

MEDIA AND FREE MOBILITY: FRAMING A10 MIGRANTS IN THE BRITISH NEWSPAPERS FROM 2004 TO 2016

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ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on the way British newspapers framed the influx of A10 migrants in order to gain a better insight into media discourse on free mobility within the EU. The fifth EU enlargement resulted in an unexpected influx of Eastern Europeans, raising concern about its impact on Britain. The first wave of the enlargement in May 2004, adding eight new members from Central and Eastern Europe: Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia, known as A8, in addition to Malta and Cyprus, resulted in the influx of A8 migrants. Similarly, the second wave of the enlargement in January 2007, adding Romania and Bulgaria, known as A2, enhanced the influx of Romanians and Bulgarians. The trend has generated a bulk of research, particularly focused on its impact on the British economy. However, it still deserves more research, particularly in relation to media discourse. Indeed, the way newspapers dealt with the influx had major repercussions on the British socio-political landscape, affecting election results, mainly by weakening the position of the two major parties, namely Labour and the Conservatives. This situation also increased Euro-scepticism among right-wing parties, particularly UKIP (UK Independent Party), paving the way for Brexit. Selected articles are qualitatively analysed, using Maxwell McCombs's media framing, and juxtaposed to Ipsos Mori polls dealing with similar issues to gain more insight into media discourse in relation to the way it could shape public opinion. The paper seeks to argue that media frames seemed to have had a major effect on British citizens' attitudes towards the new arrivals, depicting them as new 'others', contributing to their marginalisation and thus subjecting them to different forms of discrimination and hate crimes. Similarly, failure to handle the influx weakened the position of the two major parties, thus affecting the British socio-political landscape.

Keywords: *Brexit, British attitudes, Eastern Europeans, migration, media frames.*

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Great Britain was the target of an unexpected influx of Eastern Europeans following the fifth EU enlargement. The trend has generated a bulk of studies, particularly in relation to the impact of A10 migrants on the British labour market. One example that contributed to the growing literature on the trend is Ciupijus's (2012) study conducted in 2009 and 2010, and focused on a number of interviews with new arrivals to gain a better understanding of the way EU citizens enjoying free mobility were received in Britain. Yet, it was limited in scope, being focused on the perspectives of migrants from five countries: Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and confined to the period covering the two waves of the EU enlargement.

Fox *et al.* (2012) have also been interested in Eastern European migration, arguing that the trend has been racialised in relation to British immigration policies and tabloids. The study has particularly shown that immigration policies have invoked shared whiteness, thus racially including the new arrivals within the British mainstream society at the expense of non-EU migrants. But tabloids have invoked A10 migrants' cultural differences and thus excluding them from their host society. This study has also contributed to the existing literature on the trend, though it has been limited in scope and time span, being focused on two types of migrants, Hungarians arriving in 2004 and Romanians arriving in 2007.

Given that controversy over the trend extended beyond that period and involved other migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, it still requires further research, particularly from a media studies perspective. The current study is, therefore, an endeavour to carry out a longitudinal research on the topic from 2004 to 2016, a span of time including the two waves of the fifth EU enlargement, along with the June 2016 Brexit Referendum. The intention is to study the trend from a different angle, dealing with A10 migrants in relation to their impact on the British socio-political landscape. By so doing, the study could broaden the scope of research on Eastern European migration, knowing that controversy over the influx intensified during and after Brexit Referendum, raising more concern about the right to free mobility among EU citizens in Great Britain.

