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How Division is Created Through the Politics of Memory

A narrative analysis of Nigel Farage and Reform UK

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Abstract-

Reform UK are currently the most popular party in the UK. They have risen up the polls largely by presenting themselves as a radical alternative, the true voice of the people, and a populist party that can change things for the better. This thesis will show that these ideals are thinly veiled by an ethnonationalist ideal, and the intentional comments made by the party create a narrative that provides victimhood for the ingroup (white Britons) whilst consistently demonising the outgroup (largely immigrants). Nigel Farage, the leader of reform, and other major figures in the party, generally place these narratives after comments about equality, and non-discrimination, in an attempt to be seen as more pleasing to the general public, but an analysis of these things in totality, through the politics of memory, highlight the real narrative, one of divisiveness, and attacks purely on the outgroup. This thesis will be split into two sections, comments made in Parliament, and comments made outside of Parliament. Every comment made by Nigel Farage (the leader of Reform) since his election as an MP for Clacton in 2024 will be analysed through the lens of memory politics, highlighting consistent attacks on the outgroup through narrativity, using colonial aphasia, prosthetic memory, and nostalgic nationalism (as well as touching on other concepts briefly, but only to make a larger point). The second section is more broad, and looks at the most well-known speeches and comments made outside of Parliament, as well as Reform's manifesto for the 2024 General Election. This section will highlight that all of these comments, and the manifesto itself, are framed in a way to insight division, create a narrative that the ingroup is being constantly attacked, and that this is the fault of the outgroup, also being done through narrativity linked to colonial aphasia, prosthetic memory, and nostalgic nationalism.

Abbreviations-

DEI- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

DE&I- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

ECHR- European Convention on Human Rights

EDL- English Defence League

EU- European Union

FOI- Freedom of Information

GB- Great Britain

MP- Member of Parliament

UK- United Kingdom

UKIP- United Kingdom Independence Party

UN- United Nations

USA- United States of America

WWI- World War 1

WWII- World War 2

Introduction-

Many of the seismic moments in recent years and decades are inextricably linked to the historical background applied to it. In Russia, Putin's decision to invade Ukraine was rationalised by readdressing lessons of history¹, as well as a presupposed idea of an ontological threat towards the Russian people, due to Ukraine looking more west wards in recent years. Much of the anti-immigration sentiment of those in Western Europe is framed around much war-time rhetoric. Whether it is an 'invasion'², or 'fighting-age males' making the journey³, language is ramped up to invoke emotions of war, and this is synthesised with markers of history, great battles won (especially during WWI and WWII⁴). As nationalist sentiment is growing amongst many countries, and specifically for this thesis, in the United Kingdom, polarisation is growing itself and stemming from a binary⁵. Us vs them, good vs evil, those who are meant to be here, and those who are not. In a time where there are real economic crises, in a post-pandemic world of inflation and uncertainty, there are many realised problems that could be a large focus of the anti-establishment, populist right leaders in the country, but the finger is largely pointed at a singular out-group, a polarised binary⁶, who are causing the nation an 'ontological crisis'⁷ (according to them), that of immigrants.

This dissertation will look at how memory, and narrativity of history is manipulated by right-wing populism in the UK, to further their means, regardless of the truthfulness of said history. This will be done through an analysis of Reform UK's rhetoric, spoken and otherwise, inside and out of Parliament, mainly stemming from their leader Nigel Farage. This will be done in multiple ways through a literature review and two further chapters. The first will be focused on the comments made by Nigel Farage in Parliament, and the second, outside of Parliament, comments made by Farage, other well-known members of Reform UK, as well as the Reform UK Manifesto for the 2024 General Election. Concepts that will be used as a lens to analyse these comments are that of 'colonial aphasia'⁸, coined by

¹ Maria Mäklsoo, 'Politics of memory: a conceptual introduction,' in Maria Mäklsoo (ed), *Handbook on the Politics of Memory* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023).

² Stefan Couperus, Pier Domenico Tortola, and Lars Rensmann, 'Memory politics of the far right in Europe' (2023) *European Politics and Society* 435.

³ Jennifer Lind, 'Apologies in International Politics' (2009) *Security Studies* 517.

⁴ Alexandria J. Innes and Brent J. Steele, 'Memory, trauma and ontological security' in Erica Resende and Dovile Budryte (eds), *Memory and Trauma in International Relations. Theories, Cases and Debates* (Routledge, 2014).

⁵ Helga Hallgrímsdóttir, Ari Finnsson, and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, 'Austerity Talk and Crisis Narratives: Memory Politics, Xenophobia, and Citizenship in the European Union' (2020) *Frontiers in Sociology* 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Innes and Steele (n4).

⁸ Ann Stoler, 'Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France' (2011) *Public Culture* 121.

Stoler as the intentional hiding of a colonial past, as well as ‘prosthetic memory’ coined by Landsberg⁹, where one group adopts the memories of another group, despite not having lived the moments themselves. In a modern, social-media driven world, it is much easier for someone to live in a world that is not in their own spatial realm, and a large focus of this will be the right-wing adoption of much of the USA’s current affairs or recent history, to thus be transplanted onto the UKs populous¹⁰. These things largely come under the idea that we are living in a post-truth society, where the narrative is built not just on facts, but also fiction¹¹. This is built up through another device, irrational rationality¹², where real problems are present, but anger is pointed towards groups that are not at fault. In conclusion, history and memory are weaponised intentionally and because of that, there is a rising right-wing sentiment in the UK, due to faulty premises, unfounded data, and a rewriting of a history that has already been suppressed.

A focus throughout this thesis will be upon different forms of memory, and the actors that, either indirectly or directly, affect or are affected by them. Starting from the work of Halbwachs¹³, the break from racial memory to cultural/social memory showed that memory couldn’t be inherited. Practices could be passed down culturally, but Halbwachs work created a break from any biological idea surrounding memory and moved towards cultural identity¹⁴. What this also provided was the first building blocks towards prosthetic memory as well, as in theory, anyone could be brought into ‘the culture,’ despite not being born within it. Halbwachs felt memory could only be contained in the collective¹⁵, this leading to a stronger communal feel, but also potential for manipulation, as will be expanded upon later. This led onto further, more constructivist ideas¹⁶, as the idea of culture becomes slightly more diffuse, if people can integrate at any point. The point of cultural memory is that shared experience, similar lives, and tight-knit communities carry consistent ideas together, and as one brain

⁹ Alison Landsberg, ‘Protesthic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture’ in Alison Landsberg (ed), *Prosthetic Memory* (Columbia University Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Florian Helfier, ‘Colonial Violence in German and English History Textbooks. In Florian Helfer et al. (eds) *Overcoming Conflict: History Teaching – Peacebuilding – Reconciliation* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2023).

¹¹ Melika Mahmutović and Marko Lovec, ‘The First in the Service of Truth’: Construction of Counterknowledge Claims and the Case of Janša’s SDS,’ in Saul Newman and Maximilian Conrad (eds), *Post-Truth Populism: A New Political Paradigm* (Palgrave Macmillan 2024).

¹² Brian O’Connor, ‘Adorno on the Destruction of Memory’ in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010).

¹³ Erika Apfelbaum, ‘Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory’ in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010).

¹⁴ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’ (1995) *New German Critique* 125.

¹⁵ Lea David, ‘Introduction,’ in Lea David (ed), *The Past Can’t Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

¹⁶ Apfelbaum (n13).

forgets¹⁷, the cultural brain remembers, and can welcome new people to it, highlighting that cultural memory is not an immutable characteristic¹⁸. Where this cohesive understanding may falter is through trauma and crisis. Hamilton¹⁹ states that shocking events for the community are unable to be transplanted, due to the intense and intimate emotions that are felt, and memories that are made. This leads to the idea of prosthetic memory. Furthermore, Assmann's characteristics of cultural memory are key to the analysis in this thesis, with the characteristics being the concretion of identity, the capacity to reconstruct, formation, organisation, obligation and reflexivity.

Prosthetic memory is the concept that memory outwith one's community can be transplanted onto them, thus giving them a theoretically prosthetic addition to their brain. However, it also highlights the limitations within, as prosthetic means it is not a natural part of the brain. Landsberg²⁰ further highlights the role 'capitalist commodification²¹' and mass media in this role, making clear that this form of memory does not manifest itself unintentionally, and furthermore, highlights the importance of studying the actors at play. Ontological security creates a necessity for securitisation of memory, and this becomes a tool on the belt of the memory entrepreneur. Two ways in which memory is safeguarded from manipulation is through cultural artefacts, as they cannot be transplanted through mass media²², and ritual, as this is a repeated act that should be harder to change or to further another aim.

As Feuchtwang²³ writes, this standardised method of communication is a mix of both cultural, and communicative²⁴ memory, with the proximity to the everyday being more important for communicative memory, but also ritual being a quasi-cultural artefact, a living artefact. This protects (in a way) cultural memory, but if one takes a constructivist angle, even a statue, a cultural event, or otherwise, can be changed to make of it whatever the manipulator would want²⁵. Ritual itself may create a stronger bond due to its repeated nature, and therein lies an issue with memory in general, especially that which relates to history, when forgotten untruths can be told as gospel.

¹⁷ David (n15).

¹⁸ Luca Manucci, 'Populism and Collective Memory' in Michael Oswald (ed), *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

¹⁹ Paula Hamilton, 'A Long War: Public Memory and the Popular Media' in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010).

²⁰ Landsberg (n9).

²¹ Ibid 146.

²² Ann Rigney, 'Cultural memory studies: Mediation, narrative, and the aesthetic' in Anna Lisa Tota, Trevor Hagen (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (1st edition, Routledge 2015).

