-part typology to allow for a clear examination of the approaches that broadly cover the theoretical literature on populism. We shall then outline the key phenomena under study - the discourse of UKIP and of numerous ‘Leave’ components of the Brexit referendum campaigns, as well as an overview of how these phenomena have been approached as populist. We note how UKIP’s political successes are overwhelmingly attributed

to the expanding of their issue-appeal from a single-issue party. The claim here is that the analytical place of populism here should be considered in relation to the manner in which UKIP expanded their appeal from a single-issue party to a significant political power. This is in opposition to those analyses that appear to use populism as a mere descriptor of the *outcome* of this process, and in doing so ignore those very practices that enabled this broadening.

1.1 Conceptions of Populism

The term populism has spent most of the last century relegated to the murky realm of essentially contested concepts. As the term receives greater and greater attention it bears the weight of an increasing number of properties that are often both incompatible and unseen in many of the cases where the term has been deployed. Far from bringing clarity to the situation its application can instead serve only to obfuscate further the phenomena at hand. Clearly a level of exasperation is present, as not only has it become standard practice to acknowledge this contested nature of populism, but in a tragic twist the literature “has reached a whole new level of meta-reflexivity, where it is posited that it has become common to *acknowledge the acknowledgement* of this fact” (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014: 382). It would be dishonest not to acknowledge this point before entering the fray.

Many of the difficulties pertaining to finding an adequate and agreeable definition of populism stem from the fact that there is little agreement on what constitutes the object of study in any analysis of populism. Populism can and has been used to describe social movements, political parties, leadership figures, media publications and so on. Equally many have noted a geographical disparity which separates, for example, populism in the Latin American context and populism in the Western European context, along the lines that they both exhibit several stark differences in their characteristics and efficacy in the political realm (Mudde &

Kaltwasser, 2012). This has led there to be a number of rigorous attempts to reduce wide and unwieldy intuitive conceptions of populism into a core set of common properties which transcend regional analysis and can be used to describe any entity which exhibits these key features. Until relatively recently this ‘ideational’ path represented the dominant approach - a reductionist attempt to boil away the excesses of contextual, contingent, and overdetermined features, in order to unearth a conceptual kernel that we may call populism. Yet as shall be argued it is precisely in these dismissed ‘excesses’ that we find the texture and richness of populism and what makes it a useful analytic category in the first place.

Perhaps the best representation of how populism was studied prior to the ideational approach can be seen in Canovan’s famous typology which attempts to split populism into two broad categories - agrarian and political - with these categories containing three and four sub-categories respectively (Canovan, 1981). The aim is to locate existing examples of populism within a stable framework, and from this come to identify characteristics and tendencies which cut across all types of populism. Under the ‘agrarian’ category, Canovan proposes that we can identify populisms associated with commodity farmers, such as the US People’s Party at the end of the 19th century, peasants, such as the Green Uprising of Eastern Europe following the First World War, and intellectuals, associated with the Russian *narodnichestvo* whereby the peasantry were idealised and romanticised and became the locus of broader movements. These she distinguishes from ‘political’ populisms: populist democracy, which calls for increased political participation; politicians’ populism, which acts as a device through which to build coalitions around appeals to ‘the people’; reactionary populism, which rejects the “prevailing dominant ideas” and “progress” itself to a degree; and dictatorial populism, which declares a charismatic leader to be the embodiment of the demands of the people (Taggart, 2000: 18-20).

Canovan emphasises that these classifications are analytical constructs; fictions to aid in the identification of populist practices where real-life examples are bound to straddle several

categories. Yet this overlap negates the purpose of providing a classificatory system in the first place, as in investigating individual cases of populism we may find ourselves unable to pinpoint what ‘type’ of populism it may be. Worse still, underlying this ambiguity is the lack of any methodological arrangement which would enable us to explain this variety nor allow us to analyse the contextual features which gives rise to these various forms. It would appear then that this typology is little more than a series of “descriptive narrative[s]” (Brading, 2013: 9). This model of analysis was once, and in many cases remains, indicative of not only the general approach to populism but also the difficulties facing those that approach the issue. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the production of categories of populism that follow a standardised list of essentialized traits is doomed to fail in accounting for a hugely disparate series of phenomena that have at some time or another been labelled ‘populist’ in their beliefs, organisational structure, and strategies. The task at hand, it would seem, would be to produce a formulation that is both comprehensive in its approach whilst remaining sensitive to the historical specificity of any sample of populist experiences.

Through this intellectual quagmire three different routes have emerged under which most conceptions of populism can be categorised, each attempting to take up the challenge as posed here. Broadly speaking these categories attempt to define populism as an *ideology*, as a *political strategy*, and as a *discourse*. This typology is one that has emerged both explicitly and implicitly in many contemporary accounts and whilst there remains differences in how each of these terms is conceived, it likely represents the most valuable way to clarify, compare and consider the many competing approaches.² Such categorisation is important in not only determining the analytical value of the term populism, but each of these categories inform different methodologies with different levels of suitability depending on what we conceive

² See, for example, Jagers and Walgrave (2007), Caiani & della Porta (2011), Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012), Moffitt and Tormey (2014), Woods (2014) and Aslanidis (2015).

populism to be. Each of these groupings shall be examined in turn, before laying out the case for a discursive conception of populism.

Populism as Ideology

It is widely held in academic circles that the dominant and most persuasive conception of populism is as an ideology;³ indeed the Oxford Handbook of Ideologies saw it fit to include a chapter on populism such that this perspective has become commonplace (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013b). Following Canovan's initial attempts to grasp populism via its subdivision, many other authors have chosen to persist in the adoption of similar ideational approaches. This begins with the assumption that populism is primarily a set of interconnected and identifiable ideas. Like Canovan's early categorisations, such attempts rely on potentially populist phenomena exhibiting a definitive series of characteristics which can be substantiated via an analysis of the aims and beliefs of the populist candidate.

An archetypal form of this approach can be found in Albertazzi and McDonnell's illuminating collection on the rise of populism in Western Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century. They introduce populism as an ideology that:

pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice. (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008: 3)

Whilst they take care to avoid associating this conception of populism with "specific social bases, economic programmes, issues and electorates", they still insist on several essential features which comprise any populist platform. The key assertion here is that populists claim

³ See, for example, Moffitt and Tormey (2014: 383), Albertazzi and McDonnell (2015: 5) and Aslanidis (2015: 88).

to be the ‘true’ champions of democracy, who seek to win back the people’s sovereignty which has been stolen from them by an elitist caste. The government is said to have been captured by these corrupted elites who are responsible for societies current ills, and in response the populist leader and their party promises to give power back to the people, who are both considered to be both “homogeneous” and “virtuous” (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008: 4-5). Fleshing out this ideological core are four principles essential to populism: the people are one and are inherently good, the people are sovereign, the people’s way of life is sacred, and the leader and their party are one with the people (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008: 6). This heavy emphasis on the unity of not only the people but of the people with the leader, leads us to conclude that this bond between the leader and the people is a crucial element in the operation of populist parties or movements.

In the same volume, Mastropaolo builds upon these core elements of the populist ideology by considering their paradoxical relationship with democracy. Although populists often appear radically ‘anti-system’, they instead present themselves as a restorative medicine, taking politics back to an imagined past prior to the alleged poisoning of the state by corrupt elites. In pursuing this aim however they become “particularly intolerable” of the basic rights of individuals, of the rights of minorities (as this opposes the perceived homogeneity of the people) and of “politics in general” and the pluralism it advocates, at least within Western culture (Mastropaolo, 2008: 33).

This last qualifier is important because it represents a major issue with considering populism ideationally. Whilst Mastropaolo identifies a European and North American populist aversion to minority rights and political procedure, studies of populist movements in Latin America have shown a trend that predominantly opposes these features. These differences are so stark that there is now a general acceptance within the literature that it is legitimate to make a distinction between Latin American ‘inclusionary’ populism (for example in, Collier and

Collier, 1991; de la Torre, 2010) in comparison to the ‘exclusionary’ populism seen in Europe (for example in, Betz, 2002; Rydgren, 2005; Mudde, 2007). The basis of this schism relies upon the ideological import attached to the political agenda under scrutiny. In studying the *Chavismo* ideology of Venezuela, Roberts highlights the participatory nature of the socialist ideal to include lower-class groups and enhance their status within the political establishment (Roberts, 2012), and this trend is also documented by Levitsky and Loxton in the case of Fujimori’s Peru (Levitsky & Loxton, 2012). Of particular interest is the case of Bolivia in which the constitution was ratified in 2009 to declare that ‘el pueblo boliviano’ (the Bolivian people) is plural, representing a move away from ethno-centric conceptions of a single homogenous mass towards an endorsement of the multiplicity of a given population. Although, as Postero points out, we should be wary before concluding that this is some kind of ‘post-liberal democracy’ or a thinly veiled anti-democratic populism (Postero, 2015: 398). In either case, this moves us away from Albertazzi and McDonnell’s requirement that the ‘people’ under populism appear as a homogenous entity.

Equally the exclusionary right-wing populism of Europe is seen to function principally on the basis of nationalistic sentiments concerning the makeup of the ‘native’ population and the ever-present threat to their internal cohesion and unity by the foreigner (Betz, 1993; Moffitt, 2014). The most extreme form of this kind of populism in recent history could be seen in the Balkans and the Baltics during the 1990s in what has been described as ‘ethnocratic’ regimes; ‘the people’ corresponding to only one set of native citizens (Mudde, 2007: 142–145). Whilst this extreme conception of the people is less common, its vestiges can still be found in the political platform of many right-wing populist parties in Europe today. Clearly then we have two differing sets of beliefs concerning ‘the people’ between two groups of movements that have been alleged to be populist. If we offer an ideational notion of populism, then we must be

able to account for why this apparently central concept of ‘the people’ suffers from a seemingly unresolvable split which requires us to posit two distinctive populist modes.

The issue with this demarcation between exclusionary and inclusionary forms is that it relies on a fundamental ambiguity in the ideational content of the populist project. It has been said that this is largely due to there being little historical continuity or intellectual threads through which we can trace populist thinkers and ideologues; as Betz acknowledges, populist parties “lack grand visions or comprehensive ideological projects” (Betz, 1994: 107). This has not seemed to deter academics from pursuing the ideological line. However, to do so there appears to be some forced distortion of what this pursuit involves. Whilst ideology is retained as a term in order to signal that we are searching for a set of core beliefs in the populist project, it is proposed instead that defining “populism as an ideology should certainly not imply intellectual robustness or consistency” (March, 2007: 64). This would seem to go against the very premise that an *ideational* analysis is founded upon.

This line of thought has led to the notion of a ‘thin-centred’ ideology. This way of dealing with populism has become the largely dominant contemporary definition. Put forward by Cas Mudde to allow for intellectual flexibility whilst retaining the ideational approach, he proclaims that populism is a:

thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. (Mudde, 2004: 543; Mudde, 2007: 23)

This move recognises the difficulties in accounting for the breadth and variation that Canovan and others have identified in attempting to ascribe populism with any core content. The only common themes which can be found across Canovan’s typology is an appeal to “the people”

and a distrust of “elites” (Taggart, 2000: 21). Taggart emphasises this lack of substance by pointing to populism’s inherently chameleonic nature as it transforms and moulds around a given context. Mudde recognises these minimal themes and relegates populism to the status of a thin-centred ideology which, lacking the coherence of a fully-fledged ideology, attaches itself to ‘full’ ideologies and thus explains the occurrence of populism on all sides of the political spectrum, including its radically different incarnations of the people.

This ideational line has the benefit of being easily transferable from one location to another, as long as we are sensitive to the ideological underpinnings of the actors involved. The aptitude of this approach has had a pronounced influence upon the study of populism over the last decade with many authors endorsing the move from fully constituted ideology, to a thinner less restrictive conception. Considering populism as a loosely connected series of ideas concerning the opposition between the people and the elites gives us an empirically straightforward way in which to conduct research; study the statements, policies and propaganda of potentially populist actors and seek out evidence of a discourse which supports and encourages this bifurcation.

However, this move towards a ‘thin-centred’ conception of populism can be seen as an attempt to hide rather than confront the lack of coherence with which we expect to see from any form of ideology (Aslanidis, 2015: 89). This is expounded by the fact that in attempting to solve the conceptual slipperiness of the term populism, another equally if not more complex and blurry term is introduced in ‘thin ideology’. Mudde justifies its inclusion through the deployment of Freedén’s ‘morphological approach’ where he describes a thin-centred ideology as one which internally restricts itself to a narrow range of political concepts whilst externally distancing itself from other ideational contexts (Freedén, 1996; Freedén, 1998). Yet as Aslanidis points out, this is a non-specific outline in which any number of concepts including, for example, racism, capitalism, or radicalism, can all take the form of a thin-centred ideology

and become spread so far that it loses its usage as both a descriptive feature and an analytic tool (Aslanidis, 2015: 91). To make matters worse, Freedden himself has disavowed the use of his approach in describing populism, suggesting that populism viewed in this light is “emaciatedly thin, rather than thin-centred” (Freedden, 2017).

Methodologically speaking this puts us into a precarious position fraught with a seeming inability to close off the definition of populism in order to retain its purpose as a useful concept. Moreover, if the purpose of studying populism as an ideology is to endow it with a set of core beliefs, it begs the question as to why one would then, through the addition of the term ‘thin’, strip it of any such substance; it as if the terms ‘thin’ and ‘ideology’ negate one another. Ultimately the thin ideology definition reduces populism in one way or another to the *belief* that politics should be representative of the will of the people as such. This reduction has obvious methodological issues such as in the discovery of said beliefs, but more crucially it suffers from an essentialism that takes aspects such as ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ as pre-given and populist actors as those who simply believe in and act upon these pre-existing categories. To deepen our understanding of what is happening in the populist moment we must move beyond these essentialisations and consider how populists act to *construct* those very categories that are utilised and put greater weight on the strategic dimension of populist practices.

Populism as a Political Strategy

In response to the difficulties of ideational approaches, some have sought to argue that populism is best construed as a political strategy. Weyland has been one of the most vocal proponents of this approach, in which he characterises this strategy as one wherein a “personalistic leader” attempts to grasp and maintain political power through a reliance on the “direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from a large number of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland, 2001: 14). Like Albertazzi and McDonnell’s emphasis on the importance

of the relationship between the unified people and a leader, Weyland's formulation encourages this focus to be framed as an organisational feature constitutive of populist projects. Allowing for ideological flexibility, what unifies seemingly disparate populist movements is the ability for leaders to either create organisations whilst controlling and limiting their institutionalisation, or if confronted with already well-established party structures, advocating more anti-organisational tactics (Weyland, 2001: 15).

This focus on leadership and organisation are emblematic of approaches to populism as a political strategy. This can be seen in the work of those who identify the method by which movements are mobilised as the key to unlocking the populist phenomena. For these authors populism is a "specific type of response" to political crises, a "natural – though hardly inevitable or exclusive – political strategy for appealing to mass constituencies" (Roberts, 2015: 141). Roberts detects two distinct trends within this set of literature which he defines as 'plebiscitary' and 'participatory' forms of organisational 'linkages', which can be used to mobilise the people when representative forms of democracy appear to fail. Participatory linkages refer to grassroots-based exercises of organisation which attempt to foster more direct forms of democratic engagement. This mobilisation 'from below' stands in contrast to plebiscitary linkages that seek to replace existing political figures with a new leadership that is more 'authentic' as they are considered to represent the people more directly. The leader acts on behalf of the people, mobilising the people 'from above' with an authority garnered from his relation to the people. Weyland follows this line with his emphasis on personalistic leaders who do not appear as 'delegates' of the people, so much as use their popular support to achieve power. Indeed, Weyland goes so far as to contend that "populism does not empower 'the people' but invokes the people to empower a leader" (quoted in Roberts, 2015: 145).

Barr follows a similar line in his attempts to demarcate anti-establishment politics, political 'outsiders' and populism. Recognising the ideational tendency to equate some

characteristics of populism with essential features (Barr, 2009: 30–31), Barr suggests that populism constitutes a specific combination of an ‘us versus them’ discursive appeal, coming from a location that lies outside the political establishment and that this ‘outsider’ is vested with the task of representing the people in place of a party. This distinction is important, otherwise any political entity that utilises anti-establishment rhetoric would be considered populist. Nor does this definition allow for any popular political outsider to be considered populist without fulfilling the other two conditions. This perspective removes the requirement for the leader to be particularly charismatic, as is usually suggested from other strategic and ideational writers, for it is the *location* of the leader and their plebiscitarian linkages that provide them with the authority of symbolising the mobilisation of the people. Equally however this move excludes establishment figures from being considered populist, against the studies into Latin American populism wherein the incumbent leader is said to utilise populist strategies to ward off challenges to their power.

Roberts, however, stands apart from other strategic authors by emphasising that these modes of mobilisation are not mutually exclusive. Any claim to give ‘power to the people’, whether mobilised from the top-down or bottom-up, is conditioned upon the organisational structure of society. Plebiscitary linkages, it is stated, are more likely to occur where society is atomised and alienated and thus requires a leader who can embody the unifying presence of the people. Participatory linkages occur where established organisations are present, but where they become anti-establishment to advance fairer representation and democratic controls over governance (Roberts, 2015: 146). Unlike Barr, this allows for populism to be ascribed to institutionalised parties and established politicians that seek to utilise the powerful toolbox of populist strategies. This allows us to explain the identification of governments in Latin America who appear to be populist whilst advocating neoliberal policy reforms; their top-down

restructuring of society can still be assessed as populist in terms of the strategies which empower and legitimise them (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996).

Jansen takes this approach as so far as to treat populism as simply a “mode of political practice” (Jansen, 2015: 159). Such a view shifts the analysis from what populism “really is” to the question of what “populist mobilization practices share in common” and the way this mobilization is entwined with popular rhetoric (Jansen, 2015: 178). This notion of populism moves us away from considerations of singular mass movements and parties towards a conception of populism which is sensitive to any political project which maintains a mobilisation of large sections of people through an anti-elitist discourse. What is interesting about Jansen’s approach is that whilst it retains the generally agreed upon criteria that populism must invoke the antagonistic relationship between the elite and the people, we must also consider this invocation not as an ideological tenant so much as a practice; a “specific set of actions that politicians and supporters *do*” in order to mobilise support (Jansen, 2015: 167). This statement invokes the materiality of populist practices and strategies and in doing so indicates a methodological stance that does not concern itself with what the people *believe*, but with the *practices* of politicians and statesmen in the organisation of the relationship between themselves, their parties, and the people.

The advantages of conceiving populism as a set of practices, or as a particular mode of organising politics, is grounded in the ability to read political phenomena that exhibit markedly varying ideological hues. Instead of beginning with a set of core beliefs, these approaches begin by assuming that populism is not some rupture in the democratic order but a way to mobilise the power of the people. Political strategies are often temporal moments that are deployed when the opportunity arises to take advantage of a particular event: a political crisis or an economic disaster for example, and this approach goes some way to explaining the oft noted occurrence of populist actors at such times. However, more generic election periods reek of many of the

strategies identified by those that appeal to this approach, yet those practices often fade once said elections are concluded (Mudde, 2004: 543). The ability for populism to be treated as a tool widens its reach to an almost unwieldy point; for example, many social movements or all manner of community politics (such as religious parties or local council projects) risk being swallowed up by this definition (Hawkins, 2010: 40, 168). There is also a tendency for these approaches to emphasise “largely material aspects of politics, that is coalitions, historical preconditions and policies”, which Hawkins has argued makes it at best an “incomplete account” (Hawkins, 2010: 39; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014: 386). Whilst it may be accurate to describe a movement as populist by means of the manner of its mobilisation and organisation, such accounts fail to express why a population may become enthralled by these methods, or what Mudde and Kaltwasser describe as the “demand-side factors” that determine their appeal (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013a: 154).

We should also take issue here with how the strategic approach to populism can fall victim to taking particular aspects as ‘given’ in much the same way that the ideational approach does. Whilst for the ideationalists this essentialism was located in political groupings such as the people or elite, for the strategists this essentialism can be found in the very crises and opportunism that those populist strategies are said to exploit. We should be careful to also consider the way in which populists themselves co-construct those crises and articulate them as such. There is also a concern that reducing and essentialising the strategic intentions of actors limits our analytical capacity in much the same way as when ideationalists reduce to beliefs.

Populism as Discourse

Thus far we have seen a cleavage between those accounts that provide populism with a substantive content, and those instead that give a more formal or structural explanation based on practices. Discursive approaches operate within this latter category and perhaps it is

precisely because substantive approaches have failed to reconcile their definitions from one case to another (whether ideologically or strategically speaking), that there has been an increased interest in discursive approaches. This turn towards a discursive style, which prioritises the formal properties of populism above substantive characteristics, is perhaps best described by Hawkins who states that:

[f]or better guidance we must turn to the constructivists and discourse theorists... Their work here is much more advanced and provides most of the descriptive material we need to create a better definition and measurement of populism. (Hawkins, 2010: 10)

Hawkins contends that as opposed to talk of ideology and strategies, populism is instead “a worldview, or to use a more rarefied term, a ‘discourse’ - that perceives history as a Manichean struggle between Good and Evil” (Hawkins, 2010: 5). This outlook is coupled with an identification of ‘Good’ with the people, of ‘Evil’ with the elite, an emphasis on structural changes and an “anything-goes attitude toward minority rights and democratic procedure” (Hawkins, 2010: 33). This binary moral dimension makes this discourse fundamentally antagonistic in nature. However, this populist discourse is more akin to a set of “latent” ideas than an ideology, as it “lacks significant exposition and ‘contrast’ with other discourses and is usually low on policy specifics”, and yet it has a “subconscious quality that manifests itself primarily in the language of those who hold it” (Hawkins, 2009: 1045).

Yet the influence of the discursive interpretation on the study of populism goes beyond the dichotomising effects of divisive rhetoric and Manichean narratives. Instead of taking this worldview as given through an ideological lens, Carlos de la Torre defines populism as a rhetoric that *forms* the people and in so doing constructs an external ‘Other’ who “represent a threat to the purity of the homogeneous body of the people” (de la Torre, 2015: 1–2). The goal of these discourses is to allow for the emergence and establishment of a political force who are

legitimised in reference to the people. This blurring of the boundary between populism as a strategy and as a discourse is well described by de la Torre who states that whilst populism is a discourse that “builds powerful identities” for the purpose of populist mobilisation, it is “also a political strategy to achieve power and to govern” (de la Torre, 2015: 7). Both those who see populism as a strategy for the attainment of power and those who invoke the idea of thin-ideology often utilise the vocabulary and conceptual apparatuses made available by discourse theorists; perhaps most apparent in Canovan’s later moves toward a structural account that becomes almost indistinguishable from a discursive perspective (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014: 121–122). This represents a shift in the mainstay of populist literature towards a formal or structural approach; a move away from the identification and examination of the substantive ideas expressed in many political phenomena and toward such “diffuse elements as tone, metaphor and theme” (Hawkins, 2010: 5).

Such elements as ‘tone’, ‘metaphor’ and ‘theme’ however appear to restrict the way we discuss discourse to simply a mode of rhetoric, whether this be spoken or textual. Discursive approaches, such as de la Torre’s, that posit the constitutive nature of discourse in determining the subjects and objects at play, move beyond these restrictions through a deeply expansive notion of discourse. This wider conception includes populist “modes of identification” that reach beyond simple acts of strategic persuasion as “one is no longer ‘the same person’ after having been persuaded of a certain proposition” (Panizza, 2005: 8). This discursive form differs from ideological interpellation in that it may be utilised by any political actor regardless of their set of core beliefs, yet it also gives populist practices an ontological status found lacking in strategic approaches. Understood in this way, populism does not mobilise the people nor does it constitute a set of beliefs and attitudes held by the people, but it instead *constructs* them and their opposition. Populism is not an ideology that ‘believes’ society is split into two, but it is a series of articulatory practices that constructs and reifies this dichotomy. Methodologically

this leads us in a different direction to ideological and strategic approaches and towards a framework that allows us to locate and examine those practices that act as moments of discursive construction and deconstruction.

Laclau is credited with introducing discursive based approaches to populism with the release of his 1977 work *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, which is then built upon into a fully-fledged theory of populism in his 2005 work *On Populist Reason*. Running counter to dominant approaches and methods, Laclau repeatedly warned against elevating particular properties of populism to the status of essential characteristics. Instead of attempting to unearth some underlying ideology, we should adjudge a movement as populist because “it shows a particular *logic of articulation* of those contents – whatever those contents are” (Laclau, 2005b: 33). This move to formalism is considered within the literature as Laclau’s most productive contribution (Aslanidis, 2015: 98).

Through Laclau’s theoretical apparatus he concludes that evaluating a movement as populist requires ascertaining the extent to which a given discourse fulfils two criteria. First it must be articulated around a *nodal point* designated as ‘the people’, and secondly the society to which the people belong must be presented as antagonistically divided, with the people standing off against the opposing power bloc, the elitist establishment. This is said to be achieved through the deployment of *equivalential and differential logics* which act to either construct or deconstruct the linkages between various groups and symbols in society. To fully appreciate and explore this formalisation of populism we must first unpack and elucidate this series of concepts.

1.2 Discourse Theory and the Essex School

Laclau's populist framework draws upon a number of post-structuralist tools and ontological assumptions, many of which he developed alongside Mouffe, and which are continuously advanced by the Essex School of Discourse Analysis. Discourse analysis designates the practice of describing and accounting for the ways in which actors within the social field attempt to fix the meaning and identity of subjects and objects. We shall examine the key categories central to this approach before relating them back to the concept of populism. These central categories concern *discourse*, *articulation*, *empty signifiers*, *hegemony* and *logics of equivalence and difference*.

To understand what is meant by *discourse*, one begins with the assumption that all objects and actions are meaningful and thus meaning must constitute the core of any attempt to understand human practices. This meaning is conferred by the system of differences in which that object is located. To be clear, a discourse is "any complex of elements in which *relations* play the constitutive role" (Laclau, 2005a: 68). *Elements* cannot pre-exist this complex but are continually constituted and reconstituted by it. Words exist in relation to one another within the complex we call language, yet language is not a fixed totality; it is ever evolving and transforming as words come into or fade out of usage and as words are continually repurposed with new meanings. *Articulation* describes the establishing of relations amongst elements such that their identity is modified, with the sum of these relations forming a structure that we call *discourse*.

Once articulated these elements become partially fixed and appear as *moments* within a discourse. However, if elements are crystallised via the play of differences and not through some form of direct correspondence, then we must explain how this fixation is at all possible. Within this discursive framework this task falls to the category of *nodal points* that prevent the

‘sliding’ of elements. This concept is best expressed through reference to the example of an ideological discourse, such as communist ideology. Within communist ideology a number of pre-existing signifiers, such as ‘democracy’, ‘state’, ‘freedom’, and so on, will acquire a new meaning through their articulation around the signifier ‘communism’. Communism here becomes the nodal point which intervenes in these elements and transforms them into moments of the communist discourse; democracy becomes ‘real’ democracy as opposed to ‘bourgeois democracy’, freedom is associated with class dissolution and what is meant by the ‘state’ and its function is inflated to take on a much-expanded new role that, for instance, removes distinctions between governance and markets, signifiers that themselves in turn take on new significations and so on. The point is that the meaning of these terms becomes partially fixed by reference to the nodal point ‘communism’ (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 8; Žižek, 2008: 112–113).

This fixity remains partial, however, as every discursive formation is characterised by the impossibility of achieving total closure. Every element is subject to the possibility of entering into a new set of relational constellations, radically inscribing them with new meanings. The nature of discursive formations forces Laclau to stress the primacy of politics and power, as discourses become constructed by the drawing of political frontiers via “the exercise of power” in which “certain elements are included... and others are not” (Howarth, 2015: 6). This exclusion is based upon an attempt to fill this lack of final closure in the discursive field. With regards to a discursive construction such as ‘society’, we can see that its “fullness and universality... is unachievable” (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 8). Although society is not realisable, the *idea* of fullness and the ambition to achieve a kind of social completion still functions to maintain the illusory unity of the social.

These impossible ideas organise society and form their constitutive centre. Particular nodal points take up this mantle through the emptying of their signification. These *empty*

signifiers are responsible for the binding of a range of elements, as their emptiness allows them to take on the role of representing universality, of the entire discourse, which it sits in relation to. Yet this representation must necessarily fail as the totality can never be wholly represented for it is never closed. More precisely, the empty signifier represents the absence within a discourse, an absence which becomes the battleground for various political forces to “compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack” (Laclau, 1996: 44). *Hegemony* describes this operation by which a particular comes to stand in for the “incommensurable universal signification” (Laclau, 2005a: 70).

The failure of any discursive structure to become wholly enclosed is exposed by its internal antagonisms which points us to the inability of the structure to fully fix its elements. Antagonisms reveal the frontiers of any social formation, where identities and ‘floating’ signifiers are contested by opposing discourses or revealed by the contradictions within the discourse; in other words, antagonisms “disclose the lack at the heart of all social identity and objectivity” (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 10). These antagonisms are manifested as a frustration in lacking full identity. The “experience of the limit of all objectivity” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014: 108) is the experience of antagonism which is seen to occur when the presence of an ‘Other’ blocks the subject from attaining full identity. An example can help make such processes more transparent. Howarth utilises this reasoning in his analysis of the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s (Howarth, 1997). Howarth shows how the leaders of this movement set out to construct a series of antagonistic relationships with anti-apartheid organisations, the National Party, and white liberals, emphasising that the main ‘blockage’ to their identity was ‘white racism’; that the presence of white racism was not simply oppressive, but systematically prevented the *construction* of a black identity. This project linked together opposition to apartheid *with* those who identified themselves as ‘black’, “rather than ‘non-white’ or ‘non-racial’, by instituting a political

frontier” which divided South African society into “two antagonistic camps organised around the black/’anti-black division” (Howarth, 2000: 106). This political frontier thus splits society into two groups whilst simultaneously contributing to the identities of subjects on both sides.

This illustration reveals two logics which govern this antagonistic construction of a political frontier and the establishment of two opposing camps. The *logic of equivalence* describes the above example whereby a series of moments are made equivalent to others in the series “in terms of their common differentiation” from an opposing moment (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014: 113). Their differences are partially subverted and to an extent are cancelled out such that they may express an underlying sameness. The identity of the Other thus becomes purely negative in relation to the chain of equivalence. Therefore, in the scenario described by Howarth we not only see the articulation of a chain of equivalences around the idea of ‘blackness’, but their antagonistic opposition becomes *negatively* represented as ‘anti-black’. To fulfil this function of expressing the equivalential chain, ‘blackness’ becomes an empty signifier that ‘quilts’ elements into a discourse. This signifier is gradually emptied of “ideological or semantic content” as moments and identities become attached to it, eventually lending itself as a point of common “symbolic identification” for different groups of subjects (Griggs & Howarth, 2008: 128).

In contrast to the logic of equivalence which has the effect of simplifying the political arena, the *logic of difference* acts to break up these equivalential chains. This dissolves the dichotomisation of the social field and complexifies social relations. This expansion of the discursive order will thus displace and weaken antagonisms, relegating any potential divisions to the margins of society (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 107). Any discursive structure will observe the overlapping of these two logics as subjects, objects and identities continuously become intertwined or have their linkages broken.

From these discussions it may appear as though the subject has been lost under the structural weight of discursive operations. This criticism has been levelled, quite correctly according to Laclau, at his original formulations (Laclau, 2003). However, his later works sought to address this issue through importing key features of Lacanian psychoanalysis into an ontological field founded upon the political. People are thrown into pre-existing structures of meaning and differences and in so doing these structures ‘mark’ the subject; the subject is partially defined by the ‘other’, by the symbolic order. In the same way that structures are faced with the impossibility of closure, of a totalising moment, subjects are said to also be ‘lacking’. The subject is ‘split’ and thus attempts to cover over this lack by affirming its “positive (symbolic-imaginary) identity” (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008: 260). This lack is the condition for any identification to take place and allows for identities to change and transform over time as the subject is unable to assume a closed, totalised identity.

But we must however emphasise the *partial* nature of this determination. The subject is not reducible to some position within the structure but is able to act upon the structure itself. To make an agent out of the subject, so to speak, Laclau posits that the subject is the ‘distance’ between the ‘undecidability’ of the structure and the ‘decision’ (Laclau, 1990: 44, 60–64). The subject confronts their own undecidability, the lack, and is forced into the position of having to decide a new identity to fill this gap (Hudson, 2006; Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008). This act of bridging the gap between the subject as a contingent and lacking entity with their projected image of completeness and identity brings the subject enjoyment; they are satisfied with their (illusory) positive identity, reconciled with the discursive-symbolic order they inhabit (Homer, 2005; Glynos, 2008b). Fantasies allow the subject to achieve such illusions, consisting predominantly of conditions which, if only they were fulfilled, would allow the subject to be complete. The subject's lack of enjoyment is thus displaced onto the Other who becomes the

fixation of desires; they are seen as responsible for our lack of enjoyment and thus by extension our lack of identity.

For Laclau, this mythical ‘fullness’ is transferred to objects that become “objects of the drives”, which corresponds directly to Laclau’s conception of a hegemonic relation: “a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality” (Laclau, 2005a: 115). This lynchpin between the psychoanalytic and the political allows us to move from accounting for the “form” of discursive operations and the construction of political frontiers, to the “force” of the investment of subjects which cause them to become attached to these formations (Laclau, 2005a: 110). This ‘affective dimension’ describes the radical investment that the subject places in symbolic objects which bring them an image of social fullness. Empty signifiers can maintain their place within a discourse despite their lack of content precisely because of this affective investment. Indeed, it is “only then that the ‘name’ becomes detached from the ‘concept’, the signifier from the signified... without this detachment, there would be no populism” (Laclau, 2005a: 120).

Laclau’s Populism

We are now well placed to see how these ontological considerations are expanded into a discursive conception of populism by returning to our earlier minimal conception with a view to extending its analytical potential. Identifying whether a discursive practice is populist will depend on the extent to which it:

- 1) Is articulated around the nodal point ‘the people’.
- 2) Represents society as antagonistically divided into two opposing blocs.

The entire scope of analysis is thus moved away from ideologies and political aims to an analysis of political *practices* (Laclau, 2005b: 33); to how discursive practices are used to construct ‘the people’ and their opposition through the deployment of logics of equivalence

and difference. That is to say, for a “popular positionality to exist, a discourse has to divide society between dominant and dominated; that is, the system of equivalences should present itself as articulating the totality of a society around a fundamental antagonism” (Stavrakakis, 2004: 257). Populism thus occurs when the logic of equivalence is dominant in the social and political space, and where one of these chains, formed around ‘the people’, is claimed to represent the whole of society in its totality, but who are prevented from fulfilling this function by ‘the elite’.

Crucially the political dimension is given primacy within this ontology as the founding feature of the social. As all discourses are the product of articulations which involve the construction and dissolution of antagonisms and the exercise of political power, they are inherently politicised entities. It is this move that allows any analytical project to get off the ground. If political practices constitute the social, then our pursuit of a unit of analysis must begin with the articulation of practices as social groups emerge only because of these practices. For Laclau it is beginning from the group, as opposed to these practices, that leads many to mistakenly see populism as the ideology or type of mobilisation “of an *already* constituted group” (Laclau, 2005a: 72). Instead, populism is but one way of *constituting* the group.

The recognition of the contingent and constructed nature of the social allows Laclau to postulate that there is a necessary asymmetry “between the community as a whole (‘society’) and whatever social actor operates within it” (Laclau, 2005b: 33). Any attempt to bridge this gap and present society as a totality is a specifically political articulation. Neither can we begin the analysis with the individual, as this falls into the same trap as beginning with the group. Individuals are not coherent totalities but are an amalgamation of variously contingent subject positions; we cannot presuppose their interests, their wills, or their identities. Laclau proposes instead that we must instead begin with the category of ‘demand’ as the elementary unit of

analysis (Laclau, 2005b: 34). The social group is not a homogenous referent but instead its unity is produced through reference to an articulation of heterogeneous demands.

Taking this minimal unit of demands, we can see how a social group can be discursively constructed. Drawing from an example by Griggs and Howarth, we can imagine a scenario wherein a community is affected by proposed plans to build a new airport runway (Griggs & Howarth, 2000, 2008). Concerns around traffic congestion or noise pollution result in members of the community experiencing grievances which in turn causes them to make requests to the state for changes to the project. If these requests are rejected, then these grievances may harden into a social demand as they are left unfulfilled. These demands then become candidates for moments within an equivalential chain – that may go on to include, for example, environmentalists or wider transportation issues - that can be articulated together into a broader project. Yet this can be averted by a given authority who may address the demands individually, instilling a logic of difference and preventing the construction of a political frontier.

We can use this referent to produce a conception of ‘the people’ which is distinguished from other theories of populism in that it does not take it as a given group, nor does it rely upon vague connections to the ‘public’, the ‘dominated’ or the ‘mob’. Equally it avoids presuming that the populist begins with a cemented notion of whom or what constitutes the people but is engaged in a constant battle to articulate a people. The emergence of the people follows this linking of demands “from isolated, heterogeneous demands to a ‘global’ demand which involves the formation of political frontiers and the discursive construction of power as an antagonistic force” (Laclau, 2005a: 110). Analyses of populist phenomena following this perspective must begin then by searching for where ‘the people’ are located within a given discourse. If it appears as a central empty signifier, as symbolizing the equivalential chain of demands, rather than as a simple moment within a wider articulation, then we can say that the phenomenon exhibits a populist logic. ‘The people’ is thus a “theoretical, rather than

ethnographic concept”, constituting a practice of articulating linkages between demands into a universalistic discourse (Griggs & Howarth, 2008: 129). This allows us to make a distinction between populist forms of social relations, which move towards the dominance of the logic of equivalence, and ‘institutional’ politics, which are informed by a logic of difference. These are not mutually exclusive however, and their characterisation will rely upon the extent to which these logics occur within a given scenario; populism in this sense is seen as scalar and should be described in terms of degrees and concentration.

This Laclauian insight solves several issues that plague other approaches to populism. Firstly, the high level of formalism allows for a bracketing-out of disparaging or normative conceptions of populism that draw an equivalence between, for example, populism and nationalism, or which create difficult and heavy-handed dichotomies between populism and democracy. Secondly, given the consensus on the centrality of ‘the people’ to populism, discursive approaches are well-placed to discuss the *construction* of the people, to account for the strategic dimension and to be sensitive to the “material, performative and affective dimensions” that each shape and direct this construction (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017: 4). Finally, the level of formalism offered by discursive approaches is beneficial in approaching distinctively post-structuralist questions concerning, for example, how subjects are interpellated by a populist discourse and how power relations are both challenged and maintained (De Cleen et al., 2018; Glynos, 2008).

1.3 Populism in the UK?

Having laid out our conceptual approach, we finally look to the terrain of the area to be explored. Our problem, that is the occurrence of populist discourses in the UK, can be traced back through Brexit to UKIP. During the 2000s the term populism was increasingly being

identified with the campaigns of right-wing parties such as the British National Party (BNP) and UKIP (Mastropaolo, 2008: 30). However, it played a minor role in these descriptions, being left often undefined and acting instead as a substitute for the then more common phrase ‘Anti-Political Establishment (APE) party’. This period of academic reflection on the rise of UKIP is best encapsulated by the works of Usherwood and the highly cited piece ‘Doomed to Failure?’ by Abedi and Lundberg. These authors note the lack of sustained analysis of UKIP, a ‘minor political party’ who nonetheless had been making headway in European Parliamentary elections due to their clear, single-message appeal and providing an outlet for voters who simply sought an end to UK membership of the EU (Abedi & Lundberg, 2008; Usherwood, 2008). This challenge to mainstream opinion places UKIP as a “challenger” to the political establishment and utilises this platform to further assert a “fundamental divide” between the establishment and the people (Abedi & Lundberg, 2008: 74). Whilst this sounds a great deal like the populist definitions we have observed, the authors instead argue that populism simply invokes one aspect of an APE party – that there is an emphasis on grassroots organisation and the strengthening of local and regional democracy, usually via public referenda (Abedi & Lundberg, 2008: 74-76).

This limited attribution of populism to UKIP is further obscured by what the few authors on the topic claim is a surprising lack of academic interest in the party despite its, albeit limited, success in electoral politics (Abedi & Lundberg, 2008; Hayton, 2009; Usherwood, 2008). Indeed, Usherwood notes that, on the one hand, the only research on the party comes in the form of two books written by party insiders (see Daniel, 2006; Gardner, 2006), and on the other the status of UKIP as something between a pressure group and an obscure political party reflected “a certain unease on the part of researchers” on how to approach the party (Usherwood, 2008: 255). Ultimately however this lack of interest is ascribed to the single-issue nature of the party and a consensus that this aspect, combined with an anti-establishment ethos,

leaves a certain contradiction that necessarily spells doom for any party seeking political representation. However, there was a recognition that this situation could change at any time if the party were able to resolve the policy tension between their appeal as a single-issue and a widening of their policy base (Usherwood, 2008: 257-258), and gain stability through the acquiring of a leadership figure and by translating their success in European elections into influence in the national sphere (Hayden, 2009: 33).

Just eight years later UKIP had secured the majority of British MEPs in the European Parliament with 27% of the vote, 166 local councillors representing 17% of the local election vote as well as securing the defections of two MPs and 12.6% of the national vote in the 2015 General Election, making them the 3rd most voted for party; only prevented from taking more seats due to the archaic and disproportionate first-past-the-post electoral system. More importantly their rise into the mainstay of party politics forced their 'single-issue' into a promise for a referendum by the Government. Curiously however, even in this period there is a distinct lack of sustained analysis on UKIP's 'mainstreaming', a lack that is only ever partially filled in their inclusion in analyses that broadly map the rise of a pan-European 'populist-right'. One such collection of writings on 'Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe' includes a piece by Usherwood, although he is careful to point out that UKIP represents a distinctly different 'problem' to the other parties in the collection: firstly, on the basis of what he calls a lack of 'ideological coherence' typical of other right-wing programs, and secondly, unlike other European 'populist' parties, UKIP is the only one to have originated as a 'truly' single-issue party (Usherwood, 2016). These two aspects are of course complementary. But more interestingly, populism here is used as a comparative term insofar as UKIP are similar to other parties in Europe dubbed 'right-populist', yet he questions the extent of UKIP's populism on the basis of their ideological ambiguities.

Peculiarly, given the Brexit rupture that has entirely transformed the British political landscape, there has been relatively little said retroactively on UKIP's status as a *populist* party, though this word continually orbits the name (Breeze, 2019: 89). It has been suggested that this curious gap can be blamed on an obsessive focus with the party as a *Eurosceptic* party (Taggart, 2017: 257). Indeed, a more general absence of either discourse or populist-based analyses of the Brexit campaigns is also conspicuous, though this does appear to be being slowly addressed as the initial shock of the result is digested even several years later.

Fewer analyses of UKIP through the lens of populism have been performed, particularly since the event of Brexit and the fall of the party into electoral oblivion. A detailed and insightful project that endeavoured to provide an overview of a multiplicity of factors at play in the 2015 General Election was conducted by the Political Studies Association in partnership with the Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community at Bournemouth University (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015). This project contains many essays in which the concept of populism is invoked to describe particular practices or parties, such as UKIP, but at no point in the 100+ page document is populism given any definition at all. This is particularly stark, and troublesome, where populism is utilised as an explicit explanatory factor in particular analyses, such as where the background discourse on immigration in the UK is described as the "product of populist cultural work", but where what is meant by this notion is found entirely lacking (Moore, 2015). Several other articles in the same issue suggests that the rise in populist parties, particularly UKIP, played a significant role in the 2015 GE without suggesting why and how UKIP qualifies as one (Ridge-Newman, 2015; Trevisan & Reilly, 2015) whilst others imply that UKIP's populism is constituted primarily by inflammatory rhetoric about immigrants (Nikolaididis, 2015) or by the 'everyman' appeal of its leader Nigel Farage (Ewen, 2015).

Where UKIP were considered more specifically in the literature it is often insofar as they challenge the ‘real’ or dominant mainstream parties and their voters. In one piece for example we find an excursion into potential defections of Conservative party members to the ‘populist radical right’. Whilst the piece is indeed focused on ideological factors of this drift, it nonetheless contextualises this with the “rise of the populist radical right throughout Europe” and their threat to more ‘traditional’ parties (Webb & Bale, 2014: 961). Yet populist here again becomes simply synonymous with ‘radical’ and the analysis proceeds to use the term populist/populism another 20 times to describe UKIP but without clarifying what this adds to the ‘radical right’ descriptor already present. In a similar vein, an analysis of the ‘rivalry on the right’ lists populism as one of several “views” held by UKIP that amounts to an attempt to prey on the protest vote targeted by any non-Labour or Conservative party, and which is targeted through the highlighting of the gap between the elite and the public (Lynch & Whitaker, 2013). Bale provides a thoroughly persuasive case as to the populist nature of UKIP by locating their populist foundations with an attempt by the Conservative party to ‘fuse’ populism with Euroscepticism at the end of the 1990’s and early 2000’s (Bale, 2018). The Conservatives would then abandon this position, but in doing so created a space in which UKIP could operate and which indeed even fits neatly with our own tracking of the rise of UKIP’s populist move. Yet here again, though the analysis sets out to show the ‘symbiotic relationship’ of the Conservatives with UKIP and of populism and Euroscepticism, it does not indicate what work ‘populism’ is doing here as a concept. The closest we come to seeing this is through an identification in UKIP’s rhetoric of “familiar populist tropes” such as an opposition to bureaucracy, immigration, politicians, and a commitment to the British People. The common thread to these works is that rarely a clear definition of populism is given, with it instead being used as an adjective to emphasise the rightward, radical, or extreme propensity of the noun which follows. There is an indication that parties such as UKIP are not simply right-wing nor

simply nationalist but something else that challenges the usual functioning of party-politics. This usage then makes the focus of such pieces on what other parties are doing or failing to do in order to counter the populist UKIP.