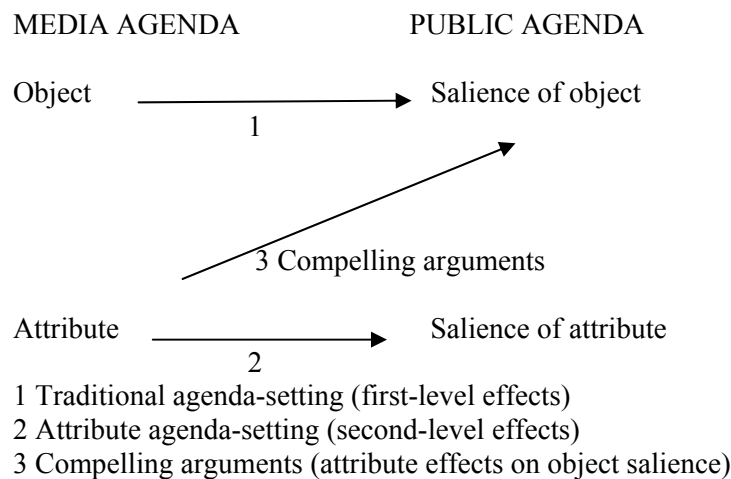
2. METHODOLOGY

The research tool used in this study is McCombs' framing, a renowned method through which one can gauge the effect of media on people's attitudes towards the most important issues, A10 migration as a case study. McCombs and Ghanem consider frames as "organizing principles incorporating and emphasising certain lower level attributes to the exclusion of many others. Frames, or attribute agenda-setting for McCombs, serve as efficient bundling devices of micro-

attributes and, in turn, can be thought of as macro-attributes” (McCombs 2004, 88). In this sense, the media “not only tell us what to think about, but [...] also tell us *how to think* about some objects” (*ibid.*, 71).

From this perspective, this study focuses on the transfer of attributes related to A10 migrants from the media to the public in a bid to see the way it could shape British citizens’ attitudes towards the new arrivals. Attention is drawn to such frames in relation to the socio-political landscape, examining the way they could influence British citizens’ attitudes towards the two major parties and the burgeoning of right-wing parties, known for their Eurosceptic feelings, particularly UKIP. For a better insight into media effects, see Diagram 1 below with particular attention to attribute agenda-setting, the tool used throughout this research, bearing the fact that the term ‘object’ corresponds to A10 migrants in the current study.

For a better understanding of the main themes covered in this study, it is necessary to shed some light on the idea of ‘Otherness’. The term ‘other’ appeared in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* first published in 1978 in which he emphasised Westerners’ objectification of the Orient, particularly in relation to Arabs and Muslims¹. But ‘otherness,’ in Kastoryano’s (2010) view, is not necessarily confined to religious and cultural aspects; it rather changes in accordance with social reality, which could shape public opinion and political decisions (88). In this view, this study is centred on the idea that media framing seemed to have affected British citizens’ attitudes towards A10 migrants to the extent of perceiving them as new others affecting the British socio-political landscape despite their European identity.



Source: McCombs (2004, p. 92).

Diagram 1: Transfer of salience between the media agenda and the public agenda.

¹ For more details, see Said *et al.* 63–65.

3. OBJECTIVES

The study probes the way British newspapers framed the influx of A10 migrants, emphasising the perspectives used to draw the attention of internet browsers, particularly in relation to the attributes associated with the new arrivals. The intention is to find whether the top newspapers constructed the same image about such migrants in a bid to find whether there is a link between such frames and British citizens' attitudes towards A10 migrants. The study also seeks to find whether there is any connection between media frames and the rise of right-wing parties, with their growing Eurosceptic feelings, affecting the British socio-political landscape.

The study seeks to answer two research questions. The first one is "How did three British newspapers, differing in type, political affiliation and position on the net represented A10 migrants?" The second question is "What was the impact of media framing on the British socio-political landscape?" To this end, opinion polls on migration and migrants are juxtaposed to the different frames and attributes to find whether there is any link between media frames and British public opinion in relation to their attitudes towards A10 migrants as well as the two-party system and the growing impact of third and fourth parties in the country.

4. CORPUS DESCRIPTION

The corpus, qualitatively analysed using media framing theory, was selected from the top three newspapers, differing in terms of market, political stances and net browsers. The *Daily Mail*, is a tabloid and Middle Market newspaper known for being extremely conservative, registering a monthly reach of 14,322 from October 2016 to September 2017, for instance. The *Sun* is a left-wing tabloid and Lower Market, with a monthly reach of 12,982 during the same period. The *Guardian* is a left-of-centre broadsheet and Upper Market newspaper, with a monthly reach of 9,978.² Five keywords were used in the search engine: *Brexit*, *Eastern Europeans*, *migration*, *mobility* and *referendum*, yielding thousands of articles, all of which were refined to keep the ones bearing at least one of the keywords. A total number of 2061 articles were obtained from the official websites of the newspapers: 1108 articles from the *Daily Mail*, 291 from the *Sun* and 662 from the *Guardian*. Using the same keywords, the corpus also included 50 polls downloaded from Ipsos Mori, among the leading world companies focused on public opinion.