²³ Stephan Feuchtwang, 'Ritual and Memory' in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010).

²⁴ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

²⁵ Ann Rigney, 'Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory' (2005) *Journal of European Studies* 11.

This relates to Stoler's concept of 'colonial aphasia'²⁶ once more. This concerted effort to remove history, or temper down the brutal extent of history, creates a further confusion of the truth, and whilst amnesia is to forget, aphasia is forced memory regression. Whilst the aim of colonial aphasia is to keep a nation's colonial past (in this instance, the UK) from creating a negative portrayal for the nation for the populous, the reflexive side-effect is that it alienates both a large population within the nation (former out-groups), and it breeds life into a populist right-wing narrative, as, if the history of the nation is glorious, then repeated theories and actions (strong nationalism, xenophobic rhetoric, clear binaries) seem to become a feasible option²⁷. Rigney's leaky bucket metaphor for personal memory creates the amnesia needed for aphasia to take place. Working memory itself forgets the past in small pieces, so when one side is removing history, and the other is inventing it, there is a smaller amount of memory to rely upon to understand what is real and what is not. Memory loss is normal; it is the manipulation of it that must be investigated.

This leads to the concept of post-truth, something which, has only increased in recent times due to things such as 'folk knowledge' becoming more common, especially as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic²⁸²⁹. This advocacy for a knowledge that is outwith traditional authority, and, in theory, is not affected by the elites, the establishment forces. However, due to the powerful forces advocating 'folk knowledge' in these areas, especially that of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is hard to say that there was any thought being produced through an egalitarian process, (hence Landsberg's strong linkage between memory manipulation, the mass media and capitalism³⁰). Furthermore, the information overload created by mass media and social media in the current day is, for the average person, too much to decipher what is true from what is not. What is clear, is that right-wing political populist methods involve much control, and presenting what is an easily graspable narrative when there is otherwise no clear solution.

Nationalism has to control a narrative. As much political ideas do, but is a significant part of this, as the modern nation state is important for this³¹. Within this, the UK is a unique case, as Manucci writes, 'countries that experienced an authoritarian past and then transitioned to liberal

²⁶ Stoler (n8).

²⁷ Olga Malinova, 'Politics of Memory and Nationalism' (2021) Nationalities Papers 997.

²⁸ Tuukka Ylä-Anttila, 'Populist knowledge: 'Post-truth' repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities' (2018) European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology 356.

²⁹ Mahmutović and Lovec (n11).

³⁰ Landsberg (n9).

³¹ Duncan Bell, 'Mythscape: memory, mythology, and national identity' [2003] BJS 63.

democracy are more likely to legitimize populist ideas of power that reject liberal principles³².’ The UK does not have an authoritarian past and was a part of the post-war liberal world order. What is necessary then, is the manipulation of history to push forward these ideas. A narrative must be built historically as well to create the grounds for the present. Manucci writes further that a country needs to come to terms with its authoritarian past³³. The UK never needed to do this, but what will be explored further is their lack of this regarding their colonial past. The populist playbook is to demonise the most prescient out-group for current issues, and that, in a lot of cases, are immigrants³⁴. A large portion of the Brexit campaign was to take back control, either from the so-called unelected bureaucrats in Europe³⁵, or control of one’s own borders, from a ‘foreign invasion’³⁶.

Removal of ‘some’ history makes it easier for populist actors to stir up hatred³⁷, as if you take a realist approach to this, it is antithetical to a nation states protection, i.e. its ontological security, to have a consistently negative view of their national history³⁸. This leads back to the idea of narrativity, and that if a positive view of one’s national history is the end, then the means become a strong narrative, as emotion that stems from story can be weaponised quicker than that of a statistical release⁴⁰. Emotions trigger a larger binary, between the insider and the outsider it is purely black and white, as these emotions further the want for ontological security, and thus further entrenches the view of populist politics as one of potential success.

Finally, this dissertation focuses on right-wing populism specifically for the simple reason that left-wing populism is not of a moment de jure, and right-wing populism has a uniquely large grip on the UK, and more generally the western hemisphere as of now, and this has only increased overall in the past 15 years. What this thesis aims to prove is that the UK, through its lack of education on its colonial past, as well as modern technology creating an information overload and it being much easier for prosthetic memory to take place, has now become a breeding ground for right-wing populist thought,

³² Manucci (n18) 461.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

³⁵ Gilles Ivaldi and Oscar Mazzoleni, ‘Economic Populism and Sovereigntism: The Economic Supply of European Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties’ (2020) *European Politics and Society* 202.

³⁶ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

³⁷ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

³⁸ Manucci (n18).

³⁹ Lind (n3).

⁴⁰ Steven D. Brown, Matthew Allen and Paula Reavey, ‘Remembering 7/7: The collective shaping of survivors’ personal memories of the 2005 London bombing’ in Anna Lisa Tota, Trevor Hagen (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (1st edition, Routledge 2015).

which prey upon realised problems, and through multiple memory manipulation techniques and binaries, have further a populist agenda.

Literature Review-

The first major theorist in terms of modern thought regarding the politics of memory is Maurice Halbwachs⁴¹. In 1924 He introduced subcategories of individual, social and cultural memory, with his release 'Les Cadres Sociaux de la memoire' (On Collective Memory⁴²). It is social and cultural memory (together, collective memory), that is of most importance to this thesis, due to its unique break from just the individual, and additionally, as was not common at this time in sociological/political research, this departed from being an idea that was related to biology, or the so-called 'racial memory,' an idea for example within C. G. Jung's theory of archetypes⁴³. However, it is important to acknowledge, as Assmann writes, 'Even our autobiographical memory is a social construction that we build up in communication with others.'⁴⁴ The important change was that memory couldn't be 'inherited.' It could be learnt, and practices passed down, but this was cultural, not innate. In theory, this can create a practice where one can become accustomed to another culture, but for Halbwachs, due to the shortcomings of the human brain, it was felt that individuals, outwith their groups, could not remember things coherently, so thus, collective memory was born⁴⁵. This does not completely dissuade from the notion of a communal transplant of memory, but it creates a large insider-outsider disparity. As such, he aimed to show how particular events and circumstances could change people's memory, thus changing history to a new creation of what happened retroactively⁴⁶. As Assman and Czaplicka write, 'Instead, both Warburg and Halbwachs shift the discourse concerning collective knowledge out of a biological framework into a cultural one.'⁴⁷ Those that can affect this memory, according to Halbwachs, were actions from the familial group all the way up to political parties and the nation. These interlink and interact, affecting certain memories in differing ways⁴⁸. One can observe Halbwachs' more socialist and communal ideals⁴⁹ within these theories, but it is certainly one theory which has stood the test of time and is widely cited as one of the seminal works regarding the politics of memory, especially how it comes to exist, who it affects, and

⁴¹ Aline Sierp, 'The Politics of Memory: Between History, Identity and Conflict' (2025) Department of History, Maastricht University 1464.

⁴² Apfelbaum (n13).

⁴³ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

⁴⁴ Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory,' in Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, Edgar Wunder (eds), *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View* (Springer Dordrecht, 2011) 15.

⁴⁵ David (n15).

⁴⁶ Apfelbaum (n13).

⁴⁷ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Apfelbaum (n13).

how that is done. It is not just the knowledge, it is how it is formed, and those who play a part in its creation will thus play a part in its retention⁵⁰.

As humans are social creatures, they cannot be analysed in a vacuum. External factors are of paramount importance in any line of theoretical and scientific advancement⁵¹. Assmann writes that ‘Halbwachs acknowledged social frames only, but it seems obvious that human memory is also embedded in cultural frames⁵².’ Culture is latent in the politics of memory, it can certainly be manipulated, but only because of the social importance placed upon it by different cultures. This can be done in many ways, be it a certain cuisine, religious festival, national days of importance, buildings, monuments etc, and once these things have been reified in society, they do bring inherent value to the memory of a group, be that familial, national, cultural or otherwise.

Apfelbaum writes further,

‘At the heart of Halbwachs’s thought is the idea that no one human being ever lives in total isolation; all human activity is socially determined or—to use contemporary terminology—socially constructed⁵³.’

This is a common ideal in constructivist thinking, but what is uniquely important in the work of Halbwachs is that it is not just the present that can affect this, but the sociohistorical factors which play an instrumental role. For example, the national history of a country, or religious tales, can form the social connections of a community, through how they relate to ‘their’ past. ‘Their’ is an important indicator here, as Halbwachs goes further to imply that there has to be a link between the storyteller and storytellee in order for it to resonate⁵⁴. One thing which will be explored throughout this thesis is the validity of this in the current world, largely due to the explosion of social media, meaning one can transplant themselves (in a sense) onto thousands of cultures, stories, religions, at the press of a button. This idea, coined by Landsberg 2005⁵⁵, called ‘prosthetic memory, is does work in opposition to Halbwachs, due to the ability of new media meaning we as the individual can feel what is happening on the other side of the globe, regardless of our cultural/ethnic/religious moorings to

⁵⁰ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

⁵¹ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

⁵² Assmann (n44) 17.

⁵³ Apfelbaum (n13).

⁵⁴ David (n15).

⁵⁵ Dessingué A, ‘From Collectivity to Collectiveness: Reflections (with Halbwachs and Bakhtin) on the Concept of Collective Memory’ in Siobhan Kattago (ed), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Memory Studies* (1st Edition, Routledge 2015).

it. Halbwachs must be given credit, however, when discussing the newly global ‘written medium,’ as whilst it loses some of its original weight, it is within the external sphere of memory⁵⁶.