There is nonetheless a core current here within the literature that can help provide a lens for our own analysis in that the ‘mainstreaming’ dimension of UKIP between 2008 and 2016, the very object of analysis in Usherwood’s piece, speaks of a broadening of policy which allowed for UKIP to draw support beyond their original anti-EU position. This broadening out from single-issue to multi-issue party appears repeatedly in stories of UKIP’s emergence as a political force after 2008 (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015). Ford and Goodwin, whose analyses into UKIP reveal rich data regarding their demographic and polling reach, conclude that their successful mobilisation of Britain’s “left-behind” was founded upon a “fusion strategy” of their position on Europe with concerns about immigration and identity, framed within their anti-establishment approach (Ford & Goodwin, 2014: 282). The narrative that emerges when seeking to chart UKIP’s recent political history is that of a single-issue party that rank themselves as political outsiders transforming, rapidly, into a more mainstream party with a voting base and a broad policy appeal, who can be categorised as one of the upstart right-populist parties of Europe. It should not be lost on us here how we see reflected in this story the Laclauian formulation of populism that sees a demand coalesce into an equivalential chain through the discursive opposition of a people and the establishment. The point is this – the academic consensus views UKIP as a party who extended their political stance beyond simply leaving the EU to a host of positions and emerged as a right-populist party (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). The intervention here then enters between an *assumption* of populism, perhaps based somewhat ambiguously on their ‘anti-establishment appeals’, and the Laclauian determination of populism as precisely a mode of politics that achieves a chaining of demands to a nominally singular nodal point.

The way in which this was achieved is perhaps the most vague and unexplored region of both UKIP and populism. Where, for example, Ford and Goodwin, among others, have rightly identified what we might call ‘demand-side’ conditions for the rise of UKIP in their demographic analyses, I aim to provide the articulatory practices that form the ‘supply-side’ of the UKIP discourse. It is, one might say, to the analytical black boxes that plague this dimension of study that we turn to in order to unlock how such a strategy functions and how we might describe its practices. These somewhat vague allusions to a ‘fusion strategy’ (Ford & Goodwin, 2014, 2017), to ‘mainstreaming’ (Usherwood, 2016), to a ‘broadening appeal’ (Gifford, 2014; Lynch & Whitaker, 2012) or even just ‘issue-linkage’ (Dennison & Goodwin, 2015; Evans & Mellon, 2019) are what we seek to refine and replace with the notion of a populist *logic* – one whose articulatory role can help frame and describe those relations between elements that together form the UKIP discourse as a whole. This is how we may deepen our understanding of how UKIP became successful; probing the articulations that tied a multitude of issues together and brought new life to their demand to leave the EU. In so doing, we may also reenergise populism as an analytical tool by laying bare how its logic operates whilst providing a method by which such an analysis can take place. It is to this task we now proceed, by operationalising the Laclauian schematic with the use of the ‘Logics’ framework.

Chapter 2 - Operationalising Laclau: The Logics Approach

The aims of this chapter are broadly twofold. First, the Laclauian interpretation of populism is refined and operationalised utilising the Logics approach to discourse analysis, which in turn is expanded upon to make it commensurate for our usage in addressing the UKIP discourse. Second, we lay out the dataset of speeches to be used as indicative of this discourse whilst providing a method by which they can be effectively ‘coded’. This produces a ‘base-line’ of populist indicators which are then used to periodise the data, whilst providing coordinates of interest for the deeper Logics based analysis.

Laclau’s work, whilst often lauded as introducing discursive concepts into the literature on populism, has often been relegated to the side-lines in lieu of perceived difficulties in utilising his concepts in empirical investigations and case studies. To this end the ‘Essex School’ of discourse analysis have continuously sought to cultivate his ideas and theoretical concepts. Their activities culminated in the development of a methodological model by Jason Glynos and David Howarth, who take Laclau’s ontological underpinnings and operationalise them through an appeal to ‘logics’. These ‘logics of critical explanation’ seek to “capture the purposes, rules and self-understandings of a practice” including the “various conditions which make that practice ‘work’” (Glynos, 2008a: 277). By harnessing Laclau’s understanding of discourse and its functions, this methodology sets out to create a “grammar of concepts, together with a particular research ethos, which makes it possible to construct and furnish answers to empirical problems” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 7). Specifically, in presenting this model I aim to highlight its applicability in addressing the question of populism in a way that has not been fully realised as of yet in the literature, thus opening up new avenues for discursive readings on populism.

2.1 Social, Political and Fantasmatic Logics

The discursive approach has been strongly deployed in analysing the role of populism as a political logic that organises the discourse of various political moments globally. Whilst the ideational camp has primarily focused on the so called ‘populist radical right’, discourse theorists have moved to flesh out our understanding of the ‘populist radical left’. This has not only aided in the further de-essentialisation of certain attributes often spuriously tied to populism from its association with the radical right (nationalism, top-down hierarchies, ethnocentricity, etc.), but has also examined more closely the democratic potential of populist movements.⁴ This is an unsurprising move given Laclau’s latter shift toward envisioning a mode of left-wing populism as an effective vehicle for achieving a desired emancipatory ‘radical’ democracy.

However, a number of tensions in Laclau’s work makes direct application of his works to cases a difficult process. Laclau’s later works seem to equate populism with politics itself, suggesting that all political moments, to some degree, try to construct an antagonistic boundary between two nodal points occupied by opposed social forces articulated primarily via the logics of equivalence. Laclau goes so far as to ask “if populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative’ (Laclau, 2005: p. 47). This statement is peculiar in the sense that it reduces the logic of populism to the political (and indeed vice-versa), thus leaving either concept bereft of any usefully distinguishable conceptual content. But equally it appears to betray a useful separation made between two other political logics that he simultaneously claims constitute the

⁴ A recent collected volume by Giorgos Katsambekis and Alexandros Kioupiolis is representative of these forms of analysis that probe questions of governance and policy making by left-wing populist parties in positions of power, as well as to evaluate and compare their relative abilities to exploit crises in mobilising and consolidating their power (Katsambekis & Kioupiolis, 2019).

political as such. These logics of ‘equivalence’ and ‘difference’ refer to the articulation together of various units (identities, signifiers, demands) into a chain that comes to be represented by one of its parts, and to attempts to separate these units and prevent their coagulation, respectively. Equivalential logics thus link together multiple demands that are claimed by several groups but which in their equivalence generate a demand from a homogenous subjectivity, ‘the people’, toward the perceived site of power that must either deliver on these demands or be replaced. As the logic that allows for the construction of the people against the elite, this logic is central to construction and identification of populist projects. If, as Laclau suggests, we are to take populism *as* politics, this does not mean “that all political projects are equally populist; that depends on the extension of the equivalential chain unifying social demands” (Laclau, 2005: 154).

This equivocation of politics with populism and the logic of equivalence is easily rectified if instead of elevating the populist logic to the logic of politics itself, we take populism as one particular logic of the political amongst others.⁵ The idea of a ‘logic’ within this approach, itself situated more broadly within post-structuralist discourse theory, is intended to capture the rules and ontological presuppositions that “characterise and elucidate the transformation, stabilisation, and maintenance of regimes and social practices” as well as the relations between these practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 133). However, they also refer to the kinds of entities presupposed by these rules. To give an example used by Howarth, we could examine the set of rules which allow for the functioning of a market as a ‘logic of the market’. This logic encompasses the rules which allows buyers and sellers to exchange commodities, including the functioning of features such as the price mechanism. Yet this arrangement presupposes a set of “entities that make possible the operation of such rules”

⁵ This move is becoming increasingly the norm amongst the Essex School branch of discourse theory as seen in De Cleen (2019), De Cleen, Glynos & Mondon (2018), De Cleen & Stavrakakis (2017).

(Howarth, 2005: 323). It presupposes certain *subjects* (buyers and sellers), certain *objects* (commodities, currency) and a particular set of *relations* between these different aspects (exchange).

Logics thus act to explicate the conditions of possibility of these rules, their sedimentation and normalisation within a discourse, and the possibility of their destabilisation and the processes in which established logics are substituted by new ones. In this way we can describe established ‘social logics’ as being constituted and contested by ‘political logics’. The success and failure of these logics are described using a third and final set of ‘fantasmatic logics’ which describe the affective investment that subjects have in existing or emerging logics and their relevant discourses. We shall examine each of these categories in turn.

Social Logics

Social logics comprise the “characterisation of a particular social practice or regime” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 137). These logics are both “conditional and historically specific systems of sedimented practices” which together capture the unity of a given discourse (Howarth, 2005: 323). The purpose of this classification is to allow for the characterisation of a regime of practices that can then be utilised for capturing the “patterning” of social practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 140). Classifying the rules and norms in this way enables us to recognise how objects and subjects are related within a given discourse, providing a contextualised background against which we can make other observations.

Political Logics

Given that social logics help us to describe and characterise existing regimes of practices, we can say that political logics focus on the dynamic emergence, contestation, and transformation of these regimes of practices. These logics thus capture what Glynos and Howarth describe as the “processes of collective mobilisation precipitated by the emergence of the political

dimension of social relations, such as the construction, defence and naturalisations of new frontiers” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 141). Equally however they allow us to grasp those processes that attempt to prevent this drawing up of political frontiers. Following Laclau, the key distinction here is that whilst “social logics consist in rule-following, political logics are related to the institution of the social” (Laclau, 2005a: 117). Yet as we have already seen, for Laclau the ‘institution of the social’ emerges from “concrete empirical demands” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 143), articulated together into a project capable of dislodging the existing social formation.

The deployment of these logics thus becomes critical for both the defenders of the current institutional framework and its challengers in times of dislocation. Dislocatory events disrupt the smooth functioning of the prevailing discursive structures by revealing the radical contingency of the social order, such as when a financial crisis reveals the dysfunction of an economic system. The purpose of political logics is thus to “formalise our understanding of the ways in which dislocation is discursively articulated and symbolised” (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 143). A hegemonic regime may utilise a set of particular practices that we may identify as a series of political logics that further entrench existing norms (social logics) in order to pre-empt their contestation by an emergent political force. It should be apparent by now that the logics of equivalence and difference as conceived by Laclau constitute archetypal political logics in this sense. The constitution, transformation, and absorption of political demands by any social formation can thus be described using the conceptual vocabulary given by political logics. To repeat Laclau’s assertion, if the logics of difference is dominant here then the established formation can absorb demands in dispersion, thus pre-empting the ‘gelling’ of these demands into an oppositional force. However, if the demands are articulated into a chain of equivalence which is framed as antagonistic towards the dominant formation, then an effective challenge to the hegemony can take place. These two logics provide two poles with which to

examine the processes involved in the defence or emergence of any discursive formation, but other political logics may be constructed that involve a combination of these ideal types. The status of ‘populism’ within this framework is precisely as one such political logic - a dominantly equivalential political logic which constructs antagonistically opposed chains that coalesce around two nodal points that correspond to the people and the elite.

Fantasmatic Logics

The final explanatory level of this approach invokes the idea of ‘fantasy’, which can often be subdivided into horrific and beatific categories depending on the content and emotive effect of the fantasy. The purpose of these ‘fantasmatic logics’ is to disclose the way in which specific regimes and practices “grip” subjects whilst other do not (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 145). Competing with existing notions of ideology that postulate fantasies as a false picture of the world, the role of fantasy as espoused here is to ensure that the radical contingency of social reality remains hidden, particularly with respect to the suppression of the political dimension of practices (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 146). The pursuit of fullness creates fantasies which promise the recapture of “our lost/impossible enjoyment” which provides the “support for many of our political projects and choices” (Stavrakakis, 2005: 73). This shall become more than apparent when we look to the political forces in the UK and their engagement with such fantasies in order to promise the people some lost aspect of their lives. When dislocations occur, which reveal the contingency of the social, political logics emerge that either attempt to conceal this gap or promise its closure, yet the key factor in the success of a political logic in dominating the discourse lies in the fantasmatic logics that support them. Fantasy functions here to give political practices “*direction and energy*” or what we may refer to as their ‘vector’ (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 147).

2.2 Populism as a Political Logic

In taking populism to be a political logic, as opposed to an omnipresent feature of politics or as a parasitic form of ideology, we can focus our analysis and uncover properties and distinctions of specific phenomena currently obfuscated by both of these alternate interpretations. As well stated by De Cleen, to examine a case with a populist lens is to ask how the populist logic interpellates and mobilises subjects and subject positions that people identify with, through the construction, defence, and naturalisation of new frontiers (De Cleen, 2019: 29; De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017: 11). What the Logics approach allows for is a way to furnish these explanations with a grammar that recognises the combination and relationships between the way a discourse is articulated (political logics), the established norms or social arrangements (social logics) that are contested and defended, and how the resulting discourse tries to create subject positions to engage and invest people in this project (fantasmatic logics).

It is interesting to note that whilst populism is increasingly conceived of as a political logic within discursive circles, that there remains a distinct lack of *Logics* based applications. This research shall attempt to intervene in this gap. This is not simply to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon at hand, but because it is in this mode of application that we can locate the specific value of populism as a dimension of our analysis that should neither be overstretched and reified as ‘the thing’ that defines the discourse, nor a term of ambiguity that should be cast aside as unworkable. What the Logics approach allows for is a way to locate the functioning of one aspect of a case that intrigues us, the populist element, but without losing sight of its role in the larger ‘picture’ we are presented with.

The Logics Approach

Logics, whilst vital, are just one aspect of the overall Logics approach to critical explanation. Glynos and Howarth provide five interlocking ‘steps’ in performing the task of applying the

high-level theory of discourse analysis in the empirical context. First, we begin by *problematizing*, which simply reminds us that the phenomenon we approach are constructions of the analyst in that we characterise what confronts us *as a problem*, as a puzzle, that in turn will shape how we go about our intervention. This step also encourages us to critically consider other problematisations of the phenomenon have been constructed, providing putative explanations as to the ‘solutions’ offered by those analyses. We have, for instance, considered the ways in which populism has been approached as a ‘problem’ for liberal democracies and as a result is too often explained in ideational or strategic terms that invoke a certain normative deficit or which cite occurrences of populism as a failure in the ‘normal’ functioning of political life.

Secondly, *retroduction* offers us a form of explanation whereby we posit a provisional hypothesis (i.e., that populism can and should be identified as a type of political logic) that in turn motivates a to-and-fro movement between theory and phenomenon to produce an account that constitutes a candidate for truth or falsity. Overall, the “single most important criterion for admitting a hypothesis, however tentatively, is simply that it *accounts* for the phenomenon or problem at stake” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 26). The justification of this explanation is provided through persuasive reasoning that is comprised of, for example, “standards of credibility and consistency, evidentiary support, exhaustiveness and so on” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 34).

Whilst retroduction offers us the form of the explanation, we can say that the *logics*, as described earlier, provide the content of this explanation. We must remain aware that such logics are constructions of the analyst, not reified entities with causal capacities (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 139) and are instead means with which to characterise, explain and critically evaluate a practice or regime of practices. In sum, we problematise a set of phenomena to which

we put forward a hypothesis whose contents are couched in the language of social, political and fantasmatic logics.

The fourth element here is the concept of *articulation*. On the one hand articulation refers to the practice of linking and differentiating different elements in a discourse. However, this term also refers to the process by which we bring together the logics we construct in the analysis in order to produce a coherent explanatory narrative that avoid simply positing isolated logics that may suffer from some contradictory interplay. In the analysis of a given discourse one may identify particular populist or nationalist or socialist logics at play simultaneously, yet individually this does not tell us if, or how, they refer to one another to produce a stable and effective discourse. For example, we could ask the question ‘are UKIP populist’ in the vein of something like the ideational approaches as we discussed previously. However, any explanation or exploration in these terms would hinder the analysis as it would tend toward subsuming the elements of the phenomena under the concept applied, in this case the concept of populism. What we ask instead, following the problem-driven ethos given in our approach, is how we can critically explain this or that phenomena choosing a particular problematisation that informs the initial foray into the case.

In this case populism acts as our starting point, as a lens through which to begin our examination, but under our understanding of articulation it cannot be posited as a category under which empirical incidences are subsumed, nor do we abandon the concept in favour of eclecticism and a myriad of uncooperative individualised explanans. Supposing we identify a populist logic within our exploration, we will also find a series of other political logics (such as nationalism) as well as the fantasmatic logics that help to maintain the affective investment the discourse provides (such as a beatific transgressive logic of overcoming the perceived authority, or a horrific invasionary logic that fears the threat of foreign incursion). This populist logic may well be *foregrounded* in this explanation, it may indeed be seen as vital to the

operation of other logics, but it does not subsume them. It instead requires their interconnectivity in order to constitute a mode of explanation. The theoretical tools that we use as well as the object under study are both modified in the investigation, making context specific gains in terms of the empirics, but also fleshing out potential theoretical moves. This is where the Logics approach can help to solve the problem of the specificity of populism, particularly regarding its analytical value, by *articulating* it with orbiting logics and concepts, understood as partially bounded by the particularity of a given case, but providing room and direction for how this concept can be applied and compared elsewhere.

Finally, the role of *critique* in this explanatory process is to reveal the moments of ‘defence’ and ‘contestation’ within a given discourse. Here is where we locate the ideological dimension of the phenomenon under study. Far from taking populism as a form of ideology, thin or otherwise, it is through critique where we can identify what challenges or defences of a particular regime of practices are given, explicitly or implicitly, within a populist discourse. Indeed, given that we take populism to be a political logic that arranges the discursive field in a particular manner, this approach then allows us to be sensitive to precisely how those contestations are made and thus better comment on the ideological moments and how they are presented by the discourse. Ideological aspects are therefore to be excavated and examined through the use of populism as an analytical category as opposed to being assumed as inherent to populism itself.

These 5 dimensions of the Logics approach are neither linear nor mechanical but overlap and intersect to produce rigorous and critical explanations of a given problematisation. Where other discursive approaches have identified populism as a political logic, none have situated this reading within the broader logics framework and thus miss out on vital relationships to be made between the way in which it is articulated with other logics, nor on those moments of contestation that allow for a richer and more critical ideological dimension

to be added that is consistent with the underlying assumptions of post-structuralist discourse theory. This had led to accusations that discursive approaches are too formal – a criticism that shall hopefully be rebuffed by the more dynamic reading of the interplay of content and structure made possible through this interpretation.

Commensuration

The logic of a practice, as argued by Glynos and Howarth, comprises “the rules or grammar of the practice” and at its heart represents an attempt to capture “those aspects which make it tick” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 135–136). These logics are constructed and named by the analyst in order to identify and refine the “underlying assumptions, ideas and norms” of a given discourse whilst interrogating these aspects to discover their conditions of possibility and their relationship to the subject (Remling, 2018: 1–2). In this way the logics of critical explanation enable us to “describe, explain and critique the emergence, maintenance and dissolution of structures of meaning, rules and practices in the social world” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 133; Hawkins, 2015: 142).

Let us take a moment to clarify this via the example of a market (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 136). The concept of the market and the terms associated with it (fair trade, supply and demand, etc.) is dependent upon our understanding of the actors and key terms involved. This relational network of subject positions (buyers, sellers, etc.) and signifiers is what a logic attempts to “capture and name”. The logic of a given market is thus constituted by a set of subject positions, objects, institutional parameters, a system of relations and meanings as well as the conditions that allows for the emergence of its practices and their continuation. To this end, *social* logics can be characterised as the naturalised norms underlying a given discourse, the unspoken ‘rules’ or taken-for-granted knowledge. In short uncovering a social logic is to uncover the ‘common-sense’ assumptions that render the text intelligible for a given group at

a given time. Political logics meanwhile describe the dynamics of change in a discourse as well as the moments of contestation and contingency – in short, through using the categories of difference and equivalence, we can describe those logics that exclude or include different signifiers and subject positions from a discourse. Finally, fantasmatic logics pertain to the ‘grip’ of a practice. Fantasmatic logics provide us with an affective-ideological dimension that seeks to grasp the persuasive or enjoyable factors of a discourse and which operate to cover over the contingencies that might threaten or challenge the discourse.

Arming ourselves with this conceptual vocabulary allows us to describe and track the mechanisms and intricacies of a dense and fluctuating discourse. The populist logic that forms the core of this analysis describes the articulations that equate and differentiate between differing signifiers in order to produce the dichotomist and antagonistic discourse of the elite against the people. Yet surrounding this kernel are a series of other, sometimes contradictory, logics which together help to provide a fuller picture. First, an analysis of the social logics contained in these speeches will provide an indication of the norms that allow for the emergence of populist practices, whilst accentuating those social logics which rub against the populist logic and make it difficult for its development. Similarly, by charting the changes in the social logics across the given timeframe, we can evaluate whether the predominance of populism lends itself to any specifically ‘populistic’ effects on these norms and what kind of norms emerge from a discourse prevalent in populist features. In much the same way, specific modes of fantasy may be revealed which result both directly and indirectly from a populist political logic. The fantasmatic logics utilised by UKIP can help to inform us as to the types of fulfilment and enjoyment that they believe can reach a significant segment of the electorate, whilst stabilising their own discourse and rendering their own actions and practices intelligible, motivating, and forceful. Logics thus roughly correspond to the *what*, *why* and *how* questions of a particular discourse – social logics probe as to *what* norms or rules embodied in a text (the

synchronic dimension), political logics ask *how* these norms geminated and displaced or excluded existing norms (the diachronic dimension), and fantasmatic logics asks *why* these prior logics become successful and are sustained. Whilst these of course overlap, it is useful to foreground the role of specified logics to help ‘sharpen’ the different dimensions of the analysis (Glynos et al., 2014: 4).

Some revisions are first required to shape this approach for the case at hand. The Logics approach, founded upon a core ontological condition of contingency, must necessarily itself be considered contingent and revisable dependent upon their application (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 153-154). In our case, we must first ensure that these logics can be made commensurate with the discursive rhetorical analysis, i.e., that logics can be discerned and constructed from speech material. This is a vital consideration as the logics approach as a method has been overwhelmingly applied to policy analysis, social movements, or entire political traditions, wherein one may find a host of practices beyond speech, including organisational practices, political actions, legal frameworks, etc. (Glynos et al., 2020). Some groundwork, in the form of a reactivation and commensuration of the concepts in our theoretical toolkit are thus first needed before we move into a Logics analysis that fits our purposes here.

First let us consider the status of a social logic. As stated, these logics allow for a characterisation of a particular social practices or a regime of practices. Yet this framing of a social logic is problematic when we consider the nature of these speeches. Given that they are a tool of an oppositional political party, we will expect to see a mixture of accepting given norms within a societal-wide paradigm that almost all adhere to, but perhaps to a greater extent the texts will aim to create new values or understandings (Remling, 2018: 7). These objectives make social logics a less suitable category for exploring the discursive qualities of UKIP’s conference speeches as, since they are an outside political challenger, these aim to contest and construct new patterns of signification and meaning. Both these speeches and our attention then

is principally concerned with the political, strategic, and ideological aspects expressed through political and fantasmatic logics.

Political logics can be calibrated to better suit an analysis of speeches. In particular, the identification of logics of equivalence can be aided if we analyse the speeches cognisant of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and catachresis. In metaphor and metonymy, we find tools which facilitate the equivocation of different signifiers such that they can become substitutive, eventually building wide chains of interchangeable terms – such as Brussels, the EU, Europe, the Continent, etc. However, the conceptual separation of metaphor and metonymy will help serve the often-subtle distinctions in speech where, with the former, the speaker attempts to create connections between terms, as opposed to the latter where a certain relation is presupposed. Synecdoche corresponds to the introduction a new term to the chain which can then stand in for the whole – or in Laclauian notation, an empty signifier. These expressions can be seen where a term is introduced that has no certain signified, particularly given the context of the discourse. In this case a term such as the ‘people’, ‘elite’ or even ‘political class’ have no direct correspondence without prior knowledge of, or an immersion in, the discourses in which they take place. Catachrestic terms misname their signifieds, often appearing as mixed or forced metaphors where the substituted term appears strange in the context of the statement. Looking out for such signifiers – that is those that are ambiguous or euphemistic – can help us make visible the chains emerging around them and vice-versa. Other basic rhetorical devices such as repetition or paradiastole (re-description) will also be useful in spotting the creation of chains, as the orator attempts to both reinforce and weave disparate elements under the same argument or block of statements. Paradiastole is also helpful however in hunting down logics of difference, where the speaker seeks to supplant existing understandings of certain moments in a discourse through the substitution of negative

terms with euphemism in order to break down particular unfavourable connections, such as with immigration and racism.

Fantasmatic logics, both beatific and horrific, are easier to discover in terms of the content of a discourse, however we can make another addition to help uncover the *form* of these fantasies. Drawing from Glynos and Howarth, and of obvious usefulness in looking at potentially populist discourses, a fantasy can be indicated in their resistive relationship to public official disclosure (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 148). To be precise, here we can flesh out our reading of the resistive antagonistic or transgressive statements that show a potentially populist statement, by adding that they contain a fantasmatic dimension that helps shape and solidify the populist chains through their ability to grip the subject. Fantasies also fulfil the function of covering over the contingencies in the discourse and promise a fullness to come that aims at providing the subject with future enjoyment or promises a blockade to the enjoyment if the subject ignores the claims of the discourse. Again, some basic rhetorical features can aid in the identification of such logics by concentrating on moments of pathos and hyperbole, though here it is important to include ethos as a significant well of fantasmatic power given the oft-cited centrality of the leader to the populist discourse. Equally, without some recourse to the emotive drive behind the overcoming of the elite by the people – an affective range that may encompass multiple criss-crossing factors including fear, anger, frustration, through to fully-fleshed out transgressive fantasies of open revolt– then we are left with two subject camps without an identifiably antagonistic relationship. The inclusion then of the fantasmatic elements which supply the antagonism is required to ensure we have identified a scenario in which the relationship of people-elite is one of tension and opposition.

Before continuing it is also important to note that these logics provide us with an alternate grammar with which to reproduce the populist characterisation given by Laclau; the existence of a discourse in which an elite and a people are said to be antagonistically opposed.

Instead, we could frame this definition as a discourse which is structured around a populist political logic wherein two parallel chains of equivalence are constructed (the elite and the people) and where an antagonistic frontier between the two is maintained by a series of fantasmatic logics.

2.3 Research Strategy

Roughly speaking, this use of the idea of a populist political logic can be used to help construct four interrelated questions that can orientate our analysis:

1. How can we identify and characterise a populist logic?
2. To what extent can we describe UKIP as exhibiting said logic and how does this inform our characterisation of their discourse?
3. Do we find the operation of these logics in the Brexit referendum campaign?
4. How can these cases contribute to our understanding of populism?

The construction and development of relations between logics in the analysis of UKIP will aid the way in which the category of populist logic can be thought of more conceptually. This in turn will help to ‘tune’ our theoretical tools for other endeavours; directly, in moving to look at the Brexit discourse, and indirectly, in providing potential avenues for future research. Thus, whilst the first of our questions is answered already, it is so only contingently, and we can return to scrutinise this definition after the analysis. The remaining questions form the spine that structures the rest of this research.

As per our reworked definition, three elements - the elite, the people, and the antagonistic relation between them - are all necessary for a practice to be considered a populist one. Any movement or party that engages in a significant number of populist practices can thus

be classified as populist. To begin probing the question of populism here, we must start by finding and delimiting a set of discursive practices performed by the target of research. For this purpose, a dataset of discursive practices was created from the speeches of UKIP party leaders from 2008 through to 2017. Earlier speeches are unobtainable, whilst the end of this set represents the extent of speeches at time of data-collection. Luckily for our purposes, the takeover of the party by Nigel Farage occurred in 2006, whilst the collapse of UKIP as a political force, in terms of both their public presence and as an electoral force, was sealed in the 2017 General Election where they received a paltry 1.8% of the national vote and confirmed two years later with a remarkably insignificant 0.1% in the 2019 General Election. This coincidence between available speech data and the period of interest makes it all the more suitable for investigation. Each of these years is comprised of two ‘leader’ speeches that mark the keynote piece of the party conference, one made in the autumn which is regarded as the primary ‘annual’ conference and one more in the spring.⁶

The reasoning behind the decision to utilise these speeches as our primary source of data is fourfold. Firstly, this limitation allows for a greater command over the comparison and juxtaposition of the involved elements. These speeches all share the same authority within UKIP in terms of prestige, regularity, and importance within the party calendar. Equally they are made comparable in terms of the circumstance of their delivery, the audience in receipt of the speech and the style of that delivery (Pareschi & Albertini, 2018). UKIP’s manifestos were considered as an additional source of evidential data, however these have been dismissed previously by the party and leadership themselves as a mode of effective communication on at least two occasions during the period of interest, making their representation of the party

⁶ The exceptions to this are 2008 and 2017 where only the annual speech is available for the former and the spring speech for the latter.

discourse at least partially questionable.⁷ Manifestos also, by necessity, are segmented pieces of work wherein different themes, policies, ideas, topics and so on are categorised and presented separately. Given the freedom to speak to multiple points at once, speeches provide a much richer source for the construction of the chains of equivalence that interest us, whilst allowing us greater scope to see affective emphases and on which aspects of the discourse this lies. For the sake of focus and consistency then we utilise these conferences speeches as our essential source. Their form is one that is suitably converted to text which is easily commensurable with other political speeches or statements of the same ilk. This makes comparisons further down the line, for example with the speeches of leaders of other parties or influential figures within the Brexit referendum campaigns, more apt for comparative work and better suited to track discursive patterns beyond our initial dataset.

Secondly, these conferences act as one of the higher profile events of the political calendar in years where no elections are to be fought. This allows for a party to utilise these events as a method by which to self-organise and ensure that officials and members are all on the same page and treading the party line. Thirdly, conference provides a rare opportunity for the party in which they control the attention of the media and are more able to get their message across to the electorate in a relatively direct manner. This is particularly true of the leader's speech which, in order to be effective, has to be managed as to speak equally to officials, members and potential voters. This unifying feature of the leader's speech gives us an insight into what the overall narrative the party leadership wishes to convey to both its own supporters and the broader electorate.

⁷ Party leader Nigel Farage famously described their 2010 manifesto as 'drivel' and called its author an 'idiot', whilst in 2015 there was public disagreements between Farage and party strategists including their 'manifesto chief' as to its contents and presentation (Bennett, 2014; Chorley, 2015).

Finally, these conference speeches offer us a fixed moment by which to track changes in the party's discourse, not only from year to year, but taking into account developments within a given year. This is especially helpful in election years as the spring conferences always occur before any given election, providing an insight into the key messages and strategies to be used when approaching voters, whilst the annual conference in the autumn gives us a window into the party's reaction to the outcome of said elections (Crines & Heppell, 2017: 234; Finlayson & Martin, 2008; Pettitt, 2012).

As such the use of these speeches follows Finlayson and Martin's proposition that party conference speeches act as a "rich site" for exploring an institutionalised "moment of ideological deployment and demonstration... shaped by strategic-rational concerns" (Finlayson & Martin, 2008: 454). Any given conference speech communicated by a party leader will be rich in discursive practices as they seek to articulate a description of the state of the nation, their position relative to this state of affairs and both of these elements in relation to the public. Hence if we are to try and discover populist practices at work in the conduct of UKIP, then these speeches are the prime candidate for their location. As a lynchpin for the various threads and narratives that bind together a party's structure, these leader speeches act as a standard candle, if you will, of how these threads are interwoven and of their relative importance within the party as a whole.

Whilst populist analyses may be lacking, some quality rhetorical analysis have been conducted that confirms our own summary of the general character of these speeches. Crines and Heppell's (2017) analysis of speeches from 2010-2014 is particular useful in this regard as it overlaps significantly with our own window. Broadly, they characterise the bulk of these speeches as *epidictic*, where the speaker performs a display to his audience to generate their own likeability through the praise and blame of various elements, utilising particularly switching between anger and humour for emphasis (Crines & Heppell, 2017: 238). Whilst

driven largely by *pathos*, the arguments often focus on the *ethos* of the speaker in terms of their own connection to the audience as opposed to the disconnect presumed between them and other politicians. Combined, the overall effect is to generate a “sense of fear and anger”, though it is noted that the latter speeches here begin to see *logos* deployed as the speaker draws on and connects more issues to the party’s central ambitions (p240). The length of the speeches ranges usually between 2000 and 5000 words, taking between 25 and 45 minutes to deliver. This range seems somewhat arbitrarily chosen, though there is some correlation to a lengthening of speech preceding and proceeding key electoral battles, though close accounts from his allies as well as his own accounts suggest that this is most likely dependent on Farage’s own mood and his “off the cuff” manner of speaking that relied little on written speeches (Farage, 2015: 171). Overall though the “political theatre” employed is seen as a necessary element for smaller parties such as UKIP who must distinguish themselves from mainstream parties who can “expect their voices to be heard because of the credibility of their parties” (p246), whereas UKIP must instead concentrate first on showing that their views deserve consideration (Finlayson, 2014: 434).

2.4 Data gathering and methods

The chosen date-range signifies the beginning of a period of serious political contestation by UKIP, from their 2nd place finish in the European Parliament elections of 2009, right through to their electoral collapse in the 2017 general election where they registered a pitiful 1.8% of the vote. However, it is important to note that prior to 2008, recordings or transcripts of the speeches of any UKIP figures at their conferences are either non-existent or not forthcoming

from UKIP officials.⁸ This limitation however does not significantly impact the work begun here. After all, UKIP’s electoral record and public exposure remained much the same from their inception in 1993 through to the 2005 General Election, thus ensuring that the available data aligns with the period of their serious emergence onto the political stage. Yet certain measures can be taken to mitigate this lack of prior discursive context. As this research consists of a diachronic approach to the discourse, our first speech in the set will not be taken as discourse *ex nihilo*. By spending a greater proportion of space analysing these initial speeches, we try to uncover the already-existing web of moments and chains that allow for the discourse to take meaning.

Table 1. UKIP Leadership Speeches from September 2008 to February 2017.

Speech Label ⁹	Date	Speaker	Location	Word Count
2008A	08/09/2008	Farage	Bournemouth	2580
2009S	18/04/2009	Farage	Exeter	2829
2009A	03/09/2009	Farage	Southport	4465
2010S	12/03/2010	Pearson	Milton Keynes	2766
2010A	03/09/2010	Farage	Torquay	1614
2011S	05/03/2011	Farage	Scarborough	2130
2011A	09/09/2011	Farage	Eastbourne	2453
2012S	03/03/2012	Farage	Skegness	3172
2012A	21/09/2012	Farage	Birmingham	2654
2013S	23/03/2013	Farage	Exeter	3439
2013A	20/09/2013	Farage	London	5533
2014S	28/03/2014	Farage	Torquay	3848
2014A	26/09/2014	Farage	Doncaster	4659
2015S	27/02/2015	Farage	Margate	2342
2015A	25/09/2015	Farage	Doncaster	3741
2016S	27/02/2016	Farage	Llandudno	3766
2016A	16/09/2016	James	Bournemouth	2255
2017S	17/02/2017	Nuttall	Bolton	1777

⁸ Several UKIP officials who were contacted made the same claim that party resources prior to the mid-2000s have been either lost or destroyed, with one figure going so far as to suggest that this was part of a systematic effort to “forget” earlier iterations of their public-facing material.

⁹ In order to radically simplify the process of referring to these speeches, they shall be marked by first the year and then ‘S’ for spring conference and ‘A’ for the annual autumn conference.

In order to track the discursive practices at play in this selection of speeches I employed the use of NVivo data analysis software. This software is designed for the purpose of performing both quantitative and qualitative levels of analysis on rich and dense text-based data inputs. These inputs can then be coded with respect to the themes, ideas, and word patterns in order to illuminate trends within the data. The result of the coding process allows for the analysis of the texts on two levels. At the quantitative level we begin by tracking the number of references made in the speeches to specific instances of a term or theme.

Primarily then, following our deployment of a discursive definition of populism, terms relating to ‘the people’ or ‘the elite’ can be counted in order to reveal their usage over time. Included in ‘counts’ of the elite are associated signifiers including the establishment, the political class, Westminster, career politicians and so on. ‘The people’ has also been designated by references to ordinary people, ordinary folk, common people, normal people, and so on.

Whilst more difficult to track, this can also be applied to statements that disclose a mode of antagonism. Such instances are counted through statements which denigrate the people or where the people can be shown to ‘strike back’ against elite oppression. These take the form of projected insults that are claimed to come from the elite (such as that they ‘sneer’ at the people) or as aggressive statements regarding the coming actions of the people (that they will ‘smash the status quo’). Humour should also be included here as a common source of antagonism, with many jokes made at the expense of European officials, framed usually as personal anecdotes that involve Farage’s escapades in the European Parliament (with the general plot revolving around how he ‘stands up’ for the British people in the face of the ‘Brussels bully-boys’ in their own ‘backyard’). Finally, we also find a rich source of antagonism in the way that the elite are said to deprive the people of some quality, expressed in terms such as a ‘theft’ or ‘suppression’ of their wealth and rights. Such insults and frictions

can be quite contextual and soaked in British idioms and required a number of readings before they could be coded for robustly and consistently.

Similarly, a text frequency analysis allows us to track other major themes such as the EU and immigration. If we can locate within these texts a significant reference to those populist elements that have been outlined, then we can then begin the process of determining the extent to which the text and its themes are organised by a populist logic. As should be clear, whilst the first ‘pass’ through the data can be performed automatically through searching for the terms people and elite, thereafter coding must be done manually in order to find patterns of naming which indicate those same terms through rhetorical usage of metaphor and metonymy. These are often located in close proximity to the initial terms people or elite; for example, both ‘ordinary’ and ‘establishment’ were swiftly identified by this concurrence and could then themselves be automatically searched for, revealing new terms that acted as signifying substitutes, and so on and so forth.

Yet this only represents an initial series of processes by which the data could be combed through, one that, though not insignificant, does not provide a *critical* analysis of the texts at hand. What is absent from this first reading is an analysis of the way in which these terms have been discursively articulated.¹⁰ But it is the way in which these terms are articulated that fundamentally allow us to determine their relevance to the populist mode of politics. What is crucial is that ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ appear as privileged points of reference through which the topics of the speech are interpreted, organised, and read through. One can easily envision these signifiers occurring in any form of speech, yet their acquiring of a populist significance

¹⁰ This mode of discursive analysis is similar to a method utilised by Stavrakakis and Katsambekis in an analysis of left-wing populism in Greece. Here they refer to an analysis of the way that key signifiers are articulated within a text as the ‘primary’ means by which to evaluate a given discourse, though simple ‘numerology’, the number of references to a given signifier, is “not at all devoid of significance” (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

comes from their oppositional relationality where the former is an underdog that is in some way harmed or obstructed by the latter who appear as illegitimate. Their construction as nodal points, alongside an antagonistic logic that regulates their relationship, acts as a smoking gun from which can be traced the development of populist practices and ultimately our evaluation of UKIP as a populist party. What the first stage of analysis allows for is the ability to locate densities and patterns across the texts. This then helps to focus our attention for the construction of logics from these patterns which can then be articulated together to provide a fully-fledged explanation of the discourse.

Following Laclau's starting point for any analysis of the political realm, the basic unit of any analysis is to be identified as the 'demand' (Laclau, 2005: 72-73). If requests are made to the state by a social group that go unheeded or leave the group feeling unsatisfied, then the request will transform into a demand. The formation of a movement or a political cause then depends on the ability of that group to rally around the demand as a point of social formation. As greater numbers of identities and people become part of the movement, the demand becomes chained with other grievances until a clear political frontier is drawn between the movement and their perceived opponents.

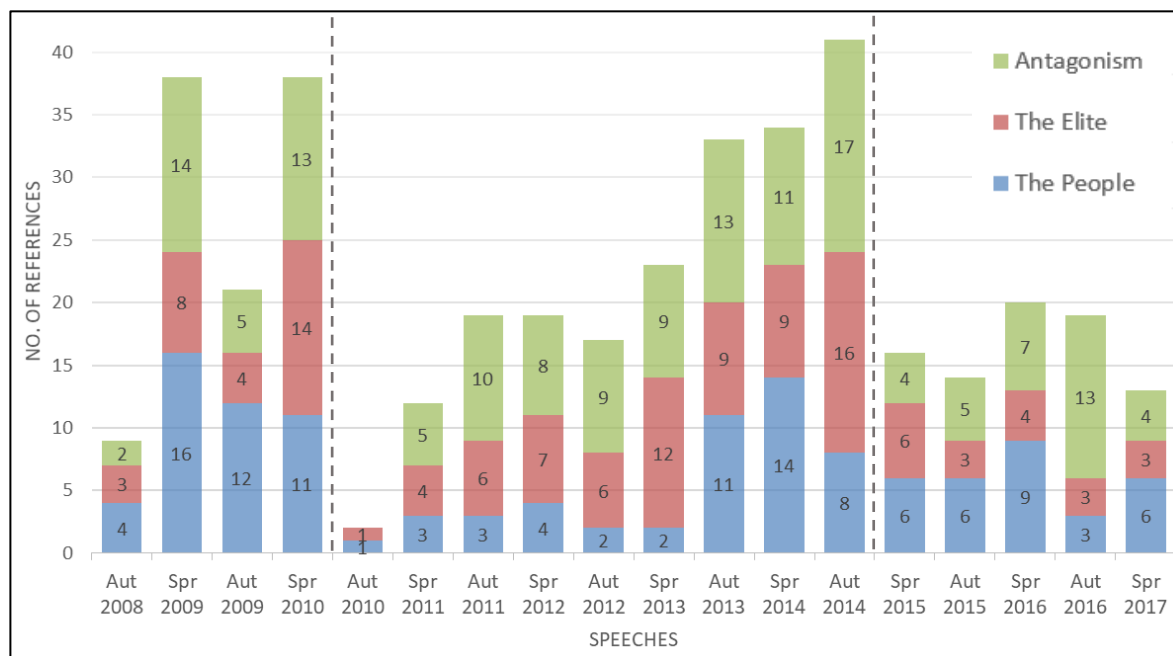
The case of UKIP makes identifying this basic unit easily achieved: they demand to leave the European Union. In order to succeed in pushing this demand, founding activists determined that a political party provided the best vehicle through which this demand could be achieved. Yet party status dictates that whatever core demands that may be in play must be linked with a series of other policy objectives. Thus, besides the demand for leaving the EU and our populist factors, we must also keep a track of other key moments emerging and transforming over time if we are to accurately chart not simply the existence of populist practices but what secondary features allowed for their construction and maintenance and vice-versa.

Initial Findings

The first pass through the data yielded a number of core themes and concepts that would continue to dominate the rhetoric throughout this period. Of the common themes coded for, the EU dominated the sources with a total of 258 references made to the organisation. References to Britain or the British was also high with a yield of 201. Four more concepts make up the rest of the most common easily identifiable features of these speeches. The number of references made about a ‘people’ was 121, the number made to an elite was 118, the number of references made to immigrants was 83, and the number made to the notion of ‘control’ was 77.

By combining the resulting references to the people, the elite and the articulation of an antagonistic sentiment that defines their relationship to one another, we can propose a simplistic ‘measure’ of populism that provides us with our starting point.

Figure 1. References to ‘the people’, ‘the elite’ and antagonism from 2008-2017.



A few comments can be made about this initial form of measurement. First, we can see that in the beginning of the period under analysis that there were a large number of references to all

three of our populist elements. What followed however was a sudden collapse in this rhetoric following the 2010 General Election and the replacement, and swift reinstatement, of Nigel Farage as leader of the party in the autumn of that year. Then came a period in which there was a steady rise in the usage of populist statements resulting in a peak in the 2014 annual conference which stands higher than any other moment during this period. A second collapse can then be seen, one which remains constant until the end of this period. Most curious, considering the extent to which Brexit has been described as a populist event, is the drop off in populist features prior to this period. Explaining this anomaly must also then be added to our considerations.

What this mode of analysis lacks however is a measure by which we can evaluate the way in which these core populist tenants have been discursively articulated within their given contexts. This is crucial in order to detect whether UKIP are simply utilising a form of populist *rhetoric*, a simplistic ‘borrowing’ of particular signifiers, or whether these signifiers are configured by a populist political logic. Further still, the centrality of the functioning of this logic to the entire discourse can then also be evaluated to give an extent to which UKIP can be described as populist. What this numerical visualisation does offer us however is a way in which to manage and guide a discursive reading of the texts. 3 clear periods emerge, beginning with the initial highly populist speeches and their subsequent collapse, a second period of a gradual rise to a period of ‘peak’ populism and finally a third period of sustained low-level populist activity.

Subsequently, we can approach the texts according to the periods defined by this initial overview. Navigating the stages as described creates a level of sensitivity required in close analysis of the speeches. To this end, the analysis must pay close attention to the way in which these populist elements are articulated specifically with regard to the period in which they

reside. The intuition here is that the way in which key signifiers such as ‘the people’ or ‘the elite’ are articulated affects the stability and coherency of the overall discourse as populist.

It is worth then restating what is sought when interrogating the ‘articulation’ of signifiers within a given discourse. For this we must invoke the use of our two base political logics of equivalence and difference. When we speak of the articulation of a given signifier, what we are discussing in essence is the way in which these two primary political logics occur in relation to a given term. For example, when looking to how the term ‘the people’ is articulated in a given discourse, we must look at how it is deployed both in relation to and opposed to other factors within its contextual moment. Equally however we must observe what is excluded from this series of relations and oppositions in order to evaluate the limits of the given discourse. The people may be deployed as a term in relation to the working class and as opposed to ‘the elite’ or to immigrants, yet other social groups may be ignored entirely as they do not fit into the narrative which the discourse subscribes to. These insights provide the texture of flavour of the populism that is detected.

This is why one must be cautious in relying purely on quantitative indications as to the populist nature of a discourse. The people, the elite and their antagonistic relation may frequently appear in the course of a given text, but for them to together constitute a definitively populist discourse they must take their place as centralising nodal points that quilt the discursive field. In other words, the chains of equivalence that link together the various threads of UKIP’s discourse must be articulated in terms of their relation to the people, the elite, or their antagonistic relation. These articulations can be expected to congregate around the singular demand of leaving the EU. This demand is the very cause of their existence, the locus of their being, and in turn will provide the first link in the chains that are expected to be forged in the creation of any political movement. The analysis of each speech will follow a similar format, providing an overview of the speech and its tone, an analysis of the key points that

stand out in each piece and finally its relation to previous speeches. A summary of each period will then also be given in order to evaluate whether a division between these periods can be said to exist and what implications arise from said demarcation.