² For more details, see www.statista.com.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The influx was framed as a dilemma to Britain, representing A10 migrants as new ‘others’, particularly by the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun*, subjecting them to different forms of discrimination and hate crimes, putting free mobility within the EU at stake. Yet, the new arrivals were portrayed as an asset to Britain, contributing to taxes and the labour market, as occasionally emphasised in the *Guardian*. Similarly, the influx was framed in terms of its impact on the British political landscape, accusing both Labour and the Conservatives of mishandling the trend. Such frames, depicted through headlines, leads, pictures and captions, undermined the two-party system, giving room to third and fourth parties. These frames increased Euro-scepticism, leading to the split between two partners, namely Britain and the EU, following the June 2016 Brexit Referendum. The implication is that media frames seemed to have had an impact on the British public opinion, as reflected in the polls dealing with similar issues.

5.1. THE DILEMMA OF A10 MIGRANTS: AN INVASION OF NEW ‘OTHERS’ THREATENING BRITAIN OR FREE MOBILITY OF EU NATIONALS?

A10 migrants represented a headache first to the Labour government, then to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition and later to the Conservatives, framing the influx as an invasion of new ‘others’, though occasionally depicted as an asset to Britain, being EU nationals enjoying free mobility. As from May 2004, A10 migrants were portrayed as a major threat, which intensified prior to and in the aftermath of the second wave of the EU enlargement in January 2007 and peaked before and after the Brexit Referendum in June 2016. The arrivals were considered as a huge burden, contributing, for instance, to discrimination against British citizens. It was reported that an investigation launched by Trevor Phillips, Chair of The Equalities and Human Rights Commission, aimed at stopping bias against whites, presumably protecting British citizens from discrimination in the labour market following such an influx.³

Resolution Foundation, a left leaning think tank, claimed that high levels of migration were causing about £450 loss in wages among blue-collar British citizens, linking it to the growing number of cheap labour from Eastern Europe. Reducing foreign workers to below 100,000 would bring about a £150 pay rise on a yearly basis for natives.⁴ Such figures put more pressure on Theresa May’s government to handle the influx, particularly by Brexiteers, including Labour MP Frank Field who argued that Britain’s open borders were behind low wages among

³ Phillips, T. (2007). Britons ‘lose out on jobs and housing’. *The Daily Mail*. November 1.

⁴ Hawkes, S. (2016). Migrants cause lower pay: Soaring rise in immigration ‘has cost blue collar Brits £450’. *The Sun*. August 15.

natives, a view confirmed by Andrew Green, Migration Watch Chair. The Foundation emphasised the impact of the influx on the nature of Britain, causing a migrant population boom in a number of towns such as Mansfield and Corby, reaching 400% since 2004. At the national level, migrants jumped from 10% of the population in 2004 to 16% in 2016. In Boston, Lincolnshire (in the same region where the ‘gigotagte’ took place, as developed in the section on the influx and British politics), for instance, there was a 255% increase in migrant share of the population from 2004 to 2016. The influx resulted in a baby boom, making Poles the largest ethnic group overcoming Indians, with 22,928 Polish mothers who had given birth to babies in Britain in 2015, compared to 3,403 in 2005. As for Romanians, in 2015, 8,700 mothers had given birth to babies, compared to 4,872 Lithuanians. Such a boom raised more concern about the impact of the influx on British schools and hospitals, giving more sense, in the view of Green, to the referendum result⁵.

Other figures showed that over one million Poles and Eastern Europeans were part of the British labour market in 2016, compared to 561,000 in 2010 under David Cameron’s premiership, including 276,000 Romanians and Bulgarians. In 2015, there was an increase of 610,000 employees, 60% of who were foreigners, presumably with a large proportion from Eastern Europe. Such figures, in the view of Green, were evidence of the impact of A10 migrants on local communities and thus the outcome of the Brexit Referendum. This raised more concern about mass migration, putting more pressure on May’s government to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands, Cameron’s pledge since 2010.⁶

Such concern was reflected in opinion polls, putting immigration as one of the major issues in Britain. An Ipsos Mori poll (6-11 November 2013) revealed that 63% of British citizens were supporting the government’s intention to restrict benefits for Romanians and Bulgarians. It also showed that 45% of voters believed in reinforcing the minimum wage in order to protect native workers from cheap labour from Eastern Europe. The December 2014 Issues Index revealed that 42% of British voters believed that immigration was the top issue, up five points, compared to the November 2014 Index. What is more, 57% of Conservative voters were arguing for putting more pressure on Cameron to deliver on the trend.