Whilst Landsberg’s idea creates a strong basis around how modern technology and social media’s affects are humanity, this is further countered by Hamilton⁵⁷, especially regarding a catastrophe that affects a community outwith one’s own (examples being the Holocaust, major wars, and the end of Communism). These histories cannot truly be implanted to an outsider according to them, largely due to the weight of the history that is there, regardless of the understanding of it, visiting monuments etc., it would not be seen as enough. Whilst it can be seen to be easier than ever to understand, and deeply embed oneself in, another community, it still can be extremely difficult, nigh-on impossible, to fully insert oneself into a community due to the length and breadth of memory within.

Landsberg’s work on prosthetic memory⁵⁸ is key to this thesis, as it will highlight a large factor of how memory is created, and the sociohistorical weaponisation, and retelling of it both. Prosthetic memory is the idea that one can become intimately aware, and thus take on the relationship with, memories of a different community, largely due to the role of the capitalist commodification and mass media usage of narratives and memories⁵⁹. These ‘memory bridges⁶⁰’ allow for ideas to be disseminated regardless of community, thus making the cultural memory of Halbwachs somewhat obsolete. Landsberg sees this phenomenon as both dangerous, but with equal potential for good. Whilst this information is largely an open forum to any with internet access, it is still disseminated by the powerful, who, if they do not control the source outputting information, then they control the site which outputs it. Landsberg writes,

‘But because prosthetic memories are not natural, not the possession of a single individual, let alone a particular family or ethnic group, they conjure up a more public past, a past that is not at all privatised. The pasts that prosthetic memory open up are available to individuals across racial and ethnic lines⁶¹.’

This is the potentially egalitarian idea that if memory can be transplanted, the hierarchical lines within given groups can be broken down. It makes sure that there is less of an insider-outsider dynamic.

⁵⁶ Rigney (n25).

⁵⁷ Hamilton (n19).

⁵⁸ Landsberg (n9).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid 148.

⁶¹ Ibid 149.

However, there is still something artificial within this, as the word ‘prosthetic’ hints at. There is a living reality, argued by Halbwachs originally and tacitly understood here, that the prosthetic arm cannot become a real arm in the end, or that at least, there is something different afoot. As this is seen as memory that does not fit within the communal knowledge sphere in a human-sense, it is something that can be manipulated, both due to the temporal speed, and the original inauthenticity regarding it. Essentially, counter-hegemonic viewpoints⁶² can be seen as a way to bring together in a communal system, or to further divide as an outsider to a communal idea.

The concept of prosthetic memory is not inherently antithetical to that of cultural memory studies, but it does have differing importances held upon how knowledge is gained. For example, mass media is used to send out stories that would have been passed down by tongue generations ago, but the ‘cultural artefacts for their memory⁶³’ is something that cannot be transplanted through mass media. Furthermore, the embodied of a culture and the understanding of one is different and then creates further ‘tests’ where communal knowledge is purported to be important or otherwise⁶⁴.

More broadly, prosthetic memory is also valuable due to the increasing ‘securitisation of memory⁶⁵,’ meaning that both the top-down state mandated ‘history,’ the capitalist media owner, and the egalitarian diffusion of information, all have a stake in the safety and protection of one against another. Furthermore, in the modern world of nation states, it is a of instrumental importance to be in control of the concept of said nation. This is largely different in authoritarian and democratic states, and largely dependant on how willing a nation is to talk about it’s historic wrongs (i.e. Germany and the Holocaust when compared with their actions in Namibia⁶⁶). What is clear, is that this is still largely done within the community, the only variable is the number of those in the community which are allowed to participate. Prosthetic memory allows for an outsider to come in and either become part of the community or change certain memories. The second option is that it just becomes another plain on which the influential, the mnemonic actors⁶⁷, can concretise their ideas. What this thesis is aiming to prove (among other things), is that the case is that this actually mainly allows for the powerful in the community to overwhelm with things that are not true, but the truthfulness does not matter. This is far

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Rigney (n22).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Sierp (n41) 1464.

⁶⁶ Innes and Steele (n4).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

from a new phenomenon, but the prosthetic element allows more to attach to the idea, and mass media allows for it to happen much faster.

Prosthetic memory fights its hardest battle against ethnohistory. This is arguably the strongest insider/outsider paradigm, as Rigney writes, 'Ethnohistory is essentially non-transferable. Being based on the shared ancestry of a particular group and by definition already constituted in the past, it cannot be extended to newcomers⁶⁸.' Cultural memory is largely used as the jump-off point for which communicative memory reifies the links of said community, but there is a large difference. Cultural memory is seen as less changeable, as Assmann and Czaplicka write, 'Just as the communicative memory is characterised by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterised by its distance from the everyday⁶⁹.' Cultural memory is what you base communicative memory upon. Prosthetic memory does this inversely, thus why it is easier to get a basic knowledge, but harder to fully become immersed. This can be seen as a normal quirk of being new to a community, it can quickly diverge into a worrying level of othering, depending on who is in control of the communal understanding, and what is decided as important regarding its potential weaponisation, something which will be developed on further in the next section.

One event that is hard to fully understand through a mass-media, prosthetic lens is that of ritual. As Feuchtwang writes, 'The simplest definition of ritual is repeated and standardized communicative action, in which communication is not simply through signs but also through symbols⁷⁰.' These are highly repeated, and have myriad meanings behind them, passed down through generations. What is important here is not the act of the ritual itself, as it is not challenging to celebrate an event, or learn a dance or song, but the innate feeling within, and the communal tradition, an acceptance within. As said at the start, cultural events do not remember, but they are used to enhance the communal memory. It brings back memories, one that cannot be transplanted in the same way, hence arriving at an insider/outsider idea. In this sense, prosthetic memories can only go so far. One can also extend this to trauma, as Hamilton writes, 'Such sites [of atrocities] accrete memories that are sustained beyond any individual lifespan, most often in physical memorials, monuments, and places and in collective

⁶⁸ Ann Rigney, 'Remembrance as remaking: memories of the nation revisited' (2018) ASEN 241.

⁶⁹ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

⁷⁰ Feuchtwang (n23).

rituals⁷¹.' One can go to a ritual, or a monument, or remembrance service, but the emotions felt regarding the communal memory, and the outsider memory, is different.

Memory in regard to the history of a nation, can lead to much problematic information coming to light. Specifically, the UK and its colonial past, is one that must be considered when thinking about communal memory, and this will be the main case study for the thesis. As Hamilton writes, 'One day in the not-too-distant future, perhaps within twenty or so years, there will be no one alive who participated in the two great world wars of the twentieth century⁷².' Communal memory is one way of keeping traditions, but trauma itself dissipates throughout generations, and this, one of the major points of British pride, is soon not going to be within living memory.

Trauma and remembrance are interlinked, with remembrance being used to highlight heroism, dark events in history, and provide a 'never again' atmosphere. However, when trauma is lost in the communal memory, there is less of a remembrance around it. As Winter writes,

'For years, I asked my students at Cambridge what they saw at the first intersection into town from the railway station. Most answered nothing at all. What they did not see was the town war memorial, a victorious soldier striding back home, right at the first traffic light into town. They did not see it because it had no meaning to them. It was simply white noise in stone. For them to see it, someone had to point it out, and others had to organize acts of remembrance around it⁷³.'

If prosthetic memory is available for those outside a community to join in (at least to some extent) in the communal memory, then can parts of history within a community then be used to bring back things, reimagine a communal memory. This allows political actors and institutions to organise, purposefully 'forget' and silence⁷⁴. This is where the actors within memory creation and diffusion need to be analysed, which will be done in further paragraphs. These are the political implications of memory.

Stoler brings this up with regards to former colonial countries (of which the UK is a major one), with their term 'colonial aphasia⁷⁵.' The colonial country has effectively removed the memory linkage between modern issues and the affect that colonialism had on these things. It is different from amnesia

⁷¹ Hamilton (n19).

⁷² Ibid 300.

⁷³ Jay Winter, 'Sites of Memory' in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010) 324.

⁷⁴ Manucci (n18).

⁷⁵ Stoler (n8).

as it is not necessarily forgotten, more so it is blocked from the dots being connected.

As Rigney further continues, to remove the blockage, an entirely new understanding is required, and a complete rewiring of memory is necessary⁷⁶. This is an extremely challenging issue, especially within a formerly colonial country, as this rewiring involves what one could argue is a change of history. To use aphasia instead of amnesia is important as it shifts the feeling of helplessness to one of moral responsibility on various actors, usually the state, but also other civil society monitors, and politicians, thus suggesting that is a battle that can be fought, but things must be changed. This then links back to the studies of ‘memory entrepreneurs’⁷⁷, and the effect they have on the leaky bucket of memory, and the communal memory it results from.

When politicised, memory is in some ways a power vacuum that can be exploited, with Rigney comparing the brain to a leaky bucket, saying ‘memories constantly disappear as they are transmitted from generation to generation: like water transported in a leaky bucket which slowly runs dry’⁷⁸. Memory fades over time, so this creates a breeding ground for new ideas, or more specifically, new comments on old ideas, to take place in the conscience. This is used to further the term ‘working memory’ as it argues against communal/collective memory in the same regard as communal memory’s work against racial memory. That it is not innate in any way, everything is relational. Whilst communal memory agrees, working memory goes further as it suggests more things of the past are forgotten, and thus more focus is needed on the present, and how things are constructed within it. As Rigney continues, ‘memories of a shared past are collectively constructed and reconstructed in the present rather than resurrected from the past’⁷⁹. A disagreement with Stoler⁸⁰ is that memory loss is purely ‘the order of the day’⁸¹, and not a regret. This is potentially almost too scientific and removes much of the impact that power imbalance has and reifies daily through memory politics. It is not simply a phenomenon; it is the work of memory entrepreneurs and powerful actors. Another side of this fading/blocked memory that can come to the fore is ‘nostalgic nationalism’⁸². When there is strife in a nation that was once one of grandeur (The UK being a prime example of this, when comparing themselves to their global positing in generations gone-by), that has

⁷⁶ Rigney (n68).