Stages of Populism

I claim, through the results of a discursive analysis of the speeches made by UKIP party leaders from 2008 through to 2017, that UKIP, to varying degrees, can accurately be described as a populist party throughout this juncture. Much more usefully however, the analysis reveals three distinct stages with reference to the notion of populism: first a moment of ‘shallow’ or perhaps ‘rhetorical’ populism, secondly a period of populist establishment and entrenchment, and finally a period of populist decline. These stages correspond to the deployment of populist signifiers as they are developed from rhetorical elements which permeated a discourse managed by a nationalist political logic, into one where a populist logic takes precedence in organising the key moments of the discourse. Indeed, the interplay of these two logics forms the bulwark of the discourse and provides us with rich grounds with which to explore how this interaction operates. Equally the contradictions and tensions present in the mixing of these logics provides the grounds for explaining the decline of a strong populist presence in the discourse in the final speeches of the dataset, particularly in relation to the Brexit moment.

The following chapter now takes our rudimentary picture of where populist signifiers lay in the first period and begins excavating this time in order to construct a picture of the political and fantasmatic logics at play in order to address the extent to which UKIP can be considered populist at this time and how this is manifest in the discourse.

Chapter 3 - The Appearance of Populist Practices: 2008-2010

In November 1991 a lecturer from the London School of Economics named Alan Sked set up a small cross-party organisation called the ‘Anti-Federalist League’, a pressure group of Eurosceptic standing candidates whose sole interest was to oppose the adoption of the European Maastricht Treaty into law. Their unsuccessful plight convinced the group that only complete withdrawal from the European Union would now suffice and they evolved into a fully-fledged political party. By the end of 1993 the United Kingdom Independence Party was born. 23 years later the UK voted, by referendum, to leave the European Union.

Of course, the existence of a Eurosceptic discourse preceded the formation of UKIP. The origin of a specifically British flavour of Euroscepticism has received countless explanations: the British ‘island mentality’ linked to their geographic location, Britain’s historical relationship with far-away Commonwealth nations allowing for an isolationist approach in Europe, as well as Britain’s ‘special relationship’ with the USA (Harmsen & Spiering, 2004; Startin, 2015). Furthermore, the universal experience of rapid globalisation serves to reinforce these positions. Culturally, Menno Spiering has pointed to a heavy focus in both educational and cultural institutions on Britain’s role in liberating Europe in the Second World War without itself suffering from occupation (Spiering, 2015: 6). As Spiering suggests, the British attitude towards Europe is that Britain stands as an exception to the revolutions, wars and atrocities associated with the continent (Spiering, 2015: 10–11). This attitude is most routinely seen in the conflation of ‘the Germans’ with Europe as a whole, with comparisons between the EU and a Fourth Reich a staple of extreme Euroscepticism (Spiering, 2015: 12–14).

A common understanding of what Euroscepticism means within the British context is well described by Oliver Daddow, who states that it principally concerns a notion of British

national identity that “sees Britain as being not only geographically separate from the continental landmass of Europe but, crucially, as psychologically distant from the European integration movement” (Daddow, 2013: 212–213). This follows the foreign policy position set by Winston Churchill that ranked the European ‘circle’ as the least important of the circles of Britain’s global position, coming behind the circles of English-speaking peoples and the Commonwealth; both of these latter circles coming to form important staples of UKIP’s discourse throughout their tenure as an established political party. This sentiment is often colloquially captured through the term ‘awkward partner’ to refer to Britain’s strained relationship with Europe (George, 1998).

Margaret Thatcher’s infamous ‘Bruges speech’ was perhaps the most forceful delivery of such framings into the public sphere, laying the foundations for later Eurosceptics to speak of Europe and ‘Europeanisation’ through the lens of British exceptionalism, Britain’s ‘special relationship’ with the USA, and the veneration of Empire and free trade (Daddow, 2013; Daddow et al, 2019). These underlying attitudes can be found driving party policy ever since Edward Heath led the UK into what is now the EU in 1973. Even the initial discussions were a lukewarm commitment at best, as a pledge to “negotiate, no more no less” as the Conservative manifesto at the time indicates (Forster, 2002: 34). From then to the present, aided largely by Thatcher’s powerful intervention in the delivering of the ‘Bruges speech’, discourses of Euroscepticism have continuously invoked the fears of a loss of sovereignty and threats to national identity (Todd, 2016: 107). Whilst these features are well documented and uncontentional within the literature, what is less clear is whether a populist dimension to these discourses can be satisfactorily detected.

In perusing this line, I follow in the steps of Chris Gifford who has argued that the rise of Euroscepticism can be explained as a systemic feature of British politics. His development of this view has led him to be described as one of the very few academics to seriously

examine the relationship between Euroscepticism and populism (Wellings, 2010: 490). Clearly this area is underdeveloped and warrants more serious consideration. Euroscepticism, it is argued, cannot be easily reduced to specific actors or ideologies, but represents a “structural tension” in political representation (Gifford, 2014: 513). Gifford takes his cues from Peter Mair who argues that the decline in the authority and support of the political party as a vehicle for democratic representation has resulted in a deep mode of depoliticization throughout European liberal democracies (Mair, 2002, 2006). European integration, it is argued, served only to fuel this decline. A “permissive consensus” has come to characterise the attitude of political parties towards decision making at the supra-national level of the EU; such negotiations were of little interest to the general public and were of little relevance to party competition (Gifford, 2014: 515). This ‘democratic deficit’, a feature of both nation states and the EU, is then a prime target of the demands of populist modes of mobilisation that offer to directly represent ‘the people’ against this elitist mode of political management (Mair, 2002). Euroscepticism thus has the potential to take on a populist form in order to challenge this depoliticization.

In searching for the foundations of English nationalism, Ben Wellings echoes this line of argumentation. English national identity, it is claimed, has been fundamentally shaped through its opposition to European integration. This antagonistic opposition led to the emergence of a thoroughly populist mode of collective identification. Coupled with the feeling of a loss of sovereignty and of democratic processes, as already highlighted, the Labour government of 1974 felt pressed into offering a referendum, presenting the arguments for and against European unity as a matter that “only ‘the people’ could decide” (Wellings, 2010: 493). This pivotal decision resulted in the people becoming a “distinct referent” in British political discourse, “let loose from the vagaries of parliamentary sovereignty” (Gifford, 2015: 363).

The referendum of 1975 thus allowed for the emergence of the people as a legitimate signifier within political discourse, one that could be rearticulated by competing political formations for their own purposes. Yet whilst Wellings emphasises this as a moment of nationalistic realisation, Gifford is quick to point out that this does not do justice to the specifically *populist* nature of this moment - “populism is not another species of nationalism, or any other movement for that matter, but it is what it is: populism” (Gifford, 2015: 363). Those nationalists that construe themselves as the people are not in support of their country if defined in terms of their governments and successive leaders, but in terms of their being betrayed by an elite who have been instrumental in taking something from them giving it away to Europe or to immigrants (Gifford, 2015: 365). As such, Europe became an antagonistic expression of British decline. In other words, what defines this collective identity is not any positive defining features of Englishness, but, in Laclauian terms, the way they have a shared antagonistic frontier in opposition to the EU (Mycock & Gifford, 2015).

This created profound internal struggles for successive governments and their oppositions, culminating in the decision by David Cameron to offer a referendum as part of the Conservative manifesto of 2015. Much has already been said about internal party divisions in relation to the ‘European question’ (Hix & Lord, 1997; Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008; Alexandre-Collier, 2015). The issue of European integration inflames party tensions, as parties must manage their most vocal Eurosceptics who seek to mobilise a British public who have traditionally shown low levels of interest in European affairs (Usherwood, 2002: 211–212). In countering this threat to their stability, parties have elected to engage in what Gifford describes as a ‘governing code’ of management; instead of seeking to build up strong public support and sentiment for Britain’s relationship with Europe, the issue is neutralised through domestic political agendas that aim to “maintain it as a depoliticised element of state strategy” (Gifford, 2014: 519).

What could thus be described as a ‘logic of management’ dictated the discourses of successive governments, which counteracted attempts to mobilise a popular opposition by Eurosceptic wings of the major parties as well as non-party influences and interest groups. However, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 reenergised Conservative Party Eurosceptics that had the “opportunities, strategies and resources” to advance their case and end this “permissive consensus” (Alexandre-Collier, 2015: 105). Approximately 20 associations and pressure groups were created during this time, many of which propagated the Eurosceptic message through until the mid-2000s (Alexandre-Collier, 2015: 106). One of these groups was the aforementioned Anti-Federalist league that would later become the UK Independence Party in 1993.

The rapid rise of a party who at their worst gained 0.2% of the vote at the 1992 general election, and at their best won the European Parliament Elections with a 26.6% share and took 12.6% of the vote in the 2015 general election, will (or at least should) continue to be studied intensely by any newcomers into the party-political arena across Europe or indeed the world. Goodwin & Milazzo (2015) in particular have provided an excellent and comprehensive study into the 2015 general election, discussing, and analysing changing political loyalties, voter demographics and the specific limitations of the British political structure for newly emerging parties. They conclude that, despite failing to make significant breakthroughs in terms of political representation in parliament, that the party were successful in expanding what was a small core of Eurosceptic and right-conservative voters, into a broader coalition described as the ‘left-behind’: working class voters who were already disengaged with politics or who feel abandoned by both Labour and Conservative parties that are seen as London-centric, out-of-touch, and responsible for the negatively felt effects of globalisation, principally de-industrialisation and rising immigration.

It was 2008, however, which heralded the beginning of a series of mass dislocations that created room for a political outsider to appeal to these elements of the public. 10 years after the landslide that made him one of Britain's most popular political leaders, in 2007 Tony Blair stepped down as Prime Minister and leader of the Labour party and was succeeded by his Chancellor Gordon Brown. The newly, unelected, Prime Minister faced a tumultuous 3 years beginning with calls for an immediate snap election, the global financial crisis, a major political scandal concerning the expenses of members of parliament and finally the 2010 general election which pitted the ruling Labour party against a reinvigorated Conservative party, one that had repositioned itself to appeal to the socially liberal centre of British politics whilst doubling down on their right-wing neoliberal economic policies. This election would see the British public face further social and political dislocation: the installation of a coalition government, made up of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, for the first time since the Second World War, one that set about instigating a deep and prolonged regime of harsh economic austerity.

Yet the British electoral system is, by design, notoriously difficult to crack open, at least from the perspective of any party besides Labour and the Conservatives. For UKIP, carving open a new political space within this landscape, whilst both Liberal Democrats (the, until recently, perpetual '3rd party'), the Greens and the far-right BNP were attempting to do the same, elevates this task from difficult to near-impossible. UKIP did however find increasing success at local and European elections where the British public have always been more willing to vote for 'fringe' candidates, either due to fairer representation or because less importance is granted to such elections allowing for less strategic voting.

With political turmoil however comes political opportunity. UKIP had firmly established themselves as a political player in 2004 when their party won 12 seats in the European Parliament, mustering over 2.5 million, or 2.2%, of the votes in those elections. This

did not translate into strength at the general election the following year, earning only 600,000 votes, a mere 0.8% increase from the previous general election. A change in leadership in 2006 breathed new life into the party that would now enter into this tumultuous period with Nigel Farage at the helm.

This intersection of small successes in European and local elections, the introduction of a newly revitalised leadership and the social and political turmoil brought on by financial crisis, scandal, austerity, and coalition, makes the period beginning 2008 the optimum place to proceed with our intervention. What then follows is an attempt to capture the discursive practices of UKIP as they attempted to forge an identity that allowed for the extension of their appeal and the inflation of their political influence. As discussed previously, this broadening of their discursive appeal has been only described in quite vague terms and we claim that through the notion of a populist logic that both clarify and a critical explanation of this change can be achieved.

3.1 Initial Mapping of the UKIP Discourse

The opening segment of speeches, made between 2008 and 2010, establishes many themes that would continue, to varying degrees, to dominate UKIP rhetoric for the next decade. Three central components emerge immediately that give us an impression of the state of the discourse at this moment: the equivalence of the major political parties, the idea of governance by the people and the undermining of UK sovereignty by the EU. It is worth highlighting some archetypal examples from this text in detail as they reoccur throughout the following decade of speeches.

The 'LibLabCon'

The primary demand of UKIP is to leave the EU. Seeing how the UK's relationship to the EU is fleshed out in these speeches then is vital in grasping the roots of the discursive webs that emanate from this position. Interestingly, the majority of allusions to the EU are used purely as a mode of drawing an equivalence between the main UK political parties. Within the first minute of the opening speech of our period, we are given a disparaging equivalence between "government ministers" and "what pretends to be the opposition party" (2008A). They do not differ on their approach to the EU, they all lied in promising a referendum on the European constitutional treaty and they "all agree" on the expansion of the EU and NATO into Eastern Europe. These equivalences cast UKIP's political opponents as a single political bloc within which their internal differences are insignificant; their national politics amounting to "arguing the pros and cons on whether a post office should stay open or should close". UKIP here stands as "the party of opposition", as "the only opposition party" to this singular, uniform political entity. The 2.7 million people that voted for UKIP in the 2004 European elections "rocked the political establishment", the bloc of indistinguishable political parties, and seek to create another "political earthquake that they simply cannot ignore". In this way, the other political parties are set up as the establishment against which a political frontier can be drawn between them and the one true party of opposition in UKIP.

Each party is regularly listed in turn along with their failure, amongst which the ability to listen to the people is most often repeated. Their equivalence is now so entrenched that "you need a fairly strong magnifying glass to work out what the differences in policy are" (2009S), but of main concern for UKIP and the people is that they want a "bigger and stronger European Union". This is the first direct link made between the British political parties and the purported aims of the EU. These parties are not simply bystanders to EU expansion, but actively seek to pursue this cause. Against this collusion UKIP call repeatedly to "give the British people a

referendum”. The notion of referendum then begins to emerge as a point of antagonistic confrontation wherein the established powers are pitted against the people in a denial of their ability to exercise their sovereignty.

The Sovereign People

Clearly then what the main thrust of this line of thought entails is an identification of the political (and as shall be seen, social) hegemony that stands in the UK. What follows then is the painting of UKIP as a thoroughly anti-hegemonic opposition to this singular political entity, this political establishment. This anti-hegemonic position is fleshed out through UKIP’s repeated insistence that “the best people that govern Britain, are the British people themselves” (2008A). These people are claimed to have fundamentally different wants to those of “the politicians”; a gap has emerged in society between these two groups that has become “a gaping chasm”, one which UKIP seeks to fill. For Farage this can be achieved because UKIP are “ready to fight...willing to fight and we relish this fight”. Most noticeably what is at stake here is the position of the people with regards to the political landscape. Farage’s reference to UKIP as some kind of banner around which the people should rally indicates heavily that the people themselves are excluded from the hegemonic bloc. As shall be explored in more detail later, this is vital when considering conceptualisations of UKIP as both nationalistic and populist. Current political and theoretical debates, as previously discussed, blur the lines between these two terms, but perhaps one pole can be identified as taking precedence over another within certain discursive frames. Here by establishing the people as standing outside of the elitist hegemon, and antagonistically opposed to it, we can see a call that is principally populist in its claim, with any nationalistic influences relegated to simply describing, or adding texture to, the people (in that they are ‘British’ and should govern Britain).

One speech in particular in this period, 2009S, is entirely geared towards the development of the idea of the people as the ultimate arbiter of politics and in turn of the nation. UKIP are claimed to be representatives of their aims and ambitions, which translate here into a support for a change of relationship between the UK and the EU. However, whilst the people may think this, “the politicians are not listening”. Crucially this is the first time in which immigration, in the form of a demand, is drawn on in UKIP’s criticism of the EU and of the Government. The people of Britain have been made angry by the ‘open-door’ immigration policy that the British political parties and the EU share. A line that will be repeated oft in this period is the proposition that “the only people who should decide who comes to live, work and settle in this country are the British people themselves through their own elected parliament”. This dense and detailed statement separates the people from immigrants whilst opposing the people to any external powers, the EU included. Surprisingly however no mention is made as to the negative effects of immigration, simply that it does exist and is likely to increase; its negative connotations are assumed.

Of equal weight at this time is the introduction of a combative style that encourages antagonisms against the collective elite. When speaking of an encounter Farage had with then PM Gordon Brown, Farage claims that on the subject of EU membership, Brown “didn’t even have the courage to respond to me, he just sat there didn’t he, like a grinning idiot” (2009S). To entrench this antagonistic anti-establishment stance Farage goes on to compare himself to a popular anti-establishment celebrity icon (Jeremy Clarkson), stating “no doubt someone will ask me to apologise for that comment, but... I shan’t”. This is partnered by a long antagonistic anecdote concerning Farage’s relationship with his peers in the EU parliament, where he upsets a “funny little Frenchman” whilst ‘exposing’ the criminal record of French Commissioner Jacques Barrot. Cheered on by the crowd, Farage goes on to say that he was “on French soil speaking the unspeakable”. But Farage wants to extend his own personal antagonisms to that

of the party as a whole by proudly proclaiming to the audience that his party has been described by the Irish Prime Minister as a “group of extremists”. UKIP, Farage says, will never accept “gutless, spineless, useless career politicians in Westminster” making decisions for “us”, “the British people”. Again, what we have is not only an expansion of the perceived hegemony through the EU’s discursive inclusion as part of the elite, but an antagonistic linkage between individual politicians at home and abroad reinforces this emerging political frontier between hegemon and underdog – of a people whose identity is derived negatively in their subordination to the elite.

This antagonism is crucial as it partially constitutes the opposed blocs themselves, giving clarity and definition to their frontiers and further entrenching their differences. Additionally, immigration control is introduced as another demand, although its overall position within the discourse is poorly defined, besides the differentiation made between immigrants and the British people themselves. No specific demand is made of immigration besides an acknowledgement that it is not the people who are in control of the decision-making processes involved in issues of immigration.

Interestingly however we do see an attempt to extend the pole of ‘the people’ further as we come toward the end of this period. For Farage the political ‘battle’ against the EU is “the battle between the people and the professional political class across an entire continent” as opposed to a battle between ‘left’ and ‘right’ (2009A). This is one of the first clear indicators of a large-scale fantasy in which UKIP forms an arm of a larger campaign to free the peoples of Europe from not only the EU but from their respective elites that collude with this tyrannical organisation. However, this line of argument is only briefly maintained before moving back to the more secure territory of domestic grievances around British parliament. In particular is the introduction of a phrase that will come to dominate British political life for the next decade as Farage states that, in the interest of the “British people... we must *take back control* of our

borders”. Yet ‘the people’ of this expression should be taken as a signifier that represents the British state, as the border is made a symbol of what separates those inside and outside of the people. In other words, though superficially a populist call, this demand to take back control follows a thoroughly nationalist logic.

The Foreign Encroacher

Standing in a complex relationship between the elite and the people, is the EU itself – the main target of UKIP’s political ambitions. The way that the EU is presented here is in opposition to the ambitions of the people and in opposition to the “national interest” (2008A). The nation’s legislation is dictated by the institutions of the EU, yet the relationship between the national establishment and this imposing organisation is not fleshed out in any purposeful way. The elites are said to be “silent” on this issue but are not equated directly with the EU. Instead, they are conceived of as a barrier to solving the ‘European question’. The EU’s positioning as part of an elite emerges not in their collusion and similarity with the national elite, but simply through their difference and opposition to the governance of Britain by the British people. In this sense the opposition constructed between the British public and the major political parties is as between the people and an elite, but the opposition between the British public and the EU is based around a nationalistic logic where an ‘outside’ threatens an ‘inside’.

Moreover, much like how immigration is never fleshed out as undesirable and is simply assumed to be so, the EU in a similar fashion is only remarked on as an antagonistic presence that threatens the UK in an undefined and existential manner. Sovereignty is the only point of contention, but the way this is fleshed out is ambiguous as at times Farage speaks of the sovereignty of Parliament – who themselves are the target of antagonistic mockery – and the sovereignty of the people. As discussed already in relation to Britain’s internal affairs, this latter mode takes preference, but in relation to the EU it appears that the nation remains very

much the focal agent. A potentially fragile balancing act appears to be at play where at once UKIP must be seen to protect the (national) symbol of democratic sovereignty, but where that same symbol must be antagonistically opposed for its location within the elitist web.

Untied Threads

Here we have then the three pivotal pillars which provide the foundations for UKIP's discourse: the elite are made up of the national political opponents of UKIP, the people are the sole determinate of the nation and the EU threatens to undermine this right to self-determination from the outside. Certainly, in this period we can identify their statements concerning these various groups as being both populist and nationalistic. A few remarks however should be made at this point. First the term elite here acts quite narrowly. It only has references to the 'big 3' major political parties of Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. Secondly the people do not participate in an equivalently chain wider than that of with UKIP itself; there is no clue as to who constitutes the people besides that they are 'British', though even who constitutes this group is also unclear. What we do know at this point however is that UKIP are attempting to associate themselves with a vague and ambiguous idea of the people.

Equally, the links between the EU, the elite and the people are left underdeveloped. UKIP's objections to the EU are by and large left unsaid in favour of mapping out a political terrain in which UKIP fights on behalf of the people against the other political parties who are charged with lying to the people on their true stance on the EU. This confusion as to where the EU stands within the discourse - as an intrusive and foreign other, as a member of the established elite, as an institution, etc. - can be seen in the discursive mode in which it is addressed. As seen, when speaking internally of the elites and the people we can see the predominance of the populist pole. Yet when speaking of the EU, the nationalistic pole instead becomes visible as the EU is not framed against an underdog nor a people, but to the

‘national interest’. UKIP’s position at this stage then might best be described as one of domestic populism and external nationalism.

Revealing Exclusions

Whilst these three threads make up the contents of this period, there are some noticeable absences that can help to situate them more clearly. Most significantly, the 2009A speech is the first to follow one of the most compelling political scandals in recent British history. The parliamentary expenses scandal arose when the expenses claims of every British MP from 2004 to 2008 were released by the High Court of England and Wales following a series of freedom of information act requests.¹¹ Ultimately, three MPs and one peer would be jailed on the charge of ‘false accounting’, with several more resignations and suspensions of peers and MPs following shortly thereafter. The most obscene expenses would be touted by the media for years to come, including, for example, a floating ‘duck house’ purchased on expenses by Conservative MP Peter Viggers for a pond in his Hampshire home to the tune of £1645, and the £2200 expense for the cleaning of the moat of MP Douglas Hogg’s country estate. The scandal became only more pronounced, and symbolic of a growing dissatisfaction with party politics and politicians more generally, as the effects of global economic recession began to set in.

However, given the extraordinary political capital that this dislocation of the political order represented for an anti-establishment party such as UKIP, what we instead see is a peculiar lack of strategic efficacy on the part of the party leadership. The parliamentary expenses scandal had a significant impact on the political discourse of the major parties who jostled intensely for the moral high ground, yet for Farage and UKIP the scandal was

¹¹ A full list of these allowances can be found on the UK Parliament website at: <https://mpsallowances.parliament.uk/mpslordsandoffices/hocallowances/allowances-by-mp/>

considered to have “overshadowed everything” that UKIP was fighting for (2009A). Instead of utilising this scandal to further develop what we would easily conceive to be a very populist conception of a corrupt elitist caste wasting the hard-earned taxes of the common people, this event is instead only very briefly alluded to in the 2009A speech before Farage turns his attention back to an attack on the EU. These attacks followed the pattern previously established of personality centred anecdotes revolving around Farage’s antagonising conduct in the European parliament. A cloud of nationalistic privileging is apparent, whereby the EU took the prime focus of the speech, whilst the actions of what one might call the ‘internal’ elites simply acted as a ‘distraction’. This moment is symbolic of the very sudden swinging from nationalist to populist poles that muddled UKIP’s discourse during this period, and perhaps begins to explain the strong variation in the quantitative reading identified earlier.

Simply put, it seems that the dismissal of this event was considered a difficult topic for UKIP to take a stance on precisely because it was difficult to arrange according to a nationalist logic. After all, given that the ‘enemy’ is the EU, one could see how a full-frontal assault on the entire British political structure could slide into an attack on the nation itself. Instead, it appears here that a logic of difference was manifest that attempted to separate grievances against the corruption of British politics with the party’s position on the EU as the primary source of corruption and greed. This is telling of a party whose discursive practices still are organised by a nationalistic logic than one organised by a populist logic as the latter would have little issue in representing this scandal as emblematic of elites regardless of territory.

Evidence for why the party strove to prefer a nationalistic telling of their demands can be found in the UK European Parliament elections of 2009 that threw up several pertinent results. Most significantly for our purposes was the election of two fascists belonging to the British National Party (BNP) to the European parliament after gaining just under a million votes. Labour, the incumbent party and thus bearing the brunt of criticism for the expenses

scandal, dropped to third place, allowing UKIP to come second in a major election for the first time in their history with just under 2.5 million votes (2,498,226). Yet this success must be viewed in the context of the previous European Parliament election where UKIP came third with just over 2.5 million votes (2,650,768). Thus, whilst they may have gained a single seat from the previous election (from 12 to 13), their total vote haul dropped slightly. This can largely be attributed to the appearance of the BNP on the political scene who narrowed the political space in which UKIP operated to the right of the opposition Conservative party.

It is in these results though that we also find a strategic conundrum for the political direction of a party who express a populist dimension against the ‘establishment’ – the Conservatives, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats – whilst also expressing a nationalistic dimension – aimed at attracting the right-wing of the Conservatives and the emergent BNP. The privileging of either dimension each represents a carving out of differing spheres of influence within the British political arena. But at this point we can speculate that the party discourse was clearly cautious in its privileging of either pole, particularly at a time where they sought to maintain their gains in the European Parliament whilst simultaneously making inroads at the upcoming general election. In particular the expenses scandal saw a perfect opportunity to relate different sets of political elites to which UKIP stood opposed, yet UKIP failed to take advantage of this moment. Their attacks remained singular and disparate, and often swung from a nationalistic pole to a populist one without any strong linkages being made between the two.

3.2 Change of Leadership, Change of Direction

The end of 2009 saw a temporary change of leadership with Lord Pearson taking the helm in time for the 2010 spring conference. This change came as a result of Nigel Farage’s decision

to stand down as party leader in an attempt to fight a campaign to be elected as MP for Buckingham in the upcoming 2010 general election. This potentially dislocatory experience for a party so reliant upon the charismatic figure of Farage represents a conflict of strategic direction, coupled with Farage's own personal ambitions to enter Parliament. Given the extra media attention created by their success in the European Parliament elections, to create a moment of internal strife prior to a general election appeared ill-advised.

This change in leadership certainly affected the style of the keynote speech come spring of 2010. 'The elite' took an unprecedented level of importance and focus at this time, becoming the centre of the events attention. This is coupled with an equally dominant positing of the antagonism that Pearson feels either does or should exist towards those same elites. For Pearson there is a clear and transparent plot underway, forged by an elite made up of the "self-serving dishonest political class", "clever bureaucrats" and the EU (2010S). This plot is directly aimed at undermining the sovereignty of the British people. Giving some content to the idea of a British people, Pearson states that the people are "not fools" and are "real" in a way that the political class cannot be. They have been "deceived and betrayed", but unable to change the system because the House of Commons, "for which the people are allowed to vote" is "wholly irrelevant".

This narrative places the emphasis not on the antagonisms faced by the leader, as with Farage in the years prior, but instead constructs UKIP as a rallying symbol through which the people can fight back against the injustices that a wide and varying elite have planned against them simply so that they can carry on leading a "comfortable way of life at our expense". This is a zero-sum game – the elite live in luxury because the people do not, and this direct conflict can only be faced if the people back UKIP.

Pearson is careful to ensure that the encroaching powers of the EU, the parliamentary expenses scandal, repeated crises in the social services, terrorism, and the growing gulf between rich and poor, are all articulated as part of one and the same issue: a lack of democracy. By looking to the Swiss institution of “national and local referendums”, Pearson finds a new nodal point with which to bring European and national politics into a new discourse within which the EU is but one, though major, moment. This is symbolised within his claim that “we are obviously no longer a single-issue party”. Democracy, or at the very least democratic accountability, takes the place of a central nodal point which provides the people with their demand. Ironically, Pearson’s claim that UKIP are no longer a single-issue party appears genuine in the sense that their position on the EU is no longer their central demand – it forms but one link in a chain that is fixed to democracy. The elites act only to “increase our influence by giving up our sovereignty. That they mean your sovereignty of course”. But for the people there is only “frustration because the British people feel that there is nothing they can do to make any difference... whatever they do they can't change the system”.

Whilst an endemic lack of substance pierces this speech and its attempts to form coherent demands, it delivers on the chaining of a number of disparate positions into a political bloc that vehemently opposes the elites and their ilk. Rich in populist devices, the setting up of the British people as an oppressed underdog, one who’s democratic function has been stripped, provides both a demand and a subject position with which to work with. The political subject that makes up the people is one who feels as though they lack any part in the decision-making process that guides the fortunes of the people, someone that has a profound sense of a lack of *control* but is still able to “see through all this... see it for what it is”. UKIP’s pledge, as representative of the people is to create the kind of “direct democracy” that “our political class hates”. This claim for direct democracy is profoundly incongruous within a right-wing nationalist discourse. Yet here it acts as a tool with which to directly and antagonistically

oppose the series of demands of the people, under the banner of democracy, against the corrupt elite in whatever institution they may resign, be it the House of Commons, the Lords, the “education establishment” or the EU.

Do we find here a hint of radical democracy, one proposed by Laclau whilst in parallel developing his theory of populist reason? Certainly, a signifier of democracy filled by sovereignty and control, and which is linked to the people is evident here. However, there is also a thoroughly right-wing, if not nationalistic, mode of exclusivity to be found that weaves together a separate thread besides the democratic one. When the people are spoken of in terms of the threats to their existence, we find the reasons behind why the elite are to be blamed for bringing “this country pretty low”. The prisons are “bursting with the mentally ill and the illiterate” whilst the “border controls have been deliberately abandoned so that our inner cities are increasingly uncomfortable and explosive places”. These points, spoken of in the same breath, indicate toward an enemy within made up of those that dwell in the ‘inner cities’ – a well-established dog-whistle that is still used to berate the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities of the Anglo-sphere – and who threaten the harmony of the homogenous people. Furthermore, the threat of the EU takes a darker turn here than in previous years whereby deeper integration represents not just a losing of national sovereignty and the sovereignty of the people, but which represents a “final extinction of what millions of our forebears have died for”.

This uneasy marriage between an aggressive, conspiratorial nationalism that defines the people against the violent and ‘explosive’ internal-foreigner, with some scant calls for a new level of democratic participation against a hegemonic elite, creates a clear vision of a nationalistically arranged discourse. ‘The people’, as a signifier, make many appearances here, yet it is clear that the nation takes precedence, particularly in relation to the aggressive antagonisms that are directed ‘outward’ far more than they are ‘upward’. This stance may

indicate a strategic positioning by Pearson, given the sudden and surprising rise of the BNP and their splitting of the UKIP vote in the European Parliament elections. This growing exclusionary element becomes well-placed to woo those voters to the right and shifts UKIP as a party contending with the host of British political parties to one that is in a direct fight with the BNP and the right of the Conservative party. However, what is also certain is the placement of the elites as not simply a blockage to the resolution of the party's demands, but as an active enemy and opponent that purposefully allows, for example, immigration or growing EU power, in order to advance their own ambitions as a homogenous bloc that exists in direct antagonism with the people. Both of these elements speak clearly to the way in which a discourse can be occupied by populist signifiers, but that their organisation according to a populist *logic* is far less clear, particularly in the presence of a conspicuous nationalist logic.

The Return of Farage

The party were keenly aware that the overtly nationalistic direction of Pearson, whilst potentially useful in warding off any loss of ground to the BNP, was ultimately unsuitable if they ever sought to broaden their appeal. Pearson resigned having spent only a few months in charge of the party following a dismal showing in the General Elections with just 3.1% (919,546) of the vote. The BNP had themselves achieved 1.9% (564,331) which UKIP took to be indicative of a split in the nationalist vote.

The final speech for this initial period, 2010A, stands alone in the dataset as lacking many of the qualities seen in the rest of the data, which in itself presents us with some provocative observations. Following the departure of Pearson, whose resignation was blamed on his inability to perform well at 'party politics', the 2010 annual conference was destined to be little more than a showcase for potential leadership candidates. Farage's return to the pool of potential candidates following his failed contestation for a seat in Parliament guaranteed him

a keynote speech at this conference – though the process of electing a new leader was little more than a formality, with candidates stepping aside as soon as Farage announced his running. His leadership election bid speech then takes the place of the ‘leader’s speech’ in this dataset as no formal leader speech was available for this conference.

This speech was very much in the vein of a leadership audition, dealing with questions surrounding Farage’s own political qualities and ability to grasp the reigns of party power. The resulting appeal to party members was thus much shorter, focused and contained only a single mention to either a people or an elite. Instead, the speech sought to relaunch a reinvigorated Farage back to his former position of leader, whilst highlighting the issues that face the party. Chief amongst the qualities Farage espoused, was his ability to “deliver good, simple, straightforward, understandable, deliverable messages the people pick up”. The years to follow would certainly prove testament to this claim. Similarly, he located the inability of the party to make further gains to their existing million voters in the party’s failure to present themselves as ‘professionals’, whether this be internally, in planning, or in their approach to campaigning. Having achieved just shy of a million votes in the 2010 General Election, Farage recognised a glass ceiling to his party’s ambitions, particularly if they followed the course of appealing to BNP voters in the style of Pearson.

These two aspects, clarity and professionalism, together provide a pivotal moment of recognition by Farage. These aspects were linked in that the story and image that UKIP was trying to get across to its own members, let alone the public, was considered by Farage to be lacking in any clear direction. The result was that the party often appeared uncoordinated in their campaigning and representatives were often unclear on the party line on a host of issues, which Farage states explicitly here. This confusion is reflected in our analysis as these early speeches regularly expressed attempts to forge new equivalential relationships without building on previous ones, creating small pockets of clustered signifiers within the discursive field

without solidifying the linkages between these groupings and dancing wildly between populist, nationalist, and right-wing exclusionary statements.

3.3 Constructing Logics of Populism and Nationalism

The focus of this chapter has been a closely read analysis of the first segment of speech-data available, attempting to extrapolate from the passages any initial signs of developing populist practices and evaluating their dominance within these texts. Yet whilst this emphasis on the prevalence of a populist logic is the core task, other logics can also be identified which can help keep track of the overall picture of the discourse as we delve deeper into the data.

Before we move to the logics which organise and affectively imbue the contents of the discourse, we should distinguish those moments that appear most frequently and prominently. Two moments stand out in particular: self-determination and independence. The latter of these takes for granted the accepted norm of democratic control that peoples and nations should be able to determine their own fates. Yet it calls upon the former in two distinct senses. Firstly, along a temporal axis, this moment sees a level of self-determination in the past that is lacking in present and that is claimed will be achieved in the future. Secondly, along a spatial axis, this moment seeks to localise self-determination to the level of a nation-state – the UK. Self-determination symbolises the ethos or spirit of the party in the present political space, whilst independence acts more as a reflection of what the temporal ambitions of the party are.

Both of these moments speak to social norms to the extent that they in themselves are never given a justification and instead are the proposed and projected norms against which policy ideas should be evaluated. They take the form of ‘is’ and ‘ought’ statements and form the referral points against which other practices, in this case statements, are informed and tested. For example, in the early speeches ‘open-door immigration’ is commanded to be

opposed yet without any suggestion as to why, with the exception that it is not the British people but the EU that dictates the number of immigrants allowed to enter the UK. In other words, immigration is to be opposed due to its failure to coincide with self-determination. This is also evidenced through recourse to democracy and democratic procedure. Multiple references to elections and the elected parliament provide an insight into the overarching moments which guide the discourse at this time. Appeals to the use of referenda and to national sovereignty as practices of self-determination further emphasises the command that this moment holds.

Layered upon this we, unsurprisingly, find evidence toward the moment of independence. Whilst there is a great deal of crossover between this and self-determination, this moment makes a virtue out of separation and ‘standing on your own feet’ – an inflated mode of individualism but wherein the individual is defined at the level of the nation in a catachrestic sleight of hand. This projected vision of the nation as an individual unit standing alone in the world is spoken of as a necessary condition of the former call for self-determination. The interaction of these key moments then becomes one of a logos based argumentative structure wherein UKIP posit a projected independence as the condition for the already accepted norm of self-determination, which is claimed to be at risk. This is seen where those democratic institutions such as the House of Commons are set to become “wholly irrelevant” unless the UK is independent from the EU, or where membership of the EU is counterposed to the national interest.

Political Logics

The logics of equivalence and difference make up the core political logics that either extend or disassemble chains of signification, and both are clearly visible here as they are in any given discourse. The manner of their deployment though creates different flavours of political logic,

of which we have identified two primary ones within the texts – the populist logic that antagonistically divides the people from the elite insofar as the former is subordinate to the latter, and a nationalistic logic that antagonistically divides an ‘inside’ from an ‘outside’. We can map these using the analysis made so far, but in particular the focus is on the construction of chains of equivalence that can be identified as representing the people and the elite. Complementing and supporting these dominant equivalential logic is a differential logic that acts to dismiss possible alternatives to UKIP’s desired direction and excludes the possibility of the capability or willingness of others to resolve their demands.

As we have seen, chaining demands together is a powerful mode of political organisation which together form the backbone of any movement. Opposing such movements can be successful if these demands can be decoupled from one another and resolved on an individual basis. We could imagine for example attempts by the hegemony, in this case the Conservative government and their discourse of fiscal austerity, promising action on immigration, democratic control, etc. such that UKIP lose vital links in their populist chain and thus their political appeal and aspiration. Equally however this logic of difference can be utilised to pre-empt such actions and it is this usage that is most apparent within UKIP’s discourse.

This logic of difference can be seen in action against the BNP, with UKIP being “very proud” that their presence is fighting off the ‘racist’ right-wing BNP, with UKIP acting as the “non-racist” receptacle of Eurosceptic votes (2009A). This differential then denies UKIP’s stance on immigration as being racially inflected and thus reinforces the position of immigration in relation to the logic of governance by the people as opposed to some other (racial) logic. The dismissal of alternatives of voting for UKIP employ a logic of difference that acts as a pre-emptive strike against those that are already Eurosceptic but who may vote otherwise if appealed to by other political platforms. However again, even this reading of the

logic at play here is altered when Pearson's speech in particular is taken into account, wherein the distance to the BNP is betrayed by a much more nationalistic and aggressive portrayal of immigrants.

Farage also goes through great lengths to ensure that UKIP's ideological allies are seen to be disconnected with those demands that are beginning to form a tentative populist chain. To give one example, we see Farage describe the Conservatives as holding the "worst" of all positions on Europe in that they "purport to be Eurosceptic... purport to want to stand up for the national interest" (2008A), but through several examples of Conservative Eurosceptic policy being 'dropped' by David Cameron, Farage tries to distance the demands of Eurosceptics from the Conservatives. In a similar fashion he describes this Conservative attempt at appealing to Eurosceptics as making "some Eurosceptic noises" but failing to "make any commitment whatsoever" (2009S). Entwining both logics of equivalence and difference, after equating the Conservatives with the other political parties Farage declares that "[t]he fact is that a Conservative party under Cameron is utterly committed to membership of the European Union. In fact, so much so, they want a bigger and strong European Union". Trust is also used as a moment of separation between the British people and the establishment, as this supposed lack of trust in their commitments tries to break the consolations and attempts by the governments to resolve the demands of the people. Importantly however, and acting as a vital intersection between logics of difference and equivalence, is the way that Farage frames this disconnection between competing parties and the EU question as a betrayal. This antagonistic claim performs a double function of differentiating the elite's 'false' appeals to the people from the demands of the party, but furthermore provides a moment against which a competing discourse can be constructed.

Looking to the multiple equivalential chains that make up this period, we see most of the speaker's energies put toward the creation of an 'establishment', synonymous with the

notion of the elite. In its most basic form, this chaining takes the form of metonymic representation wherein ‘Westminster’, the ‘political class’, ‘politicians’ and the ‘LibLabCon’ are used interchangeably as stand-ins for the elite or establishment parties. In equal respects, and as noted by Hawkins in his work on Euroscepticism, ‘Brussels’, ‘Europe’ and adding to that here, ‘Strasbourg’ and ‘the Germans’, are also equivocated in order to position the host of “EU machinery” in opposition to the UK (Hawkins, 2015: 148). It is important to note however that at this point these two chains are left relatively separated and even at times opposed, as when the speaker opposes the powers of the EU with Westminster and Parliament.

Overall, we find logics of equivalence that tie together two identifiable chains which gravitate around the British establishment and the EU. Limited evidence can be found of the people as taking part in either of these extended equivalential chains, besides a rudimentary and implicit relation between the people, UKIP, and its leaders. Where they do occur however is within a relationship with their own government, with their antagonistic relationship based around the sovereignty of the people and the dissonance this has with the actions of the major parties, despite their feigned appeals to the contrary. Where more substantial equivalential connections are to be made though, such as between the establishment’s subjugation to the EU, border control and Britain’s need to “take back control”, these are fleshed out in a nationalistic dichotomy between those on the inside and those on the outside. Nonetheless, we could say that a rudimentary populist logic takes hold of one sphere of the discourse, the ‘internal’ one, where a more stable and established nationalistic logic takes hold of the ‘external’ sphere. However, since UKIP’s core demand and primary concern at this time is the quitting of this external space, this nationalist political logic appears dominant in the discourse.

Fantasmatic Logics

Whilst political logics describe those practices that articulate different strands of thought together, or disarticulate them through difference, we can utilise the concepts of fantasy, enjoyment, and the lack, which together allow us to describe the emotive, affective support which gives these prior logics their strength or ‘grip’. As put by Glynos, “if political logics concern signifying operations, fantasmatic logics concern the force behind those operations” (Glynos, 2008: 278). These fantasmatic logics underpin the political logics espoused within a discourse and allow us to negotiate the issue of agency with respect to UKIP and their potential supporters. Key to fantasmatic success is the ability of particularly strong fantasies to push aside “all ambiguity and ambivalence which may enable alternative readings” of a given set of circumstances (Glynos, 2008: 278–279).

This category of fantasy can often be further refined into two overlapping aspects – a ‘beatific’ dimension in which an imagined fullness is promised, and a horrific dimension which revels in the looming or impending disastrous consequences of undesired courses of action. Providing both of these dimensions with their core substance is the idea of some form of obstacle that stands in the way between the subject and the realisation of their fantasmatic desire (Glynos, 2008: 283). This obstacle is the envisaged barrier that prevents the subject from consummating their identity with the world in which they live. Via fantasy, the subject explains away the ‘lack’ and the possibility of revelling in full ‘enjoyment’. This in turn causes the fantasies themselves to become enjoyable and is what gives them their energy and potency.

Consider this piece of horrific fantasy from Pearson who makes the claim that “our membership of the EU gives so many of *them* such a comfortable way of life at our expense” (2010S). Statements such as these provide a direct indication as to this blocked enjoyment. In this case, as with many others, EU membership not only prevents ‘us’ from comfort and

enjoyment, but that this enjoyment has been stolen – it is a zero-sum calculation in which the lives of the ambiguous ‘them’ is bettered through the robbery of the British people’s enjoyment. This move is also constitutive in the production of resentment and rage. As noted by Wei-yuan Chang and Jason Glynos in their work on the fantasies surrounding the UK MPs’ expenses scandal, two elements are crucial in instilling such feelings of anger: firstly, the ability to attribute enjoyment to another figure (here an ambiguous ‘they’ that is softly linked to the EU), and secondly that this enjoyment is achieved at the subject’s expense (Chang & Glynos, 2011: 111–112). Whilst these assets are present in this example, it is interesting to note that neither the accused thief, nor the manner of their enjoyment is given any precise coordinates.

Farage engages in similar ambiguity when extolling a beatific fantasy in which the UK leaves the EU and becomes “free to do our own trade deals with our Commonwealth partners and our kith and kin across the globe” (2008A). This fantasy of a globe-trotting British peoples that traverses the globe smacks of a nostalgia for Empire and further confuses an already ambiguous conception of the people. This lack of direction and ability to clearly express the benefits of leaving the EU is perhaps the determining principle behind the specifically beatific fantasies we see in these initial speeches – the horrific dimension instead is clearly foregrounded and dominates the logics that can be identified. The “final extinction” of the UK and its peoples, of what “millions of our forebears have died for” is an imminent threat unless the UK leaves the EU immediately. If not done now we “will no longer be enmeshed on every side in the tentacles of the corrupt octopus... we will be in its belly” (2010S). This vivid imaginary concerning monsters and death is punctuated by militaristic invocations of war-time Britain, with a “real battle” envisaged between “the people and the professional political class across an entire continent” (2009A). Here we see some of the first linkages between a fantasmatic logic of warfare coupled with the populist divide between the people and the elite, an elite that threatens “our rights, our liberties and our freedoms” (2008A).

These two fantasmatic logics – a beatific ‘Commonwealth’ logic and a horrific ‘invasion’ logic - both operate as means to a totalising fulfilment; the former a way to realise this fulfilment and the latter as a blockade to it. The horrific fantasmatic logic also speaks to the moment of independence and tries to sediment it in the present through recourse to an anticipated crisis. Yet the grip afforded by these logics, the attachment drawn from these fantasies in order to reify and sediment the discourse, is invested in ways that sit in a complex relationship to the political logics that have been discussed. In a direct sense, the fantasmatic logic of invasion sutures the EU chain as an ominous foreign force, yet the elite chain remains lacking in any affective attachment. Equally the fantasmatic logic of Commonwealth speaks of prosperity and opportunity but is unclear on *who* this is for. The people are marginally implied here, but in equal respects or perhaps to a greater degree, the reference frame here is one of the nation – a nation, it should be added, that is in the hands of an elite that are to be opposed. So, whilst these logics bring with them some deep affective imagery, emboldened in large part by the charisma and performance of Farage, they nonetheless seem to form ‘floating’ fantasies that do not easily align with UKIP’s web of signification which, as we have seen, is aligned more toward a nationalist logic.