Yet, high records of migration, reaching 2.15 million, as revealed in the *Guardian*, involved a majority of migrants from France, Spain and Italy (131,000 of the 224,000 extra workers) rather than Romanians and Bulgarians, arguing that such a rise could heighten the referendum debate in relation to Britain’s EU

⁵ Hawkes, S. (2016). Polish labourers: Migrant mums accounted for 75% of births in parts of UK last year, with Poles topping the list. *The Sun*. August 25.

⁶ Hawkes, S. (2016). Euromillion bag UK jobs: More than a million Poles and other Eastern Europeans now work in the UK. *The Sun*. August 17.

membership and migration⁷. As for Eastern Europeans, the trend was said to have been stable, reaching 900,000 migrant workers, as the gap in disposable income between Poland, for instance, and Britain had been halved in almost a 16-year period of time.⁸ The implication is that the row over A10 migrants was not reasonable since the trend involved a large number of other Europeans, evidence of the dilemma of the trend, particularly to Labour and the Conservatives.

The idea that EU workers were not harmful to natives was reiterated before the referendum, when controversy over the impact of the new arrivals on the labour market in terms of wages and job prospects was at its peak. There was a sharp increase in the number of EU workers, jumping from 1.4 million in 2013 to 2.1 million in 2016, making EU citizens account for 6.8% of the British workforce, compared to 4.8% in 2013 and 2.6% in 2006. Yet, such a rise, reaching 700,000 in three years, coincided with a rise among natives, adding 1 million workers during the same period, making a total number of 28 million British citizens, compared to 3 million foreign nationals⁹.

The implication is that foreigners in general were not taking British jobs; they were rather contributing to the British economy by 0.6% on a yearly basis, as estimated by the Office of Budget Responsibility. What is more, figures released by the Office for National Statistics could not confirm the idea that foreigners were taking British jobs, being mere estimates of the number of employees. In other words, such figures could not reflect on new migrant workers, as the newly-employed could very likely be British residents much longer than the new arrivals. John Van Reenen, one of the authors of the study, pointed out that a Brexit deal similar to Norway or Switzerland would not affect high migration a great deal whereas a looser trading deal would be harmful in terms of trade and foreign investment¹⁰.

In the same vein, lower wages among natives were attributed to the 2008 recession rather than the growing number of EU migrants, as revealed by researchers at the London School of Economics, arguing that neither natives' wages, nor their jobs were affected in areas with a growing number of EU migrants. Migrants' consumption of goods and services benefited the British economy by raising demand levels and creating new job opportunities for British citizens. Jonathan Wadsworth, one of the report's authors, claimed that EU migration was "at worst neutral and at best, another economic benefit"¹¹,

⁷ Travis, A. (2016). Number of EU migrants working in UK rises to record level. *The Guardian*. May 18.

⁸ Travis, A. (2016). Are EU migrants really taking British jobs and pushing down wages? *The Guardian*. May 20.

⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

¹¹ Elliott, L. (2016). EU migrants have no negative effect on UK wages, says LSE. *The Guardian*. May 11.

emphasising the fact that EU migrants were helpful in reducing the budget deficit by paying more taxes. Wadsworth's argument refuted the claim that the arrivals were a burden on the British welfare system. Yet, immigration appeared, along with the NHS, as one of the biggest issues in Britain, as reflected in the October 2016 Issues Index, with 36% each¹².

5.2. A10 MIGRANTS: WHITE EUROPEANS SUBJECT TO DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIMES

Framing A10 migrants as new 'others' subjected them to different types of discrimination and hate crimes, particularly in the aftermath of Brexit, though they were occasionally portrayed as contributors to a number of crimes and frauds. A car dealer advertised a BMW E39 for sale and was later contacted by three people claiming to be from Bulgaria (actually from Romania) to buy the car for less than half of its price. Through the CCCTV cameras near his home in Royton, Manchester, the dealer was able to discover that he had been distracted by the men who had chosen to check the car in the dark when one of them had poured oil into the coolant system to damage it.¹³