⁷⁷ Malinova (n27).

⁷⁸ Rigney (n25) 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid 14.

⁸⁰ Stoler (n8).

⁸¹ Rigney (n25).

⁸² Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

become less important in the global realm, harking back to this ‘greatness’ is a common tactic of a populist, right-leaning party, such as what will be discussed throughout this thesis, the work of Reform UK. This is heavily tied to an ethno-nationalist sentiment, and as such, brings up the commonly used and extremely important retort, that in history a country was great, but great for who?

This leads to the moral character of memory politics, as even historians themselves would be hard pressed not to have bias, explicit or unrealised⁸³. This leads to the character of a memory entrepreneur. As Mälksoo writes, this can take different forms and raises questions ‘about “positive” (or ethically praiseworthy) and “negative” (or morally despicable) ways of conducting memory politics⁸⁴.’ Most of the tools available to memory entrepreneurs can be used to further many different ideas and political manifestations, but the staggering lack of truth to much of what is claimed creates a truly confusing barometer for what is believable, and what affects the collective conscience, the communal memory. The word ‘post-truth’ was declared the Oxford Dictionary word of the year in 2016⁸⁵, so the word is still fairly new, but has been part of much debate and analysis. Firstly, the ‘post’ in ‘post-truth’ suggests that truth no longer matters. This is not true, as many statistics are a direct reflection of the living standards (for example) that people are living under. However, what is clear, is that people are now bombarded with so much information, at such a speed, that it becomes unclear what the truth is, and denial of what is true becomes much easier. This is a breeding ground for populism, even in countries with strong democratic backstops, and with free press, largely unaffected (as much as any states can be) from strong government interference and coverups. Another potential indicator of this, is the uptick in ‘folk knowledge’ and ‘common knowledge⁸⁶,’ which is described by Ylä-Anttila to mean ‘contestations of epistemic authority by advocating alternative knowledge authorities⁸⁷.’ The most obvious of this type of knowledge coming to the fore was during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the myriad concerns regarding the efficacy of the vaccine regiment, or even generally about the deadliness of the Covid virus itself⁸⁸.

The post-truth discourse can only exist due to both the ‘memory leaking’ and ‘communal memory’ discussed above, and when elevated up to the government level, the potential for aphasia in aspects of

⁸³ Winter (n73).

⁸⁴ Mälksoo (n1) 3.

⁸⁵ Mahmutović and Lovec (n11).

⁸⁶ Ylä-Anttila (n28).

⁸⁷ Ibid 359.

⁸⁸ Mahmutović and Lovec (n11).

negative history becomes clear. Discussing both post-truth discourse and actor-centric politics, Kluknavská and Eisele write,

‘We define post-truth claims-making as an evaluation of the truthfulness of opponents, through which (populist or non-populist) political actors demonstrate their own alignment with the truth and construct the “real” and “objective” reality⁸⁹.’

The most visible, and arguably the most important actors in affecting the politics of memory, are political parties and their most well-known members⁹⁰. Bell⁹¹ explains that the main theories regarding the beginnings of nationalism all relate to a controlled historical representation, a narration that explains their worldview, and the need for a story to be told emotively, writing ‘this approach presupposes the ability of nationalists to generate a form of communal identity and to be able to clearly differentiate one nation from another⁹².’ It is the ‘objective’ reality⁹³, but done so by elevating one group (community) over another, with one being the true heirs to a nation, and everyone else falling by the wayside⁹⁴. This reifies the insider-outsider narrative, framing it around sovereignty, and, in a political sense, usually regarding a nation state, or an ethno-state. Sovereignty can be nationalist, but it can also be more economic, another part of providing freedom to a community⁹⁵. Kallis⁹⁶ describes it as a redefined community⁹⁷, once again harking back to a historical basis for a current ideal, and the need to take back control. The actors within this consistently frame it around their core group, and, if in power, use resources like education, monuments, museums, national days, to further their ideas⁹⁸.

Education itself is usually a core part of the subtle indoctrination that pits communal knowledge spheres against each other. This is more obvious in autocratic countries, with a tighter grip over state apparatus, and the media⁹⁹, and if not, countries that have transitioned from authoritarianism into liberalism are more likely to fall towards populism than a consistently democratic nation¹⁰⁰. The UK

⁸⁹ Alena Kluknavská and Olga Eisele, ‘Trump and Circumstance: Introducing the Post-Truth Claim as an Instrument for Investigating Truth Contestation in Public Discourse’ (2023) *Information, Communication and Society* 1584.

⁹⁰ Sierp (n41).

⁹¹ Bell (n31).

⁹² Ibid 67.

⁹³ Kluknavská and Eisele (n89).

⁹⁴ Malinova (n27).

⁹⁵ Manucci (n18).

⁹⁶ Aristotle Kallis A, ‘Populism, Sovereignism, and the Unlikely Re-Emergence of the Territorial Nation-State’ (2018) *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Lind (n3).

⁹⁹ Kornelia Kończal and A Dirk Moses, ‘Patriotic Histories in Global Perspective’ (2022) *Journal of Genocide Research* 153.

¹⁰⁰ Manucci (n18).

falls into neither of these boxes, but this does not mean that education itself is not an important aspect to scrutinise regarding which actors can affect the communal memory. Firstly, the advancement, extremely broad usage, alternative media sources, and deregulated nature of the internet means that ‘different mnemonic actors’¹⁰¹ can affect things. Innovations such as the internet can bring society forward, but more importantly, that it is a new world, and when there is a new forum, a fight for power starts¹⁰². In the world of the internet, however, there is many different mini worlds within which one can exist, falling into echo chambers. Mahmutović and Lovéc write, ‘This knowledge is distinguished from the rarefied knowledge of elites which are alienated from everyday life and therefore from the common sense which is produced by it’¹⁰³.’ It has created an even playing field where competition is there to collect memories¹⁰⁴ and if political actors can re-create a history that involves a wider portion of the community (i.e. the dominant ethnic or national group, even if not everyone agrees with the political leanings of said actors), they have a strong chance of affecting things and gain real power. To sum up, a story that puts the nation in a positive and glorious light is one that is easily palatable and repeatable¹⁰⁵.

When there are multiple actors and multiple platforms to create and mould, the act of manipulation must be investigated. One obvious example is crisis, and the responses to them. They elevate emotions, create tension, and provide a fertile ground for communities to come together, but to also isolate from others, reaffirming a communal memory basis¹⁰⁶. Hallgrímsdóttir, Finnsson, and Brunet-Jailly write, ‘Crises are the key narrative device of our time. As a narrative device, it is a double-edged sword: while framing historical events as crises denotes urgency and the need for action’¹⁰⁷.’ This leads to a chilling effect, and more than anything else, an insider-outsider dynamic, creating a sense that those who are not ‘us’ are part of the problem, as fear takes precedence over what to believe, even when rationality made lead to a different conclusion. This can be seen through the lens of ‘narrativity’¹⁰⁸, where a storyline is more believable of a narrative device than statistical analysis, where a fact (for example, that a terrorist attack is extremely unlikely in a city) pales in comparison to a story (of a certain ideological belief leading someone to commit a terrorist attack, and the horrors that

¹⁰¹ Malinova (n27) 998.

¹⁰² Landsberg (n9).

¹⁰³ Mahmutović and Lovéc (n11) 184.

¹⁰⁴ Manucci (n18).

¹⁰⁵ Bell (n31).

¹⁰⁶ Feuchtwang (n23).

¹⁰⁷ Hallgrímsdóttir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5) 7.

¹⁰⁸ Rigney (n22).

result from it), meaning that feeling can create an idea where the unlikely becomes the main idea. Furthermore, despite the previous paragraph highlighting the many actors now able to affect what is seen by the public, Assmann¹⁰⁹ states that cultural memory, and therefore what is fed into the communal memory, can never be truly equal, and always tends towards elitism. As such, the powerful right-wing parties have a headstart regarding narrativity, and when there is a crisis, something which creates trauma, the storyline weaponizes communal memory to be seen as an exclusive ideal. Events that invoke emotion, even trauma, usually mean that one has to pick a side, a dynamic of ‘you are either with us or against us.’ This is described by Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, and Brunet-Jailly as a ‘polarised binary’¹¹⁰. For example, the national and xenophobic use of language by Europe’s right-wing parties¹¹¹ makes it clear that in a time of crisis, there is no time to extend an olive branch, and it is a time of focus, to stick to one’s group.

Trauma and crises lead to this manipulation from political actors and memory entrepreneurs, is because of the innate need for ontological security. This is defined by Innes and Steele¹¹² as such;

‘Ontological security is the seeking of a consistent self through time and space, and the desire to have that self-recognized and affirmed by others. Applied to global politics, state, and other forms of group behaviour, it is a form of security seeking that is pursued regarding the ‘who’ or ‘what’ (ontologically) it is or desires to be¹¹³.’

This is more than just security of oneself, this is the security of community, history included. Crises epistemologically threatens the fabric of this community¹¹⁴. It is not a matter of simple violence, as this is ramped up through memory entrepreneurs to push forward narratives. Those aiming to do so in the political scene realise that it must also relate to history, not just the present. Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, and Brunet-Jailly describe this as a ‘path dependent’ pattern¹¹⁵, and thus a coherent storyline is a necessity. Manucci¹¹⁶ writes that elected official frame outsiders as ‘morally corrupt enemies of the nation’¹¹⁷. This, obviously being an inflammatory claim, and one that is extreme, needs to have an

¹⁰⁹ Assmann (n44).