3.4 Shallow Populism

Overall, we can see the *modus operandi* of UKIP through the key moments identified, with self-determination and independence assuming the most prominent position in the discourse. Two chains of equivalence are formed, but kept largely separated, in the form of the British establishment and the EU who, via recourse to fantasmatic logics of Commonwealth and invasion, prevent the fulfilment and enjoyment of an unstipulated ‘us’ – perhaps the nation, the people or simply UKIP. Logics of difference are employed to distance the establishment from

the demands of UKIP with the intent of making the party the only route to salvation in light of critical threats to the nation.

Utilising the immediate analysis as well as the application of the logics we can probe into this somewhat confusing discursive situation and find emerging patterns and early signals of new lines of strategy by the party. The insistence of both Farage and Pearson to refer to an antagonised battle between an undefined people and two potential sets of elites indicate towards a populist mode of discourse and political activity. Yet these elements were not articulated in a consistent framework. This resulted in a difficult discursive terrain in which it was unclear as to what moments were in play and as to which moments were taking their place as privileged nodal points that could successfully bind together the various threads and ideas. This is of course an issue for any political discourse. However, such issues become particularly acute within populist discourses due to the need to be evidently explicit in making the demarcation between two counter-opposing forces.

The difficulty in labelling this stage of UKIP's development as populist can be seen through the application of Logics. Whilst elite chains have been identified using the political logics, they do not form a singular homogenous block. Further still, whilst there is certainly antagonism present, cultivated in large part through appeals to fantasmatic logics that appear to take a populist structure, there is little to suggest that an opposing 'people' chain is present against which a political frontier can be drawn. This in part is due to a lack of content or articulation given to the signifier of the people, and in so doing instead makes recourse to nationalistic rhetoric that places ideas of the state and national identity alongside and often in place of speaking of the people. Thus, the moment of self-determination is sometimes given a democratic hue when referring to the British people (populist logic), but at other times this self-determination is expressed abstractly as the UK 'making its own decisions' in a more protectionist manner (nationalistic logic). This can even be seen at the level of fantasy, where

an emphasis on the ‘betrayal’ by the elites (the germination of a strong populist sentiment) is left undeveloped with emphasis instead being placed on a foreign invasion and hostile takeover of Britain (a clearly nationalistic narrative).

Instead of populism then, what we find are a number of parallel strands between and within which can be found certain aspects of the populist dynamic: democratic self-determination / national independence, the people / the nation, the elite / Europe, betrayal / invasion. Certainly, the brute quantity of references to *an* elite or *a* people indicates a superficial or brooding populism. But through the discursive analysis and the application of the Logics we find a murkier picture which would be inaccurate to describe as populist, but more significantly would be unhelpful as we do not see what *role* the populist elements are playing here, particularly given their indeterminate priority or foregrounding in the discourse.

One explanation behind the failure to create a coherent and effective discourse lay in the inability of party leadership to draw strong lines of equivalences between the different elements which were floating within UK political discourse. This is exemplified by the negligible expression of concern around the parliamentary expenses scandal. Such an event provided the party with ample opportunity to paint the entire British political system as a corrupt bastion of elite power, whose wealth and enjoyment comes directly out of the taxes imposed upon the population, upon the people. This would have allowed for a sharp drawing of political frontiers with UKIP then able, as a non-represented party, to position themselves with respect to the people against this elitist caste. Instead, Farage saw this simply as a distraction to talking about the ‘real problem’ that was Britain’s membership of the EU. The potential for a more populist moment was overridden by a nationalist logic. This friction between the use of these logics in creating hegemonic blocs (both of the people or the elite) not only ensures the lack of a true populist discourse, but also a more banally inconsistent and unclear political discourse – torn between an institutional logic of difference that commands

the party to be single-demand, single-solution (leave the EU), and a desire to connect this issue with both a perceived distain with the political system as such as well as more social and economic issues.

This crystallises why this period of UKIP's history can be at best described as one of 'shallow populism'. The large fluctuations in reference to the elite, the people and their antagonistic relationship does indeed show that the individual elements of a populist discourse were at least somewhat present. Yet the party failed to capitalise on (and sometimes actively ignored) political crises and dislocation, such as the financial crisis and parliamentary expenses scandal. Such events provided the party with ample opportunities to clearly define their conceptions of the people and the elite, but instead they became guilty of compartmentalising different aspects of British politics, foregrounding the logics of difference (antithetical to the populist programme), instead of engaging in populist frontier drawing.

This is a catastrophic failure of political articulation, which within our framework is the primary tool of political practice and the source of any hegemonic project. The people and the elite, whilst present in their discourse, were not articulated as the central nodal points and instead took up a tertiary role behind both the EU and the fact that UKIP was simply not one of the other parties. Whilst these are vital moments within the party's discourse, they do not in themselves constitute broad nodal points to which any number of signifiers can be connected. They must be *articulated* in this way, which at this time was a failure due to an inconsistent and incoherent set of equivalences being made simultaneously.

Populist Potential

The use of the Logics approach has provided a method through which we can organise and describe the contestations, exclusions, constructions, and affective investments that weave together to create UKIP's discourse. This initial sketch of the kinds of logics seen here can now

be tracked through future speeches allowing for a sharpened analysis; a way to focus the investigation further and more easily pass through the data to uncover the shape and depth of the discourse. This phase has allowed for the development of an analytical groundwork which eases the process of identifying populist features, but moreover moves beyond this reading to include an evaluation of how these elements are invoked and interact by accounting for orbital logics that allow for the construction and deployment of potentially populist practices whilst also being able to account for their proliferation and staying power.

This chapter has laid out the theoretical underpinnings of the analysis at hand, presented a novel and mixed mode of analysis, introduced a grammar with which to make summaries of key elements of that data and exhibited these features through an examination of the first section of speech data. Using this as a springboard to take us through the remaining material, this period itself has thrown up several curious traits that provide a kind of base-reading which forms the backdrop to Nigel Farage's re-election as party leader in 2010, through the 2015 general election and into the dramatic Brexit referendum.

We saw that whilst these speeches contain many of the hallmarks associated with populist practices, there was ultimately a confusion and disconnect between the elements of the people, the elite, and the antagonism between them. Looking then to the moments which are organised by the political logics that surround these elements, we see that whilst self-determination informs a number of statements, there is still a weighted focus on national independence that is in partial tension with a strictly populist logic and which instead belongs to a more banal form of state-centred nationalism. As opposed to issues such as immigration being framed within a people-elite populist matrix, we instead find it being used as a differential logic which acts almost entirely to separate UKIP from not only the major parties in terms of their failure to address this concern, but also from the BNP by deflecting the racism charge to their right. This is equally true with respect to their position on the EU – Britain's relationship

with Europe, whilst invoking some connotations of a super-national elite, is not couched in terms of the people versus an elite but is instead a question of national sovereignty and independence.

It is difficult however to dismiss the populist potential exuded here due to the presence of many elements that typically result in a populist evaluation of the phenomena. Through a heavy-handed series of differential manoeuvres, UKIP had begun to carve out their own space within the political field. Peppered with superficially populist signifiers, this space was precisely a 'space' as opposed to an integrated political discourse in the strictest sense. Many of the elements that are vital and strategically rich for the development of a populist discourse are visible, but they are yet to congeal into a coherent and systematic construct. What follows after this clearing of the rubble then, this identification of the background noise bleating out from an emerging political force, is a charting of the development of this space over the following 6 years and ultimately towards Brexit. Armed with the political and fantasmatic logics that define and contextualise UKIP's discourse over this period, we can now move to frame and track this space as UKIP transform themselves from political outsiders to a cataclysmic political force.

Chapter 4 – Constructing Populism: From Shallow to Deep

The 2010 general election produced an anomaly for British politics as the incoming government would be a coalition, the first of its kind since the Second World War. This coalition emerged as a result of an agreement between the Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg, whose own anti-status quo position saw them receive a record 6.8 million votes (23%), and the Conservative party under David Cameron. This occurrence had a transformative effect on the political landscape in ways which cannot be fully satisfied here. However, prevalent to our discussions is the change in the occupier of the ‘third party’ of British politics, previously owned by the Liberal Democrats since 1992 who, for five consecutive elections, achieved a third-place finish. The nature of the British political system meant that this was rarely rewarded with a representative proportion of seats in Parliament, however their position as the third party meant that they were a consistent outlet to voters who were frustrated and alienated from both the Conservatives and from Labour.

Nick Clegg’s campaign took advantage of this political location and took part in three televised debates with the other major parties. Each debate saw Clegg being enthusiastically received by the viewing audience, regularly receiving high praise and declared the ‘winner’ in two of the three debates by pollsters. More importantly however is the significant leap in the polling figures for the Liberal Democrats immediately after each of these ‘victories’ – after the initial ITV debate, polling by ComRes suggested that they had climbed 14 points overnight to 35% and saw their social media following double (Helm & Asthana, 2010). The pertinence of this story for our purposes comes when we consider that the space of the third party is necessarily altered by coalition politics. No longer could the Liberal Democrats claim to be differentiated from the ruling powers. The threat of the BNP also subsided as they picked up only half a million votes (indeed in the local elections in 2012 they would lose all of their seats

and see their vote share plummet to 10% of its peak only four years earlier). A cavernous gap had thus emerged in the political terrain, as dissatisfied voters required a new outlet for their frustrations.

When Nigel Farage retook leadership of UKIP before the end of this politically tumultuous year, there was a clear and viable space for an anti-establishment party of a right-leaning persuasion to enter into. Whilst the right-wing credentials of the party have been confirmed through the nationalistic logic demonstrated in the preceding analysis, their ability to take advantage of anti-establishment sentiments is less clear. Moreover, this basic opposition to the status-quo can be juxtaposed to a more overarching populist position if we view it through the prism of the Conservative party. During his tenure as Prime Minister, David Cameron reopened the question of EU membership due to the rise of UKIP and the Euroscepticism rife within the fringes of his own party. UKIP's own anti-establishment credentials are worth less in such a scenario as their modus operandi is premised upon opposing the establishment's position on the EU. Herein lies the gravity of the analysis of populist discourses. Given the ideological differences between the strongly centrist, pro-EU liberal democrats and UKIP, it is highly unlikely that their voters would turn to UKIP however if dissatisfied with their own party's performance in coalition. Anti-establishment stances in of themselves do not translate into protest votes for 'outsider' parties, but instead it is the manner of their articulation into an affective discourse, one that is contextually sensitive and appropriately opportunistic, that generates these 'protest votes'. The question then becomes, how can UKIP navigate this new terrain in which they can potentially access the location of 'third party', but wherein the ruling power increasingly appears to address and absorb UKIP's primary issue.

This chapter aims to sharpen analyses of UKIP's position in this dislocated landscape through the ongoing development of the logics we have identified thus far. It is our contention

that the adoption of a manifest populist logic in this period provided a singular solution to three separate strategic issues. The evaporation of the BNP as a political force allowed for UKIP to ease away from the nationalistic logic that had allowed them to better calibrate their appeal towards those voters. Similarly, the absorption of the Liberal Democrats into the 'elite' provided a clearer space into which the party could operate as an anti-establishment movement. UKIP here rearticulates its political practices in terms of a populist logic in order to make manoeuvres toward and attack both of these political spaces as their preoccupants melt away. Finally, the translation of UKIP's increased political presence and media attention both suffered electorally from their perception as a single-issue party. Through the institution of a populist logic, this perception could be tackled through the wholesale extension of an equivalential chain that maintained the centrality of their target to leave the EU whilst imbuing this target with a plethora of orbiting issues.

4.1 Populist Construction: 2011-2013

The 2010 leadership election acted as a clean break for Farage. Having re-established his position as the dominant force in UKIP, affirmed by his overwhelming re-election to party leader, Farage provides plenty of initial signals that he was cautious in how to proceed from their disappointing election result. His own previous speeches contained many occurrences of the people and the elite, though spoken of through the frame of the nation-state, whilst Pearson's fiery antagonism in his brief charge went against the 'professionalism' that Farage saw as a weakness for his party. A certain discursive confusion, likely brought about by the party's attempt to simultaneously challenge the established political parties whilst fending off a challenge from the political margins in the form of the BNP, was coupled with an overtly aggressive antagonism whose targets were multiple and disparate. Farage's cautiousness

however can be read as part of an attempt to reconstruct the party to avoid further electoral collapses. Key to the re-building project, however, would be an expansion of the party's policy targets beyond the issue of EU membership, designed and projected into a new discursive terrain where the dislocatory effects of a global financial crisis and the arrival of government by coalition provided the perfect opportunity for the reinvention and rearticulation of the discursive elements associated with the party – nationalism, immigration, the EU, and their anti-establishment credentials. The new nodes which would structure this discourse can be read through this period and correspond to the people, the elite, control, and immigration.

The British People

Whilst cursory talk of the people was present prior to 2010, what is of particular import during this period is that for the first time in the dataset we see an attempt to provide some details as to the *content* which constitutes the British people. This articulation of the people introduces the idea of a broadly working-class base of Labour supporters that have been betrayed by the party's attitude towards immigration. Farage is "really angry" that "open-door immigration" is only possible due to the emergence of a "myth that all British workers are useless, lazy, can't be bothered and are not worth employing" (2011A). For Farage this "disgrace" is an affront to the "huge numbers of good, ordinary, decent people in this country that want to work, that want to obey the law"; those that UKIP now "champion" since their abandonment by the Labour party.

Crucially UKIP identifies the English as a group that have been left out of the new European multi-culturalism by leaders who are "ashamed of the very word England"; "we are discouraged from describing ourselves as English... our leaders seem to reel in horror at the idea of the cross of St. George" (2011A). In of itself this comes across as a multi-faceted appeal to English nationalism, one that not only uses patriotic imagery but one that also paints this as

an oppressed identity. Yet given the logic of self-determination, alongside its expression in terms of a betrayed peoples and their democratic rights, we can equally recognise this appeal as part of an attempt to conceptualise and articulate the meaning of the people in opposition to those that oppress, in this case the governing elite and their allies in the EU.

Reading through this nationalistic example provides us with further clues as to how the people are being articulated here. There has been a national betrayal that has “let down” an indigenous people that have lost control of their future, and their political institutions, due to the collusion of a political establishment that “are now so hidebound by the European Union and political correctness that they simply refuse to stand up for the nation”. This is a deeply emotive imaginary that speaks directly to feelings of abandonment, of a loss, of a lack of communal identity. An initial story of being invaded, a horrific fantasy, is advanced upon by focusing on those that now live in this occupied land – unable to ‘speak’ their minds due to political correctness and without any way to resist as our own parliamentary system no longer represents them.

‘The people’, as a signifier, is now articulated as the promise to fulfil this lack by becoming not only the new political identity around which to rally, but equally as a key nodal point with which to bring together the different strands of UKIP’s political ambitions. UKIP are placed as the only vessel in which the people can begin an anti-hegemonic struggle of international proportions. Herein lies an emerging beatific fantasy to counter the horrors, a chance to partake in a grand struggle for democracy and self-identity. Radically though, ‘the people’ here is offered up as a replacement identity to ‘English’. Immediately this opens up a wider space in which the subject of UKIP’s appeal is not limited to the English but is more representative of other nations of the UK whilst allowing for greater relatedness with other peoples of Europe. This move provides a new subject position that is more consistent with and better suits the emerging discourse which increasingly shifts the antagonistic narrative away

from a nationalistic defence of inside from outside, but between an oppressor and the oppressed. UKIP's position here is adjusted such that the subject of their discourse is not a national one, but a much wider category of those experiencing a lack of democratic input or struggling with a fragile communal identity.

This struggle for 'alignment', of placing UKIP alongside the people as opposed to simply being 'another' party, is reflected strongly at the 2012 conference. By contrasting the "college kids" that make up the ruling political class and their associated parties with UKIP's members who have "held down proper jobs, who've done things in the world" allows UKIP to show that it is they who have an "understanding of what is going on out there in our country"; of having knowledge closer to that of the 'real' people on the street (2012A). This is a typical appeal to 'common-sense' that forms a crucial role in the development of any counter-hegemonic project. Here for example the established sense that governing representatives should be politically educated is challenged in favour of 'ordinary' people who have worked 'ordinary' jobs and have an 'ordinary' education.

The Bullying Elite

A key emotional reflection that follows the discourse during this time is the notion of being 'let down' ("like a cheap pair of braces"), of being 'left-behind' by the government and associated elites. Often this is cashed out as being left-behind as a result of the ruling classes following and working for foreign interests, in the form of the EU, and in doing so further qualifying notions of betrayal and distrust in the relationship between ruler and ruled (2011A). The fantasmatic logic of an all-conquering foreign power in the EU reaches its logical conclusion here in that Britain is referred to as occupied territory, its government simply a caretaker of the EU's interests in this part of its own territory – conceptualising the internal elites and the external threat as a single enemy.

Crucially, what this means for the elaboration of the antagonistic relationship between not only the people but of UKIP and the elite, is an attempt to establish the elite as the instigator of the troubled relationship between the two blocs. The government are the purveyors of insults, attacks and plots against the people who are (currently) powerless to these assaults, whilst UKIP suffer particularly intense attacks for trying to stand up for the people. Farage speaks of the “abuse” received by UKIP members; referred to by the elite as “eccentric cranks”, “gadflies” and “fruitcakes” (2012S).¹² The Labour and Conservative parties condescend UKIP’s concerns, telling them not to “worry your pretty little heads” and to leave matters to them. This is followed by examples of how “the Greek people” have been subjected to the “bully boys of Brussels” who have usurped their leaders and replaced them with “puppets” whilst the same is said to have occurred in Italy as well. But for Farage the response to this imminent threat “from our own political class” has not only been one of silence but of cooperation, where the British establishment is “happy for British taxpayers’ money to be used” in order to support this aggressive authoritarian regime.

The rapid movement that occurs here between intersecting topics and groups such as the EU and British concerns, can be read as a clearly defined attempt at equating together not only the internal elites and external enemy (the UK establishment and the EU), but of positing an antagonistic and subversive division that acts as a realiser of critical political frontiers. These antagonisms allow UKIP to place themselves as the only party “making the arguments”, of concerning themselves not simply with the UK but with “the whole of a continent being independent, democratic and free”. In this sense UKIP pulls itself closer to its articulation of the people and distances itself, via antagonism, with its articulation of the elite. By sharpening the offensive side of the hegemon, Farage makes it easier to further the fantasmatic

¹² Gadflies and fruitcakes are terms used in British vernacular to describe an irritating provocateur and ‘crazy people’ respectively.

constructions of both his party and the people as a radical, democratic *resistance* movement.

This combination of struggle and resistance in the name of self-determination acts as a beatific fantasmatic logic to partner the horrific logic of invasion. This latter logic however undergoes some subtle but important changes here also, as the space from which the invading force emerges is not simply as a foreign nation (as per a typical nationalist story) but is a tyrannical force that occupies, illegitimately, that same originating space. Whilst not explicitly spoken of as elites, this mirrors the critique of the internal elite chain, whilst the crux of the entire speech, the antagonism that faces UKIP and the people, is in the same breath sourced from the British establishment and the EU, bringing closer together these two poles.

Control

Relative to the earlier period of study, the beginning of this section contained relatively fewer references to either a people or an elite. However, when these features did occur, they took place in the context of three interrelated themes: democracy, decision-making and control. To give an example, having discussed a series of policies that Farage disagrees with, he goes on to state: “But that isn't the point is it? That isn't what matters. What matters is *who* takes those decisions” (2011S). He goes on to say that “Parliament is impotent, and our democracy has been sold”. The people’s power, it is claimed, lies in referenda. The contents of parliament and of the stance of British politicians that represent the public are meaningless if the ability to act on their positions is undermined by external forces, an external force in this case that the people can act upon should they have a referendum. This centrality of a referendum on EU membership as a way to respond to the question of who should make decisions, following the logic of self-determination, ties together the projected logic of independence with the actions and will of the people. What is more is that this direct democratic decision-making is further

incorporated with the negative and powerless control of parliament. Again, that democracy has been ‘sold’ continues the idea of a betrayal by the status-quo.

Collectively these themes, of democracy, of referenda, of decision-making, of impotence, can be categorised under the rubric of ‘control’. This moment within UKIP’s discourse, whilst not entirely new, begins to take on a much more central position in a twofold manner. First, the people are the victims of this lack of control as it deprives them of the ability to take part in British democracy. Secondly, however, this lack is described as being implemented by internal elites, principally the mainstream political parties, to the benefit of external elites in the form of the EU and its various regulatory bodies. The call for a referendum on Britain’s continued membership with the EU is thus advocated “so that the people of this country can sort out their futures and not have it done for them by career politicians” (2011S). Farage’s demand here is made explicit: “we demand that we, the British people, take back our birth right, our right to govern ourselves, our right to make our own laws...”. The content of these laws is almost irrelevant. The previous calls for independence are being re-described as not the final goal, but as a waypoint in the search for control. Crucially here we see some of the first explicit and direct equivalences being made between those signifiers that correspond to the logics of self-determination – democracy, self-governance, law-making – coalesce around a broad demand spoken from the position of the people and UKIP. Much like the populist paradigm itself, the form is foregrounded whilst substance is relegated to the back; a commanding logic of self-determination, of *who controls*, is dominant over the actual contents of what policies are chosen.

This charge is thus more focused than in previous efforts. In the 2011 Spring speech, for example, talk of immigration is entirely absent, the ‘British’ are only mentioned once, and references to either an elite or the people are used sparingly, with only 4 and 3 citations respectively. This is a world away from the scattergun approach prior to 2010 and appears to

fail to constitute even a shallow mode of populist discourse. What is instead provided here are a series of connections between democratic mandates, accountability, voting and control, but most importantly *who* controls. The cry to ‘take back’ control in this way appears to build on previous notions of betrayal and trust as to take back necessarily implies that something has been taken away in the first place. This form fits well with the classic fantasy structure laid out in the previous chapter, a theft of enjoyment that prevents fullness, indicating an emerging fantasmatic logic.

Continuing the emphasis on antagonisms levelled in the previous Spring speech, further attacks by the elite, their “lies and deceit”, are brought to the fore (2012A). Yet now these attacks are given a sharper focus by articulating their attacks as being centred around the nodal point of control, which takes a greater precedence in this speech than in any prior. UKIP is presented simply as the attempt to fight against those antagonisms by asking the question as to “whether we should govern our country or not” by “winning back our independence”. The escalating immediacy of this issue is stressed by the fact that “[t]hey’re not hiding anymore, they’re not pretending anymore. They’ve used the Euro crisis to try and take yet more power for themselves... we must give up parliamentary democracy for all time to the unelected European Commission”.¹³ This ominous use of ‘they’ also suggests that for UKIP the articulation of the elite within the discourse is becoming established as an oppositional force of such common-reference that ‘they’ is sufficient to name the forces working against the party and the people. As if to ensure that this interpretation is correct, Farage openly announces that “what we are now seeing is the political class uniting” in order to maintain their control over the people. This class need not be named but is instead confidently and comfortably assumed.

¹³ Interestingly, Farage here recalls how the then President of the European Commission (José Manuel Barroso) declared him an “extremist populist”, which Farage takes to be yet another “insult” although he admits he does not know quite what this means.

UKIP resist not so much the unification of these forces but the overthrowing of both, putting forward instead a “demand that this country is given a full, free and fair choice in a referendum so that we can decide who governs Britain” – a choice intertwined with the making of “our own trade deals”, of taking control of “our health and safety legislation”, of “the crazier elements of environmental policy”, of immigration, of the supremacy of European courts over British courts. This can only be achieved if we “take on the political class” in what is dubbed the “fight of our life”, being fought of course by UKIP; supposedly the “most incredibly enthusiastic army”. The elevation of militaristic rhetoric and its intertwining with control, of the commensuration between a resistance fantasy and control as core nodal point which gives all other elements their meaning, is at its most stark here. On the “issue of democracy” the EU “says we must transfer *our* national democracy to a model of European democracy, by which he guesses we must give up parliamentary democracy for all time to the unelected European Commission”. In order to enforce this position, the EU is “turning itself into a militarized undemocratic danger to global peace” against which stands only UKIP and the British people. These equivalences imbue control with the affective energy of resisting a foreign power whilst simultaneously providing it with a historical grounding in British democracy and identity.

This peril is only heightened by invoking a seemingly counter-productive strategy. Instead of attempting to highlight the weaknesses of the hegemon and showing the need for a new power to intervene and disrupt this failing state, what Farage indicates here is the overburgeoning strength of the current hegemony. This peculiar arrangement combines the British political class together with the European ‘oppressor’ in order to further strengthen the portentous up-hill battle that informs the UKIP fantasy of a dogged grassroots resistance. This is a crucial aspect within the wider development of a populist discourse. Whilst many, if not most, modes of politics involve one side citing the weaknesses and failings of their opponents, this strategy utilises the overwhelming power of the oppressors to sharpen the division between

them and the named people in order to assign them the value of underdog. With the elite chains identified in the last period slowly becoming intertwined, we equally see this having an immediate effect on the creation of the antagonised and repressed people and begin to move into explicitly populist territory.

Yet the binding of these elements relies upon their grip on the subjects exposed to such discourses. Simply suggesting that the British political institution is in league with the EU carries little weight in of itself, bearing only discursive or symbolic connections; that they both concern power, governance, that they are institutions, that they contain politicians, etc. But entangling this connection with phrases such as ‘the elite’, the ‘political class’ or even just as ‘they’ or ‘them’, requires strong backing in the form of fantasmatic qualities that pull these imaginaries together. Unlike the initial stages of this type of rhetoric that we saw in the earliest speeches, this connection between domestic and foreign elites is sedimented through a carefully chosen fantasmatic logic that equates these powers not by their similarities but through their imagined opposition to the people in the form of an occupation of the nation and its deprivation of its full potential under the whims of a vassal government in league with, if not part of, the occupiers.

Immigration

Immigration is introduced slowly through this period with few mentions at first and not appearing at all in one of the speeches. When it does begin to appear however, it does not appear as an issue for the nation as is often the case in nationalistic discourses, but as a point of coincidence between “those three parties, the LibLabCon” who “all support a total open door” for immigration (2013S). To give this line of argumentation further support it is then referred back to the other key emerging point in this discourse by emphasising the need to “control” your own borders and “decide in your own parliament” who gets to live, work, and

settle in “our” country. This initial focus is juxtaposed with the “million young people out of work” that suffer as a result of this consensual policy.

Apart from the use of immigration in order to solidify the equivalences of the elite, similarly we gain some more clues as to the idea of who should constitute the people with reflection to those immigrants - those that pay “tax and national insurance into the central pot”, that speak English, are perfectly “ordinary” and have “been in this country for five years, paid their taxes and obeyed the law”. Establishing itself rapidly as a nodal point, immigration shapes both frontiers in parallel, of the people and the elite, whilst introducing a further reason for the lack of fullness in the lives of the people with the implicit claims that immigrants neither ‘pay’ their taxes nor obey the law. This of course indicates the usage of a common fantasmatic logic of theft by others, which in of itself is a somewhat banal observation, however it is worth noting for how it will come to influence and integrate with the other fantasmatic logics prevalent in the discourse.

Speaking in reference to the system of benefits and taxation speaks to existing hegemonic logic of austerity and in doing so allows for a way into the discussion that is consistent with prevailing discourses concerning ‘strivers and skivers’, benefit ‘cheats’ and the (un)deserving poor (O’Hara, 2014). Taking advantage of existing norms such as these allows for new lines of argument that do not appear as radical as they can be chained with current norms. In this case the immigrant takes the place of the ‘cheat’, superimposing this new nodal point over the image of the poorest of the people and opening up new discursive possibilities. What is left uncontested here however is the idea of an ‘underserved’ quantity of people which should alert us to not a radical change to pre-existing norms, but simply to a re-targeting of existing social and political pressures to a new object of antagonism. This may explain in part why the hegemonic discourse of austerity with its undeserving masses was always (and perhaps is always) susceptible to anti-immigrant rhetoric, as an existing armoury of signification

combined with a well of existing fantasmatic zeal against those that ‘take’, requires only minor adjustments to point towards a new and equally vulnerable target.

This two-pronged use of immigration, reifying both the concepts of the elite and the people, develops the political frontier that stands between UKIP and the people against the EU and the elite. An ambitious extension of this equivalential logic posits UKIP as “the true Europeans” because their fight for control extends to the rest of Europe where they seek to give other nations “back *their* independence and democracy” as they stand against the “threats and the bullying that are going on with Greece, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus... the monstrous bullying and intimidation”. Any pledges by the other British parties to deal with these issues are dismissed as they are again said to form one bloc in the form of an elitist political class; one said to be united by their agreement over political correctness, immigration, EU membership, the use of referenda, press regulation and “virtually every other issue”. Farage insists that he wants “my country back from the European Union and back from the career politicians”. The two have now been firmly conjoined in UKIP’s discourse; an assault on one being equal to an assault on the other – to take part in the fantasy of resistance against the elite caste requiring taking the fight to the EU and vice-versa.

Stability and Clarity

By this time, we have seen the coalescing of various concepts, principally amongst which emerge a more definitive proposal of the constitution of the people, the elite and of control as an expression of the core principle of self-determination. What this allows for is the elaboration of a focused, coherent discourse which give weight to claims that previously would not carry the same meaning or centrality to the speeches given. This passage from the beginning of the spring 2013 speech is worth stating here in full to provide an indication of this claim and shows the evolution of this movement from the preceding analysis:

And the question that the commentators are asking, the question that increasingly everybody in this country is asking, is what's going on? Why is UKIP surging? Well I'll tell you. There is a wholesale rejection of the career political professional class in this country going on - we have had enough of them.

And they really do all look the same and sound the same. They all go to the same schools, the same Oxbridge colleges, none of them have ever had a job in the real world and not one of them is in politics for principle and that's what we stand for, principle.

And there are millions of ordinary decent people out there who feel betrayed by this political class. A class who appear to be more interested in their own careers and in what other foreign leaders think than what is in the national interest for the people of this country and those people are turning to UKIP. (2013S)

The 'political professional class' and 'foreign leaders' are directly and antagonistically opposed to the 'ordinary' people, "the people of this country". In a few short statements the core of the increasingly populist discourse is exposed clearly, espousing the triad that forms our detection criteria. People "want to stick two fingers up to the establishment" which for Farage is "pretty understandable" given their ill treatment and disregard; the sticking of fingers itself another example of an increasing appeal to beatific fantasies where the underdog can finally 'get one over' the elite that are the source of their misery. Moreover, the framing of the national interest here is done so specifically in terms of what this means for the people.

4.2 Populist Sedimentation: 2013-2016

Following the establishment of a newly configured discourse, the next period under examination takes place after UKIP gained their highest share of the vote in a local election (or

of any other vote for that matter) with a total of 19.9%. This increased their number of Councillors from 8 to 147, though this did not return them overall control of any Councils. Nonetheless, the party was buoyed by this shock result as evidenced by Farage's emphatic resolve in the beginning of his next conference speech: "We've been roundly abused and laughed and mocked and derided, but despite that over the course of the last 18 months something remarkable is happening and we are now changing the face of British politics" (2013A). This is a perfect example of how, even in victory (especially in victory in fact), that the underdog element must be maintained to keep UKIP firmly on the side of the oppressed and opposed to the hegemon.

This focus on the relationship between the people and the elite becomes very much the focal point of the discourse for the next few years. Antagonistically inflected references and remarks reach their apex during this time and allow for the sedimentation of this populistically arranged confrontation. By sedimentation what is meant is the securing of the nodes and relations which have been painstakingly constructed such that they become stabilized and semi-permanent associations for those who partake in the discourse. The strength of this sedimentation relies on many aspects, being as simple as the proliferation and repetition of these linkages or through the consistent and robust rationale of the parts that make up the whole. However, this process primarily draws its strength from the grip of the relevant nodal points and in turn its network of related signifiers and concepts. Whilst this level of affect and the fantasmatic logics that generate this grip have not been absent from the discourse until now, this period in particular elevates this dimension to new heights. Principally these fantasmatic logics both create and are informed by the antagonistic relationship on offer in this period. Specifically, two flavours of fantasmatic logic can be identified here as 'beatific' and 'horrific', the former offering a positive vision which promises a fulfilment of identity and the latter a negatively charged warning of a threat to this identity. These two categories of fantasmatic

logic are drawn from during this period in a particular correspondence to the key nodal points of control and control constructed prior. Horrific fantasmatic logics are utilised that draw on a pairing of ‘elite’ with ‘immigration’. Similarly, a beatific fantasy draws from a pairing of ‘people’ and ‘control’ which at its core seeks to supplant and replace the former pair. Fundamentally, the maintenance and affective power of these fantasies arise from antagonism in three broad forms: first, of the antagonism between the people and the elite; secondly, of control and sovereignty with immigration and autocracy; and finally, as a moment within the discourse itself that signifies the route for transition between from the horrific present to the beatific future. Whilst of course many of these elements overlap and are overdetermined within the discourse, we can attempt to illustrate these parts more clearly through their partial separation into beatific and horrific components.

Horrific Fantasy: Elites and Immigrants

Farage opens the 2014 spring speech by mocking German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British PM David Cameron, using this antagonism to chastise the Conservatives approach to renegotiating the terms of Britain’s membership to the EU. Together these figures mark the pinnacle of the alliance between foreign and internal elites and together form the target of much disdain during this period. But he also makes clear that these mocking statements are a response to “such a degree of derision” that UKIP receive simply because of their “threat” to the “political establishment” (2014S). This placement of UKIP as the victim allows the antagonism expressed to be a justified reaction to an oppressive elite.

The reason for this focus on antagonism soon becomes apparent in this speech. So far much of this analysis has concerned the setting of the people and the elite within a wider discourse that supports this frame. Antagonism has been discussed as a particular relationship which acts to engender and solidify the properties and identities of these two societal blocs.

But what Farage shows us here is that antagonism should not simply be reduced to a relationship but in itself can constitute a moment within a discourse. As a moment, antagonism can also be articulated much in the same way as any other moment. The way in which antagonism is articulated here is as a virtue, a virtue which helps to set the party, and the people, apart from the elite. The antagonism levelled at the elite is symbolic of a party that “doesn’t conform to the current PC [politically correct] climate in this country”, a party that Farage would rather lead than “be a member of a party run by a political class who don’t actually dare say what they think, who are not in politics out of conviction, and who have betrayed this country and the people of this country and sold us out to Brussels and elsewhere”. Here we reveal a useful product of our determination that antagonism is not just a relation between people and elite, as per both discursive and non-discursive methodologies at present, but can be produced as a moment itself within the discourse which can act as an important rallying point for associated elements and moments.

This mode of antagonism as *virtue* seeks to engage with those that are unable to find expression in the parties that make up the ‘political establishment’. “Who is speaking up for ordinary working people in this country?” Farage asks of the party congregation. This linkage between antagonism and free expression taps into debates surrounding ‘political correctness’ and helps to legitimise the increasing focus on debates for which UKIP are targeted and derided, most pointedly on immigration. By making a virtue of antagonism, any attempt to dismiss talk of immigration or of EU membership on the basis that it antagonises can be rearticulated as a betrayal by this “political class” to engage with the issues facing the people.

The response of the establishment to this threat will be one of a “coming together. You will see one or two of the big banks. You’ll see one or two of the giant multi-nationals. You will see all 3 political parties and many of their friends in the print media. And the establishment line will be trotted out”. Alongside the EU and the “unelected Brussels bureaucrat” this chain

of equivalence presents a united force of elites against which UKIP must fight. For UKIP the best issue on which to fight this great power, in preparation for UKIP's battle in the upcoming European Elections (one which UKIP would go on to win – the first time a party other than Labour or the Conservatives have won a popular vote), is on the grounds of immigration; “the number one issue in British politics”. The plight of “ordinary folk... ordinary families” is again raised against the disruption that is said to be caused by open-door immigration. This is amplified by feeding this argument back through the antagonistic virtue:

We as a party have claimed back the idea that debating the European issue is not some disreputable, appalling thing to do. We have made the European debate respectable in this country. We have made the immigration debate – remember 10 years ago? You couldn't talk about immigration. Somehow if you did it meant you were a terribly awful bad person. But we in UKIP have taken that issue head on and I think proved the point that it is not extremist to talk about immigration, it is the responsible and right thing to do to talk about immigration. (2014S)

This is of course preceded by four paragraphs which each represent a different side to the anti-immigration debate. The first introduces immigration as something that “80% of us” are opposed to; an irresponsible policy that goes directly against the “interests of the people”. The second paragraph chains immigration to a host of social issues, covering youth unemployment, wage compression, schools, and hospitals. Emphasis is also placed on the ‘social costs’ to communities where “you don't hear English being spoken anymore... not the kind of community we want to leave to our children and grandchildren”. The third paragraph insists that the EU not only facilitates this issue but is also incapable of preventing “the largest migratory wave” that the UK has ever faced; the other British parties “not prepared to do anything about it”. Finally, “the British people” are called on to “control” immigration, not just in terms of quantity “but quality control as well”, by voting UKIP in the European Elections.

The power of the nodal point of immigration is sedimented further here, including its connections to control and its ability to clarify the differences between the people and UKIP on the one side and the elite on the other. What such connections have allowed for is a more coherent populist category, which in this speech is expressed in that it makes the largest number of references to a ‘people’ than in any other speech in this period. What is more is that this ability to speak so freely of the people follows directly from a speech in which immigration saw its highest number of appearances than in the entire dataset.

The following annual conference speech of 2014 took place in the aftermath of an overwhelming success for the party in the European Parliament Elections. Winning 4,376,635 votes, a 26.6% share of the voting public, saw UKIP win the most seats of any UK party in the European Parliament, for a total of 24. This was the first time in history that a party other than Labour or the Conservatives had won a popular vote in an election since 1906. The governing Conservative party were pushed into 3rd place, a result which would have a profound influence on David Cameron’s later decision to hold a referendum on EU membership. This in large part appears in the form of a victorious salute to UKIP members and voters who are encouraged by this dislocation in British politics, against an “establishment” that “threw us absolutely everything they’d got” (2014A). Farage even turns his attention to “people who we would of thought were friends of ours, the Eurosceptic newspapers” who “couldn’t do enough to say: please, please don’t vote UKIP. Please maintain the established political order in this country”. Yet UKIP voters “ignored the establishment and ignored their friends in the media”. The media would go on to receive further equivalences with the elite, equally unable to leave “the confines of Westminster or its restaurants and bars” and unable to recognise the growing support for UKIP.

Repeatedly Farage rebuffs the charge that this was an electoral fluke, a ‘protest vote’ by millions of people “because they don’t like the establishment”. It is deeper than a dislike, it

is a fundamental antagonism that has emerged because “the establishment has failed them, failed their families and failed their lives”. This antipathy is emboldened by two specific charges, both of which aim to show the effects of one-party domination, in this case targeting the Northern heartlands of the Labour vote. Firstly, Farage suggests that the dominance of an established party leads to complacency which in turn leads to corruption, in reference to the Donnygate scandal of 2002 where a number of Labour councillors were handed prison sentences through convictions of fraud and bribery. However, a second more severe charge is levelled at the effects of this ‘complacency’ which UKIP seeks to disrupt. During 2014 a police investigation into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, Northern England reached the disturbing conclusion that at least 1400 children had been abused between 1997 and 2013. This led to the charge and imprisonment of 7 men who quickly became the focus of the national media, particularly in relation to their shared British Pakistani heritage. Farage suggests the failure to confront this issue earlier was a direct result of the complacency of the local Labour party combined with “their own political correctness”; that they were “so scared of causing a division within the very multicultural society that they have created, they were more fearful of being branded racist than they were of taking on and tackling an evil that existed within that town”. Farage’s accusations and their societal implications are claimed proof of:

...why we need opposition. It shows why we need a change in our political culture, and I know that some people are saying to me, Nigel, its wrong, you shouldn't be saying these things, you shouldn't be making this political, this is simply a cultural problem. Well I'm sorry. But if this isn't political then what is? (2014A)

Later on, he suggests that the threat of terrorism can also be associated with this failure of the elite to engage politically with the demands of the people. The “radicalisation” in schools and prisons, the “collapse in national self-confidence”, the lack of confidence in “our leadership” all form part of what Farage label the “home front” of an ongoing war.

This peculiar equivalence drawn between terrorism, child abuse and corruption are compounded to equate the two logics of nationalism and populism that organise the fantasmatic narrative that is being espoused. On the one hand there is a thoroughly nationalistic threat of immigrants abusing British children and who also represent an immediate security threat to the British public. Yet equally those elites charged with the defence of the people are engaged in corruption and seeking to entrench their own power and status at the expense of the people. Ultimately the effect of immigration and elite corruption is to create a “divided community” which in turn benefits the elite who can rule unopposed.

Beatific Fantasy: The People’s Control

UKIP’s task then in this “battle” is to fight against the separatism of ‘multi-culturalism’ (which is an “attempt by the state to divide everybody up”) and instead say that “we don’t care what colour or religion or where people come from, they must be here together in one Britain, together” (2014A). This represents a call to arms to unite disparate groups under one banner that is named the people. This coming together of various groups and interests is symbolic of a recruitment into “our people’s army” who together can “sweep aside like a new broom the establishment that has failed us so badly in this country”; a sentiment echoed in Farage’s closing statements in which he calls on this “people’s army” to fight “hard on the ground” in the upcoming general election. These quotes are indicative and archetypal of the elevation of the populist logic from a partial component to an organising feature of the discourse. The ability of Farage to utilise terms such as the “people’s army” fighting off and ‘sweeping’ aside an “establishment” that has failed them are indicative of a strong discursive backing which imbues these phrases with a level of meaning and significance that was not present in the initial speeches under analysis, hence their absence in these pieces.

Farage also directly appeals to the changing view of “the British people” in the British social attitudes survey, in which 17% thought that the UK should leave the EU when the party launched, but which now stands at 67% (2013S). But for Farage this is only part of a wider context in which UKIP have pushed their stance on the benefit system and on immigration which together “affects everything” from the NHS, the economy, primary school places and public services. The debates on these issues have been ‘closed down’ by “the establishment” who have shouted down the people who wish to discuss these issues as “bad and racist”. Such people are defended by UKIP who seek to oppose the notion that people are disconnected from politics. “People aren’t disconnected from politics. They’re disconnected from the current career class of politicians”. The centrality of the people here cannot be understated and is reflected in Farage’s description of the typical UKIP voter:

[...] we have workers, employers, self-employed, big businesses, corner shop owners, rich people, people in the middle, people who are struggling, people young, people old, people unemployed, people a few of whom have left wing or right-wing opinions, they're mostly people roughly somewhere in the middle, very few of them are political activists, some of them haven't voted for anybody for the last 20 years, but they are good, decent, patriotic, hard-working, law-abiding British people and frankly I feel that we are now the only party that stands up and speaks for them. (2013S)

Utilising the solidification of UKIP’s major nodes in the previous few years, Farage speaks, with an almost Gramscian tone, that this “alliance”, this “eclectic mix of people” has been brought together by one underlying commonalty: that they are “fed up to the back teeth of the cardboard cut-out careerists in Westminster who look the same, sound the same and are never prepared to put the interest of Britain the British people first”. As if Farage has studied the notions of the war of position and of populism, in one fell swoop he articulates the people as a bloc united by their antagonism toward an elite who are not only entirely unlike the people but

who actively work against them. Inciting this antagonism appears in several forms throughout this period, principally amongst them the idea of “worrying and shaking the establishment”, of giving them an “earthquake”, delivered on behalf of the people. The name of this shock finishes the speech in the form of a single demand from the people who “collectively as a nation” say “we want our country back”.

Control here is elevated to the status of primary nodal point in UKIP’s discourse. Leaving the EU, often portrayed by commentators as UKIP’s telos, is definitively articulated as a means through which “we can regain control of our borders, our parliament, our democracy and our ability to trade” (2013A). Control, by the people, over these facets of the nation is what now provides the “definition of UKIP”. “They’ve taken over” in all aspects of business and “we’ve got to” free up business and reverse this “culture”. The party who takes charge of the country is “irrelevant”, except of course for UKIP, because Britain’s biggest industry is now managed by “a very charming Frenchmen who doesn’t wish our industry well”. Only if we “take back control” of this management then can things improve. He goes on: “we’ve given up control of our economy... we’re giving up our own concept of civil rights, as evolved since Magna Carta, and we’ve got to stand up and defend those rights”.

In order to ensure that this concept of control is imbued with the power that a nodal point warrants, much of this period targets the effects of *uncontrolled* immigration on Britain, public services, and employment in opposition to an envisaged *controlled* plan. This of course represents for Farage the single biggest “disconnect between the political class and the ordinary people”. However instead of laying this necessarily at the feet of this ‘political class’, Farage insists that in fact “they can’t do anything about it, because they’re tied through a series of European treaties”. Neither immigration nor the elite are in themselves the issue so much as it is the level of control available to the British people. In terms of crime for example, “we need to get back the power” to deport those we choose and as such the only way to “take back control

of our borders” is by leaving the EU and “taking back control”. Of note here, and as a foreboding of the evolution of this phrase, Farage is claiming that to ‘take back control’ of something is, quite circularly, achieved by ‘taking back control’. This circular reasoning is indicative and typical of what Laclau names the ‘empty signifier’. The emptiness here refers to the idea that this phrase, this nodal point, overextends its connections to related moments. Its meaning becomes overdetermined, overstretched, and becomes synonymous not with any given point within the discourse, but with the discourse itself. Due to the ‘lack’ that is necessarily bound up with the empty signifier, we expect to see a large dose of fantasmatic investment in this signifier such that it maintains its grip on not only different subjects but over the moments that it is articulated with.