In some areas, British citizens claimed that they were alienated because of Eastern Europeans who contributed to the creation of ghettos. Page Hall, Sheffield, home to 6,000 Roma and Eastern Europeans, with a majority from Slovakia since 2012, was transformed into a crime-plagued ghetto, registering 145 robberies in 2015, a highest record in Sheffield. For some residents, the increasing number of A10 migrants destroyed their community because of their poor English, a view confirmed by Mark Payne, a specialist in the Roma community at the University of Sheffield. An elderly resident claimed that she would not go shopping after 8 a.m. because the new arrivals would start roaming the streets, adding that she would not carry a handbag lest she be stolen. A petition, signed by 2,000 people in 2014, aimed at putting an end to attacks by Roma gangs in one of the schools in the area.¹⁴

However, Poles showed more concern about their safety, arguing that reaction against Brexit released "an evil genie out of the bottle,"¹⁵ subjecting them to different forms of racism and hate crimes. A Polish centre in Hammersmith, West London, was daubed with a "Go Home" graffiti.¹⁶ Outside a school in

¹² Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 992 adults aged 18+ across Britain.

¹³ Fruen, L. (2016). Oily Customers: Moment Romanian scammers 'pour oil into coolant system of BMW before test drive – then ask for knock-down price when it sounded faulty' down price when it sounded faulty'. *The Sun*. October 25.

¹⁴ Jackson, K. (2016). The Roma Empire: Locals blast crime-hit Sheffield 'ghetto' where 6,000 Eastern European immigrants have settled since 2012. *The Sun*. December 6.

¹⁵ Wells, T. (2016). Post-Brexit 'hate crimes': Shockwaves sent through Polish community as 'racially motivated' graffiti is spray-painted on social club. *The Sun*. June 26.

¹⁶ *Idem*.

Huntingdon, Cambridge, with a large number of registered Eastern European children, leaflets in English and Polish bearing expressions such as ‘Leave the EU. No more Polish vermin’ and ‘Go home, Polish scum’ were distributed. Indeed, there was a 500% rise in hate crimes targeting A10 migrants, including verbal abuse and xenophobic language. Reports on hate crimes in Hammersmith reached 331 a week on the National Police Chief’s Council portal, compared to a 63-weekly average¹⁷. A Romanian store in Norwich was completely devastated in the aftermath of Brexit after an incendiary device had been thrown on it¹⁸.

Another case involved a Romanian woman attacked by teenagers in Northern Ireland after asking her whether she could speak English. When she stated she was from Romania, they expressed their hatred to Romanian migrants. A video recording the event posted on social media attracted a number of sympathisers who were against such crimes. One comment, explicitly linking such behaviour to Brexit, read: “It sickens me how the kids think because the UK decided to leave the European Union these people have no rights”.¹⁹ Although the incident sparked a police investigation to face such crimes, it is evidence of the impact of media frames on British citizens’ reaction to Eastern Europeans, particularly following Brexit, subjecting them to different types of hate crimes.

Another aspect of discrimination appeared a few days before the Referendum when bosses in a company in Sheffield deprived Eastern Europeans of speaking their own language. The measure was taken following a complaint by an employee working with a group of Poles conversing in their mother tongue. Such a measure would negatively affect performance in the company when two Poles or Slovaks, for instance, converse in English, making it difficult for them to be understood. But a company spokesman claimed that the aim was to avoid isolation and intimidation of employees coming from different ethnic backgrounds working in a multi-cultural business. In his view, enforcing English during working hours would bring a harmonious atmosphere among the employees²⁰. In the same vein, a twenty-one-year-old student at Portsmouth University was injured after a group of gangsters had slashed his throat with a broken bottle and beat him with wood planks, insisting that he should not speak Polish in England²¹.

¹⁷ Fruen, L. (2016). Hate crimes soar: Reports of abuse up 500 PER CENT since Brexit, official figures show. *The Sun*. July 1.

¹⁸ Flynn, E. (2016). Shop torched: Eastern European food store gutted in a devastating fire attack in the early hours. *The Sun*. July 8.

¹⁹ Charlton, C. (2016). ‘We don’t like Romanians’: Shocking moment youths throw stones at eastern European immigrant and spark police probe in Northern Ireland. *The Sun*. October 3.