¹¹⁰ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5) 7.

¹¹¹ Sierp (n41).

¹¹² Innes and Steele (n4).

¹¹³ Ibid 15.

¹¹⁴ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

¹¹⁵ Ibid 4.

¹¹⁶ Manucci (n18).

¹¹⁷ Ibid 452.

appeal that goes beyond seeing a simple statistic, it needs to appeal to emotion, one that goes beyond even the individual, and towards the whole community, in the past and the future as well. Finally, there is also a level of cultural memory towards a group's want for ontological security¹¹⁸, as they need things that they can rally behind, and things that can be used to rally around something for the future, this relates back to both the actors at play, and the post-truth historiographic tools they can use.

The actors that manipulate memory to a large degree in the modern political world are those of populist parties¹¹⁹. Populism is described by Mudde¹²⁰ as

‘An ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous 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 people¹²¹.’

Populism then, as defined, is one that defines a clear boundary between us and them, thus creating a simplicity, that they the people, and for the people. The way to do this is to purport to know the answers and blame problems consistently on the same group. Left-wing populism and right-wing populism both purport to fight against the elite¹²², but the most common ‘outgroup’ to rally against, in modern right-wing populism, are immigrants (put specifically), but also people who do not look like ‘them’ or are not ‘them’ (an ethnoreligious or racial difference usually)¹²³. Populism is not a new phenomenon, and state/party propaganda is not either, but with the advent of new media sources and near-universal social media ownership (at least in the UK), it creates a system where populists can circumvent the checks and balances, and preach to an increasingly larger bubble that also wants to avoid what they see as an outsider, whether that be scientists (as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic) or otherwise¹²⁴.

Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann¹²⁵ identifies mythmaking as an important tool for right-wing populism, as this larger-than-life idea is something most know about, and is usually the historical bond that can unite a group together¹²⁶. These usually go hand-in-hand with a victory in history against a

¹¹⁸ Innes and Steele (n4).

¹¹⁹ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

¹²⁰ Cas Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’ (2004) *Government and Populism* 541.

¹²¹ Ibid 543.

¹²² Ivaldi and Mazzoleni (n35).

¹²³ Martin Shaw, ‘Embedded Racism in the Brexit Conflict,’ in Martin Shaw (ed), *Political Racism: Brexit and its Aftermath* (Agenda Publishing 2022).

¹²⁴ Mahmutović and Kovec (n11).

¹²⁵ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

¹²⁶ Feuchtwang (n23).

foreign enemy (the ‘glorification[s] of a pre-democratic, authoritarian past associated with ethnic nationalism¹²⁷’), so it is not a far stretch for those in said group to draw parallels and come to an anti-immigrant (out-group) position. Furthermore, Manucci¹²⁸ sees the effectiveness of populism coming from two separate starting points. Either a refusal to come to terms with one’s past as a nation, or the lack of change after the fall of an authoritarian regime. The UK certainly does not fall into the second category, so the first is what will be explored later on. Whilst the educational system is not, and has not been under the direct influence of populist or authoritarian arms, the lack of ‘coming to terms with a nation’s past’ is a definite mark against that of the UK, so when a forceful populist bloc brings a mythologised ideal that explains everything and provides an enemy to go with it, this is something that more people can understand, as they (as part of the in-group) do not feel demonised. This one-size-fits-all approach of a populist’s idea of the enemy¹²⁹ works to create consistency and, in a way, transparency as well. This works in an oddly reflexive way. As there are a multitude of debates as to what is true, and who can be trusted when reading the news, and with many problems being seen to affect a community, the community can revert back to simplicity, One problem, one answer.

Another form of memory that can be manipulated is that of remembrance. As writing above, a negative view of communal history does not correlate with a community willing to fight. In a realist view of the world, this is antithetical to survival, so all aspects must relate positively to the nation, even when in remembrance¹³⁰¹³¹. Innes and Steele write, ‘State or group behaviour thus can be considered a series of active attempts to underwrite, and narrate, a sense of what it is as a state or group act¹³².’ Going back to the concept of narrativity, one must see the highs and lows of a country (if admitted) into a nationalist narrative (when discussing a state-wide community), creating an autobiography with meaning of their past actions. Public commemorations are used to impress upon people a clear understanding of history¹³³, as these usually happen annually, or at least are repeated at major milestones (decennial instead of annual for example). Firstly, regarding commemorations, one of the easier decisions for an actor to make is simply to avoid it. For example, there are no dates or places for the end of the Vietnam War in the United States of America, and the Algerian War in France¹³⁴, whilst World War II

¹²⁷ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 438.

¹²⁸ Manucci (n18).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Lind (n3).

¹³² Innes and Steele (n4) 17.

¹³³ Sierp (n41).

¹³⁴ Winter (n73).

Monuments are in most towns across France. However, even if a state does highlight its past actions, a common manipulation tactic would be to blame this incident on either a past rogue actor, or to completely redirect and obfuscate these actions, similar to what Malinova describes as ‘selective amnesia’¹³⁵. As Winter writes, ‘Commemoration requires reference to history, but then the contestation begins. Whose history, written for whose benefit, and on which records?’¹³⁶ For example, in the last half-decade, many statues have been removed and defaced¹³⁷, but whilst this can be seen as a rejection of colonial legacies, it can also stoke the flames of a culture war, weaponised by populist actors as a foreign agent trying to destroy the fabric of their communal history¹³⁸. This redirection places a historical ‘negative’ into a modern debate over one single thing, highlighting the populist memory politics created by remembrance.

Finally, to link these to more concrete examples of the UK, one example of a rewriting of communal memory, is that May 24th (Queen Victoria’s birthday), formally named Empire Day, was changed to Commonwealth Day¹³⁹, and the Imperial War Graves Commission is now called the Commonwealth War Graves Commission¹⁴⁰. Both name changes that consequently shift a historical narrative, from imperial domination to communal prosperity. Populist actors manipulate with two major narratives, a common outgroup to fight against, and singular goal. The Brexit campaign was centred largely around both, firstly the need to ‘take back control’ from foreign technocrats and give back sovereignty to the people¹⁴¹, and secondly, to fight against a foreign invasion by slowing immigration drastically¹⁴². One of the more obvious ‘outgroups’ that right wing populist actors use are Muslims¹⁴³¹⁴⁴¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶. When compared to a country that’s mostly white, with Christianity being the largest religion, this can be stirred up into more than just an insider-outsider dynamic, as it can create a sense of panic regarding the community’s ontological security¹⁴⁷, with Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann writing, ‘One prominent rhetorical trope is the appeal to a Christian tradition in

¹³⁵ Malinova (n27) 22.

¹³⁶ Winter (n73) 314.

¹³⁷ Manucci (n18).

¹³⁸ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

¹³⁹ Winter (n73).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ivaldi and Mazzoleni (n35).

¹⁴² Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

¹⁴³ Brown, Allen, and Reavey (n40).

¹⁴⁴ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

¹⁴⁵ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

¹⁴⁶ Shaw (n123)

¹⁴⁷ Innes and Steele (n4).

the defence against the contemporary ‘invasion’ of Islam¹⁴⁸.’ Once more, parallels can be drawn with wartime rhetoric, with a common trope being the invasion of the ‘working age male,’ the group which constitute most of the armies across the world. This means that the ‘true national community¹⁴⁹,’ are at severe risk, a risk that can come to be with an ontological threat.

¹⁴⁸ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 439.

¹⁴⁹ Hallgrímsdóttir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5) 6.

Chapter 1- In Parliament

This chapter will focus on the words of the Reform UK leader, Nigel Farage, in parliament. In a world that is heavily reliant on many differing media channels, and has myriad problems regarding falsified information, the best way to counter this is to look at what is said by someone in their place of work, in a situation where things are fully prepared, and it would be hard to misattribute things, or take them out of context. 'Fake news' is a common attack, especially when one feels their words are being taken out of context, thus one's heavily considered parliamentary comments will be looked at. After analysing every time Nigel Farage spoke in the House of Commons since his first election as an MP for in the June 2024 General Election¹⁵⁰, this chapter will look at the main themes of what was spoken about, as well as how these relate to the politics of memory, what the aim of these speeches were, and what he particular emotions he aimed to evoke for those listening in. In particular, his constituency, the right to self-determination, relations with the USA, a grooming gangs report, a singular case of murder, and mainly, immigration in general, will be looked at, and synthesised by the aforementioned techniques of memory politics. Regarding his constituency, the evidence suggests it is highly neglected, and local-level politics is not central to the argument put forward by Farage.

Nigel Farage has spoken 69 times (as of June 25th, 2026) in the House of Commons since his election as MP in the 2024 General Election, and these can be broken into several different themes. These being, his constituency, aiming to leave the ECHR/self-determination more generally, his links to the USA and special relationship with the Trump Administration, enquiries surrounding grooming gangs, the murder of Henry Nowak, and immigration. Each will be focused on in turn, and analysed with the various lenses of memory politics to highlight the techniques used in each various scenario to invoke emotion and thought in those who read it, mainly those in favour of the party.

Firstly, the key tenants of populism, as written by Mudde¹⁵¹, is that of the homogenous and antagonistic group, against the 'corrupt elite'¹⁵², and for the general will of the people. Furthermore, the populist playbook is one which stands as the only true voice of the people, and does so in this imposed binary, making sure that whatever issue or supposed problem that is thrown out, can be put into a simple in-

¹⁵⁰ Ben Quinn, 'Nigel Farage elected Clacton MP as Reform UK wins four seats' *The Guardian*, (July 5th 2024).