Herein lies what appears to be a self-reflexive reaction to the dominance of the horrific fantasmatic logics which so dominated the early period of this dataset. The horrific fantasy of a foreign invasion is still the overriding equivocating mechanism by which the different strands of the elite are sewn together, the EU and their patsy government in the UK, and in which we find strong evidence of elitist-antagonistic convergence. Yet the addition to this of a counterweight, of a beatific fantasy in which the people resist this force and ‘sweep it aside’, completes the populist triad and designates what we could describe as a populist fantasy in which the people’s antagonistic response to the elite’s antagonistic aggressions is posited as the solution to the lack felt by the people and the method by which their collective demands can be satisfied. Even the simple act of ‘speaking out’ becomes part of the “patriotic fightback” by “people who say we are proud of our country; we wish to govern ourselves” (2014S). The intricacies behind this phenomenon of a united fantasmatic logic, one of both beauty and horror, and its relationship to the populist logic shall be explored later, but for now it is sufficient to posit that this symmetry between the populist discourse and the fantasies which support it may provide sufficient grip as to solidify the articulations being constructed.

Affective Integration

Two important considerations are revealed here. Firstly, Farage makes explicit the foundation of a populist project by moving beyond talk of specific classes or interest groups, precisely the opposite move to what he sees as the divisive, differential elite strategy, and speaks instead of a coming together under his 'people's army'. Secondly, he also appears to locate antagonism at the heart of politics in a way which echoes Laclau's ontological stance surrounding populism and the political. The 2014 speeches in particular indicate a growing awareness of not only the machinations of a populist strategy, but a growing confidence in the deployment and manipulation of this populist discourse and its support with sufficient fantasmatic grip.

This was only possible due to the development of a series of political logics which allowed for the expression and chaining of various moments around key nodal points. As opposed to the 'shallow populism' period, we instead see an initially more conservative use of populist elements which begin to increase in line with an increasing appeal to particular chains of equivalence around designated privileged moments and in turn of political frontiers. This slower construction allows for a deeper exposition on what the meaning of 'the people' and 'the elite' entailed as well as their relationship to one other. Crucially this period also saw the emergence of certain nodes that allowed for a sedimentation of many floating elements, of which 'immigration' and 'control' were by far and away the most significant and referenced.

Through immigration, 'the people' were able to be defined with much greater clarity by utilising this 'other' as a disruption in the unity, in the being, of the British people; a disruption which UKIP uses to locate the people. Simultaneously 'the elite' can be associated with the failure to prevent immigration and are thus in turn actively responsible for destroying the identity of the people directly. Immigration also allows for the introduction of wider economic and social issues concerning social services, as well as security issues based around

terrorism. What is more is that due to concerns of sensitivity enshrouding the debate around immigration, UKIP were able to mobilise ‘speaking out’ and antagonistic feelings of the public against an elite that were seen to both silence and depoliticise this issue. This key movement, of reintroducing a de-articulated element back into mainstream discourse, simultaneously provided a specific policy space within which UKIP could distance itself from ‘the establishment’ whilst pre-loading the use of this signifier with an inherently antagonistic drive in the very act of speaking about it. Acting as a condenser of identity, as a source of antagonism and as a nodal point which links together more peripheral policies and standings on a host of social issues, immigration became a vital lynchpin in the development of a populist discourse.

Control meanwhile begins to take the place of the singular demand that quilts the rest of the discourse; in other words, taking the place of the empty signifier. Leaving the EU took this place originally and was touted as a demand from, and for, the nation. This period however places leaving the EU as but one demand in a chain that gains its significance from the emerging empty signifier of control; an empty signifier that projects forward a new logic of the centrality of control and self-governance to the discussion of any policy. As per the understanding of populist construction which informs this approach, a signalling of the emergence of a populist discourse is that a series of demands are chained together as part of a political frontier. We have seen already how immigration performs a role which equates to this effect. However, the *demand* made of the elite that follows from this chaining takes the form of a demand for control. Control becomes a symbolic representative for this long chain of equivalence and in turn of the populist discourse in its entirety.

This feature sees control evolve from a moment within the discourse, passing rapidly through the role of a nodal point and ultimately emerging as an ‘empty signifier’. This empty signifier is one which is gradually emptied of its contents, of its meaning, as it stretches its reach as a signifier over a range of different demands. When Farage and UKIP more broadly

speak of control in their discourse it takes the form of control as sovereignty, control as immigration management, control as economic prosperity, control as democracy, control as the will of the people, control as power; control as what is lacking in the lives of the people. This signifier is the core solidifier of a series of disparate demands and is what stabilises the discourse over this period. It is via control that the people are opposed to the elite, as the demand for control is a substitute for all the demands that the people, through UKIP, make of the elite.

Immigration and control similarly enable and are enabled by the co-construction of fantasmatic logics that expand UKIP's affective horizon far beyond its previous limited scope. Understanding how these specific signifiers were able to be constituted as such, creating and connecting various relationships between elements as diverse as healthcare funding or the 'threat' of Islamic terrorism, requires another passage through the development of fantasy. Previously we noted how UKIP's discourse attempted to entangle its parts, and grip its subjects, through the deployment of a beatific fantasy of Commonwealth and a horrific fantasy of invasion that echoed the historical threat of war from the continent. Both of these reflected the nationalistic logic that dominated the early discourse. Whilst we noted that this is a powerfully emotive narrative, it only allowed for the inflation of the EU into a foreign invading force. It did little to enhance and sediment the populist rhetoric at play and ensured that the boundaries of the space in which the people could be developed were drawn too narrowly. This restricted the scope with which a wider segment of society could identify with this construction. Equally we saw the fantasy of Commonwealth remaining side-lined and underdeveloped in favour of the horrific dimension.

Whilst this fantasmatic logic of invasion is still very much present, we have witnessed a dramatic and expansive evolution that binds notions of invasion with a 'theft'. Appealing directly to the lack in the subject, the absence of enjoyment in the lives of the people is ascribed

to the pleasures and fullness enjoyed by the elite. This is where the centrality of immigration makes its mark on the discourse in a significantly emotive fashion, whilst also indicating how a view to the fantasmatic can help account for the character of the populist logics. Any lack perceived in the public services, particularly in welfare, security, jobs, and housing, is conceived of as a lack caused by their enjoyment by immigrants – by those that are not part of the people. Whilst the immigrants are seen as an invading force, one that is crucially aided and abetted by the elites, they are equally considered obstructions that prevent the people from achieving homogeneity, which in turn explains the people's inability to determine their own future. Immigrants provide a far more visual and reified threat to the people than more abstract notions such as European regulations or institutions, so the immigrant becomes a target and symbolic representative for these invisible threats – they represent the lack of a border with which to protect the homeland, they represent a drain on resources that could be better spent on the people, they represent a foreign entity in 'our' midst that is responsible for job losses and the lack of efficient public services. Almost all criticisms levelled against the elites and the EU can be squared with a symmetrical critique of immigrants which reify those criticisms and channel those frustrations into a tangible object of distrust and antagonism. The object of 'immigrant' becomes more than a simple nationalistic aversion to the foreign but is elevated to a more populist entity that performs the normal scapegoating functions whilst also representing the mark of the elite intervening in the social order. In turn the horrific fantasy evolves here from a simplistic invasion to an occupation, one that reflects less an imminent foreign threat and more a current illegitimate presence.

The solution to a lack is a fullness that is promised, and it is here that the signifier of control, and the equally utilised phrasing of 'take back' if not always in direct conjunction, takes on a fantasmatic value that elevates its presence to empty signifier. As has been stated, control is the direct representation of self-determination writ large in the discourse, but its

fantasmatic appeal is derived from its promise to restore any number of sub-demands that can be united under its call. If the problems with social services, borders, sovereignty, democracy and so on, are that they are denied their fullness due to the presence of immigrants and the domination of European elites over the people, then taking back control becomes the singular answer to any and all of these woes. It promises a firm, stable commitment to those who feel insecure or powerless by ensuring that they can become meaningful once again by taking part in a 'true' democracy that is determined and owned by the people.

Beyond control, the cry to 'take back' is a strong rhetorical command that tunes in to the populist conjecture via the fantasmatic. First, logics of equivalence construct a people who have been stolen from, as well as an elite who have performed this crime and blocked the full realisation of the people's potential, partially through the use of immigration. An antagonistic stance is then taken through oppositional and combative rhetoric, such as pitting the 'people's army' against the obscene and corrupt elite, which is then fantasmatically infused by claiming that this will restore what has been lost. 'Taking back' then becomes an easily deployable reference to this populist mode of fantasy, wherein its usage signals an action-towards the returning of a mythic past fullness. The previous, weakly implicated, beatific fantasy of 'Commonwealth' functioned in nationalistic opposition to the horror of foreign invasion. The new beatific fantasy of establishing a new era of control for the people stands in opposition to a nationalist-populist horror of foreign-elite occupation.

Configuring the fantasmatic logics that have been seen so far, we can sketch out a new mode of fantasy that includes the horrific threat of invasion, the theft of enjoyment or fullness, combined with a beatific resistance mythology that directly counters these dangers. The synergy of these fantasies however must also be taken into account here, a whole of more than the sum of its parts, such that we may posit a unified fantasmatic logic of *liberation*. This logic has two complementary dimensions that are uniquely tied according to a populist structure.

The horrific dimension threatens the disruption and destruction of the people by the elite and their forces (which includes, but is not limited to, immigrants), but that this threat may be stopped by an appeal to a beatific dimension of fantasy that calls upon the people to resist this fate and take back what is theirs in order to resume control over their lives and restore their fullness. That the fantasy is explicitly structured around an antagonistic struggle between the elite and the people creates the seamless fantasmatic foil to quilt the populist discourse that has been established in parallel.

4.3 Populist Decline?: 2015-2016

We have seen the establishment of a fully-fledged and fantasmatically enabled populist discourse by the end of 2014. Our initial numerical coding reveals at this point a marked drop-off in references to either the people, the elite or attempts to frame an antagonistic division between the two. Less than half of the number of references to these three terms are registered in any speech in this period compared with the final speech of the prior period. However, we should not dismiss out of hand this diminishment in quantity, in terms of populist signifiers, as indicative of a lessening in populism *per se*. Just as our analysis of the earliest speeches concluded that the substantial presence of such references did not indicate a populist *logic* at work, this period needs to be investigated further before making a similar conclusion in reverse.

For example, Farage insists that “the people of this country” seek to support his party for the sake of “hope” and “inspiration” and in return they are abused by the elite (2015S). But this does not deter the “growing level of support for the People’s Army” who will “stand up against an establishment that has served this country so badly”. Farage questions the nature of the economic ‘recovery’ that is spoken of by the Conservative party suggesting that it is “a recovery being felt by the few and not by the many”. He speaks of the “shock and horror of the

establishment” when UKIP challenges them in elections, and in reference to MPs he states that “it must always be the *people*, not the politicians, that are the bosses”. Of course, this stance will have repercussions which Farage is all too aware of: “I know we’re going to have the entire political establishment against us”.

Whilst there may not be as many repeated instances of the ‘people’ or ‘elite’, the way in which these signifiers are articulated suggests a confidence in brandishing these terms in a way which will resonate with UKIP members. But more than a confidence, what this usage indicates is the way that these statements carry a meaning which is made possible because of their position within an established discourse. In other words, these statements could not have been said nor made sense without the previous discursive construction, but now Farage is in a position where he can speak of the people’s fight for control against the establishment precisely because these signifiers have been well-articulated prior. The level of new equivalences being constructed, the introduction of new moments and issues into the discourse, is also noticeably lower. Given that a populist discourse is present, there is then less need for Farage and UKIP to focus on new equivalences and extensions to existing signifiers. Were this process to continue along its trajectory after the 2014 speeches, then the discourse would risk a level of overextension that would jeopardise its moments and nodal points; needless complications that may draw attention away from the people and their domain of control. Given the strong links established between the people, immigration, control and the elite, any extensions to the meanings and relationships implicit in the discourse could potentially undermine these existing linkages; a blurring of signification that results in a loss of discursive and persuasive force as the rhetoric loses its key messages and focus.

These speeches represent the end of a ‘constructive’ period in which a populist discourse was built up and sedimented through the elaboration and development of key signifiers, backed up by appropriate fantasmatic logics. Yet what we see here are the

conclusions of this endeavour in the form of strongly populist statements which do not require further elaboration by the speaker; their meaning is considered to be well established such that the signifiers used (the people, the establishment, control, etc.) are self-sufficient. This insight allows us to confirm that indeed a noticeable change in the content of UKIP's discourse, first alerted to us by our initial pass through the data, can be confirmed yet not quite in the way that was expected. These speeches indicate a lower numerical presence of populist indicators, yet the statements and claims made therein remain organised by a populist logic. The change we first identified between these periods is thus not a decline in populism *per se*, but instead indicative of the end of a constructive phase and the entering of a phase of established populism.

The low quantity of populist features continues into the 2015 annual speech. Having received 3,881,099 votes in the General Election between this and the preceding speech (a 12.6% share of the vote), this year represented a huge success for UKIP in terms of their increased popularity and political exposure. However, this significant portion of votes translated only into a single MP; a point which understandably aggrieved many in the party. This is reflected in this speech which dedicates a large share of its time licking the party's wounds, as it were, and explaining away UKIP's shortcomings in terms of circumstance; in this case a major swing to the Conservatives from a public that were fearful of both the Scottish National Party and the prospect of having Labour's Ed Miliband as Prime Minister.

The surprise Conservative victory placed a great deal of pressure upon PM David Cameron to honour an election pledge to hold a referendum on Britain's continued membership of the EU after a series of renegotiations of the terms of this membership. One by one, Farage lists those associated with the expected 'Remain' campaign who each in turn receive a mix of booing and laughter from the audience. To this effect, Farage sets his sights on these negotiations and presses home the demand (control) of UKIP's discourse in all areas. He

accuses Cameron of not wanting to “get back control over open borders and the free movement of people”, of not wanting to “get back the supremacy of British law in our own Parliament and indeed that our own Supreme Court should be supreme” (2015A). Voting to remain in the EU represents a risk far greater to the UK and its people than “voting to take back control of our laws and our borders and our own lives”. Provocatively, this debate over who controls what, should act, according to Farage, as a space in which a productive discussion can be made over the identity of the people: “Let’s talk about who we are as a people”. Not only then do the negotiations represent a direct route to leaving the EU and ‘taking back control’, but, keenly observed by Farage, they provide UKIP with a space to extend their discourse, along with their web of signifiers concerning the people, into the public realm in a way hitherto unprecedented.

This exploration into the identity of the people leads Farage into explaining his understanding of what various ‘elites’ think of EU membership, of what Liberal Democrat leader “Nick Clegg was really saying” of what “Branson and Blair and Mandelson” are all “*really saying*”:

What they're saying isn't that we're not big enough. What they're saying is we're not good enough. They don't think we're good enough to make our own laws, control our own borders, make our own trade deals, run our own businesses, set our own energy standards, control our own fishing waters and set the standards for British farming...

We are patriotic and proud of who we are as a people, as a country. We are proud of those that went before us and sacrificed much so that we could be that free independent country and we certainly... we certainly believe that Britain is good enough, that we are good enough to stand on our own two feet and trade with the world. (2015A)

Farage takes the Remain argument that the EU provides Britain with a stronger ability to make global trade deals and turns it into an antagonistic insult towards the British people themselves.

This interpretation of the Remainer position acts as a challenge against the people and specifically as a challenge to their demand for control. Farage is aligning the elite position as one that is not only at odds with the interests of the people but as against the coalescing demand which unifies the UKIP discourse. In turn, by opposing this demand the elite can be seen to oppose the very force which constitutes the people *as* the people.

However, beyond the unifying force within the party, Farage begins to speak of unity outside of the party in terms of the competing campaigns that he suggests will emerge if a referendum were to occur. He issues a warning against the “fractured” and “divided” Eurosceptics that have failed in the past and is grateful to party donor Aaron Banks for setting up a ‘non-political party’ umbrella group called ‘Leave.EU’ to whom UKIP will ally themselves in the future, and which contains “every single one of those groups who is committed to leaving the European Union”. This alliance is the first noticeable time that UKIP have aligned themselves with other groups and forces in the UK, with the exception of course of the people. How this changing political landscape will be articulated in the discourse is unclear at this stage. However, UKIP until this point have been very careful to show that they alone oppose the elite and represent the people. This imbues Farage, personally, with a great deal of power with respect to the fact that he comes to function as a key extoller of UKIP-style populism; as a man of the people who is belittled by the establishment and the media precisely because of his leading of a resistance against the oppressive elite. The relation between the people, Farage, the party, and the elite is thus singular and linear. Discussions about alliances and others ‘committed to leaving the EU’ blur this picture somewhat. The ramifications of this potentially disruptive thread will ultimately come to have a profound effect on the party’s discourse.

By the spring of 2016, Prime Minister David Cameron had announced his decision, in line with his General Election promise, to hold a referendum on Britain’s membership of the

EU on the 23rd June 2016. For Farage, the decision to hold this referendum was “our victory” and it was now the responsibility of the party to make that date “Independence Day” (2016S). This call to arms becomes the central guiding logic of the last party conference speech Farage would give for UKIP. Farage instructs his members that they “have to tell the British people” about the importance of voting to leave the EU and “win back our democratic freedoms and rights as British people”. But to achieve this goal, Farage begins to thaw relations between his party and those that may join the Leave campaign. Speaking of the decision of Boris Johnson MP, to support Leave, Farage encourages his audience to “show what good-hearted people we are in UKIP and give Conservative Mayor of London Boris Johnson a big cheer”. Farage is very much aware of this peculiar turn of events: “It’s funny what a referendum brings isn’t it? Cheering a Tory”. Further tributes are paid to two more Conservative MPs and even Labour MP Kate Hoey for their contributions to the Leave effort, and signals to Farage a need to “cast aside any previous political differences... whatever’s been said in campaigns, whatever’s been said about us, we’ve got to put that behind us”.

These few comments represent an extraordinary turn of events. More precisely, they represent an unexpected intervention into the chains of equivalence and difference that have been carefully cultivated up until this moment. UKIP’s discourse at this time was founded upon a populist demarcation between the people and an elite, locked in an antagonistic relationship as those elites seek to suppress both the interests and the identity of the people. These comments thus suffer a great friction against the grain of their own discursive background, comments which dislocate and unsettle the notion of a grand, unified elite against which UKIP is battling. What is more, given that the chain of demands which revolve around the signifier of control is dependent upon a target to whom those demands are made, any change in the signification of the elite within this discourse must be accounted for and made clear or risk ambiguating the constitutive other and unsettling both the entire chain and the political frontiers they support.

Working with other political forces for the sake of the referendum risks the fraying of years of cultivating and articulating together those forces into a combative adversary. Farage recognises the risk of this potential self-undermining by restating another moment of their discourse: “So we must portray this as not being a battle of left and right, it’s a battle of right and wrong, it’s a battle about who governs our country”. This, unsurprisingly, leads into a great number of references to the lack of control over “our” laws, industries, services, foreign policy, borders, and security. The awareness of the fragility of this repositioning forces Farage into reinforcing this chain promptly as to buffer against any anticipated destabilisation. In giving an increased weight to this binary, moralistic moment of right and wrong, Farage attempts to reinvest control with a significance that changes the focus of the makeup of the elite and the people, in terms of their identity and background, and instead defines the people and the elite by their position in relation to the ‘Brexit question’. In this way, those that were previously associated with the elite are given the opportunity to join the people, their sedimentation *as* elite becomes loosened, and they may join the people if they support their moral and righteous demand for control.

This manoeuvre does not come without its risks. In unfastening and relaxing the direct relationship between the opposing parties, the ‘LibLabCon’, who act as an integral moment in the elitist chain, UKIP’s position as a party who singularly represent the people becomes weakened as opposition MPs may now also take up this mantle. The tension between party politics and ‘single-issue’ referenda thus becomes overtly acute during this speech. Referenda are often espoused as a deeply populist tool. Yet what we witness here is an alteration, and perhaps even a weakening, of a well-established populist discourse precisely because of the strategic manoeuvring involved in (re)positioning a party to fight in a referendum. Most of all however is that this opening up of the UKIP discourse to novel subjects dilutes the link between

UKIP and the people as the principal articulator and vessel of their demands, opening up space for alternative agents and voices to claim the role of representative of the people.

These last speeches represent the definitive end of a ‘constructive’ period in which a populist discourse was built up and sedimented through the elaboration and development of key signifiers, backed up by appropriate fantasmatic logics. Yet what we see here are the conclusions of this endeavour in the form of strongly populist statements which do not require explanation by the speaker, so to speak; their meaning is considered to be well established such that the signifiers used (the people, the establishment, control, etc.) are self-sufficient. This period indicates a lower numerical presence of populist indicators, yet the statements and claims made therein remain as populist as the speech prior. The numerical change we first identified is thus not representative of a decline in populism *per se*, but instead is indicative of the end of a constructive phase and the entering of a phase of established populism. Furthermore, the final speech indicates the beginning of a shift in terms of those invited to partake, so to speak, in the populist discourse. Farage even goes to far as to select particular figures from competing parties, most crucially (future Prime Minister) Boris Johnson, as trustworthy allies in the upcoming referendum struggle and by extension in the struggle between the people and the elite.

4.4 Deep Populism

In the previous chapter we evaluated and categorised our findings in terms of the Logics framework and in so doing yielded a number of core logics – logics of self-determination and independence, equivalential political logics which created two discernible chains around an establishment and the EU, a beatific fantasy logic of Commonwealth and future prosperity, and a horrific fantasy logic of foreign invasion. It soon became apparent that whilst there were some

correlations to be made to a populist framework, what was at work in this discourse was a more obfuscated picture where several strands and tangents ran alongside each other with no dominant thread or locus – whether this be the people, the nation, the establishment, the EU, the immigrants and so on. It was suggested that a struggle to combine these moments, or at least make clear what is foregrounded, as well as the lack of strong fantasmatic backing beyond the horrific dimension, may well be responsible for the ambiguous, and rather incongruous, nature of the discourse.

In this chapter we have revealed a kind of grand unification of these disparate positions and themes. Several discursive manoeuvres, consisting principally of the collapsing, expansion and investment of key elements and moments across the speeches, were achieved through the re-organisation of these moments according to a populist political logic. The logic of national independence has been collapsed and subsumed under the logic of self-determination, where independence is but one expression of this principle, allowing for the limited objective of ‘leave the EU’ to incorporate many more features than previously available. This change can be seen through the relegation of the signifiers of the ‘state’ or ‘nation’ to secondary roles behind that of the people. What is presented here as ‘given’ is the idea that both independence and sovereignty are concepts that bear relevance and priority insofar as they apply to the people. Key to this transition from the nation to the people as the subject of democracy and decision-making (and thus creating the discursive ‘room’ that is excavated to expand the reach and appeal of the party) is the introduction of ‘control’ into the signifying sequence. An inversion in the terms of this sequence has seen control move from being the route to independence, to independence being the means by which to grasp control. In this sense we could say that the core demand of independence has been supplanted by a broader and more general demand for control.

However, that which is taking control is not the nation but the people. The British people must be able to “decide in their own parliament” (2013S), and utilise “British democracy” to take control over borders, laws, budgets, etc. In this way, control takes up the place of the empty signifier whose presence represents a short-circuiting of the entire discursive field; a way to simultaneously express the underlying logic of self-determination whilst representing the chain of sentiments and signifiers which each themselves have become expressions of this logic – whether this be control of immigration, control over laws, of justice, control over elected officials and democratic processes, etc. In sum, it is *the* demand. The sedimentation of the signifier of control as an all-encompassing rally cry for the party is only possible however through an expansion of the dual chains of the people and the elite. To take control implies a taker and someone to take from. In turn this requires a coordinated articulation of those who wish to take control, those who currently lack it, and those who currently have control. To this end the people are described as hard-working, ordinary families who wish to take part in their communities but are blocked from doing so by the elite. There is a unity and homogeneity to these people who together are compared to an army; a force that suffer together but who hold immense power. Moreover, these same people have slowly had their control over their communities taken away from them through the plotting of elites and the presence of immigrants who dislocate this chain through the upsetting of this homogeneity and who weaken their collective force. Crucially however what joins the people together is what they are said to lack – control. Much like control, immigration also provides a way in which these two chains can be reified and played off one another. Firstly, immigration allows for the people to gain a level of homogeneity as they provide an opposing group against which an identity can be established. Secondly, this disruption to the people can be directly ascribed to the elite in all its machinations – whether this be assigning blame for ‘open-door’ immigration to the EU, or to the British government and ‘liberal experts’ for experimenting in ‘failed’ multi-culturalism.

Moreover, this double play of immigration provides control with yet more discursive connections as immigration, it is claimed, demonstrably shows the importance of control and the lack of it the British people have.

This lack is ascribed to an elite through a zero-sum calculation whereby the presence of control elsewhere is seen as a direct theft from the people. This is why the elite chain is as equally crucial in the construction of the people and one cannot function without the other. In this case the lack of control in the lives of the people, as well as the insurrection of immigrants into the people's communities, both result from the hegemony over control created by the partnership of the British establishment (the LibLabCon, the mainstream media, the corporations and 'so-called experts') and the EU (alongside its bureaucrats and the leaders of European nations). This frightening alliance of global powers also takes on a spatial importance that helps to sediment their opposition to the people. London, the home of the British government, the corporations, the media, etc. allies itself with Brussels, a foreign seat of power where decisions are made that dominate the lives of British people. The previous period saw the EU as external to the elite chain, existing instead as an imminent yet separate threat to the nation to which the elites were simply despondent or ignorant. In this sense the EU was organised within the discourse through a nationalist logic based on an inside and exterior. The EU is now absorbed however into this singular expansive chain where the internal elite coordinate with the EU and its institutions, "happy for British taxpayers' money to be used" to support their obscene project (2012S), and connecting the reclamation of control as a fightback against "the European Union and back from the career politicians" (2013S). This chaining now implies that to achieve something like replacing the primacy of the European court with the British courts can be accomplished if the people "take on the political class" (2012A); the implication here being that the political class now encompasses the EU itself. In effect, the

populist logic supplants the nationalist in the organisation of the EU and its orbiting signifiers in relation to the rest of UKIP's platform.

Populism Unleashed

Upon charting the occurrence of basic signifiers of a populist phenomenon – the people, the elite and antagonism – we noted three distinguishable periods based on the ebbs and flows of these terms. Superficially, the first period bore little pattern and was sporadic in its elements, whilst the next period suggested a gradual controlled increase in populist features until it peaked in 2014. An investigation into the first period yielded a number of logics that suggested a commitment to self-determination as well as an image of a national elite and a foreign enemy in the form of the EU, coupled with fantasmatic visions of a new Commonwealth as well as the threat of invasion and occupation. Yet piecing together these elements into a coherent populist picture was fraught with difficulties due to the emphasis of the nation over and above the people, who in themselves were ill-defined, as well as the lack of any clear moments allowing for the coalescing of a clear and targeted elite against which an antagonism can be brought forth. In sum, whilst it may appear that there was a populist rhetoric present, it did not provide the structuring principles to the discourse.

However, as we moved into the second period, we began to see a slow and measured introduction of populist elements that began to make better use of nodal points to construct chains of equivalence along a people-elite schematic. Immigration and control together provide a means through which to define both the people and the elite, whilst connecting a host of issues and binding them to the task of leaving the EU. Reflecting the logic of self-determination, the people possess a singular demand for control and will take it back from the elites that are responsible for their suffering, misfortunes, and lack of fullness, especially in terms of their identity *as* the people. A fantasmatic logic of liberation grips the subject of the

UKIP discourse, who is first threatened by the impending undemocratic occupation of their communities, but who can then experience the enjoyment of transgressing against these ominous powers by joining the people's army and overthrowing their tyrannical rule. Taken together, we can confidently assert that UKIP's discourse at this time was structured and mediated by a well-defined populist logic, one that was co-constructed alongside the core nodal point of 'control' in order to expand UKIP's political horizons beyond relatively mundane and largely nationalistic opposition to the EU.

Returning to our logics-based depiction of populism, we can re-visit our initial problematisation of populism. The first key issue is that one cannot simply identify the presence of a people or elite in the rhetoric. As we saw in the first period, this in of itself gives little indication as to whether such signification implies their foregrounding and organisation within the discourse. What is required is an investigation into the creation of the people and elite as such, which can be achieved through the identification and construction of political logics that locate the elements and moments that structure and give weight to these core signifiers. This then raises a second key issue – how are these chains infused with the grip necessary to sustain their foregrounding as key nodal points whilst simultaneously making the discourse appealing to subjects? This forces us to consider the affective qualities of the discourse, which in our analysis was mapped by constructing fantasmatic logics out of the numerous threads in order to build-up a rich picture of what is promised by the discourse and how the transgressing of the elite is fleshed out and translated into a demand to be realised.

We now have a thick and rich map of UKIP's populist discourse. Whilst rewarding in of itself, there is a question that looms large over the discourse at this historical juncture: how, if at all, does this discourse impress on the Brexit referendum campaign of 2016? After all, the threat of a surgent UKIP party was responsible for the calling of the referendum that to this day is contested, poorly understood, and has created political, social, and economic uncertainty

unheard of in modern British politics until now. Our analysis leaves us well-placed to turn our attention to the Leave campaign in order to resolve questions surrounding its populist capacity as well as to its structure and the logics which guided its construction and prolongation.

The undertaking of this venture follows from several intuitions and questions that align with the analysis given. Given the confirmation of UKIP as a populist force, can we use this information to make corresponding conclusions about the Leave campaign? If so, to what extent, if any, did they utilise the discursive structure laid out by UKIP, alongside any key moments and nodal points? Given the current domination of British political discourse by Brexit, we potentially have a route to track current day political practices by the major political parties through the Brexit campaign and back to its origins in UKIP. This next undertaking would then allow us to comment on the virulent nature of populist discourse and allow us to evaluate the extent of the influence that specifically UKIP's populist discourse has had on British politics. It is to this task then that we now attend.

Chapter 5 – Brexit and the Populist Contagion

Our mapping of the UKIP speeches has given us a string of logics that define and explain how it functions to arrange a series of disparate elements into an affective and effective discourse. Crucially, we found there to be a strongly established and well-defined populist logic that was essential in allowing for a broadening of the central issue of the EU to encompass all manner of demands that were crystallised around the cry for the people to take control. This empty signifier of control enabled those equivalences, and differences, to be made that produced definitive political frontiers manifest as a series of antagonisms between the people and the elite.

One of the advantages to the mode of analysis undertaken here is that we were able to construct a vivid picture of the operations taking place within the discourse. This was not simply a synchronic viewpoint, however. Instead, our analysis enabled a diachronic reading which allowed us to animate the development and evolution of particular logics, and their relationships, over several discernible periods. The transformation of the discourse from one organised nationalistically against an external threat, to one that is predominantly organised according to a populist logic against a threat from an oppressive ‘above’, was a metamorphosis that required time for the establishment and sedimentation of various nodes and their relationships within and to the wider discourse. In this way, we saw the rearticulation of the discourse toward a populistically organised separation of chains, symbolised in their entirety through the empty signifier of control. Of course, the *raison d'être* of UKIP’s existence was always for the UK leave the EU. Yet the notion of control supplanted this demand as they expanded their political horizon and in doing so breached the limits of a more disjointed and disconnected discourse previously constrained by a much narrower nationalistic hue.

The centrality of this specific signifier of control to the functioning of this discourse becomes retrospectively of great import due to its emergence as a potentially even more significant term in the years to follow in Britain's political landscape. At present, in the year 2021, the ruling Conservative government under Boris Johnson remains committed to a Brexit that will "take back control" for the British people. Johnson's predecessor Theresa May similarly made a fascinating symbolic gesture of penning a 'letter to the nation' in which she too stated that her primary "duty" was to "take back control of our borders... take back control of our money", "take back control of our laws" and "full control over our waters" following the Brexit vote.¹⁴ When considering the period in which Britain descended into a dichotomised tribal state pitting Remain against Leave during the Brexit referendum debates of 2016, we find ourselves plagued by this single demanding phrase – 'take back control'. Indeed, the most circulated paper in the UK went so far as to suggest that "[i]f you want to know why 17.4 million people voted for Brexit it probably all boils down to three little words: Take Back Control" (Cox, 2018).

The prevalence of this term, one that has come to define a political era in the UK, has rightly become the focal point of much debate and research. Yet our analysis leaves us uniquely placed to raise some pertinent questions regarding how it was elevated to such prominence as the symbol of what is said to be demanded by the British people and to which the ruling powers must speak. Whilst the origins of the phrase and its associated discursive elements are placed squarely within the Vote Leave campaign during the Brexit referendum, the manner in which it rapidly gripped the nation is less elaborated upon in terms of how it was articulated as part of the 'Brexit' offer.

¹⁴ This letter can be found on the UK Government website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pm-letter-to-the-nation-24-november-2018>

The aim of this chapter then is to reinterpret the current understandings of this phrase and its usage as it emerged from the Brexit referendum campaigns as the empty signifier *par excellence* that defined this period. Current contributions to the understanding of this empty signifier at the time of these campaigns place its genesis within Vote Leave itself and to one figure in particular in Dominic Cummings, head political strategist of the Leave campaign. Its proliferation is suggested as a counterweight to the instability suffered by the great mass of what is now commonly called the ‘left behind’, defined largely in terms of identity, social and economic well-being (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015; Sobolewska & Ford, 2020). Taking control is offered here as a way to fight back against this trend. Such contributions and comments, whilst highlighting the enormity and centrality of this discursive flourish in the unfolding of the struggle between Leave and Remain, fail to systematically capture the web of signification which supports and elevates its prominence, impressing it with the meaning and affect. It is the contention of this chapter that the structure by which this was made possible is precisely that which we have unearthed in the UKIP discourse.

Our claim is that ‘control’ and its counterpart ‘take back control’ are empty signifiers that originate not with Cummings and Vote Leave but with Farage and UKIP. Furthermore, the possibility for ‘take back control’ to acquire such a rich tapestry of meaning in such a short space of time was made possible by the pre-existence of the UKIP discourse as we have unpacked it here. As such we are well-placed to determine whether this central pillar of the Vote Leave campaign was made meaningful, in the sense that it mapped onto the emergent discourse of Vote Leave, via the same populist logic. Further still, given the orbiting logics we have identified previously, we are well placed to indicate the extent to which Vote Leave was inspired by, or even replicated, the UKIP discourse and what modifications too place thereafter. In doing so we can reevaluate claims of UKIP’s supposed minor role in the referendum campaign which ignore how the Vote Leave discourse was made possible by and evolved from

the UKIP discourse. For this purpose, we shall be looking to the statements and speeches of leadership figures within the Leave campaign, including Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, and Nigel Farage. Whilst our primary focus shall be on the discourse of the officially designated Vote Leave campaign group, their relationship with other groups and competing discourses will supplement this understanding. What this analysis reveals across the groups of the Leave campaign is a direct continuation of the populist logics that framed UKIP's discourse on their rapid rise to success.

In the preceding chapters we sought out 'populism' through the construction of a pattern of signifiers according to a particular set of logics that culminated in the establishment of the empty signifier of 'control'. We instead now begin with this identified empty signifier and the logics we have constructed and attempt to identify their resonance within particular pivotal moments in the Brexit campaign. The analysis given here aims to show that the appropriation of control, and more importantly the discourse in which it was pre-situated, enabled an establishment campaign of mainstream politicians to integrate particular elements, such as immigration, into a failing discourse centred on the economy. This allowed the Vote Leave campaign to appeal to nationalism and right-wing racism without becoming fully associated with either. This enabling came about for much the same reason that Farage was able to do so in the final period of our previous analysis – that explicit calls to particular contents were not required as this content and its accompanying affective material was already well-established, sedimented and thus implied in particular 'trigger' signifiers and moments such as 'control'.

5.1 Take Back Control

The Leave campaign's reliance on this phrase cannot be understated and has since been the focal point of research by many looking to understand this period. The story told here is

commonplace and has almost become established as an episode of British political mythology, with one particular mythic figure dominating the narrative. Dominic Cummings, ex-chief of staff to Conservative MP Michael Gove and special adviser to the Department of Education, left the government in 2014 after altercations with officials within the party and would come to be lead the Vote Leave campaign having previously led a campaign to ward off the Euro as well as successfully leading a referendum campaign to a landslide 78% victory in 2004 on whether to establish a north-east regional assembly (Shipman, 2016: 36-37). A divisive figure, Cummings was described as a “raging menace... a practitioner of the dark-arts” who was disliked almost uniformly by his party and labelled as a ‘career psychopath’ by then Prime Minister David Cameron (Mason, 2014). Yet in equal measure, Cummings was seen to be a ‘tortured genius’ of political strategy, a man with a certain “fearlessness in the face of authority” (Shipman, 2016: 38) and someone who “knows how to win” and “doesn’t care who he pisses off in the process” (Shipman, 2015). Cummings is credited with coining (or ‘masterminding’s) the phrase ‘take back control’ (Chambers, 2019) and making it the centrepiece of the Vote Leave campaign. A dramatized telling of Cummings ‘genius’ in manufacturing the ‘take back control’ slogan and the campaign to drill this message into the public psyche was televised by both Channel 4 in the UK and HBO in the USA, and was even nominated for an Emmy television award in its portrayal of these events.

The problem with this story is precisely that it is a story. Perhaps its compelling narrative of a troubled rogue fighting against an out of touch elite (a narrative that in of itself has strong populist elements), being the reason behind its near universal acceptance as truth, regardless of one’s affinity to Brexit. Whilst I mean not to undermine Cummings centrality to the campaign and its sloganeering, what we can do is question the creation *ex-nihilo* of this slogan as if it were not already present within a particular discursive arrangement and therefore how its usage draws from these discourses. Our discursive lens cannot accept that such a

selection of signifiers can be brought into play in such rapid time with any meaningful effect without a drawing from their placement within existing discursive frameworks. Yet, this disregard of the discursive dimension appears to be precisely what has allowed Cummings and his story to proliferate and in doing so detracts from the role of UKIP's discourse in the referendum campaign.

The role of UKIP here can be roughly reduced to two main tasks in the literature. First, UKIP's electoral progress forced the Conservative hand in allowing the referendum to take place in the first instance. Secondly, that UKIP's role in the referendum itself was to work on the political margins. For instance, the difficult and often toxic topic of immigration could be downplayed by the main campaign, in full knowledge that UKIP would draw votes for the campaign from its anti-immigrant base. At worst however, UKIP were seen as a distraction, an embarrassment even, that could potentially scupper Leave's chances of success (Shipman, 2016: 50-51).

Given the controversy surrounding UKIP – including but not reduced to accusations of racism, sexism, and right-wing nationalism – the Vote Leave campaign, from its very creation, sought to avoid contaminating itself with UKIP and in particular with Farage. Accounts given of the creation of the various Brexit campaigns highlight the tensions and animosities that donors and political figures had behind the scenes; tensions principally based around the 'figureheads' that would lead the cause and the central message that the overall Leave campaign should exude. For example, given the charged status of immigration within British discourse and its links to racism, Cummings was careful to point out that "The official OUT campaign does not need to focus on immigration" due to its existing prevalence amongst voters and their political concerns (Cummings, 2014b). Instead, the primary concern of the OUT campaign "has one essential task – to neutralise the fear that leaving may be bad for jobs and living standards".

In an article written for *The Times*, Cummings did however make a key recognition as to the stance and power of immigration within the debate. Following a series of focus groups, polling, and data collection in 2014, Cummings came to the conclusion that not only does “the combination of immigration, benefits and human rights dominates all discussion of politics and Europe” but that “people now spontaneously connect the issue of immigration and the EU” (Cummings, 2014a). Of course, as we know this was far from spontaneous but grew from UKIP’s political involvement. Crucially though Cummings claims to have shown that on “issue after issue [the participants] side with ‘let’s take back control’ over ‘we gain more by sharing power’”. What stops however many of these voters declaring their support for leaving the EU is fear – fear of closing businesses, fear of job losses, and a general sense of uncertainty. Tim Shipman, political editor of the *Sunday Times* and author of several detailed and insightful works on the conduct of the referendum campaign (based largely on his personal interviews and discussions from many of its primary participants), pre-emptively echoes a key conclusion of our analysis of the UKIP leader speeches – that Cummings saw the key to victory as being held in the linking of immigration with control (Shipman, 2016: p. 40); or in other words in the affective combining of our identified two core nodal points in a political discourse already widely dispersed and amplified by years of media coverage and increasing electoral success.

‘Take back control’, the symbolic substitute that has come to take the place of the ‘Leave’ discourse in its entirety, thus requires an explanation. Here it is posited that such an expression can only gain its meaning in so far as it is located within a specifically populist discourse. Fundamentally, this is due to the signifier of ‘control’ embodying a division between those who have and who do not whilst ‘take back’ relies on an antagonistic struggle between those two blocs. Our account indicates that such a slogan and its centrality to the campaign relied on a pre-existing populist framework, as constructed by UKIP. It is argued that this alone does not entail a full explanation and that what is needed is a mapping of this phrase onto the

field of discursivity in order to illuminate *how* populism imbues this with meaning in such a way as to provide it with maximum affective appeal and a strong level of consistency within the discourse in which it operates. Furthermore, this explanation should also attempt to demystify the Cummings ‘origin story’ narrative by illustrating that, far from being forged ex-nihilo, this expression, as well as its supporting and grounding discourse, begins with UKIP. The resulting analysis declares that whilst the Leave campaign claimed distance from UKIP, it simultaneously re-appropriated it; that the discourse of the referendum campaign was that of UKIP’s and as a result that such discourse inflected all Brexit exchanges to follow. The decline of UKIP that followed then does not signify a decline in UKIP-style (right-wing, nativist, populist) discourse, but simply its expropriation by other political forces.

What Cummings uncovers in his preparation for organising and managing the OUT campaign, is a pre-existing desire by many to prioritise ‘control’ over ‘cooperation’ as well as an understanding of the pre-existing equivalences drawn between the EU and immigration. Equally the Leave campaign recognised their greatest challenge in a discourse concerning the fear of instability, particularly with regards to economic instability and losses. It is at this locus point that our discourse analysis intervenes. For this purpose, we shall be looking to the statements and speeches of leadership figures within the Leave campaign, including Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, and Nigel Farage. Whilst our primary focus shall be on the discourse of the officially designated Vote Leave campaign group, their relationship with other groups and competing discourses will supplement this understanding and so we shall begin by outlining these affiliations.

Out – Vote Leave, Leave.EU, Grassroots Out

On the 13th April 2016, the organisation ‘Vote Leave’ was designated as the official group that would campaign for Britain to leave the European Union. This designation provided the group

with access to state resources in the form of £7 million worth of financing and access to ‘mailshots’ (postal advertisements) and guaranteed TV broadcasts. Other Leave supporting groups such as ‘Grassroots Out’, backed Farage, were initially sceptical of this decision as they sought to claim this mantle for themselves and threatened to challenge the decision in court, but soon backed down and pledged their support. This tension revolved around the ‘establishment-orientated’ Vote Leave group that acted as a vehicle for “Conservative heavyweights” in the form of Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, who could then use this position to campaign for Leave whilst being seen to avoid the toxicity of UKIP or, as being associated with “miscellaneous populists” (Clarke et al., 2017: 29). These early frictions ultimately stem from an issue of competing strategies and the discourses these strategies represent.

Living in, and researching the discourse of, ‘Brexit Britain’ makes it difficult to conceive of a time when immigration was not a key part of the EU referendum debates, yet when we look to the origins of the Vote Leave group this aspect is missing entirely. In October 2015 Vote Leave was founded by political strategists Matthew Elliot and Dominic Cummings, and quickly gained members from across the British party spectrum. At this time they released an online video that formed the platform of their campaign and the initial ‘stall-setting’ of their public discourse (Vote Leave, 2015). The video shows an NHS hospital dissolving, a series of arrows and figures to show the movement of vast sums of money from the UK to Europe, a number of examples of what these figures represent (a new hospital every week, half of England’s schools’ budget, sixty-times the UK’s cancer drugs research fund) before finishing with the original hospital regenerating. The video ends with a series of messages: ‘Vote Leave – let’s take control’, ‘Vote Leave – let’s save money’, ‘Vote Leave – invest in the NHS’, ‘Vote Leave – invest in science’, ‘Vote Leave – get change’, and most curiously of all, ‘Vote Leave – the safer choice’.

Clearly then, as Cummings suggested, what would become this campaign opted to go for economic issues, ignoring immigration entirely. Sovereignty at this time was only spoken of implicitly, in so far as the ability to make these economic opportunities come to fruition implies a lack of decision making that needs to be harnessed and taken control of. It must also be noticed the lack of antagonism here; the EU is not established as an enemy as there is no ‘taking back’, simply an assertion of ‘let’s take control’. The focus should be on British businesses and the economy. Vote Leave’s early manoeuvres then focused on this aspect, with one of their initial, and successful, campaigns to discredit polling that suggested that the majority of British businesses were in favour of remaining in the EU – forcing a response from the British Polling Council that agreed that the conducted sampling was skewed (Fletcher, 2015). These initial, often forgotten, salvos would come to be important in the context of the distrust of experts and ‘facts’ that characterised the Leave campaign and indicate how these aspects would later be incorporated into the ‘elite’.

The other large Leave campaign group established at this time came in the form of ‘Leave.EU’, founded and funded almost exclusively by UKIP party donor Aaron Banks. Farage initially lent his support to this group, but when pressed on his support conceded that he backed both Leave campaigns because they targeted ‘different audiences’ (BBC News, 2015). With some reservation he described Vote Leave as a “Westminster organisation”, making “business arguments”. Leave.EU however, he described as “an entirely different thing” that were talking about the “ability to control our country, the ability to control our borders, and they’re reaching out to millions of ordinary people”. Far from being contradictory, these groups were “complementary” he claimed. It seems then that a populist logic is engrained even amongst the same sides of the Leave group, with Farage differentiating between its ‘elite’ and ‘people’ orientated parts. This friction dominated communications between these groups as others did not see the groups in this light and believed that their public split and different approaches

damaged the chances of victory.¹⁵ Talks of a merger were even once in process to avoid this issue, but fell apart due to deep personal divisions and crude insults levied between members of both sides.¹⁶ The Leave.EU campaign's echoing of UKIP was clear from their inception and this in part explains the detachment that Conservative and Labour politicians in Vote Leave sought. Shortly after their foundation they drew together a global team of experts, including successful US campaigner Gerry Gunster and the controversial data firm Cambridge Analytica, and held a public event in which they discussed how they should campaign in the referendum (Leave.EU, 2015). Leave.EU 'ambassador' Richard Tice led the event and immediately begins replicating the same discursive sequences seen in the UKIP discourse.