²⁰ Lake, E. (2016). EU must speak English: Factory boss bans Eastern European workers from talking in their native languages. *The Sun*. July 3.

²¹ Culliford, G. and Wooding, D. (2016). ‘It was a low blow’: Boxing legend Carl Froch reveals rival’s taunts about his Polish family hit him hard as he launches anti-hate campaign. *The Sun*. November 27.

Hate crimes escalated in the aftermath of Brexit when a Pole, Arkadiusz Jóźwik, was beaten to death by teenagers in Harlow, Essex, among the top thirty regions in England and Wales with the largest number of Eastern Europeans.²² Another one from the Czech Republic, Zdenek Makar, was beaten to death with a bike chain in front of a chicken shop²³. Indeed, feelings of xenophobia and hatred reached other foreigners, as reported in *Die Welt*, a German newspaper, by a German lawyer living in Britain for thirteen years. Germans were advised not to speak their mother tongue in public following the Brexit vote, creating uncertainty among EU residents on their future in Britain. A German professor living in London for fifteen years had refused a position at Cambridge University and was considering other alternatives elsewhere.²⁴ In fact, such feelings were predominant prior to the Referendum, pushing A10 migrants to apply for British citizenship as a contingency plan while others were thinking of returning home, particularly for the absence of any British plan after exiting the EU. A French national, who was certain about her leaving, claimed that controversy over Brexit made EU nationals no longer feel at home, feeling rejected similar to a bad transplant. Another person, a Belgian married to a British citizen, was also worried about her status, wondering whether all EU citizens would be required to leave after Brexit²⁵.

5.3. THE INFLUX AND BRITISH POLITICS: EURO-SCEPTICISM AND THE RISE OF THIRD AND FOURTH PARTIES

Media framing of A10 migrants seemed to have affected the British political landscape, increasing concern about the influx during the period in focus, particularly prior to and in the aftermath of Brexit. The effect of such frames was quite noticeable during the campaign for the 2010 general election when Gordon Brown, British Prime Minister from June 2007 to May 2010, promised to provide “British jobs for British workers”. Yet, such a promise lied in tatters after his encounter with Gillian Duffy, the 65-year-old lady and lifelong Labour supporter, in Rochdale, Lancashire, bruising Brown’s campaign after describing the lady as a ‘bigoted’ woman. His remark was a reaction against the lady’s series of questions, including one on Eastern Europeans. The event, known as the ‘bigotgate’, contributed to the end of Brown’s political career, leaving Ten Downing Street without winning a general election, signalling the re-emergence of the three-party system. This was obvious in this statement by Nick Clegg, then leader of the

²² Levy, A. and Inderdeep, B. (2016). Gang of teenage thugs who beat Polish man to death were like a ‘pack of hyenas’, says witness. The *Daily Mail* August 31.

²³ Dathan, M. (2016). Czech PM tells Theresa May to take action after linking the chicken shop killing of Czech businessman to Brexit. The *Daily Mail*. September 30.

²⁴ Cambridge, E. (2016). ‘Don’t speak German in public’: London-based Germans warned not to speak their language in public after Brexit vote. The *Sun*. October 27.

²⁵ Walsh, J. (2016). EU referendum: Europeans in Britain fear Brexit vote. The *Guardian*. May 9.

Liberal Democrats, during the final televised debate: “Don’t vote for those two discredited dinosaurs. Vote for me and get ‘decent open politics’”.²⁶ Clegg also emphasised that “the tectonic plates of politics are shifting, and the choice has distilled down to a vote for his party or a Conservative party that will ‘cast the country adrift’”.²⁷

Under the coalition government, there was more hysteria over the influx, particularly that from Bulgaria and Romania. Such hysteria contributed to the rise of UKIP, threatening major parties in relation to immigration, becoming “at least partly, the party of the disaffected,” boosting Nigel Farage’s popularity, mainly among Conservative supporters, with 47% believing that he was doing a good job. In Farage’s view, the EU enlargement and the influx of A10 migrants “created a ‘gateway for organised crime’” from former Warsaw Pact countries which had not yet “recovered from communism”,²⁸ validating the idea of ‘otherness’ of Eastern Europeans. Farage suggested measures to curb foreign jobseekers to provide more opportunities for British workers, excluding Romanians and Bulgarians whose full rights as EU citizens were due in January 2014 after lifting the seven-year restriction rules. His attitudes seemed to have given him centre stage, becoming neck-and-neck with Cameron on handling immigration.²⁹ Former Prime Minister, Tony Blair accused Farage of ‘stigmatising’ the new arrivals in the hope of attracting dissatisfied white working class voters.³⁰