¹⁵¹ Mudde (n120).

¹⁵² Ibid 543.

group out-group, both against the ‘immoral¹⁵³’ and ‘corrupt¹⁵⁴’ opposition political parties, and the supposed outgroups, largely, in this case, being against immigration. Other bellwethers include economic performance, cultural structures and the success of populism in other countries¹⁵⁵, something that, in an increasingly interconnected world, is of key importance at gauging the efficacy of an idea in the modern political climate, especially when a nation is not the current hegemon (the USA being the norm diffusor in this case). Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann write that, on-top the established definition of populism by Mudde¹⁵⁶, a right-wing populism focuses especially on an ‘anti-establishment rhetoric in opposition to a glorified conception of a culturally and ethnically homogenous people¹⁵⁷.’ This is important, as it does not just mean that anyone anti-establishment is able to feel apart of the movement. It is not necessarily just a hierarchy of power that demarcates who is part of a movement, there is a national or ethnic presupposition that also makes a difference. This is a large reason why immigration is such a focus, as these national, racial, ethnic, and religious binaries are preyed upon. This right-wing element is key, as despite it being far from a new phenomenon, this nouvelle vague populist trope of a collapsing western society¹⁵⁸ is implicitly (when looking at the speeches of Nigel Farage), and more so explicitly (by other parts of the Reform UK party and even more so their followers) is invoked.

Hayton writes, ‘Using political science terminology, Reform UK can be most sensibly classified as a populist radical right party¹⁵⁹.’ Despite being launched as a party itself very recently, originally as the Brexit Party in 2018, and then rebranded as Reform UK in 2021¹⁶⁰, it is more synonymous with its leader than any other political party in the UK, something that only heightens its populist credentials. Nigel Farage, being the leader of UKIP from 2010-2016, and its most famous voice, was a major driving force behind the 2016 Brexit referendum. UKIP’s vote share has now become miniscule, and the two main reasons were that they were seen largely as a single-issue party (that being independence from the European Union), so achieving that goal secured their wants. The second reason was Nigel

¹⁵³ Cristina Lastres-López and Isabel Íñigo-Mora, ‘Exploring Populism in Contemporary Political Discourse’ in Cristina Lastres-López and Isabel Íñigo-Mora (eds), *Discourse Approaches to an Emerging Age of Populist Politics* (2024) 2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid 2.

¹⁵⁵ Manucci (n18).

¹⁵⁶ Mudde (n120).

¹⁵⁷ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 457.

¹⁵⁸ Mark Leonard, ‘The New Right: Anatomy of a global political revolution’ (2026), European Council on Foreign Relations <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep78364?seq=1>> accessed 14 June 2026.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Hayton, ‘To conserve or to reform? The reshaping of the right in British politics’ (2025) *British Politics* 381, 387.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party officially changes its name’ (January 6th, 2021) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55566526>> accessed July 18th 2026.

Farage leaving and forming a new, very similar party. Essentially, the current iteration of a Farage party, Reform UK, is seen as one-and-the-same. In a country that has a Prime Minister and not a President, and especially so in the current climate of everchanging leadership for the historically successful parties (the Labour party and Conservative party). What this means is that whilst there are subtle differences between the separate parties (and party names) synonymous with Nigel Farage¹⁶¹, it is him that is the main focus of this next section, and usually, what he speaks about follows the classical in-group out-group populist framework, usually involving scapegoating and fighting against an elite that he feels he is outside of¹⁶².

The first, and by far the smallest in comparison to what one would generally assume as a matter of importance, is that of Clacton, his constituency. It would be unfair to treat the leader of a party's comments in the House of Commons in the same way as backbencher MPs, but even so, it is a startlingly small two instances where Clacton is mentioned, on the 28th January 2025 in relation to a new road being built¹⁶³, and on the 5th of February 2025, the only time he mentions Clacton in name, but only in passing regarding a cutting of a winter fuel allowance, which was a national bill¹⁶⁴. An MP must serve their constituents, but in the UK system, the leader of a party does have multiple other responsibilities, however this clearly more than just having a dual-workload, and speaks more to a larger populist narrative, where the largest amount of people spoken about is a more necessary endeavour. Neither of these two comments overtly link into key memory manipulation tactics, however, these comments are part of a larger political issue, the lack of attendance. Between March 11th and June 1st, 2026, Farage missed 77 consecutive votes¹⁶⁵. This highly undermines the social contract signed by an MP for their constituents, and once more highlights an issue with what is said, and what actions are taken. An ideology, and the general political will is one thing, but something as simple as an absence makes this immediately a faltering house of cards. Once more, this part of his comments does not tie themselves obviously towards memory politics, but it is necessary to mention this as it sets up an understanding of the actions of the party, to underscore the words.

The second main theme that Farage speaks about in his 69 comments in the Commons, is surrounding the ECHR and, more broadly, self-determination (more specifically, state-determination). Farage wants

¹⁶¹ Keith Popple, 'Populist Politics and Democracy in the UK: Implications for Community Development' in Sue Kenny, Jim Ife, and Peter Westoby (eds), *Populism, Democracy and Community Development* (2020).

¹⁶² Leonard (n158).

¹⁶³ HC Deb 28 January 2025, vol 761, col 88WH

¹⁶⁴ HC Deb 5 February 2025, vol 761, cols 745-746

¹⁶⁵ Craig Munro, 'Nigel Farage admits missing 77 out of the last 77 votes in Parliament' *Metro*, (June 1st 2026).

to leave the ECHR, or at least mentions wanting to, in multiple separate instances, and the stated reasons usually are around the protections the ECHR gives to immigrants, and thus, to leave the ECHR allows for more state determination, meaning stronger laws against immigration, which falls outwith that provided in the ECHR. For example, on the 23rd of July 2024, his first comment after his election, was “We will stop this only if we start deporting people who come illegally. Then they will not pay the smugglers. But we will do that only by leaving the ECHR¹⁶⁶.” This “fun suggestion¹⁶⁷” was the start of a, as of now unfulfilled want, to leave the entire convention, and mainly to do with deportation. This ties massively into the concept of nostalgic nationalism. A larger portion of the Reform UK psyche is akin to a pseudo-MAGA conception of the UK, where the UK of yesteryear is what one must go back to, and unquantifiable metrics such as culture are being destroyed by an outer evil. Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann write that ‘historical tropes that mythologize the past have been (re)articulated by far-right actors who construe themselves as the true heirs and bearers of national historical traditions and values¹⁶⁸.’ Once more, the suggestion of leaving the ECHR, whilst currently not a possibility, as Reform are a minor party in the Commons, only holding 8 MPs, is a further advancement of Farage and Reform being the one true heir to the throne of power, and the true speakers of the unspoken for, a classic populist narrative. Furthermore, as written in the previous paragraphs, the right-wing tinge of populism veers into nationalism when there is an ethnic barrier to who is spoken for, and who is spoken out against. The ‘cosmopolitan changes¹⁶⁹’ of the general population is weaponised. Whilst the spoken reasons for wanting to leave the ECHR are, on paper, about self-determination, it is not hard to recognise the dog whistles present in these speeches.

Whilst comments by Farage on these two themes include quotes stating things such as, “This is about liberty, it is about freedom, it is about democratic control... This is about sovereignty¹⁷⁰,” and comments about the historic brilliance, and strong legal structure of the UK, “Do you not believe in the country that since Magna Carta has developed the principle of common law—which, with its faults, has been perhaps the best ever developed by civilisation?¹⁷¹” These comments highlight an amalgamation of narrativity and nostalgic nationalism. These fairly mild and historically relevant comments posit an important question, that of having control. But the control is to create a society where the outgroup

¹⁶⁶ HC Deb 23 July 2024, vol 752, col 570.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 435.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid 436.

¹⁷⁰ HC Deb 29 October 2025, vol 774, cols 352-354.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

is the immigrant. A strong enjoyment of one's history is in no way problematic, but a cherry-picked historical narrative that creates a story, one where there much is left out, and the structure is meaningful¹⁷². This invocation of history to fit a narrative is important to be further investigated. As an example, for historians, distance went together with rationality, to be neutral one must be distant, not just in a temporal scope, but nationality-wise as well¹⁷³. Furthermore, academics in this area found that the production of historical knowledge can promote exclusion¹⁷⁴, and as such, what is on the face of it, a mere mention of a part of a nation's history (the signing of the Magna Carta), can be brought forward into a further problem of exclusion. The meaning is shrouded in the context, and the leader of what is a populist, radical-right party¹⁷⁵ says something in parliament that promotes 'self-determination' through exclusion, the sociocultural and historical context is key¹⁷⁶.

The argument from Farage about self-determination is largely what led to the UK leaving the EU, with the public voting to leave in the 2016 referendum¹⁷⁷. This aim of self-determination is inextricably tied to the self-control of human rights systems, essentially getting rid of the red tape on one thing, the situation surrounding immigration. Another comment is about UN human rights systems, with Farage stating "They [the government] believe in human rights so much that somehow, they are seeking to follow a court that is part of the United Nations in total contrast.... to one of the most basic principles of the United Nations: namely, national self-determination¹⁷⁸." Whilst leaving UN institutions was not brought up as an idea, it further entrenches that the problem is the shackles of foreign agencies (out-group) stopping us, the people (in-group) from protecting ourselves from immigration (out-group). Another memory device important to this in-group out-group conception is that, according to Rigney, 'ethnohistory is essentially non-transferable¹⁷⁹'. Whilst Farage does not overtly invoke anything about an ethnohistory, the idea of self-determination is rarely mentioned in any context other than that of immigration, and this leads to something that can be understood as, at minimum, and attempt for an assimilated culture. This goes back to Couperus, Tortola and Resnmann's

¹⁷² Rigney (n22).