An opening salvo declares the Remain campaign as sounding like a "disease" consisting of the "Lords of the realm... the usual old political names, the big investment banks, the large corporates", in short, the "same old establishment". Repeatedly Tice makes references to the "political and corporate establishment" bullying and oppressing "the British people" with their negativity and defeatism. This is all before the EU are even mentioned. This antagonised, populist opening gambit slowly moves into EU territory citing their ignorance of "the people's" issues and concerns about border control, sovereignty, law, and cost of membership; repeated, in that order, numerous times throughout the event. This, he emphasises, is what this "truly people's campaign" seeks to contest. Expanding the people's reach, Tice insists on the support Leave.EU has from both the trade unions and the political left as well as citing (unverifiable) membership of over 300,000 supporters as well as over 1000 councillors. Freedom from the "handcuffs" of others, control over the nation's destiny come down to one key strategy – "it is about *the people*". Reaching out beyond the elitist "Westminster village" and engaging with

¹⁵ Indeed, publicly their divisions were compared to the divisions between the 'People's Front' seen in the classic comedy Monty Python's *Life of Brian*.

¹⁶ This included, for example, Vote Leave supporter and UKIP MP Douglas Carswell being described as "borderline autistic" by Leave.EU and UKIP financier Aaron Banks (Hope, 2015).

the people in order to overcome the “political and corporate establishment” who sought only to sow “fear” and “mislead” the people.

Again, however there is a level of recognition that “different messages chime with different people” and whilst this is not elaborated on, seems to suggest an early postulation of the idea that multiple Leave campaigns, as opposed to a single hegemonic grouping such as Remain’s ‘Britain Stronger in Europe, will be vital to winning the debate. This is punctuated further when one attendee asks the panel, and Aaron Banks directly, why Farage, their “most prominent supporter” is simply a spectator at this event and not on the panel itself. “[A]re you ashamed of him?”, it is asked. Banks refuses to respond. Both Gunster and Rice however remark that this campaign belongs to the people and not individuals, such as Farage or Boris Johnson, though they will have their place as different “messengers” in the debates. The attendees seem particularly determined to interrogate the proximity of these significant messengers and their messages in much the same way sought here as another attendee dives straight into the heart of this inquiry. Noting that the ‘People’s Campaign’ has been stated countless times, he asks “when did that phrase, that idea, come about and how was it formed, cemented?”. Banks replies: “I can’t remember where it came from”. But one thing for certain for Banks is that Leave.EU intends to “frame [the debate] as politicians versus the public and I think if we do that we will win”. That the leading donor to UKIP cannot recall where the notion of a people’s campaign came from should require no further inspection considering our preceding analysis. In an implicit rebuttal to his fellow panellists, Banks goes on to express regrets over the existence of multiple campaigns and hopes for some form of unification prior to the Electoral Commissions decision regarding official designation.

Already then at the end of 2015 some distinctive lines in the sand are being drawn across the Leave side of the debate. Vote Leave revolve around ideas of economic investment and opportunity, and of the safety to be found in control. In particular, the direct and simple

connection between the money spent on EU membership and the potential ‘windfall’ for the NHS this could provide was established early on as a clear and powerful way to speak to voters (Kettell & Kerr, 2021). Leave.EU meanwhile openly bared all in terms of strategy by laying out a populist stall that sought form over substance; that, whilst focusing on border control, sovereignty, and cost, is principally about a struggle between the people and the establishment. Control continues its position as the empty signifier that draws these strands together, whilst immigration acts as the nodal point that maintains their connectivity and acts as a weapon by the establishment with which to harm these facets. Whilst Vote Leave sought to play down the issue of immigration, Leave.EU used their funds to pepper the public with immigration statistics – of how total EU immigration over the last 3 years was “greater than the population of Leeds” (Facts, 2016), that “migration poses a threat to low-income workers in our country” and that “migration accounts for 1/3 of the deficit in social housing” (TimeToLeave, 2016). Staffed, funded and fronted by UKIP officials and supporters, this was a clear and natural continuation of the existing discursive structures of UKIP as presented by this research.

The final player in the bid to lead the Leave campaign emerges directly out of the schisms and tensions that divided Vote Leave and Leave.EU. Farage took the lead of a new organisation named ‘Grassroots Out’ or ‘GO’, with Aaron Banks yet again providing funding for the group. Soon they were joined by Labour MP Kate Hoey, Conservative MPs Peter Bone and Tom Pursglove as well as receiving support from another political ‘outsider’ and former MP of the ‘Respect Party’, George Galloway. The group would go on to claim they had over 700,000 registered supporters (Farage, 2016A) and ultimately the support of Leave.EU, who would struggle to gain official recognition by the Electoral Commission and would therefore work alongside GO for the rest of the campaign. Unsurprisingly Farage’s speech at GO’s launch, on the same day that Cameron would return from negotiations in Brussels, is simply a continuation of the speeches he had become so used to giving at UKIP’s conferences. He spoke

clearly and passionately about the need for control of “our seas”, “our borders”, about the dangers of opening up the NHS to “508 million people”, the loss of sovereignty by all nations in the EU and the perils of allowing open-door immigration to a union that is “hell-bent” on including Turkey in its expansion. Yet, in line with UKIP’s discourse, these individual concerns are subsumed under one pivotal moment that is anti-elitist, pro-people and the struggle between these two factions:

[O]ne argument above all that we in this movement must grasp and we must understand that actually what has happened in our country... is that our ruling classes have collectively lost faith in our ability to make our own laws, to control our own borders, to make our own trade deals, to stand on the world stage... they don't think we're good enough, they don't believe in this country, they don't believe in the people of this country, and I do believe in the people of this country... to hand that legacy of freedom, liberty, justice and pride in who we are to our children and grandchildren - this is what we are fighting for. (Farage, 2016A)

The combination of Farage’s charismatic leadership, the funding of donor Banks and the clear (re)laying out of the populist stall indicates that the combined and co-supportive organisations of Leave.EU and GO amounted to little more than a UKIP mouthpiece in referendum form. What we see here is UKIP creating a multi-faceted platform for its discourse to be aired across the nation using political figures, funds, and coverage far beyond the limits and constraints of UKIP as a parliamentary party.

In – Britain Stronger in Europe

On the Remain side there was a greater sense of unity with only one campaign ever considered in the running for official designation. The somewhat underwhelming name ‘Britain Stronger

in Europe' (BSE)¹⁷ was chosen for the cross-party group that would encompass essentially all pro-Remain voices and actors that would take part in the campaign. Whilst a significant number of separate 'pro-remain' groups existed, they chose to act within the boundaries of their specific interest, with groups such as 'Academics for Europe' and 'Scientists for EU' levying campaign materials, particularly through their social media presence, to their target audience. For a general indicative comparison, whilst the total number of significant Leave groups totalled at most 5, the number of Remain organisations listed on Wikipedia totals 40+ groups, separated by industry, region, political allegiance, and feelings toward the EU itself (ranging from pro-EU groups through reformists and hesitant Remainers). Unlike Leave, little evidence of any cross-contamination of personnel, ideas, tensions, or agreements can be said to be found between any of these extra groups with the hegemonic control that BSE took over the campaign.

On the surface this setup already hints at what Laclau would describe as the dominance of the institutional logic, or in other words of the logic of difference. The vast array of 'special interest' groups act to soothe the issues and neutralise the demands of specific voting groups; an approach that in total amounts to treating individuals as belonging to certain identities that can be appealed to separately and directly. For Laclau this approach to politics amounted essentially to a *de-politicisation* of an event, though we could equally argue that they may have acted in this way as to avoid being subsumed under the government driven BSE, allowing them to operate with more freedom and to propose alternative messages.

Yet we do see hints from the core of BSE's campaign strategy, as devised by key strategists Andrew Cooper, Ryan Coetzee and Craig Oliver, of an internal logic of differentiation at work. A strict 'rulebook' that comprised the core strategy of BSE's campaign

¹⁷ BSE incidentally is an acronym in the UK previously associated with Mad Cow Disease – a point that was not missed by commentators and Leavers alike (Crace, 2015; Shipman, 2016: 61).

centred around differentiating the public into 6 “attitudinally similar” groups consisting of a pair of strongly Remain supporters - ‘Ardent Internationalists’ and ‘Comfortable Europhiles’ – a pair of strongly Leave supporters - ‘Strong Sceptics’ and ‘EU Hostiles’ – and finally a pair of ‘middle-ground’ and potentially persuadable voters – the ‘Disengaged Middle’ and ‘Hearts vs. Heads’.¹⁸ Previous field work and focus groups led the BSE strategists to the conclusion that very few people could come up with any positive reasons to stay in or even like the EU. Those that did could safely be expected to vote Remain. Those that were hostile to the EU or were supporters of UKIP could effectively be ruled out of contention. Yet increasingly their research showed there to be a large proportion of people, predicted as roughly a third of voters, that either struggled to engage with politics in general or who agreed with the statement ‘[m]y heart says we should leave the EU, but my head says it’s not a good idea’. Cooper had previously identified the same pattern in his work on the Scottish Independence referendum, where the status quo won 55% to 45% and on which both Cameron and the BSE increasingly sought to base this new campaign in (Shipman, 2016: 59). With this being the case, praising the EU was considered a poor move as it was likely to upset the ‘Hearts vs. Heads’ group. In both the Scottish Independence campaign, and to a large extent in the 2015 General Election campaign used by the Conservatives against Labour’s Ed Miliband, the key to the middle groups was through focusing on the economy, the money in the pockets of those voters and their families, and by playing on their fear of risk, instability, and uncertainty.

Best Laid Plans

This contextualisation grounds the beginning of the Brexit campaign and provides an insight into the various strategic threads that were both available and considered by the major players involved. David Cameron’s return from negotiations with Brussels on the 20th February 2016

¹⁸ See Oliver (2016) or Shipman (2016: 58–65) for further details on the breakdowns of these categories.

acted as the starting pistol for all campaigns to begin making their cases for or against Brexit. The date of the vote was set for the 23rd June, allowing for 4 months of campaigning, though officially the full armoury of electoral tools would not be made available until the 15th April; not that this prevented these heavily funded sides from using their vast networks of supporters to begin their assaults the moment Cameron returned. Cameron and BSE aimed to fight on the same familiar territory as their last two electoral battles, deciding that a tunnel-like focus on jobs, the economy and most crucially ‘risk’ would be enough to win. At this time, Vote Leave took the form of a ‘moderate’ cross-party campaign that sought to pitch the debate at roughly the same level of economic benefits and security, but with the added promise of ‘control’ to counter the specific accusation of risk. Both Leave.EU and GO measured the debate by its form and logic above its content, with both expressing a populist mode of campaigning – explicitly as a strategy in the case of the former, and implicitly in the rhetoric and figure of Farage in the latter. In terms of their contents however, Banks explicitly stated in his diaries that immigration “is the key to this referendum” and that this should form the centrepiece of the Leave campaign over the coming months (Banks, 2016).

With this acting as our grounding, we can now follow these discursive threads as we move through the Brexit campaign, tracing their interactions and evolution towards the final vote in favour of Brexit. We know that Vote Leave would come to dominate proceedings, largely aided by their privileged official position providing greater access to the public, so monitoring the ebbs and flows of their discourse via its two key leaders in Boris Johnson and Michael Gove is crucial in uncovering the nodal points and guiding logics that together represent the Leave discourse. Alongside these readings, we continue to look to the populist UKIP discourse, via Farage in order to evaluate how it shaped the discourse of Vote Leave and in turn the extent to which UKIP developed the very discursive patterns and machinations that dominated the Brexit debates, and which linger with us still.

Eleven texts are analysed, made up of statements and speeches from these three titanic figures of the Leave campaign. These texts were chosen after a period of immersion in the online archive provided by Vote Leave in which is kept a record of all the key speeches, interviews, and op-eds of the pivotal figures of the campaign. Using Vote Leave's archive of 52 interviews, op-eds, and speeches, we singled out Johnson and Gove as the two most prominent speakers and are also the most oft-cited 'leaders' and influencers of the Vote Leave campaign besides Dominic Cummings (Oliver, 2018: 66-68; Shipman, 2016: 178-180). Of their interventions, we chose eight texts that signified either prominent moments in the campaign or were archetypal of the type of statement produced at that time by these figures. To this extent, four of the texts were chosen as they constitute an initial declaration to join Vote Leave, followed shortly after by an opening statement from each as official campaigning began that outlined their key motivations and arguments for their side. The other four texts marked events of significance during the campaign. The first of these is Johnson's first major speech to take place after PM David Cameron's attempt to renegotiate the terms of the UK's membership of the EU. The second is a piece written by Johnson for *The Telegraph* coinciding with the launch of perhaps the most memorable symbol of the Vote Leave campaign – the much-maligned 'battle-bus' that was adorned with the misleading claim that the UK 'sent' the EU £350 million every week and that this could be used to fund the NHS instead. Third is a statement by Johnson commenting on the release of official immigration figures that quickly became the focal point of both sides of the campaign and the Leave supporting media (Travis, 2016; Worstall, 2016). Finally, we include an interview from Gove on Sky News in which he uttered the now renowned claim that "people have had enough of experts" – a phrase that not only came to define narratives about Brexit (Calhoun, 2017: 68; Oliver, 2018: 69; Zappavigna, 2019), but also marked by some as damning evidence of a move towards a 'post-truth' period (Speed & Mannion, 2017). The three Farage statements that accompany these eight by Johnson

and Gove were also chosen for their significance. The first of these was a very public condemnation of Vote Leave that drew a great deal of media attention and Remain derision for being indicative of a ‘split’ and ‘chaos’ in the Leave campaign (Aitkenhead, 2016). The other 2 texts come in the final days of the campaign, representing the last written and spoken contributions he made that summarised his self-interpretation of the months, even years, of campaigning that led to the day of the referendum. Together, and following an extended immersive reading of the texts that marked this period, these eleven texts together create a rounded and representative picture of the Leave campaigns.

Our findings show two distinctive periods roughly split between February through April and May through June. The texts of this first period reflect the overall campaign strategies as previously laid out. Vote Leave would follow Cummings strategy of focusing on newfound economic prosperity and an articulation of control as tool through which ‘risk’ could be cancelled out as an effective counter. Many of these arguments are framed with a nationalist logic that opposed the UK with the EU, with the latter being seen as infringing on the laws and sovereignty of the nation. The orbiting Leave.EU and GO campaigns we find to initially carry the UKIP logics to a wider national audience, beyond the standard electorate and party allegiances, yet a shift from a populist-aligned discourse back to one dominated by a nationalistic logic becomes apparent. However, a more seismic shift in the discourse of the Vote Leave campaign occurs as we move into the final two months of the campaigning in which a newfound focus on immigration is used to supplement control as an affective empty signifier. This integration of immigration into the discourse is made according to a populist logic that stresses the centrality of immigration as a battleground that splits the elite from the people. The overall effect on the dynamic of the campaign is that as the UKIP backed organisations moved to more nationalistic territory, Vote Leave repositioned themselves as *the* populist force.

5.2 Opening Gambits

The first set of 5 texts that shall be examined together comprise of Gove and Johnson's initial statements that declare their siding with Leave in the upcoming campaign, followed by the initial two statements released once the official campaigning commenced on the 15th April. We shall also look at a speech by Farage that received a great deal of attention in the media due to his critical stance on Vote Leave's position and strategy during the first two weeks of campaigning and in which he calls upon them to reorientate the campaign around immigration. For ease of reading, all citations of texts by these figures during this chapter shall be referred to by the initials of the author and a letter to denote the order in which they fall chronologically.¹⁹

Vote Leave launched their first major media event on Cameron's return from Brussels on the 20th February 2016. Their main attraction comprised of no less than 6 cabinet ministers who had all declared their support for Vote Leave, together holding aloft a banner declaring "Let's take back control" (Watt, 2016). Significantly, a close ally of David Cameron and Secretary of State for Justice, MP Michael Gove, was amongst their number. The decision to join Vote Leave by the high-ranking, senior government minister confirmed that the Conservative party were indeed to be split during the referendum debate, whilst also acting as both a catalyst and comforter to other Conservative rebels.

This firing of the starting gun was accompanied by a statement by Gove that both explained his decision to join Vote Leave and acted as an appeal to others to join his cause. The following day Johnson followed suit. These statements follow Cummings' strategic choices to the letter, opting to focus entirely on notions of control and the risks of remaining in

¹⁹ This section shall use texts: BJ.A (21/02/2016), BJ.B (15/04/2016), MG.A (20/02/2016), MG.B (19/04/2016) and NF.A (29/04/2016).

the EU. This opening salvo, this banner with which to entice fellow Conservative MPs, sets out the Vote Leave campaign via an attempted rhetorical re-description of the underlying terms of the debate. Knowing full well that this would be a duel between economy and security, from both sides of the debate, Gove's statement begins by chaining notions of security with democracy, sovereignty, and control and to then proffer this chain as the protection the nation requires against the risk of staying in the EU. The EU prevents "us being able to choose who makes critical decisions", a historic British tradition that "radicals" created in order to take "power from unaccountable elites" and to then place it "in the hands of the people" (MG.A). Being unable to do this leaves the EU to make decisions and create policy that "have become a source of instability and insecurity". Obscene gesturing towards the two World Wars is also made, offering a horrific fantasy of the risk that the EU creates: "Razor wire once more criss-crosses the continent, historic tensions... have resurfaced in ugly ways and the EU is proving incapable of dealing with the current crises in Libya and Syria". The current hegemonic symbol of fear and insecurity - terrorism - is also placed at the feet of the EU's border policies that hang "a sign, welcoming terrorists to Europe" and in turn have "encouraged extremism, to the extent that far-right parties are stronger across the continent than at any time since the 1930s".

Much in the same way that Gove's statement is replete with references to World Wars and invasion imagery, Johnson presents the EU as a monolithic empire seeking similar levels of conquest. Britain, it is claimed, is witnessing "a slow and invisible process of legal colonisation, as the EU infiltrates just about every area of public policy" (BJ.A). Britain is being slowly engulfed as the EU takes power from its captured nations, "hauling more and more towards the centre". The question is posed, why is it that "we fought in two world wars?" (BJ.B). The answer, apparently, is so that the "laws of our countries should be made by people we elect". Law-making and democratic sovereignty are central themes here, particular in reference to the sovereignty of Parliament (as opposed to the people), but "it cannot stop the

machine” as Britain “can be overruled more and more often” as the EU grows larger and stronger (B.J.A). The Leave campaign is a “campaign for freedom”, a chance to “believe in ourselves again” (B.J.B).

Such abstractions are brought down to a more relatable level through more fantasmatic appeals to “ludicrous” EU rules: “the rule that you can’t recycle a teabag”, that “children under eight cannot blow up balloons”, “limits on the power of vacuum cleaners” (B.J.A), “can’t sell olive oil in carton cans in five litres”, “bananas with abnormal curvature of the fingers must be banned”, “tell us what sort of trains to run” and so on (B.J.B). Yet it is made clear that this obsessive level of “mindless interference” should not be taken lightly as this is but a step in the road towards more nefarious measures beginning with being unable to “cut VAT on tampons” through to “preventing us from deporting murderers”. This ludicrously rapid escalation indicates a desire to build equivalences through the affective salience of the everyday (such as the threat to the British cup of tea) through to the threat to our security that this foreign force represents. Even at this level of everyday affect military language is poignant, as “the people of this country have no idea how far the EU now *invades* every area of our lives”. In sum, the “more the EU does, the less room there is for national decision-making”.

This lack of control and the risks it carries is most vividly deployed through the equation of the nation with a ‘hostage’. This appears in several forms where “if we vote to stay, we are hostages to their agenda” (M.G.B) or more imaginatively where the nation is akin to a passenger “locked in the back of a minicab with a wonky satnav, driven by a driver who doesn’t have perfect command of English and going in a direction we frankly don’t want to go” (B.J.B). This particular analogy occurs on various occasions and each time tries to create a profound anxiety in voting to remain through the uncertainty and lack of control it presents. In this scenario, remaining is not the default position, nor the onus on the Leave camp to present their case. This is inverted as if “we vote to stay we are not settling for the status quo - we are voting to be a

hostage, locked in the boot of a car driven by others to a place and at a pace that we have no control over” (MG.B). This inversion is reflected in other areas where leaving, far from being some singular risk-laden event, is instead likened to a steady, gradual process. But in the same sense, “staying in the EU means accepting a process, not settling for a resting a place”. The question then is which process is preferred, the one overseen by the foreigner or the nation’s representatives.

Of course, “by leaving the EU we can take control” which in turn mitigates these risks and as a side-effect “we can take back the billions [of pounds] we give to the EU” and engage in global trade (MG.A). The economic argument remains detached from the idea of control, but clearly a rhetorical re-description occurs at the level of risk-security. Going beyond simply contradicting the Remain claim that leaving the EU is a “leap in the dark” and presenting remaining in the EU as the real ‘risky’ option, we see the signifier of ‘control’ used as the antithesis of risk itself. The presentation of the Vote Leave strategy here is that to take control *is* to have security, and thus all calls to take control act as a necessary negation of the risk claims of BSE. As we shall see, this begins the use of the most effective discursive technique used in this campaign, as the tying of risk to control causes every signalling of risk by the Remain camp to feed directly into a desire for control, counter-intuitively negating this risk and instead opens up the accusation of exaggerating dangers and engaging in hyperbole – or what Vote Leave and their supporters would come to name ‘Project Fear’. Clearly then the struggle over ‘risk’ as a nodal point will be crucial to the deployment of orbital signifiers by both campaigns.

Johnson tackles this issue of risk with a much more complex appeal which combines a surprisingly complimentary attitude towards elites, both in the UK and EU, with a nationalistic-beatific logic of Britain’s future independence. For Johnson, the EU was at one point manned by “well-meaning officials (many of them British) trying to break down barriers to trade”

(B.J.A). Whilst this was a worthy cause, Johnson's principal target is the supposed evolution of this aim into one of integration. At its core, Johnson's issue then is not focused on the democratic governance by various peoples, but on national legislatures and governments to assert their independent sovereignty. Yet even the "federalist vision is not an ignoble idea" particularly as it was "born of the highest motives – to keep peace in Europe". Again, this non-antagonistic laying out of an 'ideals versus practice' style argument is layered with praise for those that work for the EU, the "people who run the various EU institutions – whom we like to ply with crass abuse – are, in my experience, principled and thoughtful officials". They have "done some very good things" and should not be the target for mockery but require a "challenge" to help them "recover some of the competitiveness that the continent has lost in the last decade". National elites are also spared, with a great deal of praise going from Johnson to the Prime Minister David Cameron in particular who he hopes will continue to unite and lead Britain outside of the EU.

This slow decline of the EU, not through the fault of elites and individuals in the EU, can be located in the centralisation of power in Brussels, "hauling more and more towards the centre, and there is no way that Britain can be unaffected". In this set of argument there is no speak of individuals and agency is very much assigned to spatialised entities – Brussels, the EU, and the UK – where the gradual subsumption of the latter under the former is ongoing. Attempts to negotiate "cannot stop the machine" and only withdrawal from the EU can not only save the UK but provide the impetus for EU officials to fix this machine. This "under-appreciated benefit... would lead to the reform of the European Union" and will show that a "different Europe is possible", one in which it is possible to "regain democratic control of your own country... without surrendering fundamental sovereignty" (M.G.B). Arguments that try to rebuff these notions by trying to focus purely on the economic dimension, as Remain did with some initial success, are dishonest, particularly in reference to the EU as a free trade

organisation as “[n]o other free trade grouping is trying to turn themselves into a single country” (BJ.B).

National Democracy

Clearly then, the fixation here is on nationhood and with this comes nationalistic logics that reverberate antiquated notions of empire and colonisation. On the one hand empire is spoken of fondly, as “[w]e used to run the biggest empire the world has ever seen and with a much smaller domestic population and a relatively tiny Civil Service”. In comparison this new emergent ‘empire’ is engaged in an “invisible process of legal colonisation, as the EU infiltrates just about every area of public policy” and where with every passing day “acquires supremacy in any field that it touches”. Juxtaposed here then is the nostalgia for an empire lost, against becoming a victim, a colony, of a new insidious empire. This meeting of old and new empire reveals an almost envious fantasmatic contradiction where the EU simultaneously has democracy internally. They, for example, hold votes on new laws, but Britain is said to be repeatedly outvoted “as they have done on 80% of the cases in which the UK has been involved” (BJ.B) or how the supposedly ‘colonised’ nations such as Germany and France use the EU to work together to undermine British manufacturing and finance to gain a competitive advantage (MG.C). Yet simultaneously, this new empire has a “mock parliament”, one with “no popular mandate for action”, a twisted impersonation of the great nations that preceded it. “Democratic self-government, the form of Government we in Britain actually invented” should be regained by all nations of Europe who follow the UK’s lead. Both Johnson and Gove acknowledge the concerns of the EU, and Remainers, who worry that a domino effect could damage all of Europe and further promote insular nationalism. Their retort is telling: “yes there will be ‘contagion’ if Britain leaves the EU. But what will be catching is democracy” (MG.B).

This tension between nation and democracy, of speaking to both old and new empires, highlights the difficulties suffered in this discourse that tries to arrange democratic elements by the logic of the nation. The memory of horrific European conflict, the notion of the ‘kidnapped nation’ and a new European colonialism are appropriated to show the risks to the UK. But they similarly rely on a beatific appeal to those same European conflicts (in the name of democracy), the sovereignty of the nation (at the head of the Commonwealth), nostalgic for a time of greater British influence and control that appears to not be confined to our shores, stretching across the borders and remaking (or ‘saving’) the continent - in Britain’s eye.

What is also striking at this time is not just the presence of these tensions, but the lack of appeals to particular elements now connotative with Brexit. Perhaps in an effort to avoid bringing too much jingoism to the discourse, as per Cummings’ intent to instead focus on ‘neutralising the fear’ of leaving, immigration takes somewhat of a peripheral role at this time. This is not to say that it does not feature, but is included almost as one banal example, among many, of the boons of Brexit. Particularly glaring is the lack of emotional investment by these key figures on the subject. Gove simply states in his ‘Facts of Life’ statement that “[w]e could also benefit economically from of immigration” (MG.C). Further details are logistical, speaking to how migration policy could be altered to develop “humane” systems which are in the nation’s “long term economic interests”. Johnson similarly utilised immigration in an off-handed fashion in his first speech announcing his intentions to campaign for Vote Leave, but this is used to call attention to other issues: “Sometimes the public can see all too plainly the impotence of their own elected politicians – as with immigration. That enrages them; not so much the numbers as the lack of control” (BJ.A). He then moves on to focus on this question of elected officials and immigration does not reappear in the speech at all.

Immigration represented a difficult puzzle for Vote Leave strategists. On the one hand, they believed that the EU and immigration were so equated that they need not focus on

immigration. They could also rely on other organisations to fulfil this role anyway as Farage, UKIP, Leave.EU and GO would indeed do throughout the campaign. However, this represents a problem if we reflect on the way UKIP had constructed their Brexit discourse until present. Like the initial Vote Leave campaign, they focused on the risks of staying in the EU, risks that were largely associated to a lack of democratic participation, sovereignty, and economic self-determination. Together the empty signifier of control chained these larger abstract concepts with more localised elements such as welfare, the NHS, lack of housing, the plight of the fisheries and so on, both to extend the reach of control as an amalgamation of all of the people's ills, but to increase its affective reach. However, by far and away the most salient of these moments was immigration. Not only was this a (large) link in the equivalential chain, but it also doubled up as a form of relation between, for example, democracy ('our leaders oppose popular opinion in not preventing greater immigration') and the NHS ('immigrants are a burden to these services'). This broad function of immigration, not simply as an *issue* to be debated but as a constituent mechanism in the efficacy of 'control' as an empty signifier, is what appears to be missed by the Vote Leave strategists.

Internal Tensions

This dual problem of immigration and discursive strategy form the two broad themes of Farage's most high-profile speech in this period. With his customary appeal to analogies befitting to 'the people', Farage lambasts the Vote Leave campaign who have "spent the last fortnight defending its own goal, doing their best to stop the other side putting the ball into the net... not being as assertive as they should be" (NF.A). Instead, what is required is to "get into the other half of the pitch... attacking the enemy's goal and where the enemy are at their absolute weakest is on this whole question of open-door migration". This is what has had the greatest effect on the "lives of ordinary Britons", but it is also where the Vote Leave campaign

do not have “the credible voices to make those arguments”; it being largely staffed by high-profile Conservative MPs and ex-cabinet ministers.

The remainder of the speech is an intense concentration of years of discourse-building into one public address. Where Vote Leave struggle to connect the EU to immigration in a way simply assumed by Cummings as ‘spontaneous’, Farage holds aloft his passport for all to see and states “what are the first two words on it? European Union”. This one symbol is proof that “there is nothing we can do to stop unlimited numbers of people” from “enjoying the same rights and privileges” as the people. This amounts to nothing less than a “total loss of control”. This basic ‘fact’ is something that “the Westminster set still haven’t really clocked” yet – a provocation that not only speaks to the Remain camp, but to Vote Leave also. This opens the door to a focused attack on the “privileged and wealthy” elites and “big business” who think immigration “is terrific” because of the cheap workforce it provides them, but which impacts “ordinary decent people” in a way that the elite cannot comprehend due to their fundamental and seemingly irresolvable distance and difference to the people.

Every channel of attack is exploited to aid this argument that equates the elite with immigrants and control. Ecologically, immigration requires building houses on the “green belt that many of us love so much”. Educationally, we now must find “200,000 primary school places” to cope with the “explosion” in birth rates from newly arrived immigrants. In healthcare, the NHS is under threat from “health tourism”; in terms of salaries for “ordinary working people” wages and living standards have “declined 10% since 2008”; in terms of crime, “41% of registered crime in London is now committed by foreign nationals”; in terms of security a large number of terrorist “jihadis” can enter the nation unless we can control our own borders. Finally are the “serious social implications” such as claims of the ill-treatment of women by “young males from countries and cultures where women are at best second-class citizens” and where liberal traditions are absent. Yet through all the bluster and accusation,

ultimately the question is one of planning and control. Farage's question here is "how can you plan forwards for public service provision when you have open-door immigration and you've no idea... how many people will actually be living in the country. You can't".

'Control' can be an enormously expansive and affectively charged signifier, as we saw in the UKIP discourse, but this comes precisely from its lack of substantive content. For UKIP this gap, between empty concept that stands in for the chain on equivalential demands and those individual elements of the chain, can be effectively and affectively filled through the support of orbiting nodal points. In one fell swoop, Farage not only provides the consistent thread that is lacking from the Vote Leave discourse through immigration but shows how it can be wielded to touch as many aspects of voters lives as possible whilst still pinning the 'cause' of these issues to the question of control; those that have it, and those who do not. The populist logic enables and completes this problematic by providing a target who has control and a people who are taking back control, whilst simplifying the political landscape from a plethora of complex issues into two options on a ballot paper. Farage perhaps surmises this best:

We have to, in this campaign, make people understand that EU membership and uncontrolled immigration are synonymous with each other. We have to make people understand that what this referendum is about is taking back control of our lives, our laws, and our borders. (NF.A)

The overall landscape here presents two contrasting pictures. On the one hand we see a continuation of the UKIP discourse along the same trajectory. What is more is that initial signs of a weakening of their populist stance, through the welcoming invitation of parts of the elite to join their cause, have been put to rest by a doubling down on their antagonistic relationship with the elite, regardless of whether they fall on the Leave side of the campaign or not. Vote

Leave also made good on their strategy to attempt a rearticulation of Remain with risk and Leave with control. However, the relationship of control to the overall discourse varies greatly with the way the same signifier was used by UKIP prior to the campaign. Whilst for UKIP control named the consolidated antagonistic frontier between people and elite, the thing that gave these blocs their very definition, this picture is much less clear for Vote Leave. The frontier here is between different sovereign bodies or perhaps better read as between nation and supra-national; though even here the 'supra-national' is often described as a ploy to create a powerful continental nation or empire.

Distinguishing the political logics that inform the two discourses reveals two key factors. First, that whilst many of the same features and issues penetrate both discourses, namely ideas of sovereignty, democracy, and security, these are organised by nationalistic logic in the one discourse and populist logic in the other. In other words, for Vote Leave these issues are tied to the status of the independent nation and are threatened by a foreign nation, for Farage these issues are fundamentally corrupted and stolen by the elites and belong to the people. Secondly, these differing arrangements has an effect on the fantasmatic logics apparent in the competing discourses as the former speaks more to militaristic and imperialistic symbolism, whilst the latter continues the affective drive of UKIP that proposed a moment of liberation. This second fantasy provides a greater sense of a direct seizing of control, whilst it is less clear in the former what the function of control is. One may ask, for example, if control is nation-bound then why is the democratically elected leader of the UK and most of parliament on the side of Remain? If the EU is a 'good ideal' how has it become an 'evil empire'? Who is to blame if not the elites and officials of both the British government and those working for the EU? Antagonism, whilst present, fails to identify a tangible target here.

5.3 Discursive Repositioning

Moving into the final 2 months of the campaign we begin to see some dramatic shifts in the focus of the campaign.²⁰ The consensus on this shift from both observers and from inside the campaigning is that, just as Farage suggested, Vote Leave realised that it could not win the debate without shifting attention onto the affectively salient topic of immigration. Equally, whilst the attempt to satisfy questions of risk were reversed against the Remain campaign by reframing staying in the EU as the risky option was achieving traction, strategists in the Leave camp could see that they were losing the economic arguments. However, the way in which this shift was achieved and is manifest in the discourse has not received the same level of interrogation. As the present analysis shows, this change is facilitated by a shifting in the underlying political logic of Vote Leave from a predominantly nationalist hue to a populist one. In tandem, UKIP, Leave.EU and Grassroots Out move in the opposite direction, becoming almost exclusively focused on questions of British identity, values, and the national interest.

The first indication of the evolution of the political logic of the discourse into a populist one is a reorientation of the binary of Britain versus the EU to one of the people versus the elite. This is best encapsulated by a segment of an interview with Michael Gove in June in which the interviewer asks why people should trust Gove's arguments concerning the economy, sovereignty, and security when so few organisations support or can even validate his claims. His response is telling:

I'm not asking the public to trust me, I'm asking the public to trust themselves. I'm asking the public to take back control of our destiny from those organisations which are distant, unaccountable, elitist and don't have our interest at heart. (MG.C)

²⁰ This section shall use texts: B.J.C (09/05/2016), B.J.D (15/05/2016), B.J.E (26/05/2016), M.G.C (03/06/2016), N.F.B (20/06/2016) and N.F.C (22/06/2016).

Pressed on how a Conservative cabinet minister could utilise the term ‘elitist’ here to describe the EU, Gove adds: “absolutely... the people backing the remain campaign are people who’ve done very well thank you out of the European Union”. Here then not only the EU is an elitist, unaccountable organisation, but those in favour of the EU are part of that same elite. This is in direct contradistinction to “[t]he people who are arguing that we should get out [who] are concerned to ensure that the working people of this country at last get a fair deal”. Johnson’s statements during this period reinforce this notion that it is up to vote leave to free the people from the interests of the elites, whether at home or abroad, insisting that “[w]e have got to stop trying to kid the British people” and convince the public that it “is we who are speaking up for the people” (BJ.C). The difficulty of course for this claim to represent the interests of the people is the considerable weight of evidence and expert testimony to the contrary. Acutely aware of this issue, Gove makes perhaps the most memorable claim of the Brexit campaign and perhaps the most cited phrase after ‘take back control’: “I think the people of this country have had enough of experts” (MG.C).

The value of this phrase can be seen in the immediate response of the interviewer to Gove’s exclamation. Upon criticising this sentiment and insisting upon the usefulness of professional opinion and analysis, the interviewer becomes part of those very experts and as such is the enemy of the people. As Gove states, to insist upon such notions whilst dismissing Gove’s concerns is paramount to “dismissing the concerns of working people. You are on the side of the elites, I am on the side of the people”. Even to question the powerful and wealthy leaders of the Leave movement is to locate oneself as the elite. Comparing this evidence-deficient stance to blind faith, Gove calmly retorts that he has “faith in the British people to make the right decision”.

The Rousseauian-esque claim that is used throughout the campaign relies on this notion that as the people are a democratic entity, then the claims of the elite are an irrelevance in the

faith of the authority and decision-making ability of the people as demos. For Johnson it is a necessary truth that the decision the people make is the correct decision. By extension then, the people's membership to the EU represents a "fundamental democratic problem", an "erosion of democracy" and it is this central feature of the EU that "brings me to this fight" (BJ.C). The "anti-democratic absurdities of the EU" are responsible for the "steady attrition of the rights of the people to decide their priorities, and to remove, at elections, those who take the decisions". Again, this places proponents of EU membership as being in some way fundamentally anti-democratic, and since democracy is the object of the people those 'Remainers' must be part of the elite.

At this point one may only perceive mild differences between the articulation of the people here, in relation to their democratic element, and that in the previous period wherein the nation is the faucet of democratic integrity, perhaps with the shift from nation to people here being only a minor shift in rhetorical appeal. However, this change from nation to people is accompanied by a significantly magnified focus on the elite. This assault on the elite takes 2 primary forms. First, the EU itself is accused of being a project, however 'noble' in ideals, that is controlled and directed by elites. Secondly, and overwhelmingly, the elite are spoken of in more general terms as a consortium of business leaders, bureaucrats, and politicians who, whilst not part of the EU, are the greatest beneficiaries of the actions and influence of the EU.

The story that both Gove and Johnson express about the EU began, as we saw, as one in which EU officials, who were both reasonable and intelligent attempted to achieve noble goals for the continent utilising supranational mechanisms. Gove and Johnson's relation to these figures was agonistic at best, but moreover their focus was very much on the EU itself as a system that had begun to run out of control. The EU was spoken of as semi-autonomous, a machine that acted on its own accord and to which the 'solution' was spoken of in similar metaphorical terms – that it required a reboot and that the prospect of losing one of its members

may provoke such a reset. In this period however, this narrative collapses under a new focus on the “European elites” who “are doing exactly the wrong thing” at the helm of the EU machine (BJ.C). They mistakenly chase an “ever-denser federal system of government... at a pace that far exceeds the emotional and psychological readiness of the peoples of Europe”. Instead of “devolving power, they are centralising” and it is clear why such moves are being made at an uncompromising and accelerating rate.

Johnson is particularly explicit on this “insidious reason”. “[T]he whole EU system of regulation is so remote and opaque that they are able to use it to their advantage, to maintain their oligarchic position and, by keeping out competition, to push their pay packets even higher” (BJ.D). The ominous ‘they’ that is used in the discourse at this time is vague and seems to refer to those working for the EU itself, the wealthy, and the majority of those in the Remain camp who are “only too happy to parade through Downing Street and declare their undying devotion to the EU”. The machinery of the EU that seems to have only a self-sustaining logic is now apparently a system designed such that the “super-rich are able to use it to their advantage, to maintain their oligarchic position”. The people, not simply of the UK but across all of Europe, are paying such that rich elites and EU officials, who are often one and the same person, such that, for example “it can be spent on Jean-Claude Juncker’s expense account and his private jet rather than being spent on our NHS and our priorities” (MG.C).

Much focus is given here to inequality, to the huge disparity of wealth and status between the people and the elite. Nationalist, right-wing appeals to the opposition between nations is largely replaced with progressive, left-wing appeals to the exploitation of workers by their bosses and their companies. Johnson laments on how the salary of “top executives” were around 25 times that of the average employee in 1980, that by 2015 this became around 130 times. “This multiple appears to be taking off, at an extraordinary, inexplicable and frankly nostril-wrinkling rate” and now in 2016 “cue a fusillade of champagne corks – the fat cats have

broken through the magic 150 barrier” (BJ.D). A mammoth “growth in corporate inequality” has followed from years of the elites having an “intensely relaxed attitude to getting filthy rich”.²¹ This gain in wealth is directly juxtaposed with the people as these elites are flying in private jets and building subterranean swimming pools, while many of their employees cannot afford to buy any kind of home at all”.

This split between the workers and the managerial class is given a criminal edge to further weaken the notion of the EU representing security and stability as the far from people “part of a free trade zone”, the EU instead represents “a big business cartel” (NF.C). In effect, “through the European Commission” large corporate bodies are able to “write the rules for their own businesses” and which are backed and defended by “an entire political and bureaucratic class”. Those on the side of Remain are not simply ignorant to this behaviour, but actively work to defend the “vested interests” of the establishment. This is spatialised in the image of London as being the home to financial and bureaucratic power. In a speech given by Johnson on the 9th of May or ‘Europe day’ in celebration of the Schuman declaration the founding of the EU, he specifically points out that if “you walk around London today, you will notice that the 12-star flag of the EU is flying all over the place... [i]t is the birthday of the founder of this project, and the elites have decreed that it should be properly marked” (BJ.C). This encouragement to celebrate an elitist holiday is welcomed by “our City fat cats” who “love the EU – it’s why they earn so much” (BJ.D). Curiously the focus on London in particular as a seat of financial and political power would seem to undermine the argument that both wealth and power has been lost to the continent via the EU. Yet this is countered with attacks on the banking sector in particular who not only are “contributing millions to the Remain campaign because they do very nicely thank you out of the EU”, but directly “spend millions lobbying the EU to rig the

²¹ This specific phrase is intended to parody the previous Labour government’s statements on meritocracy in the UK, where the former Business secretary Peter Mandelson had stated that his party was “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich, as long as they pay their taxes”.

market in their favour” (MG.C). As Gove states, whilst Remain concern themselves with economic arguments that, for example, place London’s financial district under threat if the nation left the EU, he instead is “not interested in defending the position of those who already have money, power and privilege”. The EU is “rigged in favour of the rich and stacked against the poor” and as such the risks to the rich are not only null, but precisely a boon in leaving.

What this move indicates should not then be considered a contradiction so much as a replacement of an in-out distinction between what is being ‘left’ should Brexit occur, but as a vote to ‘exit’ a particular state of affairs manifest in the inequity between the people and the elite whether this be at home or abroad. This becomes more and more acute as the use of the notions of the “unelected” and “unaccountable” replace the EU as those to which we “cede control of our economy, our trade and our money” and from whom “we should take back control” (MG.C). The unelected and unaccountable are slowly emptied of content from their position as adjectives to describe the EU in particular and become opened up to describe the rich and powerful wherever they are, allowing the target of attack to be shifted from the EU itself to the Remain camp in order to discredit their position. Much like how the Remain camps authority on statistics, economics and policy is undermined precisely insofar as these emerge from ‘experts’ (as opposed to the everyday experiences of the people themselves), those same economic predictions of continued prosperity in the EU are undermined precisely in their links to the idea of wealth and thus the elite. The people have not felt the economic security that has apparently been afforded by EU membership, so the promise of its continuation amounts to little more than the continuation of the well-being of the elite. Here the fantasmatic urge to ‘take back’ from those that are better off is manifest in Gove’s response to a question about the possibility of people losing their jobs if the UK leaves the EU. Gove concurs – “73 members of the European Parliament will be losing their job”. This represents a form of revenge against

the elite and which the people can directly participate in through their participation and most importantly their vote in the referendum.

The utilisation of wealth and status as a manner in which to define the elite is a useful mechanism with which to draw an antagonistic line between ‘them’ and the people. Yet to truly elevate this dichotomy with affective salience would require what Farage demanded, and Dominic Cummings had previously conceded, to be brought to centre stage in the referendum duel. Immigration began as a difficult subject to broach, particularly for the many political figures that wished to campaign for Leave but without risking their political careers and ambitions to a topic bound up with nationalistic and racist associations. UKIP had somewhat successfully begun making this a more palatable topic through their populist framing of immigration as being a threat to popular sovereignty and a quintessential example of the elite intervening in the lives of the people. Nonetheless, the initial aversion to immigration changed dramatically during May of 2016, just as Remain appeared to be pulling away significantly in the polls. This integration of immigration into the existing discourse built on the ‘risk’ of staying in the EU and on ‘taking back control’ of British democracy would have to be conducted in such a way as to minimise its nationalistic flavour. Fortunately, UKIP had already provided a roadmap on which this could be built and improved.

As the portrayal of a people oppressed by the wealthy elite was being vividly painted by Vote Leave, the campaign had to pin down, in simple terms, how it is the EU benefits these elites in a way more affectively appealing than in reference to legal and bureaucratic abstractions. Johnson confronts this question directly:

So, what is it these fat casts like about the EU?... They like uncontrolled immigration, because it helps to keep wages down at the bottom... and therefore to ensure that there is even more dosh for those at the top... And as denizens of Learjets [private aircraft]

and executive lounges, they are not usually exposed to some of the pressures of large-scale immigration, such as in A&E, or schools, or housing. (BJ.D)

The correlation here is direct and damning. The elite are able to maintain their position as the elite because of their ability to command immigration, via the machinery of the EU. “They”, again the ambiguous subject, are getting “richer and richer – by mainlining immigrant labour for their firms and manipulating EU regulation that only the big players can understand” (BJ.D). The people however, “those at the bottom” instead see a “fall in their wages” as a result of this nefarious activity. This utilisation and deployment of immigrants by the elite is described at times as a careful plot, but equally manifests itself as chaotic – as a “system” that has “spun out of control” such that “[w]e cannot control the numbers” (BJ.E). This telling juxtaposition is indicative of the correlations being devised between the people with control, and the elite with risk, chaos, and instability. The elites’ control over immigration does not represent *real* control as it is not in the hands of the people. When the elites have control, this means chaos for the people, just as their appeal to the security and certitude of EU membership speaks only to their own security and extravagant lifestyles and as such stands in direct opposition in an almost zero-sum fashion to the security and wellbeing of the people. As long as the EU can guarantee a “steady supply” of immigrant labour “*they* don’t have to worry quite so much about the skills or aspirations or self-confidence of young people growing up in this country” (BJ.D). ‘They’ are the real felons behind the angst and self-doubt of the people and even the usual scapegoat of society’s ills – the immigrants – are simply a tool utilised by the elite to maintain their supremacy.