Worries about the emergence of UKIP and its leader as a threat to the major parties was reflected in opinion polls. The September 2014 Ipsos Mori Political Monitor, for instance, revealed that 53% of voters believed that UKIP was raising major issues neglected by other parties. It also showed that 74% of decided voters were supporting one of the three main parties, namely the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, compared to 90% in 2010. In other words, 26% of the voters were supporting a party other than the three, validating the argument of the rise of fourth parties in British politics.

During the Brexit campaign, Farage and Boris Johnson, prominent figures among the Leave camp, were strong opponents of free mobility, along with the power of Brussels over Britain’s sovereignty. Farage was able to attract a wide range of followers, including defected Conservatives, the most controversial of who was Douglas Carswell, making history after leaving the Conservative party as an MP

²⁶ White, M. (2010). Election debate: David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown rated. *The Guardian*. April 29.

²⁷ Wintour, S.A. and Edemariam, A. (2010). Nick Clegg: we have taken Labour’s place in UK politics. *The Guardian*. April 30.

²⁸ Watt, N. (2014). Nigel Farage: enlargement of EU creates gateway for organised crime. *The Guardian*. May 4.

²⁹ UKIP’s threat to the Conservative Party. June 3, 2013. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/ukips-threat-conservative-party>.

³⁰ For more details see Blair accuses Nigel Farage of ‘stigmatising’ foreigners to win over angry white working class voters (2014). *The Daily Mail*. June 2.

for Clacton to win it (in a by-election held in October 2014) as a UKIP MP, their first seat in Westminster. Ironically, two Polish men profited from the results of the Referendum, calling their new energy drink launched in Prestwich, Manchester, *Brexit*. Similar to the referendum results, it was argued, some British citizens might find it difficult to swallow the drink, though the two men claimed that there was no political statement behind their choice. One of the residents tweeted “every drink bought they donate £350 million to the NHS”,³¹ echoing the argument during the Brexit campaign that Britain’s contribution to the EU would be spent on British hospitals. Concern about these issues was reflected in polls, showing the EU and Brexit as the top issue, with 39%, up 7 points since October 2016 in the Ipsos MORI/Economist Issues Index (December 9, 2016), validating media effects on public opinion.

CONCLUSION

The study explored how significant the impact of British media discourse was on free mobility within the EU, as revealed through a qualitative analysis of a corpus selected from three newspapers dealing with A10 migrants. It was found that Eastern Europeans were portrayed as new ‘others’ threatening Britain, subjecting them to different forms of discrimination and hate crimes despite their being white Europeans and EU nationals, particularly in the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun* prior to and in the aftermath of the 2016 Referendum. Controversy over the trend had repercussions on British politics in relation to the way successive British governments handled the influx. Both Labour – first under Blair and then Brown – and the Conservatives – first as part of a coalition government under Cameron and then under May – were said to have failed to curb the influx, giving room to third and fourth parties to gain momentum, putting the two-party system at stake and affecting the socio-political landscape, particularly after Brexit. With hindsight, the impact of Brexit, in particular, was quite obvious during the campaigns for the two snap elections called by the Conservatives, validating the main argument in the study and possibly calling for more research on the topic from other angles.

One possible way to expand this research is to carry out a comparative study between the influx of A10 migrants and that of European Volunteer Workers (EVWs) in the aftermath of WWII. Such a study could be significant in the sense that EVWs, including Eastern Europeans, were encouraged, in Kathleen Paul’s (1997) view, by the British government – through intermarriage – to be potential Britons. The idea was that they would produce a considerable number of qualified, healthy ladies providing an asset to the British labour force instead of ‘undesirable’ people (87), presumably blacks from Jamaica and Trinidad coming on board of the

³¹ Lockett, J. (2016). Brexit gives EU wings: Polish businessmen launch new brand of energy drink called BREXIT. *The Sun*. October 4.

Empire Windrush in June 1948. Yet, A10 migrants seemed to have turned into ‘undesirable’ people, in the same way as the *Windrush* generation, despite their whiteness and EU citizenship.

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