¹⁷³ Pedro Ramos Pinto, 'Doing History in Public? Historians in the Age of Impact,' in Pedro Ramos Pinto and Bertrand Taihe (eds), *The Impact of History? Histories at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (2015).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Hayton (n159).

¹⁷⁶ Apfelbaum (n13).

¹⁷⁷ 'EU referendum: full results and analysis' (*The Guardian*, June 23rd 2016) <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2016/jun/23/eu-referendum-live-results-and-analysis>> accessed July 18th 2026.

¹⁷⁸ HC Deb, 20 October 2025, vol 773, col 716-717.

¹⁷⁹ Rigney (n68) 241.

writing of the right-wing actors being the ‘true heirs and bearers of national historical traditions and values¹⁸⁰.’

The third main theme of Farage’s comments in the House of Commons is that of grooming gangs. This is related to the June 2025 report titled ‘National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,’ commission by the UK Government¹⁸¹. The report, among other things, stated that a major failing in the reporting of this abuse was lack of data on the ethnicity of perpetrators, something which, despite a full amount of data, show ‘disproportionate numbers of men from Asian ethnic backgrounds amongst suspects for group-based child sexual exploitation¹⁸².’ This report was accepted by the UK Government, and it is clear that lack of data about ethnicity was cause for concern in the policing of these grooming gangs. This is agreed as a failing, and this is something which evokes extremely strong emotions, as crimes against children, and sexual crimes against children, are seen as the worst crimes anyone could commit. This is also something where ethnicity, or the lack of data surrounding ethnicity, was shown to be a mitigating factor in the number of crimes committed. It would be remiss to say that this should not be heavily debated, and it is something Farage has commented on four times. On January 8th, 2025, he said, “to what extent were gangs of Pakistani men raping young white girls? Ultimately, it seems to me that there is a deep racist element behind what happened¹⁸³,” on October 29th, 2025, he said “Well, what about British families? What about their rights and their freedoms? What are the priorities of Members of this place?¹⁸⁴,” and on June 1st, 2026, “There is a feeling that for a couple of decades the authorities at all levels have not done the job of genuinely pursuing justice because of racial sensitivities¹⁸⁵”. What is also stated, in the enquiry report, is ‘This does no one any favours at all, and least of all those in the Asian, Pakistani or Muslim communities who needlessly suffer as those with malicious intent use this obfuscation to sow and spread hatred¹⁸⁶.’ A delicate balance must be struck in this particular case, as ethnicity is a mitigating factor in said report, but despite the care to mention these things in parliament, the language is largely put in an inflammatory way, and most importantly, it is extrapolated to a wider issue of immigration, not specifically a problem of policing. This only links further towards the in-group/out-group

¹⁸⁰ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 435.

¹⁸¹ Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB, *National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, (Home Office, 2025).

¹⁸² Ibid 8.

¹⁸³ HC Deb 8 January 2025, vol 759, cols 883-884.

¹⁸⁴ HC Deb 29 October 2025, vol 774, cols 352-354.

¹⁸⁵ HC Deb 1 June 2026, vol 786, cols 55-56WH.

¹⁸⁶ Baroness Casey of Blackstock DBE CB (n181) 5.

narrativity. Whilst you could give the benefit of the doubt in one instance that this is nothing more than genuine care for the wellbeing of those in the country with no political narrative being provided, the case of Henry Nowak suggests that cases are being cherry-picked for reasons of narrativity, and memory manipulation.

The murder of Henry Nowak by Vickrum Singh Digwa happened on December 3rd, 2025, and the final sentence was passed down on June 1st 2026¹⁸⁷, so this is a case currently strong in the public memory, with a lot of media attention being given to it. The facts of the case are as such; Henry Nowak was walking home, bumped into Vickrum Digwa, where there was a small confrontation, that, after Digwa taking Nowak's phone from him, a (potential) struggle led to Digwa stabbing Nowak in the chest, upper leg, and lower abdomen multiple times¹⁸⁸. The key facts of the case, in relation to this chapter, is that, when police arrived on the scene, it was Nowak that was put in handcuffs due to an alleged racial attack on Digwa. This was an unsubstantiated claim, and due to this taking place at night, and Nowak wearing multiple layers of dark clothing, the police did not realise he had been stabbed until he was unconscious. To conclude, Nowak was put in handcuffs whilst dying from stab wounds due to unsubstantiated claims of racial abuse¹⁸⁹. Farage has spoken in the commons once, on June 3rd, 2026, stating "It is now clear to growing millions in this country that we are living under two-tier policing¹⁹⁰", the two-tiers in question being that ethnic minorities are treated better than white Britons. What is important, is that despite the inference being clear, it is not explicitly said, at least in parliament. His comment continues on, "The instructions that are given to police officers from police bosses are clear and written down in ink: "You must treat different ethnic groups in different ways¹⁹¹." This can be understood in a more general way, that it is important to have cultural understanding, and have a complete picture of every situation. However, it is clear that this is not the case, and feeds further into narrativity. The two major criminal enquiries that have been mentioned are, the murder of a white man by a Sikh man, and a report that states not enough are being done to look into the ethnicity of grooming gangs, something where south-Asian men are disproportionately present in. These things are true in a vacuum, but in two years of comments, these being the two things commented upon, highlight that race is a factor over and above the crimes themselves.

¹⁸⁷ R v Digwa (Southampton Crown Court, His Honour Judge William Mousley KC, Sentencing Remarks, 1 June 2026) <<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Digwa-Final-Sentencing-Remarks.pdf>> accessed July 9th 2026.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ HC Deb 3 June 2026, vol 786, col 1163.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

To link this to memory, a larger picture is needed. As Laubenthal and Myres write, ‘The successful Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom, which relied mainly on anti-immigrant sentiment¹⁹²,’ was the main aim of Farage’s political career. The lack of overt anti-immigrant sentiment in the House of Commons does not obfuscate from the inert meaning in these words. The House of Commons, more so than the average political chamber, has many rules surrounding language, and one being ‘proper and correct’ is heavily important. As such, a shallow analysis would not pick up the true meaning of these words, and the topics that are spoken about. Stoler’s concept of colonial aphasia¹⁹³ is key here. Different to amnesia, it is the intentional disabling of certain events, specifically the UK’s colonial past, to push forward a modern narrative that is predicated on intentionally forgetting past discretions. As Stoler puts it herself, ‘Aphasia, I propose, is perhaps a more appropriate term, one that captures not only the nature of that blockage but also the feature of loss¹⁹⁴.’ The right-wing element of these examples is key in furthering the importance of this colonial aphasia, as, despite populism being of the people, the right-wing element is inherently exclusionary of other out-groups¹⁹⁵, and in a country with a long colonial history, this is key. Nationalist history goes hand in hand with colonial aphasia, and it is clear that this is not in demise¹⁹⁶.

The fifth theme, and one of the most common themes spoken about in the House of Commons is immigration. Whilst this is an underlying theme in the last two case studies, it is overtly mentioned ten separate times by Farage, and largely, it is the mention of small boat crossings in the English Channel. This is the theme that has the most overt and open language stoking up hatred, and creating an obvious in-group/out-group narrative, but additionally, a key use of multiple memory politic theories. For example, his mentions of an invasion, “very aggressive young males¹⁹⁷” and alien cultures¹⁹⁸, highlight the narrativity at play. One of the proudest moments regularly called upon in British culture was D-Day, where British and Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy (Northern France) in 1944 to launch a counter-offensive that was instrumental in the downfall of Nazi Germany in WWII¹⁹⁹. The consistent invocation of this invasion by fighting age foreign males is done so specifically for those in

¹⁹² Barbara Laubenthal and Kevin Myers, ‘Memories of Migration’ (2021) *German Politics & Society* 70.

¹⁹³ Stoler (n8).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid 128.

¹⁹⁵ Popple (n161).

¹⁹⁶ Ramos Pinto (n173).

¹⁹⁷ HC Deb 10 September 2024, vol 753, col 260WH.

¹⁹⁸ HC Deb 30 April 2025, vol 766, col 322.

¹⁹⁹ Janet S. K. Watson, ‘The Politics of Commemoration: Britain and D-Day, 1984-1994’ (2020) *British Journal for Military History* 128.

the UK to make this connection. This links to Rigney's concept of the 'leaky bucket'²⁰⁰, with memory consistently draining, and the transmission between generations meaning memory 'continuously being lost along the way'²⁰¹. Memory dissipates as time goes on, so the intentional framing of immigration in its entirety, linking it to positively emotive moments (victorious moments of WWII) and thus reframing the entire theme of immigration into something purely about small boat crossings from fighting-age men from a foreign culture is intentional, and relies upon the narrative of memory to do so.