This is not to say that the impact of immigrants directly escapes mention. Significance is placed on the sheer volume of migrants, usually in reference to various British cities; “we add a population the size of Newcastle every year” (BJ.C), “1.25 million people have been added to the population... bigger than the city of Birmingham” (BJ.E), “we are adding a

population the size of Oxford to the UK every year” (BJ.E). This brings with it all the “extra and unfunded pressures that puts on the NHS and other public services” and other common points of struggle that have been elaborated on here through UKIP, such as their lack of “job offers” and “qualifications” to decrease their ‘value’ to society (BJ.C). However, the negative focus on the impact of immigration pales in comparison to the real target of animosity which is the “power to control the numbers”. Johnson, whose arguments were initially focused on the sovereignty of Britain and its economy becomes wholly consumed by the “democratic legitimacy” of immigration policy if left in the hands of the elite. He believes that “it bewilders people to be told that this most basic power of a state – to decide who has the right to live and work in your country” is an aspect that is not decided by the democratic mandate of the people. Again and again, Johnson emphasises that he is “pro-immigration” (BJ.E), “in favour of immigration” (BJ.C) but first and foremost he is “in favour of control”, “above all I’m pro controlled immigration” (BJ.E). Whilst elites of all kinds want unlimited immigration to help suppress the people, leaving the EU acts as the first step as “the simply reality [is] that inside the EU we cannot control immigration - it is literally impossible”. Focusing on the future of the EU, Johnson wants to take this argument one step further claiming (erroneously) that future EU plans include taking “control of immigration and asylum forever” and that voting to Remain is “kissing goodbye permanently to control immigration”. This future threat is cemented by continual references to the ever-accelerating expansion of the EU to include nations such as Turkey²² extending visa-free travel to the border of though not including, Syria and Iraq, in a move he describes as “mad”. Though by his own words he says that free travel and EU expansion does not actually include these nations, their function here is to act as

²² Johnson takes great pains to reassure his audiences that he is the “proud descendant of immigrants” and proud of his “Turkish ancestry and my Turkish family” (BJ.E).

symbols of chaos and war, juxtaposed to the EU's expansion and lust for more power and dominance.

Fantasy

By redescribing the EU as a tool used in the interests of the machinations of a powerful, transnational elite opened up new avenues for fantasmatic modes of engagement which were less available when the EU was portrayed as a semi-autonomous leviathan. By instilling a form of agency to the functioning of the EU, a new story can be constructed in which the EU itself has fallen victim to the elite as they have seized control of its directive. Whereas the Remain campaign focuses on the EU through a purely economic calculation, Leave reject this narrow focus as “to keep insisting that the EU is about economics is like saying the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate” (BJ.C). This comparison highlights not only the capture of the organisation by an insidious group, but pointedly dismisses the notion that the EU can be reduced to economic arguments, therefore providing room for discussions of much more emotive themes – grounds on which the Remain campaign were found immensely wanting, but in which Vote Leave specialised. The “loss of democratic control” that staying in the EU represents is not simply a negative effect in of itself but a “loss of democratic control is spiritually damaging and socially risky”. This connection of democracy with the social ‘spirit’ is an embodiment of the populist antagonism in which the encroachment of the elite distorts and damage the collective identity and stability of the people.

Talk of legalities and centralisation may provide a broad overarching horrific fantasy, but its more imminent texture is gained by providing a localised representation of this process via the image of the immigrant. Herein we find the source of the fantasmatic appeal of the empty signifier of ‘take back control’. As was stated when this phrase first began to emerge in UKIP's discourse in the years prior, our analysis is well placed to analyse a phase of this

specific wording as it speaks directly to the Lacanian notion of lack and the lacking object that if reclaimed can promise solidity and wholeness to the subject. The subject here is the people and an antagonistically opposed bloc, the elite, threatens not simply the ‘fullness’ but even the existence of the people – as Johnson revealingly states by damaging the spirit and social bonds of the people - through the theft of control.

Perhaps the best example of how the immigrant fulfils this function in the Vote Leave discourse comes from one of Johnson’s speeches in which he declares that “[w]e cannot control the numbers. We cannot control the terms on which people come and how we remove those who abuse our hospitality” (BJ.E). This is emblematic of the way in which Vote Leave refers to migrants whose ‘abuse’ is defined by the extent to which they utilise goods and services that belong to ‘us’ – whether this be schools, hospitals, housing, or ‘our’ wages. The crux of the argument here is that the immigrant enjoys themselves at our expense – the ‘abuse of hospitality’ – and it is this excess which must be controlled. After all the British people “support immigration” but require a level of democratic control that is denied by the elites (BJ.E). The people “are generous but feel their generosity has been abused. They are right” and have the ability to “take back control” by choosing to leave the EU. After all, “that’s the safer choice”. Yet the presence of the immigrant, whilst representing the theft of enjoyment and obstruction to the collective identity of the people, is thrust upon them by the elite. The immigrant and the elite thus both acquire their affective salience within the discourse from the same fantasmatic logic. Both are an unwelcome presence that strips the people of their democratic self-determination and collective identity.

The ‘EU bureaucrats’ steal “our money to fund their jollies”, with Vote Leave often quoting the expenses of the “luxuries” enjoyed by people working in the European Commission (Gove, 2016C); the “limo-riding classes” (Johnson, 2016b) who revel in waste at the taxpayers’ expense. Vote Leave explicitly challenged the European commission to explain “five- and six-

figure spending by Brussels” (Mason, 2016) on jets, hotels, chauffeurs, alcohol, golf, gym-memberships, tennis, toys, chocolate, and holidays (Keate & Waterfield, 2016; Little, 2016; Slack & Martin, 2016). Following this line of attack, Johnson also stated that a “small group of people”, including Cameron and Osborne, “do very well out of the current system” which allows them to laugh and enjoy themselves with other high-profile figures at elitist events such as the Davos business summit (Dominiczak, 2016). Specifically, Johnson chose to say that the current system makes these elite profiteers “go mwah mwah” in a tone not unlike the laughter of a bad movie villain; a poor impersonation which invites us to join him in enjoying the mocking of these elites in a very public act of defiance (Dominiczak, 2016). Ultimately, this focus on theft, on taking, provides the stage upon which Johnson can define the entire terms of the referendum debate – that the campaign represents in “a sense, a struggle between people who want to take back control and a small group of people who do very well out of the current system”.

The beatific side of this fantasmatic coin speaks to the same mode of liberation that the UKIP discourse offered. However, what might be called a more ‘legitimate’ edge is afforded through the grander imagery with which high-profile, well-educated Conservatives like Johnson and Gove can offer. Much like UKIP had begun to indicate, independence for the UK is portrayed as a means by which the peoples of Europe may be liberated, “because the truth is it is Brexit that is now the great project of European liberalism” (B.J.C). Remain’s dour and economic-centric campaign, one that committed mostly to suggesting that staying in the EU was better than leaving as opposed to praising the EU directly, provided vital space for Vote Leave to take advantage of the liberal intellectual tradition. “It is we in the Leave Camp – not they – who stand in the tradition of the liberal cosmopolitan European enlightenment – not just of Locke and Wilkes, but of Rousseau and Voltaire”. This appeal to European values is spliced with classical British references such as to Shakespeare in appeals to “we few, we happy few”

that further engrain the position of the underdog. The people-as-underdog, in pure transparent fantasy “will win for exactly the same reason that the Greeks beat the Persians at Marathon – because they are fighting for an outdated absolutist ideology, and we are fighting for freedom”.

Perhaps however the sharpest and most antagonistically gilded desire that is offered to the people from Johnson, who simply states: “Vote Leave on June 23, and give this cabal the kick in the pants they deserve” (BJ.D). Herein a maligned, long-suffering people are offered a chance to take revenge on the criminal elite, the ‘cabal’, a chance, if not necessarily to win back everything that has been supposedly taken from them, to shake the elite, to transgress, and take enjoyment from open dissent against their desires and demands – manifest here in their demand to stay in the EU. This lucrative offer to dream of the “sunlit meadows beyond” is a “once in a lifetime chance” (BJ.C). It is little wonder then that rejecting such a unique opportunity to ‘punch upwards’, so to speak, is rearticulated as the risky choice.

The Nation

Whilst the Vote Leave leadership, through Gove and Farage, invoked the populist logic to arrange the various arguments and affective threads of their position, Farage, and the organisations he was attached to, plumped for a different strategy. Having spent the greater part of the last few years (and the beginning of the referendum year) cultivating a well-organised populist discourse, a radical shift in logics becomes apparent as the campaign edged towards its conclusion. This is not to say that the elements spoken of as under threat by the EU, nor the benefits of leaving, were any different to the Vote Leave campaign. Farage, for instance, quite plainly states that “[t]his referendum is the people versus the establishment” (NF.C). Leaving the EU would “revitalise our democracy” (NF.B) and take control back from “unelected old men in Brussels who most people cannot name and who we cannot vote for or remove”. Equally, besides the democratic deficit provided by EU membership, Farage takes

aim at “the vested interest”, “the rich”, “the big business”, and all of those that are “doing very nicely thank you, against pretty much everybody else” (NF.C).

However, the manner in which the people and elite are articulated here is derived from a focus on the nation and the national interest. Farage and GO may, sporadically, speak to the people, but it becomes clear that this is not the same European peoples of Vote Leave. Instead, Farage’s people are one that are voting in order to “make a decision which flag is theirs”. And what Farage requests of the people is to choose to “live under British passports and under the British flag”. Most directly, we can see how the people here are subsumed under the nation when Farage repeatedly asks for the British public to “[v]ote with pride in this country and its people”. The people clearly belong to the nation. Even the purpose of taking back control is no longer to secure the validity and identity of the people qua the people but is instead “about us taking back control of our own destiny as a nation” (NF.B). The decision to vote itself again can be distilled down to the key question “fundamentally about who we are as a nation”. This focus can be seen particularly in the aesthetics of his final speech given the day before the vote. On a projector screen behind Farage, we see a montage of images as his speech begins featuring, amongst other national symbols: RAF Spitfires, the monarchy, the London skyline, the Houses of Parliament, Union Flags, Tower Bridge, assorted images of the Army, Stonehenge, rolling hillsides, English sportsmen and Winston Churchill. Even the title of the speech is provocative as it asks the audience: ‘Which Flag Is Yours?’

The distinction between the people as underdog and the people as nation can be difficult to discern when remaining at the level of comparison between the elements and moments that the one discourse shares with the other. However, moving into the fantasmatic dimension can be deeply revealing about how this discourse is organised and how we should identify the political logics at play. First of all, we can see how Farage depicts the consequences of Brexit in a horrific fashion. The focus here does not appeal to a significant degree to the struggle

between the people and elite so much as to an underdog nation against the power of a new ominous foreign threat. Remaining in the EU risks being “swept up in a United States of Europe” (NF.B). The strongest appeal to this united powerful enemy is fleshed out in the language of national symbolism. “They have an anthem. They’re building an army. They’ve already got their own police force”. The ‘they’ here is no longer the ‘they’ of elites and their puppet immigrants that must be resisted to liberate the people of Europe. ‘They’ are instead a singular nation, constructed from an array of European nations that have succumbed to its expansion and to which the UK will fall victim unless it escapes via the referendum and then follows up this act through the shoring up of its border and it’s doubling down on the relics of its old Empire, referred to as its Commonwealth. Nothing better reveals the nation-based opposition between conflicting ideas of Remain and Leave here than Farage’s call to unite behind “Independence Day and the banner... the banner that we've been standing on now for a very long time that says ‘believe in Britain’” and his given ‘proof’ that the EU is nothing more than a new super-nation – “[a]nd of course, they’ve got a flag” (NF.C).

Given this affective drive, when Farage states that “[w]e are big enough to stand on our own two feet”, that “we are strong enough to make our own mark in the world” and “forge our own success”, that this ‘we’ can only refer to the nation or at best the British people understood as a people defined by their homeland against the foreigner (NF.C). ‘Independence Day’ is thus an opportunity to “take our place on the world stage as a country focused on the wider, global picture, free and able to act in our own national interest” (NF.B). This notion of being “free to act in our own national interest” is central to the desire to become “unrestrained by EU bureaucracy”, “get our borders back” and “get our pride and self-respect as a nation and in who we are as a people back” (NF.C).

The moments that are utilised to argue for Brexit here are not dissimilar from those we examined in the early sections of our investigation prior to the establishment of the populist

logic within the discourse. In particular the fantasy elements that are peddled here most resemble the ‘invasion’ fantasmatic logic identified in those earlier years. The focus for Farage is geared towards a myriad of national symbols – passports, anthems, armies, flags and so on – which represent the threat towards one nation by another. When the elite are invoked, they are spoken of as subsumed under the interests of the EU as this new foreboding nation, as opposed to the way that Vote Leave invoke the elite as utilising the EU as a tool for their own purposes. Similarly, where the people are used by Farage are as ‘defenders’ of the nation, Vote Leave utilise the people as the agents, the impetus, for a liberating moment against oppressive elite forces.

5.4 Populist Transformations

How then to best characterise the shift of the Leave discourses from the earlier to the latter campaign? To make claims as to a transformation of the discourse from nationalist to populist would not only be too strong but miss out on the presence of both in all parts of the discourse. Ideationally such a move is particularly problematic as the core aim (leaving the EU), its orbiting issues (immigration, security, etc.) and prevalent demands (for control) are present throughout. Our analysis addresses this issue by stating that the shift is not one of ideology but of the organising principles in the discourse, expressed as a function in the relationship between a series of logics of which the populist political logic is primary.

For Vote Leave, this transition to foregrounding the populist political logic in front of the nationalist one is stark. This move has been noted by various authors though without a consensus on exactly how this shift should be perceived. By and large there is agreement that immigration was dragged to the fore, as Vote Leave realised that they could not win the economic argument and that this turning point corresponds to the middle of the campaign

(Grice, 2016; Goodwin, 2016; Helm, 2016; Nickerson, 2016). This is often coupled with an increase in jingoistic nationalism, and whilst this may be true of the overall discourse of the Leave side as a whole and the largely supportive right-leaning British media, this does not do justice to the manner in which Vote Leave brought these elements together, under a populist logic, for coherence and affectivity.

One way to visualise the distinction between these two periods is to look at the relationality between the posited subjects at odds in debate. The early Vote Leave campaign pitted the UK against the external EU who increasingly threatened to envelop the UK. This in/out division corresponds directly to the very question of EU membership, of whether to stay in or get out. But the latter campaign was dominated by the positioning of an underdog, the people of Britain or even the peoples of Europe, against a hegemonic force who are not simply intervening in the subject of the people but is responsible for the conditions in which the one is supreme over the other in an up/down relationship. Both axes are very much present, yet what we find is a significant degree of travel as Vote Leave shifts to a greater reliance on the up/down distinction, displaying an underlying populist political logic, whilst Farage and Leave.EU moved to prioritise the in/out distinction, relying more on a nationalist political logic. An important consequence of this reading is that it problematises ideational theories of populism that typically posit European right-wing populist movements as being fundamentally ‘exclusionary’ as opposed to more left-wing ‘inclusionary’ populisms typified in Latin American politics. Yet this distinction is unclear when we find a discourse that leans heavily on immigration, but which does so in a way as to construct and entrench an up/down relationship. This quote from Johnson typifies this type of problem, as he too makes a “distinction between ‘inclusive’ societies, where people feel involved in their democracies and their economies, and ‘extractive’ societies, where the system is increasingly gamed by an elite, for their own financial advantage” (B.J.C). Our reading however reveals the overdetermined

aspects of both the exclusionary-inclusionary dichotomy and the spatialised analogy as particular elements, such as immigration, can be employed in a multiplicity of functions depending upon its articulation according to a political logic.

It has been claimed by people close to Cummings that his strategy from the start was to avoid immigration until his campaign had “won the right to be heard” at which point it could be adopted into the campaign going into the final weeks (Shipman, 2016: 49). In this way the relative absence of immigration from the Vote Leave discourse highlights a calculation of the risks in incorporating it into a discourse based largely on nationalist (exclusionary or in/out) logics. The shift to reframing the battle for Brexit as a struggle between people and elite altered this underlying structure and changed the way that this risk was calculated. One insightful study that takes the specifically populist shift more seriously, instead of assuming its presence throughout, reveals not only a “precise moment” that the Vote Leave and media agendas shifted suddenly mid-campaign to include populist rhetoric, but that this correlates to a “major rise in Leave support” (Smith et al., 2021: 11-12). As the authors cautiously state, correlation is not causation. However, for our purposes it is the specificity of their dating in line with our own that is intriguing, as they also identify a sharp and significant uptake in “anti-elite” populist rhetoric in the media from the 27th May onwards, which falls in the middle of our second period. They note that this followed a change in strategy from the Vote Leave campaign, one which they do not expand upon but which we have provided here. The study concludes that this populist rhetoric, whilst not emerging spontaneously, was “mobilised, crafted and amplified by key protagonists over a comparatively short time frame” (Smith et al., 2021: 13). Whilst for the authors this represents a puzzle requiring a “closer consideration of the sources of populist rhetoric” (Smith et al., 2021: 14), we can confidently state that our analysis goes some way to rectifying this problem.

In truth the ‘short time frame’ in which the populist discourse was developed was simply the result of the discourse being pre-packaged and primed for use by UKIP. Cummings’ aversion to its use stems first from allowing Vote Leave to gain legitimacy by focusing on economic and democratic questions framed by a nationalist logic that suits a debate fundamentally concerned with the role of the nation. However, once this platform was established, and with Remain beginning to pull away in the polls, Gove and Johnson reset those issues along populist lines, utilising immigration in particular to enhance the appeal of the core demand for ‘control’. Following the dominant analysis of events, the Leave campaign effectively lost the economic argument and was forced to change tact. However, we can see that Leave’s economic position was primarily focussed not upon disputing directly the claims made by Remain, but upon prying open the narrow debate on economic strength by implementing control as a new nodal point with which to interpret information from both campaigns. The aim here was to dislodge stability as the primary lens through which other signifiers such as trade, sovereignty and immigration were read. As the Remain camp and the EU were rearticulated as the elite, immigration could be incorporated not as a nationalist-exclusionary component, but as a symbol of elitist dominance that highlights the people’s exclusion from society, democracy, and the levers of control. Calls for control were thus articulated as an inclusive mechanism – as a way to defeat the elites and reincorporate the people into a society that left them behind. The question was not should the UK leave the EU – it was the answer to the question of how the people can take back control.

In this landscape, Farage and his various campaign vehicles were forced to reorient. Johnson in particular had taken his mantle as representative of the people. According to polling by YouGov, the last weeks of the campaign Johnson was not only the most trusted politician of the Leavers, but the most trusted politician overall, whilst trust in high-profile Remainers such as Theresa May and David Cameron had dropped to its lowest point since the beginning

of the campaign (YouGov, 2016). Crowded out by a campaign adopting the same language, spoken by more legitimately perceived figures, with all the funding that official designation had benefited, Farage was left adrift from the very platform he had spent years cultivating. Having been “obsessed with being the face of the ‘No’ campaign” for the greater part of his political career (Shipman, 2016: 51), it is little surprise that Farage had to occupy a more vacant political space where a nationalist and xenophobic discourse could maintain his popularity with a base he would hope not to lose to these upstart populists. This suited the overall Leave campaign well – this would allow them to cover appeals to a wider audience whilst maintaining a professional distance to the more controversial elements. It would be very difficult to believe that this was co-ordinated as Cummings and the Vote Leave staff have been well documented as being entirely antagonistic with Farage and his backers to the point of hatred and revealing public spats (Duell, 2020; Shipman, 2016). However, Cummings was happy to transplant Farage’s populist discourse onto the campaign that would decide the answer to the most critical question in British politics in modern history.

Leaving a Populist Legacy

Brexit will be permanently marked and remembered by the phrase ‘take back control’. What has been shown here is how the usage and efficacy of this expression was made possible insofar as it was constructed as an empty signifier within a discourse defined by a populist political logic. As opposed to this discourse appearing almost *ex nihilo* as a creation of Vote Leave and its strategists, or even developed in a ‘short time-frame’, what is revealed is that this discourse quickly morphed into being effectively that of UKIPs in the few years preceding the referendum. The groundwork was laid such that little modification was necessary to elevate the discourse of a minor, single-issue party to the language that has defined this unprecedented chapter in Britain’s modern political history.

The construction and evolution of a series of logics, particularly though not exclusively the populist logic, has enabled a novel reading of the Brexit campaign that reveals a dynamic shift in focus and appeal over time. We began this chapter armed with the logics of UKIP's discourse and the observation of 'control' as the defining feature of the campaign to leave the EU. Recognising this term as an empty signifier, one already encountered in the analysis of UKIP, we sought to identify and examine the logics that allowed for its operation as the lynchpin of the Leave discourse. In comparing these cases, as well as by following the UKIP discourse through the campaign, we revealed the evolution and dynamic interplay of nationalist, populist, democratic, and horrific and beatific logics. These were at times foregrounded or backgrounded, and the various moments and relationships invoked through them shifted as the campaign drew on. Matthew Goodwin, one of the foremost researchers on UKIP, the right and Brexit, has posited in several talks that the most powerful facet of the Leave campaign was that Brexit acted as a kind of substitute for any issue that Leavers were concerned with; dissatisfaction with their economic position, with social issues, with issues of identity, with the political system in general and so on (Goodwin, 2017; 2018; 2019). The role of populism in his analysis of these events is as a qualifier, an inflection, on otherwise more traditionally nationalist trends and movements, and is more or less synonymous with a distrust for elites and a general apathetic attitude towards 'mainstream' party politics which does not hear or address their demands. Our analysis takes this notion of Brexit as a catchall channel for an overdetermined multiplicity of issues and proposes that the way the Vote Leave discourse was constructed was such that this could be taken full advantage of and extended further in a manner befitting a simplistic referendum question with only two choices available. The populist political logic, based upon the radical extension of the logic of equivalence in an antagonistic divide between people and elite, acted as the supreme method by which arrays of

diverse and disparate issues could be brought together and bound to a control to be gained if only the UK left the EU.

Whilst a comprehensive demonstration cannot be laid out here, it is uncontroversial to state that the years that followed the referendum saw the major parties engage with one another in populist terms. The ruling Conservative Party would shift their discourse, which had been one based predominately on austerity since 2010, into one which resituated the party as the principal vehicle by which the people can take back control. Equally, the opposing Labour party would be defined by their slogan and title of their 2017 manifesto 'For the many and not the few'. It is curious to note how this latter slogan acts as a direct riposte to the Conservative claim to be taking back control; an amendment to try to remind the public who the antagonistic agents are in this new post-Brexit landscape, and to recast the one party as representing the many and the other as representing the few. The principal struggle between these two competing powers appears to be over who can harness and control the populist energy that emerged from the social and political fissure opened up by Brexit. In the Conservative camp, their opponents are painted as trying to frustrate the singular demand of the people (Brexit) and are thus declared 'enemies of the people' and part of the 'metropolitan liberal elite'. In the Labour camp, the emerging political frontier is very much defined by the struggle against an economy 'rigged' in favour of the wealthy elite by the suffering wealth-creators, the British people.

In either case, populist rhetoric has punctured the political landscape and we can trace this back through the Brexit referendum to the influence of Nigel Farage and UKIP. Various questions have arisen though in our analysis that still require addressing. Most prominent amongst these in the role of the leader in these discourses. Both Farage and Johnson and to a lesser extent Gove were at different times charged with the populist mantle, so to speak. Most theories of populism reserve a special place for the 'charismatic leader' and though discourse

theory does not follow this trend, perhaps certain remarks can be made as to the relation between such figures and the discourses emanating from them. Secondly, whilst we have dipped into the murky and blurred relationship between populist and nationalist signifiers, particularly in reference to how signifiers such as the people occur prevalently in both, more clarification is needed on how best to characterise their relationship and the problems this presents for analyses which almost inevitably must deal with both. Finally, we can revisit questions of the role of discourse theory and the Logics approach in wider debates about populism and how analyses such as this can aid in tackling key issues that afflict the field of populism studies at present. It is to such questions we now turn.

Chapter 6 – Reconceptualising Populism: Discursive Lessons from the UK

We have traced the ebbs and flows of the UKIP discourse from their early electoral breakthroughs up through 2016, followed by their tribulations during the Brexit referendum campaign, and in parallel analysed the populist credentials and discursive structuring of the Vote Leave campaign that successfully rallied the majority of the voting British population to agree to leave the EU. We have witnessed the gathering of an armoury of signifiers by UKIP that coalesced around the empty signifier of control, which was then successfully transplanted into the heart of the Leave campaign. This process was made effective, and would perhaps have been impossible without, a dominating populist logic that created the necessary discursive conditions for the monolithic equivalential chaining that imbued ‘control’ with its symbolic energy, affective drive, and broad appeal.

The ability of the people-elite bifurcation to create two competing spheres in which various chains can be constructed provides the ultimate space in which the logic of equivalence can take precedence over the institutional logic of difference. The space the use of this logic opens up in the discursive field for multiple affective interventions has been one particularly rich contribution that our mode of analysis has afforded; first in the sense that this has been a much spoken of, though not well understood, differentiation between pro- and anti-Brexit camps, but second because the use of logics provides a formal method through which these can be categorised and described. Of principal import here is the interaction between what are commonly seen as nationalist tropes and modes of affective investment interacting with, or perhaps better described as being organised by, the populist logic. This has multiple implications for the way the nationalist-populist dynamic should be understood from an analytical standpoint, but moreover points the way to more strategic discussions as to how such intertwined discourses gather their effectiveness.

These various components then give us a rough spotlight for this final reflective exercise that began with the rise of UKIP in the late 2000s through to their demise at the end of the 2010s. Yet the close of the UKIP story is not the end of the populist one – after all, a discourse that is powerful enough to dominate a nation does not simply disappear overnight even if its roots wither and die. However, following all the threads of this populist explosion into the British political landscape would be folly; a task best left for future research. Our reflection here is best spent instead drawing on the Logics analysis in order to tease out theoretical discussions on the interplay of various political and fantasmatic logics in performing a populist investigation. The primary function of this chapter then is to reflect on the analyses elaborated here in order to tease out implications for the competing theories of populism.

As with any project that seeks to deploy discourse theory in attempting to problematise and decipher a given phenomenon, we must reconceptualise the content of our analysis at the level of form in order to produce insights, queries, and challenges to both our methodological tools and our theoretical frameworks. This retroductive process demands that we must not leave the substantive findings of the research in isolation but to utilise this work to revisit and challenge the ontological presuppositions that framed the project in the first instance. Largely we shall focus on the nuances that this discursive reading adds to our understanding of populism, whilst negotiating certain pitfalls and difficulties in the conduct of such an analysis. Two broad branches of revision can be discerned. First a discussion of the role of the leader is had in relation to their seemingly ubiquitous presence in populist discourses and how this role fits into the notion of populism as a political logic. Here we argue that within the UKIP populist context, the leader should be considered as a ‘prime articulator’. This term is intended to capture the contribution the leader makes to the discourse in terms of their guiding articulations, but also how this position simultaneously makes them an invaluable nodal point within the discourse. We use this discussion to consider the fragility of populist discourses in terms of

this leadership, based on the departure of Farage from UKIP. Second, a more ontological review is made wherein we attempt to resolve the status of the term populism in relation to nationalism. By utilising a spatial conception of these logics, we argue that we can maintain their conceptual separation without losing sight of how they interact within the confines of a case. We add to existing spatial interpretations in discourse theory by invoking fantasmatic logics as a method by which these distinctions can be preserved whilst highlighting the efficacy of their imbrication in the UKIP case.

It would be remiss, however, to not finish this story of UKIP's rise without briefly returning to the two final conference speeches taking place in Britain's post-referendum (though pre-Brexit) era which demonstrate, and resonate with, their collapse and retreat into electoral oblivion. This chapter shall thus begin by briefly observing the discursive disarray that embodied UKIP and its practices following the Brexit referendum.

6.1 The End of UKIP

On the 23rd June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union. Neither the manner of departure nor the status of the vote itself was included in the terms of the referendum – the result being a short and simple command to 'leave'. Shortly thereafter, Farage resigned as leader of UKIP having ostensibly fulfilled his political ambitions.²³ UKIP's 2016 annual conference was thus an event of excitement and self-congratulation, but also of trepidation as members elected their new leader, Diane James. James used the keynote speech as a reflection on the party's referendum victory whilst using this occasion to reassert her own credentials to lead the party into the post-Brexit era.

²³ Simply as a matter of curiosity, it should be stated that this resignation was also framed in terms of control: "during the referendum I said I wanted my country back... now I want my life back" (Badshah, 2016).

Having ‘moved mountains’ and shocked the system by “the disruption we’ve caused”, James was put into a difficult position where she must guide the party in a transition not only through the aftermath of the Brexit vote, but also from one type of leadership to a new one (2016A). This move becomes clear in the manner in which James modifies the party’s discourse concerning antagonism: “We’ve won a heat - I’m not even going to talk about battles and wars, I’m going to talk about heats and races and getting over the winning line”. Whilst this may signal a change in a core moment of the UKIP discourse, this new line lasts less than a minute before the audience joins in laughter at James’ characterisation of Remain voters as ‘remainiacs’, that continue to “tell us what to do” and “boss us about”.

This confusion in antagonistic positioning continues in her promise to make sure “we are battle-ready, race-ready” and her crude insults towards new Prime Minister Theresa May; “magpie May” who has “stolen” UKIP policy on defence and schooling and who has tried to “bury” UKIP, “undermine us, demoralise us” and “throw everything at us”. Indeed, instead of backing away from this perceived challenge, James encourages her members to “continue being the thorn” in the EU’s side, and considers it vitally important that Farage will keep “giving them grief as much as he can” as an MEP. After all, “this is what the people’s army exists for, it’s what we’re going to fight for, it’s what we’re going to continue fighting for”. Yet all the way through these confrontations, this ‘fighting’ rhetoric, James continues to insist that “[m]y language might be a little different. I’m not going to be retiring, so unlike Nigel I may not be able to be as frank as I might want to be”.

James is careful to register the potential displacement and takeover of vital links in the connections that bind the UKIP discourse together. In particular she warns against the ‘stealing’ of a key message by other “organisations”, a message “that again you must constantly remind people... take back control. Take back control”. James emits an awareness here of what could be described as a lack of ownership at the heart of any rhetorical struggle, a discursive ‘death-

of-the-author' if you will, yet simultaneously she provides few clues as to how UKIP can maintain their grip and equivalence with this standard bearer of the Leave campaign and of Brexit itself. In other words, whilst this is an acute observation of but some of the new challenges to the UKIP discourse following the dislocatory effects of Brexit, other moments, ones which act as the link in the chain between control and the party, are either entirely ignored or passively rejected. For instance, James urges UKIP members to go forth and spread their views, but where possible to put forward their policies "to the United Kingdom population" and make "them" aware that UKIP will act on their behalf "for this country". This talk of the 'United Kingdom's population', a cold and distant 'them' that is a far-cry away from 'the people' that has been the locus of UKIP's discourse for nearly a decade, provides a small window through which we see the breaking down between UKIP's populist peak and their desire to remain the party of control.

This approach is echoed by her stated ambition to make "[p]rofessionalism... top of my agenda" which will involve taking the "winning political machine" and maintain it as "something coming to you which you know delivers all of your key objectives". Talk of 'machines' and 'objectives' again disrupts the party's populist credentials as being a vehicle for the demands of the people; instead of an army taking back control on behalf of the people, we have a machine that is used simply to achieve the ambitions and objectives of the assembled members. This could be seen as an attempt to suture the worries of party members first and foremost following a leadership crisis, but further shows the centrality that Nigel Farage had in maintaining a discourse that was cultivated over many difficult years. James' first task is then clear in this speech – to appeal to the party as the 'winning machine' in order to steady the party-ship at a time of its own massive internal dislocations in both directorship and policy.

This, however, proved an impossible task. Diane James' reign as party leader was short-lived and 16 days following her electoral victory, she rejected her nomination as party leader,

citing a lack of sufficient authority or the support to make changes to the party as she saw fit, and Paul Nuttall took charge. His first, and our last, speech contains very few mentions of the people, the elite, antagonisms, the EU, immigration or control, which instead largely focuses on specific policy issues that are not articulated together with any common thread; the removal of VAT (Value Added Tax) on female sanitary products and on hot takeaway food, a cash 'injection' for the NHS, cutting the foreign aid budget, addressing the housing crisis; these issues are raised one after the other without any guiding logic made explicit behind their connections (2017S). A short burst on immigration targets allows for Nuttall to bring together housing shortages with an over-supply of cheap labour and issues with 'rapidly changing communities', however this point is made in reference to the 'working-class' as opposed to a people, and with no reference to a target for this demand; no elitist plot, no EU tyranny.

A single populist claim is made towards the end of this speech when Nuttall attempts to prove the vital importance of UKIP to "ensure that shady establishment figures do not try to subvert the will of the people". However, this appears as just a supporting role in the Brexit negotiations, that the party must "be the government's backbone in these negotiations". Yet UKIP's discourse up until this point relied heavily on opposition to the elitist government. This statement however assumes the inability of the Conservative government to assert their own 'backbone' and places UKIP in the peculiar role of government followers, thus rendering UKIP devoid of the establishment opposition necessary to maintain their populist logic and attraction. This is precisely why James warned against the 'stealing' of the core demand to 'take back control' by the Conservative party, for if this could be absorbed successfully then the government can assume the role of the deliverer of the people's demands, leaving UKIP undressed of their core signifiers, of the elite that opposes them, of the people which they represent and ultimately condemning them to political insignificance.

Collapse

Whilst the media initially paid significant attention to Nuttall's coronation as the new leader of UKIP, attention rapidly faded away as focus turned to not only leadership challenges and crises in all of the major British political parties, but of course to the fallout of the Brexit vote and the day-to-day farce of negotiations between the government and the EU. UKIP evaporated from the public sphere, a dissipation that was reflected in their electoral losses, beginning with the 2017 local elections where they collapsed from 146 councillors nationwide to just 1. A snap general election the following month signalled the penultimate death-knell to the party who lost their only MP and slumped to just 1.8% of the vote from their previous outing at 12.6% - marking their lowest share of the vote since 2001.

Most commentators and academic theorists placed the fall of UKIP firmly at the feet of their own success – with the UK leaving the EU their objective was complete and they can now depart from this world, their purpose fulfilled (Klein & Pirro, 2020). Whilst this view dominated public discourse on UKIP from the day of the referendum onwards, the concurrent research performed here adds an important layer to this simplistic reading. A political objective is no firm thing, it is but a collected series of articulations whose very extension into a multitude of demands can never be fulfilled; it necessarily relies on its own incompleteness in order to persist as a politically salient object. The 'achieving' of a political objective is thus unavoidably a falsehood and can only ever be *articulated* as complete or otherwise. In this landscape it can be advantageous to avoid declaring that Brexit is 'achieved' and behind us, but instead be a practice that is constantly performed and defended as parties jostle to claim sole leadership of this almost Sisyphean process.

Two competing interpretations of events follow (Clarke, et al, 2016; Ford & Goodwin, 2017). First is that UKIP has no purpose given that the UK is leaving the EU and that these

matters must now be left to the ‘real’ politicians to carry out the wishes of this short-lived political child. In this story UKIP were little more than a rupture in politics as normal, and whilst they may have attained their wish via the referendum, their voice was simply that – a dislocatory shout that must be heeded but which has no presence of its own. It is a consequence of the actions or failings of other parties, one which strips UKIP of their actions and agency, robbing us of the chance to learn important lessons of what they offered and how they offered it. This type of story follows the institutional logic of difference to the letter: a demand emerges, regardless of origin, that calls for the UK to leave the EU, a demand which is accepted into the governing body and thus removing the requirement of there to be a group which sustains the call for this demand and neutralising the threat of opposition to this order (Hughes, 2019: 261). Perhaps the prevalence of this view of UKIP speaks to the ideologically suspect way that populism is treated as a concept at present, where its occurrence is reduced to a “mere”, though sudden, “expression of pre-existing social cleavages” (Borriello & Mazzolini, 2019: 77). However, a second narrative, one that imparts some agency on the party, is hinted at in these closing speeches. Here, the day that the UK leaves the EU represents a “winning line” that is far from reached. Better still, in terms of justifying the existence of the party, what this winning line resembles remains entirely unclear and this must be contested and fought for (Bale, 2018: 275).

But what logic predominates this articulation of the referendum event and UKIP’s relation to it in these final speeches? In fact, no coherent structure seems to dominate. The populist stream that flowed through UKIP over much of the past decade is conspicuously absent here. A populist logic would maintain the coherency of their prior speeches and clear this haze, yet no call is made for ‘the people’s army’ to seize control of Brexit through UKIP, no command to oppose the elitist mainstream parties who will inevitably try to betray the will of the people. As the final speeches suggest, UKIP must prevent the ‘stealing’ of the iconic

mantra of ‘take back control’ and yet they must simultaneously back the very ruling party who is performing this theft. What link in this populist chain between core empty signifier, equivalential chain of demands and party broke so severely as to lead to this paradoxical and political suicidal positioning?

This question forces us to reconsider the role of the leader. The departure of Farage represents much more than the loss of a political personality, of a charismatic talisman, one that takes with them those voters that look only to the ‘strong leader’ archetype and become devout followers. These clichés are read in the literature on populism, yet in most forms of populism analysis the leader is taken as a precondition alongside the criteria of people, elite and antagonism. Yet it is also becoming equally cliché within discourse theory to rely too heavily on the populist form of ‘people-antagonism-elite’ and this in turn makes it easy to underappreciate particular substantive features, such as the leader, that deserve greater scrutiny. What our puzzle hints at is the possibility that the leader is not simply one moment among many, or even as a nodal point that binds and separates elements whilst generating an affective drive via his own *ethos* and charisma. The role of Farage was one of leader, performer and *articulator*, a privileged type of nodal point – one that ultimately acted as a double-edged sword to the stability of the UKIP discourse.

6.2 The Empty Place of the Leader

Our analysis has shown the precise processes by which the discursive construction of UKIP was enabled, paying specific attention to the populist logic that guided this development. The performative function of the leader as orator and rhetorician has been examined within this analysis itself and in doing so shows the interplay of these features and the enabling of the one by the other. We have also seen how the loss of Farage corresponded with an immediate decline

in UKIP's position, an evaporation of the populist logic from their leadership and subsequently a dissolution of the coherency of their once powerful discourse. So, what left UKIP when Farage departed?

As mentioned, this wide question can (and has) been answered in terms of political capital, that is in terms of the cult of personality that a charismatic figure inevitably gains through their career and takes this with them as they move on. Equally one could look at organisation, stability or simply the idea of *leadership* itself, though one may doubt whether these qualities made for Farage's strengths especially when looking to the controversies and infighting that plagued his party even when they were doing well. Nonetheless, these ideas surely go some way to explaining the dislocatory effect of a change in leadership, but through our analysis it is possible to add an overlooked discursive feature here. The concept of articulation is certainly central to any discursive analysis, yet I suggest that alongside articulation, political logics and affect, we must also place greater emphasis, at the level of form and not just of content, the role of the articulator.

Of course, that articulation requires articulator(s) should be implicit in such analyses, but the location of such an agent is necessarily blurred. Multiplicity - in the number of speaking subjects, in the media outlets that disseminate the word, the everyday conversations between people that sediment and reify the discourse in question - makes assigning the role of author or articulator an extraordinary and necessarily futile challenge. The articulator is always already overdetermined. When we ask ourselves, *what* is doing the chaining of signifiers and constructing new political frontiers, we must locate this question at a chosen level of abstraction - at the level of the institution, the party, the individual - whilst recognising that these boundaries are flexible and unstable. However, when we talk of specifically *populist* phenomena, the particular location of the leader stands above this complex matrix of interlocking parts and presents themselves to us as the arbitrators of the populist logic. By

focusing in on the connections between leader and discursive field in this case, we can shed some light on this core figure of the populist moment and in turn speak of Farage as articulator.

As per the logic guiding the research itself, conference speeches, particularly those by the party leadership, are key milestones in the political calendar in which the party can take stock and rally around the direction and ethos as dictated by the party elite. In UKIP this feature is only enhanced as Farage's dominion over all aspects of party management is famously over-zealous. The party line is often little more than what Farage decides it to be and this in turn places greater value on the party leader's speech. Equally the lack of any MPs for the majority of their tenure as a party, combined with the media-responsive personality that Farage cultivated, means that very few figures other than himself represent the party to the public, whether this be by television interviews, radio broadcasts (indeed Farage hosts his own show on the national talk-radio station LBC) or through the personal interactions and charisma displayed at public rallies.

Yet the populist logic, read through our discursive framework, imbues the leader with another, and perhaps most vital, role. We see how a series of disparate demands, on immigration, on public funding on security, on sovereignty, and so on, can be chained and read together through the elevation of one demand to take on the representative role for the entirety of the chain. The empty signifier of 'control' provides this role here. But this picture requires the effective condensation of these parts and here the role of the articulator stands tall. In order to achieve unity amongst signifiers in a chain, the leader, the grand articulator, takes on a special role in movements where the populist logic dominates, as they create a dependency whereby they are originator and maintainer of that which links the moments of the discourse together.

Two further side-effects follow from the recognition of the leader as the prime articulator. Firstly, any affective grip that is manifested by either parts or the whole of the chain of equivalence becomes necessarily bound to the articulator. When Farage speaks of taking ‘control’ of our borders and laws, he simultaneously is contaminated and rendered a symbolic vessel of the emotional ties of the demands. This in turn affords him greater strength in condensing new elements into the chain, which in turn can attract new affective drives, thus providing him with greater articulatory power and so on in a profoundly powerful cycle of amplification. Here we then see a mechanism by which the cult of personality of leadership figures is formed in populist discourses as we can monitor the discursive-affective feedback loop that sediments and amplifies the name of the leader. In this way, it would be accurate to describe Farage, at this level of abstraction, as an empty signifier in of himself to the degree that his name evokes an affective grip which conjures up the very chain that he manifested. The leader is the chain, the leader makes *the* demand. Farage gives control.

The second effect of leader read as articulator is that they then become a projected repository for the fantasmatic aspirations of those subscribed to the populist discourse on offer. Given an affective discourse that pits the people against the elite, those that consider themselves part of the people seek to undermine, antagonise, and battle against the elite. In turn this provides the jouissance of the fantasy of oneself, both as an individual and as part of a unified people, enacting revenge and ‘getting back’ at those elites that are blamed for the ills of the people. But given the material improbability, if not impossibility, of realising this fantasy, it can in turn become a poisoned chalice that, rather than motivating the individual to action, instead acts as a generator of lethargy and distances the individual from the promise of fulfilment. Here the leader takes on a newfound importance as the symbolic substitute for the subject in their impotence. The leader is capable of acts of subversion that attack the purported elite in ways that are seemingly unavailable to the subject. Yet the leader is not simply a proxy

for the subject, as part of the people, to antagonise the elite, but as we have seen is also the empty signifier that takes the place of the chain of demands. The result is a leader who, in the process of being seen to challenge, disrupt and dislocate the hegemonic order on the subject's behalf, inscribes the chain of demands directly into the space of the political in lieu of the subject doing so themselves. The leader becomes a visible rupture in the hegemonic order onto which the subject can project themselves and revel in this disruptive rift.

We see this at its most poignant in the actions that Farage takes inside of the EU parliament itself, and why, given his ideological opposition to its existence, Farage continues to take his seat inside the parliament. A mountain of online content, registering millions of views from the public, compile and share footage of Farage making obscene demands, insults, and threats right in the 'belly-of-the-beast' as it were (see, for example, *The Sun*, 2019). What Farage allows for is a partial fulfilment of the Brexit-Populist fantasy in such a space where the demands of the people can not only be nailed to the door of the EU church, but where this nailing can be performed spectrally by the subject of the populist discourse. The leader here then is twice emptied: first as an empty signifier that allows for the representation of the equivalential chain, and then as a host that allows for the inhabitation of the people such that they may directly confront the elite in a way previously consigned to the fantasmatic register – an almost Leviathan-esque projection into the heart of the enemy.

As the populist logic largely refers to a foregrounding and domination of the logic of equivalence, this then explains why we often see the emergence of these powerful leadership figures in populist movements in general. The dramatic condensing of a chain of signification required in the construction of a populist discourse will tend to propel and amplify the position of articulator, following the dual emptying process outlined. This will not necessarily be true of all populist movements depending on how such movements germinate, but here we can see how a combination of hierarchical control over party mechanisms coupled with a media

obsession with the figure of Farage would provide the conditions of possibility, the fertile ground, for the distillation of potential articulators down to the singular, and ultimately reifying their position as the people, the party, and the demands. Against Laclau, this does not force us to assume the *necessity* of a powerful leader in any populist movement (Laclau, 2005: 100)²⁴ but requires us instead to consider conditions that Laclau neglected – namely organisation, both internal to the movement of the channels by which said movements present themselves to the public (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014). Here, we can look to the work of both ideational and strategic schools on non-leader populist movements in order to reveal how organisational capacity appears to affect the likelihood of the emergence of such figures - such as in the self-proclaimed ‘People’s Party’ of the US at the end of the 19th century (Kazin, 1995: 388) or more modern movements such as the US ‘Tea Party’ or the global ‘Occupy’ movements (Lowndes, 2017). The common differentiation between leader and leaderless movements is split between grassroots, ‘bottom-up’ modes of populist mobilisation as opposed to the top-down, party-based populism (Aslanidis, 2017). Following the lead of these types of investigations, it is only when a substantive reading of a phenomenon is made, as opposed to a conceptualisation that remains at the level of formal rules, can it be said that a leadership figure is more or less likely to emerge.

In our case, however, it is clear to see why such a figure as Farage would be central to the development of UKIP and the development of a populist logic that would dictate the party line. But clearer still are the consequences of such a coalescing around a single leader figure when that figure then departs the movement. The utter collapse of UKIP almost immediately following the Brexit referendum has been attributed to the fulfilment of their so-called

²⁴ Statements from Laclau’s *On Populist Reason* underlie his attachment of populism to the idea of the leader: “... the equivalential logic leads to singularity, and singularity to identification of the unity of the group with the name of the leader”; “...the symbolic unification of the group around an individuality – and here I agree with Freud – is inherent to the formation of a ‘people’” (Laclau, 2005: 100).

‘purpose’. Whilst this idea was briefly trendy amongst academics and journalists, it has since been somewhat tempered by the emergence of the new ‘Brexit Party’ (recently re-named ‘Reform UK’) at the beginning of 2019. By March that year, it was led by none other than Nigel Farage himself. Whilst UKIP saw dismal local, national, and European elections between 2016 and 2019, the very first elections participated in by this new Brexit Party, the 2019 European Parliament elections, saw them romp to victory with 5.2 million votes (30.5%) and were able to take majority control of the British delegation to the European Parliament. Clearly then the ‘purpose’ of UKIP had not been received by the public as complete, but in losing all 24 of their seats in the European Parliament and walking away with only half a million of the votes (3.2%), they were simply no longer seen as the banner-men of the Brexit demand chain. In a little over five months, with no manifesto, with little to no broadcast coverage, with no established policies (besides to have ‘Brexit’) this newcomer to the British political stage went from non-existence to the largest single national party in the European Parliament, all whilst commanding a 20% average in national election polling, higher than any level received by UKIP and briefly leading all parties in the polls (Savage, 2019).

It is not the case then that UKIP’s demise can be simply assigned to the outcome of the Brexit referendum. Instead, what we witness is the loss of the leader and with him a radical dislocation at the heart of the party discourse. We have seen the discombobulation this caused to the party line and we can offer a more complete explanation besides the loss of a charismatic and popular personality. When Farage left UKIP, they also lost their prime articulator, the twice emptied agent of both signification and of affective projection. The replacement leaders, as we have seen, did little to nothing to maintain the pre-existing chains of equivalence that sustained UKIP’s populist frontier, nor did they attempt to any significant degree to construct new chains that could maintain the populist logic that had hitherto been the guiding force that sustained their discourse. Further still, when Farage took up leadership of the Brexit party, he took with

him this status of articulator and so immediately transferred with him the discourse that had given UKIP such electoral success. This helps to provide some explanation as to why, given the lack of any discernible public face or exposure between Farage's takeover in late March 2019 to their extraordinary victory in European elections in May of the same year (63 days in total), the Brexit party became so popular. There is no need for constant exposure and talk of policy or stance on any number of points with Farage at the helm, for he is the empty signifier that stands *in situ* for all those elements. The people know what the Brexit party stands for because in Farage we have the entire pantheon of affective moments that together can be uttered in the name of the leader, in 'control' and in 'Brexit'.

This scenario provides for another theoretical reflection that is worth restating in full if it is not already made clear in these details. UKIP have been described, not just here, as a populist movement. But with the movement of the leader, we see a decline in the populist logic present in the party discourse. It is here we can identify a potentially fatal flaw in the use of the populist logic in political movements. If the populist vigour imbued in UKIP as a party was so fragile as to all but evaporate following the loss of a single figure in the party, however senior, then we must question the ability of populism to act as a long-term logic that can guide any social movement or party when so much appears to hinge on so few. Now, it would be against the ethos of the retroductive discursive method to allow but one case to signal such a damning report on the possible uses of the populist logic for social change. However, we can look to what *conditions* allows this conclusion to be made in this case and use it to inform the theory and possible future cases.

I believe that several key insights can be made about the effectiveness of populism as a political logic from looking at the role of the leader. First there is the question of organisation, party (or movement) hierarchy and centralisation. The incredibly top-heavy mode of organisation of UKIP, even prior to Farage's ascension to leader, whilst not in of itself

responsible for the populism to follow, made the articulatory prowess of the leader central to the party's coherency and public appeal. If said leader then exhibits the articulatory movements that utilise the populist logic, the organisational centrality of their position is then coupled with an *articulatory centrality*, as the public come to identify the chain of equivalences (immigration, security, sovereignty) and the empty signifier that coordinates the chain (control) with the leader (Farage). This is not then to say that any budding populist movement will result in an essential leader-articulator role in the vein of Farage, but it does indicate that *given* an organisational condition that primarily awards both management and public relations to one figure, then it becomes exceedingly likely that the pursuing of a populist logic will result in this hyper-condensed, one might say bloated, figure with whom the fate of the movement's discourse depends. Secondly, we could consider UKIP's fragile populist character as being tied to its origin as a single-issue party. We saw how this was expanded upon in their populist construction period in order to reduce the centrality of independence as the only demand that quilted the discourse. This move could have cushioned the impact of the Brexit vote, allowing for room to engage in a new competition over the articulation of the 'meaning' of Brexit and whether their task of 'taking control' was successful or not. Yet, as we saw from UKIP during the Brexit campaign and shortly thereafter, they reneged on this expansion and returned to a (nationalistically aligned) demand for independence. Worse still, the departure of Farage was indicative that their 'task' was complete, since he was the embodiment of their demands, making any claim by the party to the contrary a much more difficult pitch.

Even still, this does not signal necessarily signal the death-knell of the party as long as either a replacement leader can be integrated sufficiently preferably via the ordination of the leader, or the party as an institution does enough discursive work to ensure that the empty signifier's connections with the *movement* are foregrounded and sustained in place of the leader. This leads us to our third suggestion – that the leader, an individual who is but a

temporary, even fleeting, moment in any movement, has both the will and the ability to ensure that they utilise their place as prime articulator to rearticulate their own presence *with the party* or movement itself. This may also include a de-articulation of the leader with their own movement to ensure the smooth transition into a post-leader period whilst ensuring that the relevant connections between themselves and the people are transferred into the movement. Traditional party structures have much to offer here in terms of this move, whether this be via particular symbols or tropes associated with the party, right the way through to particular images or institutional practices that maintain the party collective in the absence of strong leadership (one may think here for example of the song ‘The Red Flag’ that is still sung by the Labour party faithful, most notably for our analysis, at the conclusion of party conferences). The issue here is that the onus is upon the leader to ensure that they pass their emptied significance into symbols of some permanence. Farage’s inability, or unwillingness, to do so tells us, unsurprisingly, that his personal political ambitions trumped any long-term establishment of UKIP as a political force whilst simultaneously giving us an insight into the weak institutional existence of UKIP as a party.

Simply stated then, the use of the populist logic as an effective mode of discursive construction and maintenance requires paying close attention to these two strands in order to sustain the movement over time. First the movement must remain wary as to the way that not only the organisation of the party becomes centralised into a singular figure, but that both the internal and public-facing articulations that tie together the activated moments of their discourse are also not ‘centralised’ into one figure. This first act however is not strictly necessary if the movement prepares contingencies for our second measure which allows for an orchestrated re-inscription of the leaders symbolic-affective location back into the folds of the movement. In terms of the ‘new wave’ of populist movements across the globe, such a step would allow for the sedimentation of these factions into rooted party institutions whilst

maintaining the populist logic that provides for their identification with the people. Here is planted the double-edged nature of the populist logic in a way that is absent in both Laclau's theory and his appraisals. By recognising the leader as more than simply a coalescing point, we see how reconceptualising the leader as a hybrid of prime articulator and empty signifier allows us to tease out their complex status within a populist movement. This also allows us to bridge a tension in Laclau between the leader as something inherent to populism and his attempt to rid populism of an ontic contents.

Here a simple inverse injunction can allow us to provide a somewhat simplified view of the effectiveness of populist movements to sustain themselves: that the centrality of the leader to a populist movement is inversely proportional to the long-term strength and stability of the movement's discourse. As a complex intersection of agent, empty signifier and primary articulator, the 'leader' figure is as strong a feature within the populist discourse as it is precarious. In the short-term this figure can bring together a series of disparate elements via the affective grip of their charisma, their image, their place as a signifier within the discourse of the movement. Yet if they are unable to translate or displace this affectivity onto the non-subject, that is, onto the concepts and symbols or more concretely onto the movement itself – in this case the party – then the populist discourse lives on the borrowed time of the leader and is prone to the extreme contingencies that all political subjects face. Whether this be a political misstep, a falling of favour, scandal, resignation or even death, the leader must engage in an institutionalisation of their own signifier and role as articulator into the party machinery for them to maintain the populist discourse in any meaningful capacity. UKIP as an institution demonstrably failed to account for this complexity and have since been resigned to political insignificance. Instead, the Brexit party now benefits from their new leader's presence.

Curiously this finding represents a mirrored version of a Laclauian insight into the incorporation of the horizontal and vertical registers in his discussion of historical change

through his notion of ‘radical democracy’. Whilst one may at first believe such an occurrence relies overwhelmingly on the horizontal dimension of “autonomy” as he called it, this would “be incapable, left to itself, of bringing about long-term historical change if it is not complemented by the vertical dimension of ‘hegemony’... [a]utonomy left to itself leads, sooner or later, to the exhaustion and dispersion of the movements of protest” (Laclau, 2014: 9). Our case highlights the consideration of this synchronisation of axes from the perspective of the vertical dimension, wherein an ‘exhaustion’ and ‘dispersion’ both occurred dramatically to the party when the reliance on this top-down discursive formation through the figure of the leader was not translated into institutional practices that allowed for the cultivation and expansion of the horizontal register.

6.3 Nationalism, Populism and Spatial Architectonics

The preceding section aimed to expand on and clarify the notion of the ‘leader’. The next contribution that is offered comes through the leveraging of the analysis performed here to address the way that the populism is conceived as a political logic, particularly in its problematic and underdeveloped relation to other logics such as nationalism. Indeed, perhaps the single largest issue facing current mainstream approaches to populism is found in either equating populism with nationalism, with regards to elements such as exclusionism, or where a distinction is recognised but the interactive processes between these two aspects is downplayed in favour of identifying populism as a flavour of nationalism ignoring potential tensions between the two. Here we may contribute to discussions of how this may be approached from within the Logics framework.

The ideational approach to populism attempts to meet these types of issues head-on: if the usage of populism as a concept is ambiguous due to a lack of ascribed content, then it is

because populism is an ideology whose content needs to be uncovered and named. As previously stated, this attempt fails due to the broad variety of apparent populist phenomena leading to the widely accepted ‘thin-ideological’ interpretation. Investigations into UKIP along these lines are even thinner with perhaps the only substantive contribution to be made by Luke March (2019) in a textual analysis of the UK party system as a whole. The issue here is that in trying to focus on a reified substance called populism, the analysis reduces populism to the degree of homogeneity found in the party’s definition of the people, given by a “people-centrism score” as well as an overall “anti-elitism score” (March, 2019: 60-61). Whilst March goes much further than previous ideational analyses by fleshing out, for example, who is included in the people and the elite, this is done segregationally and ignores the way that particular “sets of targets” (such as corrupt politicians or ambiguous foreign elites) are not pre-given but are themselves constructed in tandem with the people and their demands. Ignoring this element lends itself to attaching greater significance to the ideological ‘core’, in this case nationalism, in explaining why particular targets are chosen, instead of examining, as we do here, how such targets are constructed in line with the demands that are assigned to the people. This gap likely explains how March can simultaneously posit that UKIP attacks “corrupt national politicians and political parties”, whilst also claiming that “UKIP barely concerns itself with national political elites, except when they are the ‘regional agents’ of its main enemy, Brussels” (March, 2019: 61). The tension in such claims is dealt with in our analysis by showing how the weaving of these separate elite ‘registers’ is paramount to producing a singular bloc which can absorb all those grievances that form the equivalential chain and from which significant emotive energy can be exploited. Moreover, these tensions point to a static mode of analysis that fails to account for discursive shifts over a significant period of time (from 2001-2015 in this case) wherein significant political dislocations and shifts have occurred.

Hughes' provides a content analysis of UKIP rhetoric over a similar period of time to our own that also suffers from a similar concern (Hughes, 2019). The work relies on a breaking down of populism into three key elements (people, anti-elite, othering) and identifying the shifts in the numerical occurrence of indicators pertaining to these elements over time. The results of this analysis are that UKIP present themselves as a core-issue party (that is, EU centric), despite occasional rhetorical appeals to other areas. The author also confirms that the party does appeal to ordinary people, does use language that denigrates elites, and does differentiate between 'Britishness' and 'otherness'. Overall, it can be concluded that UKIP are a "rigid core-issue complete-populist party" (Hughes, 2019: 248). Nothing is said on the relation between these various populist elements and how they relate to the 'core-issue' aspect of UKIP, nor is the contents of the people and elite divulged to any substantial degree. Of course, any work is necessarily limited in scope, but the way that populism is utilised here is as a definition that can be divided, coded, and applied to then allow us to conclude that 'x' is populist. But, as with many such analyses, this is very much where the investigation ends.

The lack of any populist specificity gauged in relation to UKIP is not limited to ideational approaches. Discourse theory too has appeared to ignore UKIP, likely as a result of their apparent atypical stance when compared to research of other European 'radical-right' parties (Breeze, 2019), that choose to emphasise a perennial clash of civilisations, usually in relation to Islam, and whose focus on and opposition to institutions such as the EU is far less significant (Brubaker, 2017). We may also speculate that the lack of attention from ideational populist researchers may result from a similar unease with dealing with the complexity of the UKIP case relative to both these European right-populist parties and Latin American left-populist parties. Our goal then is to return to the discursive literature, beginning with Laclau, to seek rectification of these issues.

The Ontological and the Ontic

Laclau's principal role in the story of populist theory has been to relocate efforts to conceptualise its qualities at the ontological level rather than the ontic. Most notably, Laclau asks "if populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative' (Laclau, 2005: 47). This statement is peculiar in the sense that it reduces the logic of populism to the political (and indeed vice-versa), thus leaving either concept bereft of any usefully distinguishable conceptual content. Though Laclau does of course not "presuppose that equivalence and difference are simply in a zero-sum relation of exclusion of each other" (Laclau, 2005: 78), the emphasis on the former logic has often led analyses utilising his works to fail to register the contribution of the logic of difference in the very process of people construction; neglecting that in order for the people to be built up as 'legitimate' and the elite 'illegitimate', there must necessarily be a series of differential manoeuvres made to implicitly separate out both the illegitimate people and legitimate elite.

Drawing from the discourse of UKIP pre-Brexit, several distinguishing elements were harnessed to create these differentiations that determined perceived legitimacy. We find what amounts to what could be called *clauses of exception* that generate curious results that allow for a richer reading that act as a useful way in which to distinguish cases of populism. For example, the descriptions of the people given by Farage speak to suburban and rural lifestyles and communities and where urban populations are mentioned they are more associated with the 'metropolitan' identities that are equated with the elite. Similarly, where one may expect 'big business' or 'rich people' to come under the banner of the elite, Farage at times designates both of these groups as a "decent, patriotic, hard-working" and "law-abiding" foil of the British people. These elements – patriotic, hard-working, law-abiding – signal part of the criteria by

which the legitimate elite and the illegitimate can be demarcated. These conditions should be read as partial demands to be made of different groups that, if seen to be practiced by said groups, remove them from the equivalential chain that makes up the elite.

Defining populism in terms of the dominance of the logic of equivalence then may be true in a trivial or formal sense in this framework, but in terms of guiding an analysis that seeks to uncover more about the political dimension of populism in action, it may be both misleading and counterproductive. Making sense of this conceptual collusion requires us to consider the process by which Laclau reached this unsatisfying state of affairs. For this we must return to the key drive that begins the movement from populism to the political, which can be located in the formalising process which necessarily occurs through the movement from the ontic to the ontological. At times for example, Laclau (2005: 99-100) postulates the emergence of the Leader as both a necessary and inevitable result of the proliferation of the populist logic, one that generates a particular that stands for the whole. The charismatic leader is a regular feature seen in both empirical cases and as part of the substantive definitions provided by thinkers on populism. Yet to see its occurrence in Laclau indicates either a lapse back into the ontic or as a suggestion that the Leader is a formal component of the populist logic. In a similar vein, the name of the subjectivity manifested by the populist logic is 'the people'. But again, we see Laclau move from the centrality of the people within his populist schematic to the centrality of empty signifiers more generally. As Stavrakakis makes clear in his reading of the late Laclau, this transition "is essential in moving from an ontic to an ontological conception... [P]opulism as a mode of discursive articulation is no longer associated with the location of the point de capiton 'the people'" (Stavrakakis, 2004: 262).

On the one hand we have a notion of populism as the logic of the political, where the idea of equivalence and how this is articulated in every political project is the source of what we call populism; omnipresent, though apparent to greater and lesser degrees in each case. On

the other hand, we also see populism as an equivalence, but one that specifically creates an antagonistically opposed people and elite. In this view the populist logic is simply one logic of the political. Our contribution should be read as highlighting the rich texture that can be derived from cases utilising this second interpretation. Yet we can utilise our analysis to aid in the conceptualisation of this populist logic with other political logics in conjunction with the latest developments in the field.

Down/Up, In/Out

In attempting to provide clarity to the difference between Vote Leave's early and late campaign periods, we made use of a spatial analogy to highlight that the distinction between the foregrounding of particular political logics was of relationality. Using spatialised metaphors, what has been dubbed as 'discursive architectonics' within the field (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Stavrakakis, 2019), we can begin to 'map' these relations. Such spatial imaginings are ever-present in politics even if perhaps they are not recognised as such – we see for instance references to the left/right political orientation, front/back for progressives and regressive and so on. First, we can consider a horizontal axis wherein we find the logics of equivalence and difference. Imposed on this we can envisage a vertical axis that corresponds to the people-elite dynamic. Laclau's two interrelated conceptions of populism are based on a shift that does not exclude one of these poles in favour of the other, but which changes the emphasis from one to the other.²⁵

What results from this conception is a down/up orientation with which to envisage the relation between people and elite that can then be made comparable to other modes of relation. This move has been made by several leading discourse theorists who acknowledge the

²⁵ One might even characterise Laclau's work on populism as a slow but steady conceptual reorientation from the people-elite axis to the equivalential-differential one, where the former is not lost so much as it is claimed as being produced by the latter.

difficulty of grasping the notion of the people as it occurs in a given discourse; when to ‘count’ talk of the ‘workers’, the ‘public’, the ‘ordinary’, the ‘voters’, the ‘national community’ as an extension of the elusive ‘people’ (Borriello & Mazzolini, 2019; De Cleen, 2019; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).²⁶ Our initial attempts at coding produced first a search for ‘the people’ followed by extrapolating from orbiting and corresponding statements of the same form other valid substitutive terms. One key insight from performing this process was to realise that instead of isolating a ‘core’ signifier and similar proximal phrases, what is required is an indication of relationality. That is, we understand the people/elite pairing as naming a relationship whose correspondence is based on some form of social, political, or economic standing where the one sits in an inferior position to the other. This relationality can then form the basis on which coding patterns are generated for the investigation of datasets.

This is a significant advancement on Laclau’s initial conception of the populist logic. It carefully navigates between the formalism that blurs it with the political whilst simultaneously giving it conceptual clarity by pinning its functioning to a particular mode of relation that renders it separate from other types of political logics, such as the nationalistic one. Equally, whilst discursive approaches have long emphasised the need to focus on how the people are constructed, this more recent focus on relationality extends this concentration such that it must include how the elite are constituted and on what basis this is done, if one is to clearly expose the spatial orientation of said relation. This can be deeply revealing as whilst separating the people as something akin to *volk* from the people as an underdog may be a difficult task, the analysis of the elite provides a second entrance into the discourse where more clues may be found in the form of their articulation as being above or outside the people.

²⁶ It should be noted that problematic references to ‘the people’ as indicative of populism is not unique to discourse theory and discussions on how to ‘count’ such references quantitatively in all manner of research have also taken place - see for example, Jagers & Walgrave (2017) or Rooduijn & Pauwels (2011).

This development however is not without its drawbacks. These are most clearly brought out in Brubaker's critical engagement with De Cleen and Stavrakakis' central piece on the populist-nationalist distinction. Key to this is the accusation that their spatial model removes the ambiguity of 'the people' from the ontological level and inscribes it instead only at the level of the "empirical intertwining of two conceptually 'pure' phenomena: populism and nationalism" (Brubaker, 2020: 10). This is a potentially productive critique by Brubaker in so far that his point here is to preserve the notion that appeals to the people are necessarily ambiguous in so far as this represents a strategy that articulates as many agents (i.e., voters) as possible with the people. Therefore "[t]he tight weaving of vertical and horizontal registers... is central to and constitutive of populist discourse", such that even at the formal level we cannot make this spatial distinction (Brubaker, 2020: 10).

My contention is that whilst this 'weaving' is not *constitutive* of populist discourse, it remains a common problem for the abstraction of down/up and in/out spatialisations in a way that is not fully addressed by current discursive frameworks. Here we aim to contribute towards a rectification of this ambiguity problem via our own dissections of the nationalist-populist dynamic. In UKIP we have a discourse that clearly utilises both populist and nationalistic elements. Its modus operandi is the 'independence' of the UK, of the nation, from external masters, the EU. It utilises immigrants in comparison to the 'British people' in order to separate the 'in' from the 'out'. Simultaneously, on what might be dubbed an 'internal' frontier, it produces a discourse concerning the "ordinary" person, the "workers" who's "common-sense" and desire for democratic liberty and equality puts them at odds with the "Westminster establishment", the "political class" who undermines their right to sovereignty from above. Given the spatial framework available to us, one can speculate as to what moments in the discourse correspond to a relationality between inside and outside or down and up. Yet the further we move away from this formal level, the less these distinctions can be sustained.

Let us revisit the UKIP case again. We have already highlighted the position of the immigrant and the political class in relation to our two spatial axes. The immigrant takes the place of the invasive entity that uses up the social services – the National Health Service, the schools, the prisons – at the expense of the people. They claim benefits, do not pay taxes and are generally given preferential treatment over the hard-working, deserving people. In a similar fashion, the political class allows the degeneration of these services in exchange for personal wealth and power; their luxurious lifestyles, at the people's expense, a common source of antagonism. The mirrored relationship between these two should be clear, but a deeper articulation of these moments is at play that serves only to ambiguate their individuated conceptual status. An overarching parasitic quality imbued in both serves to delegitimise their claims to be part, or representative, of the people. The political class can be divided into internal and external components, the former being the Westminster elite and the latter the EU bureaucrats. This external elite simultaneously takes the form of the higher, unaccountable, illegitimate power that wrests the democratic sovereignty from the people, but the place it steals away to is a foreign land outside of the home of the people. They are both above and outside of the people in this regard. In a similar fashion we also find the discourse surrounding immigrants to be constituted of two distinct strands. Firstly, the immigrant is an incommensurable entity that seeks to 'use' the nation to their advantage and enjoyment without integrating into the culture, into the people, that is seen as the only legitimate place from which the nation is to be enjoyed.²⁷ But a second strand is present here, one in which the immigrant is also a *privileged* subject in society whose harmful effects on both nation and people are said to be protected with priority over the people under law (in receiving benefits for example, or in being granted 'first-access' to housing or other public services) which cannot be confronted or criticised by the people due to 'political correctness' and 'multi-cultural values'. In this sense

²⁷ For a detailed discussion on the way the subject is said to 'enjoy' the nation see: Žižek, 1993: 199-202.

the immigrant is not simply outside, but ‘above’ the people due to a certain privileged status. Note also that this status not only confers on them an elitist status, but that the ‘shields’ that are said to protect immigrants (PC culture or ‘diversity’ for example) are themselves seen as tools of the elite to keep the people ‘below’ them through repressing their activities and self-representation in society.

As can be plainly seen, the discourse UKIP employs does indeed ‘weave’ together both horizontal and vertical registers utilising this vital nodal point. The logic of equivalence is put to work taking selected signifiers - such as ‘diversity’, ‘political correctness’, ‘multi-culturalism’ – and using them to entwine the immigrant and the ‘political classes’ into one elite chain. In parallel, the logic of difference performs the task of separating the immigrant from the people who cannot share the same demands as the immigrant’s enjoyment is already fulfilled and satisfied by the elite. At this level, only circularity can ensue when asking if the people reject the elites due to either their otherness or their privilege, by whether they are ‘outside’ or ‘upward’; in sum, by whether the people are constituted by a nationalist or populist logic. Ostensibly, the rejection of the immigrant within this discourse is a question of ‘control’, of a rejection in lieu of the democratic exclusion of the people from the decision-making processes that dictate levels of immigration. We are of course free to dismiss this as rhetorical or ideological cover for the racism implicit within both UKIP and Brexit discourses. Yet approaching these issues and their proponents framed along these lines has proven costly to their opponents, who simply reinforced their perception as members of the elite and galvanised the subjects of the discourse further, and as theorists it may not only be dangerous to perform the same dismissal at the level of analysis, but we may also lose something vital about these discourses and their operation.²⁸

²⁸ Suggestions are already beginning to emerge from some discursive quarters that nationalist or exclusive discourses cannot be ‘proper’ populisms, leading to the very same normative conclusions that are alleged of the

Now, it would be churlish to deny the possibility of a certain scaling measurement here. Despite certain methodological deficits and difficulties, one may contend that within the confines of a given discursive frame we may see more or less of the articulation of the ‘down’ with the ‘in’ or the ‘up’ with the ‘out’. This is one potential route out of this quagmire that may still provide case-based distinctions where the ‘level’ or ‘intensity’ of populist or nationalist logics can be decided upon the basis that particular elements correspond to one axis over another. Yet what we have revealed in our analysis, alongside how spatial conceptions can be utilised, is a second *fantasmatic* route by which we distinguish the specificity of the populist logic in relation to nationalism.

Pluralising Populist Fantasies

Having established the way in which political logics can be drawn in spatial terms, we must turn our attention to how these bifurcations are invested in. Antagonism is the lead focus here as it shapes and separates the very chains that together constitute the populist discourse in its totality. The construction of the fantasmatic logics which manifest and sustain this antagonism must be undertaken to account for the effectiveness of the antagonism in generating the dichotomy of the social space and accounting for the ‘grip’ of particular significant moments in the discourse. But moreover, we can utilise these fantasmatic logics as a lens through which we can discern more clearly the spatial differentiations.

Fantasmatic logics of course play this role in any discourse, but their specificity in relation to the populist discourse is currently underdeveloped (Dean & Maignashca, 2020). Yet here again lies a way in which we can separate out political discourses guided by a populist

mainstream or ideational approaches and that discursive applications were originally trying to avoid. See, for example, Stavrakakis (2017), where he distinguishes “proper” populist discourses from many right-wing populist movements for whom populism is often only a secondary or “peripheral” feature (p530). This may well be true, but for the subjects to whom the discourse speaks this may not appear ‘peripheral’ but central and most affectively salient and as such we should not discount such discourses of their populist content so easily.

logic from others. At the heart of the antagonistic articulation between people and elite lies a certain ideological dimension, not in the sense of a rigid system of beliefs concerning societal structures or economic policy, but in terms of the communal fantasies that enjoin and empower the elements that construct these identities and their relationship. Central to furthering populist investigations is the following question: how does the subject enjoy this discourse?²⁹

Several enquires can be found that are beginning to explore this dimension and call for the ‘affective’ to be taken more seriously. Filipe da Silva and Mónica Vieira present the underlying logic of populism as a logic of resentment “operating within and mobilized by democracy’s egalitarian commitments” (da Silva & Vieira, 2018: 505). Similarly, Paul Hoggett affirms the idea that resentment is widely regarded as “the affective foundation of reactionary forms of populism” (Hoggett, 2018: 393), but is careful to distinguish between resentment as the reaction to social injustice and what he calls the more ‘toxic’ *ressentiment* that is exploited and given “shape and form” in populist movements (Hoggett, 2018: 403). By our framework however, resentment represents just one logic; just one way in which the subject can ‘enjoy’ the populist discourse. What is required in order to further explicate the fantasies underpinning populism is a pluralisation of the modes of affective enjoyment in order to account for the differences in wide-ranging populist phenomena or even, as our own analysis indicates, as a way to distinguish between different periods and emphases in one fluctuating discourse.

Broadening the affective search reveals some detailed analyses that have explored the far-reaching emotional catalogue specifically in relation to populist phenomena and the construction of a people. For example, Eklundh’s research on collective identities in Spain

²⁹ Enjoyment is understood here in the Lacanian sense of *jouissance* – that is, any affective register that attempts to partially fill the ‘lack’ in the subject. In this way, for example, resentment is enjoyable for the subject insofar that resentment towards another is in itself an explanation for the experience of a ‘lack’ in being or identity and so provides the subject with an explanation for their woes. We can say that the constitutive lack in the subject that “drives them towards empty signifiers such as ‘the people’ can therefore be more easily understood ‘as a lack of jouissance’” (Salter, 2016; Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008: 261).

reveals some key insights not only into the range of affective practices that co-construct groups (Eklundh, 2019), but also looks into the relationship that populism has with institutionalism along an emotional-rational dichotomy that is deployed by the hegemony in order to trivialise the demands and identities of populist movements (Eklundh, 2020). Demertzis' analysis into reveals a more nuanced picture of how resentment, whilst "clearing the ground for the emergence of populism" in the Greek case was driven by the repression of a consortium of connected emotions (vindictiveness, indignation, vengeance, spite, envy) which then became manifest as resentment dissipated (Demertzis, 2006: 121). Salmela and von Scheve in a similar fashion identify resentment as resulting from the repression of emotions such as fear, insecurity, and anger. But for them resentment represents only one of two psychological mechanisms behind the rise of right-wing populisms, with the second mechanism relating to what they dub 'emotional distancing' from social identities that produce these negative emotions and a move instead toward the generation of self-esteem and meaning from more stable (though potentially exclusive) identities (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). This last example in particular highlights the need to look beyond resentment, even if it can appear largely constitutive of the germination of populist movements as a reactive emotion, to see how this is then usurped or re-articulated into more proactive affective moments that help to stabilise and energise the core identities (i.e., the people), that give these movements their longevity and wider appeal.

Returning to the populist-nationalist dilemma, we can observe the proliferation of parallel fantasmatic logics in UKIP that represent a partial unravelling of populist and nationalistic elements with some deeply intriguing results. The peculiar status of the immigrant as elite can be observed again through the lens of the beatific and horrific fantasies we identified. The immigrant, as an othered subject, is a member of another populous who is disrupting the order of things by disavowing the 'enjoyment' of their home nation and coming

to the UK to ‘steal’ our enjoyment, an outside probing inward. The enjoyment of the immigrant discourse is clearly resentful, but also speaks to a (metaphoric) castration in that the imagined nation is “destroyed by an evil ‘Other’” and is an “obstacle” to the full enjoyment of the national community whose enjoyment has been stolen from them (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008: 262).

However, the discussion of the immigration moment is almost entirely framed with the idea of control. This control is in the hands of an elite who are portrayed as enjoyers of sovereignty. Two clear fantasmatic logics of resistance and liberation are at play here, which re-emerge in much the same way in the Vote Leave discourse that followed. The enjoyment from resistance is the transgressing of the authority, of the symbolic order, and is visible in the call to form a “people’s army” to resist this tyranny. The liberation fantasy takes its enjoyment from the overcoming of resentment, through “taking back control” of “our” lives, communities, and nation and in doing so divorcing the elite of their status and returning this power to the people. Following Salmela and von Scheve, whilst the resistance logic is manifest by a more *reactive* resentment at its core, the liberation logic takes its cues from a more *proactive* construction of a communal identity that is said to be realised through the imposition of the people onto the political apparatus. What this tells us is that once we move past the transgressive aspects of the discourse, we find a further fantasy that directly inscribes the societal construction and articulation of the people into the very demands that are simultaneously said to be made by those people – that through the overcoming of the elite the people can be represented *qua* the people. This emergence onto the political stage corresponds to the enjoyment experienced of an invisible subject made visible and moves beyond a simple ‘stick[ing] two fingers up to the establishment’ that is central to resentful readings, and into the establishment of a positive, communal identity that allows for the vocalised public expression of the demands and desires of the subject.

What we have then is enjoyment of the immigrant via the fantasmatic logics of castration or theft and an enjoyment of the elite via the fantasmatic logics of transgression. In this way we can see how these fantasmatic logics can aid in identifying the nationalistic or populist drive within a given discourse, as clearly the former reinforces an in-out separation that is under threat, whilst the latter gloats openly about upsetting the down-up relation. But the contribution of the fantasmatic dimension here is to reveal not only how these subjects are constructed and why they are to be antagonistically opposed, but to show how they become wedded as signifiers within the discourse and causing conceptual difficulties in the first place. The subject 'immigrant' is from the outside and the subject 'elite' is from above. But as signifiers, as objects to be arranged in the discursive field, the fantasies that surround these identities allow for the cross-pollination that implicates the one in the other. As stated, the immigrant, whilst shown as a thieving foreign subject, is primarily utilised as a signifier of the control that the people lack and which the elites enjoy. Yet other aspects of control within UKIP's discourse, such as EU regulation or democratic deficits, can be difficult to express as tangible elements with affective associations. The immigrant then plays precisely that role by taking the place of these elements, as a nodal point that binds and represents the chain of elements that the subject lacks control over. In other words, the object of 'immigrant' becomes more than a nationalistic aversion to the foreign but in parallel acts as a populist signifier that depicts the mark of the elite intervening in the social order; the trace of the workings of the 'upper' in the realm of the people.

Revitalising the Role of Populism

We argue then for a pluralisation of the way in which fantasmatic logics are reconstructed in the analysis of populist movements. Instead of restricting ourselves to a single component (resentment) that can unwittingly become a catch-all explanatory unit in the fantasmatic reinforcing of discursive frames, we should instead describe logics in each instance which

supplement the affective grip of the various elements of the discourse. Furthermore, when these fantasmatic elements are integrated into the overall Logics framework, we can see them as always being connected to the political logics on display, populist or otherwise.

What the reconstruction of these fantasmatic logics has shown is the way in which one relational axis, the in-out dichotomy, can be apportioned to help solidify the chain of the people whilst simultaneously appropriating affective nationalistic signifiers, such as the immigrant, to provide fantasmatic support for the down-up separation. We have shown how, by moving beyond simply 'weighing' the populist or nationalist status of a discourse, we can see how these logics are imbricated and summoned within each other. Our focus on the nationalist-populist combination has revealed an intersection between resentful, castrated, and transgressive fantasmatic modes, but this is only in one such case. These can and should be pluralised further by looking to more cases not simply within this particular constellation of logics, but also in other 'exclusionary' and 'inclusionary' forms of populist discourse. Moreover, the very possibility of even making such a distinction between such forms may be eased through a turn to the fantasmatic logics and the sources of enjoyment proposed within such discourses.

Between affirming the relational component of the populist logic and calling for a pluralisation of how we conceive of the 'grip' of the fantasies that support these relations, we can gain far greater precision in naming and describing the function of the people and the elite, particularly in reference to their congruence with other political logics operating within the discourse. The use of fantasmatic logics aids us in identifying various types of enjoyment that the subject receives from the discourse and how these logics relate back to the political logics. We were able to show how the fantasies supporting the antagonistic divide between the people and the elite display a curious overlapping of a legitimate people, in terms of their nation, with an illegitimate elite, in terms of their power and status. The enjoyment factor here read largely

in terms of a resistance to a technocratic and malfunctioning democratic system from which liberation could be achieved and power returned to the people. Potential future research that specifically sought out the fantasmatic aspect would need to involve a greater focus on the movement from affective moments such as resentment through to more proactive emotional motivations to generate understandings of how populism mobilises support.

Our development of populism into an analytical tool capable of handling this web of logics is beneficial because it wards against reducing and reifying populism as a substantive object to be uncovered and identified within a given case. Instead, this approach begins with populism as a starting point, just as our analysis UKIP did, but then encourages us to move beyond the bounds of this one logic and explore and the relationships and articulations that give this instance of populism its specificity. Our hope is that this particular use of the Logics approach provides a way with which these multiple components can be grasped holistically whilst retaining a grammar with which to investigate each strand distinctly.

Conclusion

The use of the term populism has exploded to encompass all manner of political practices, movements, and figures and in doing so has created a new branch of political analysis. While questions concerning its descriptive potential as a signifier remain, what has been contributed here is a way in which we can maintain, and enhance, its usefulness as an analytical concept in this ever-emerging field. Analysing this logic that, to varying degrees, structures the discursive arrangement in which it occurs, we become well placed to observe the identifications, relationships and networks of signification that produce multifaceted phenomena that cannot be *reduced* to populism, but in which we can locate a populist logic and evaluate its function. From this, we can produce configurations of logics whose specificity can be maintained within a given context, but which provides a means to make comparisons to other cases and phenomena.

We have demonstrated what this configuration looks like in the UKIP case, and furthermore have shown how this configuration can be tracked over time to yield further insights into the functioning of the discourse over an extended period. UKIP has previously been investigated and referred to as an atypical European right-wing populist party. What our contribution demonstrates is the specificity of the designator ‘populist’ in this case (and perhaps with this specificity, reasons behind its apparently atypical status). We have utilised the populist logic to explain the previously observed expansion of their reach beyond a single-issue party to one with a significantly broader appeal. Constructed around a political frontier dividing the people from the elite, elements that previously took their meaning from a nationalistic logic – such as independence or immigration – could be reworked as a series of demands that drew their affective support from a multiplicity of fantasmatic sources, ranging from allusions to a militaristic defence of the realm through to liberation narratives invoking the overthrow of the

corrupt regime. As opposed to simply finding UKIP to be a populist party, we instead conclude that we find a party that sits in a fluid relationship with a populist logic. Whilst references to populist terms, as traditionally conceived of, are present throughout the period we examine, our analysis reveals that UKIP engaged in the establishment of a populist discourse from 2011 through to the Brexit referendum in 2016. Prior to, and after, this period they can best be described as having a nationalist discourse with only rhetorical flourishes toward more populist credentials.

Moreover, we have shown how the Vote Leave campaign appropriated the UKIP discourse in the second half of the referendum campaign. We demonstrated how the statement ‘take back control’ could become of such import and reverberate by making clear its status as an empty signifier within a wider populist discourse. The rapid establishment of a populist discourse here could, and has, been seen as abrupt (Smith et al., 2020), but our analysis shows that this was not as difficult or instantaneous a task as first appears as UKIP had already laid the groundwork for the expression of such a discourse. The connection of the nodal points of immigration and control were well developed prior to their co-option by Vote Leave, who simply vaulted them to the forefront of the political terrain. The much-heralded strategist Dominic Cummings was not responsible for the creation of this discourse, but he recognised the efficacy of an existing discourse which could be transplanted onto a much more powerful host. The official capacity of the Vote Leave campaign revoked Farage’s centrality to the populist discourse of his own making, handing this role to Boris Johnson who of course would go on to implement the ‘will of the people’ as Prime Minister in the years to follow. Meanwhile, as UKIP were crowded out of the populist territory in the referendum, they chose to re-adopt the privileging of the nationalistic logic to maintain their relevance, a move that would not pay off and see them collapse out of public sight and to the margins of electoral politics.

Via characters such as Farage and Johnson, we have also built upon discursive understandings of the role of the leader. Where such figures fit within these highly formalised definitions and frameworks of populism has been a problematic query. In identifying the leader with the concept of the empty signifier we have shown how they form part of the discursive structure itself. However, in trying to capture their agency in the co-construction of the discursive structures within which they operate, we consider their status as one of a prime articulator. In shaping and articulating the various elements of the discourse, they leave an affective trace that slowly incorporates them as a moment in the discourse. The subject is then able to enjoy the discourse and the antagonisms therein through these figures. Farage's centrality to the functioning, and not just the creation, of UKIP's discourse cannot be understated in this regard, and our reading can add to discursive understandings of how this significance is manifest. This conception of the leader also provokes future research questions concerning the relationship between how populist groups are organised and the occurrence of these articulators, as well as to the solidity of such discourses given the instability of UKIP following Farage's exit.

Equally we have made a significant contribution to the theoretical framework in terms of understanding how the nationalist logic both intertwines with and conflicts with the populist logic – demonstrating the specific challenges involved in the articulation of these components together and showing that they are by no means a 'natural' fit as is often assumed. Perhaps of greatest significance here is a repositioning of antagonism as a point of investigation. This underdeveloped element can be understood as constitutive of the fantasmatic modes which inform the underlying ideological features that co-construct how the populist logic manifests. Cashed out in terms of fantasmatic logics, we can commensurate the ideological dimension with the logics which structure the discourse to provide a fuller picture of what these discourses offer the public. The often-normative anti-populist academic reaction appears to result from an

ambiguous equivocation of populism with nationalism and other exclusionary proclivities (Stavrakakis, 2017). But if we can grasp this populist-nationalist nettle, we reveal in discourses such as UKIP's how they tap into particular inequalities, fears, and uncertainties with a "popular-democratic grammar" (Stavrakakis, 2017: 530); obliging us to recognise that they are offering a particular appeal, organised, and presented in a particular way that is found wanting elsewhere and which strikes much deeper than simple exclusionary-nationalist appeals.

Our research however is not without its limits. Whilst the scale of the work, in terms of a close following of a number of texts over time, allowed for a wide reading that allowed for a significant *diachronic* portrayal of the discourse, a return to specific 'sites of interest', such as the construction and establishment of UKIP's populism from its 'peak' in 2013-2015, would make for a richer *synchronic* understanding of the flavour of populism engaged in during this particular snapshot. A more focused work could utilise a multifaceted databank that would include manifestos, advertising campaigns and perhaps interviews with party members to draw on a larger body of practices. With access to such practices, we could establish the 'norms' that form the backdrop against which could be derived a series of social logics, one that is lacking in our current picture. This would enrich the analysis because those norms provide the grounds by which the construction of the people and the elite take their cues; informing what elements are articulated along the down-up, in-out poles. This would help to recalibrate analyses that even in the form elaborated here perhaps leans too heavily on examining the articulation of the people and the elite without simultaneously reading their constitution as an *embodiment* of those norms that are being either challenged or sustained and thus require the intervention of the people in the first instance. This would open a further avenue with which to designate the specificity of populism in a given case, in conjunction with our spatial and fantasmatic methods, by asking questions as to what the norms under challenge pertain. Do they, for instance, concern democracy, equality, representation, the nation, self-determination,

patriotism and so on? Equally, what norms are claimed to be under threat and that require our collective defence? We may ask, are these located at the level of individuals or the nation? Only once these terms are laid down can the subjects that protect or threaten these norms begin to be chained into an elite against which a popular front can be established. With a more complete picture of the social logics that warrant defence and contestation, we would be better placed to tease out the reasoning behind the inclusion and exclusion of particular elements from the people and the elite on the basis of their contribution toward or resistance to these norms.

Further questions are implicated in our work that may form the basis for future research. Whilst UKIP dropped away, both Conservative and Labour parties would make claims to represent the will of the people and have been argued to be engaging in populist rhetoric, to varying degrees, since Brexit (Browning, 2019; Finders, 2020; Stefanowitsch, 2019; Watts & Bale, 2019). But both questions of if and how their discourses constituted a case of populism requires further analysis. Our method of distinguishing national and populist logics and their complex relationship could go a long way to providing such an investigation with the tools to differentiate distinct modes of populism(s) in their contact with conservative and socialist traditions, and particularly in relation to the ever-present Brexit debates. This could help expand our understanding of the resonance of populist practices and provide a much fuller picture of the extent to which they reverberated through British politics after the Brexit referendum. Moreover, such an analysis could uncover the extent to which the nodal points and fantasmatic threads highlighted here were able to dominate this new terrain and what measures were taken by the ‘mainstream’ parties to take advantage of their presence, or try to counter them, through their reincorporation into new discursive arrangements. Coupled with the methodological improvements that resulted from the limitations of our own analysis – in expanding the role of norms and diversifying the modes of fantasy associated with populism at present – we have a powerful and novel way with which to take a deep dive into particular

political struggles to reveal not only the extents of populism, but the effect of populism on their ability to construct coherent, powerful, and effective discourses. Further still, those conflictual moments between different groups attempting to harness the populist logic opens room for a much more critical confrontation with not only populist party politics, but with the strategies of their opponents. More research could, for instance, utilise the network of logics developed to describe the Vote Leave campaign and compare this with the logics of the Remain camp. A critical intervention here could provide insights into why Remain failed to counter the populist threat of Leave and proffer discursive maneuverers which could have hindered and outflanked this emerging discourse. This in turn could be framed as part of the wider debate on the interactions and contestations between populisms, anti-populisms, and non-populisms.

Populism, for better or worse, has captured the gaze of many commentators. The concept has been deployed to capture a host of heterogeneous phenomena from across the political spectrum. My aim throughout this study was to engage with a deficit in the productive value of populism as a tool of analysis. Populism, as a political logic, is a powerful tool for the imbrication of a multiplicity of demands, drives and desires. Developing methods for its direct and clear engagement is necessary to understanding some of the most pressing and wide-reaching political movements arising at present. To this end, we have constructed, deployed, and revised a promising procedure for this engagement in order to better grasp the discourses of UKIP and Vote Leave, with the hope that these analyses will expand our understanding of the concept of populism itself.

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- 2008A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Bournemouth: 08/09/2008.
- 2009S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Exeter: 18/04/2009.
- 2009A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Southport: 03/09/2009.
- 2010S. Pearson, M. UKIP Spring Conference. Milton Keynes: 12/03/2010.
- 2010A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Torquay: 03/09/2010.
- 2011S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Scarborough: 05/03/2011.
- 2011A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Eastbourne: 09/09/2011.
- 2012S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Skegness: 03/03/2012.
- 2012A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Birmingham: 21/09/2012.
- 2013S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Exeter: 23/03/2013.
- 2013A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. London: 20/09/2013.
- 2014S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Torquay: 28/03/2014.
- 2014A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Doncaster: 26/09/2014.
- 2015S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Margate: 27/02/2015.
- 2015A. Farage, N. UKIP Annual Conference. Doncaster: 25/09/2015.
- 2016S. Farage, N. UKIP Spring Conference. Llandudno: 27/02/2016.
- 2016A. James, D. UKIP Annual Conference. Bournemouth: 16/09/2016.
- 2017S. Nuttall, P. UKIP Spring Conference. Bolton: 17/02/2017.