A further thing done by Farage in relation to comments about immigration in the House of Commons is a feigned knowledge that his framings of things are not always the case, but this mainly a throwaway comment to justify his overall point. For example, on May 12th, 2025, speaking about this immigration to England's south-east coast, he said, "Already today, a further 600 young men have been processed through Dover, perhaps the odd Iranian terrorist among them—who knows?"²⁰². 'Maybe the odd Iranian terrorist among them,' is a throwaway comment that, despite it being stated as a minority, is intentionally done to enflame the debate. What this relates to regarding memory manipulation is ontological security. Ontological security, described by Innes and Steele, is 'the desire and urge of a social actor to survive and surpass not only as a physical entity, but also as a certain sort of (social) being'²⁰³. This goes above that of personal or familial protection, it is about one's clan, it is more diffuse and is about the protections for someone's conception of their way of life. As it is not something that can be fully quantified, it is something that can be easy to cause panic to. This ontological security can rupture in a critical situation, as Innes and Steele continue, 'an unpredictable situation that an actor finds threatening to its sense of self'²⁰⁴. This trauma, actual or unrealised, delivers a sense of irrationality, which is clearly the aim that the original comment 'the odd Iranian terrorist'²⁰⁵ delivers, small boat arrivals (39,000 between March 2025-2026²⁰⁶), made up about 40% of all asylum claims over this time, and less than 5% of the total immigration to the country²⁰⁷. The majority of these small boat arrivals are from nationals of Muslim nations (Eritrea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, and Somalia being the 5 most common nationalities), it is the consistent undertones (in the House

²⁰⁰ Rigney (n25).

²⁰¹ Ibid 12.

²⁰² HC Deb 12 May 2025, vol 767, col 59.

²⁰³ Innes and Steele (n4) 16.

²⁰⁴ Ibid 20.

²⁰⁵ HC Deb 12 May 2025, vol 767, col 59 (n202).

²⁰⁶ Home Office, 'Immigration system statistics, year ending March 2026' (*Gov.uk*, July 16th 2026) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2026/summary-of-latest-statistics>> accessed July 9th 2026.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

of Commons) of Islamophobic discourse that is clear. As Couperus, Tortola and Rensmann write, ‘One prominent rhetorical trope is the appeal to a Christian tradition in the defence against the contemporary ‘invasion’ of Islam²⁰⁸.’ The right-wing populist history in the UK, and the rise of the it currently, is heavily based through othering²⁰⁹, and Islam is seen as the target. Reform UK are not specifically a Christian party, although this is constantly referred to by much of the leadership, an example being the speech of Danny Kruger, at the time of the speech a Conservative MP, but who defected to reform only a month later, where he spoke of the need to stop the growth of Islam and not to abandon the “oldest Christian country²¹⁰” in the world. The UK is historically a Christian majority nation, but it does not have a proscribed state religion, and this moniker of a Christian nation is largely invoked in reference to the rise of Islam, in opposition to this, feeding into a culture war²¹¹. The three most well know right-wing populist parties, the EDL, UKIP, and Reform, as Popple writes, ‘have played a role in highlighting immigration and presenting a negative image of immigrants²¹².’ The United Kingdom has undoubtably seen a rise in the number of people identifying as Muslim, and it has also had a large amount of small boat crossings in the last 5 years when compared to the decade prior. However, when the instances of the Reform UK leader’s comments about specific crimes in the House of Commons are regarding people from the Middle East and South Asia, or more specifically, those with a different skin tone, it highlights a specific narrative than just a simple observation. It is worth noting that Vickrum Digwa is a Sikh, not a Muslim, but the agenda being pushed does not have fine boundaries, and any religion seen as ‘foreign’ is within the purview of these ideas and comments. This is done through irrational rationality, where things are stated in a rational way, but only as it was started by an irrational premise.

The final theme of Nigel Farage’s comments in the House of Commons relate to his relationship with the USA, and more specifically, to Donald Trump. A large number of these comments were in the context of UK Overseas territories, as it is in the process of giving the Chagos Islands (an island chain in the Indian Ocean) to Mauritius²¹³, something the White House vehemently disagrees with, as Farage recounted during a comment on February 25th, 2026, ““DO NOT GIVE AWAY DIEGO GARCIA!”

²⁰⁸ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2) 439.

²⁰⁹ Hallgrimsdottir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

²¹⁰ HC Deb 17 July 2025, vol 771, cols 520-523.

²¹¹ Shaw (n123).

²¹² Popple (n161) 179.

²¹³ Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Mauritius concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia (signed 22 May 2025, yet to enter into force) CS Mauritius No.1 (CP 1334).

Capital letters from the American President—he likes capital letters in his posts²¹⁴.” The main comment made in this regard is about the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, and the military base Diego Garcia. The Chagos Islands are currently under the process of being transferred to Mauritius. This was the result of an International Court of Justice advisory opinion²¹⁵. It is important to note that President Trump was against this, but even more important that Farage was the one mentioning this. Farage has cultivated a relationship with Trump, with many of his comments in the House of Commons noting this; “I assure the House, having been in America last week and knowing the incoming US Defence Secretary very well²¹⁶,” “I have just returned, hotfoot, from a very full Mar-a-Lago²¹⁷”, “I am in a fortunate position. It is not just that for 10 years I have stood up and defended President Trump—I was very much on my own in those days—but that I know half his Cabinet²¹⁸”. He positions himself to be the main liaison regarding US-UK relations, and in an increasingly fast-paced and deregulated world order, his relationship with Donald Trump is something of importance.

It is a clear attempt to curry favour with the American powerbase, and thus the UK public, as there has been an increasing right-wing populist media surge, with the most obvious intertwinement is through the fairly new news channel, GB News. It was launched in 2021 and is the UK’s answer to Fox News²¹⁹. Nigel Farage is a regular guest on the show, and as Hayton writes, ‘[GB News] is increasingly interconnected with the Trumpian American right and the National Conservatism movement, for example in terms of its funding²²⁰.’ This quote also links to Elon Musk’s purchasing of Twitter around the same time and highlights a right-wing slant of the modern media sphere. The ‘special relationship²²¹’ between the UK and the USA is mentioned, not only by Farage, but by all other major political parties as well. The difference with Farage, however, is the overtures of a personal bond with a specific leader. They both won major right-wing populist votes in 2016²²² (Trump’s first election as US President, and the Brexit Referendum, something engineered by Farage), and they both did so whilst being a political outsider, but a part of the wider establishment, with Trump coming from vastly

²¹⁴ HC Deb 25 February 2026, vol 781, cols 338-339.

²¹⁵ *Legal Consequences of the Separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 (Advisory Opinion)* [2019] ICJ Rep 95.

²¹⁶ HC Deb 13 November 2024, vol 756, col 794.

²¹⁷ HC Deb 18 December 2024, vol 759, col 319.

²¹⁸ HC Deb 4 February 2025, vol 761, cols 274-275WH.

²¹⁹ Hayton (n159).

²²⁰ *Ibid* 387.

²²¹ HC Deb 4 February 2025, vol 761, cols 274-275WH (n218).

²²² Clara Voyvodic Casabó, ‘Post-Truth Politics and the Fracture of Neo-liberalism’s “Double-Truth” Doctrine’ (2018) *St Antony’s International Review* 48.

wealthy family, and Farage being a City of London trader²²³. In this sense, they have both won and can rely on this for future gains. However, tying oneself to Trump is a risky proposition, as Leonard writes, 'Trump's newly aggressive designs on Greenland have driven a wedge between the administration and the European new right²²⁴.' Furthermore, Farage's decision to agree with Trump's assessment of Russia being provoked to attack Ukraine by the West, meant that Reform lost footing in many opinion polls²²⁵. Farage has made the conscious decision to ally himself to Trump, and furthermore, anoint himself as the main point of contact between the UK and the USA.

Finally, regarding US-related comments in the House of Commons, one more recent event can be seen as a concerted effort of prosthetic memory usage by Farage, which being the murder of Charlie Kirk. On September 11th, 2025, he said, "My mind is filled with the horrendous images of the assassination yesterday of Charlie Kirk: an American, a conservative, a Christian, a family man gunned down²²⁶". As stated in previous paragraphs, this being spoken about is important, it is an event in the political zeitgeist, and the event was seen by millions of people. This, event in the USA, has clear utility through prosthetic memory, and toward a broader point being made on the right-wing of the chamber. 'Conservative' and 'Christian,' both true descriptors of Kirk, but once more, looking at what is not mentioned, and seeing a narrative being built, is clearly done to engender a narrative that political violence is happening against only the right, the conservative. As he said in a speech on July 7th, 2026, "I am the most physically and verbally attacked public figure or politician of modern times²²⁷". This comment, and wider 'cancel-culture' attacks have been used to promote the idea that the right is the sole victim in political violence. However, two sitting MPs have been murdered in the 21st century, one Conservative and one Labour, and only one has been shot, that being Jo Cox of the labour party, in 2016. Prosthetic memory, as described by Landsberg, is as follows, 'It has become possible to have an intimate relationship to memories of events through which one did not live: these are the memories I call prosthetic²²⁸.' In the modern media age, a lot of things can feel personal despite taking place in an entirely different place, thus meaning that 'memory bridges²²⁹' can form. However, Landsberg

²²³ Leonard (n158).

²²⁴ Ibid 4.

²²⁵ Hayton (n159).

²²⁶ HC Deb 11 September 2025, vol 772, col 1082.

²²⁷ Nigel Farage, 'Farage calls EMERGENCY by-election.' (July 7th 2026) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j32hynQGEV0>> accessed July 9th 2026.

²²⁸ Landsberg (n9) 148.

²²⁹ Ibid.

intentionally uses the word ‘prosthetic²³⁰’ as there is still something fake about the memories formed, due to it not taking place in one’s immediate community. Linking back to this current instance, the murder of Charlie Kirk and Farage’s comments about him and his views being the most attacked is built on faulty logic due to prosthetic memory, whilst murder politicians have been few, but from either side of the political spectrum in the UK.

In conclusion, Farage’s comments as the MP for Clacton since his election in 2024 have been specifically focused on his own narrative. Firstly, self-determination regarding the ECHR is spoken through a nostalgic nationalist lens, where the Britain who signed the Magna Carta are being shackled by foreign actors. This lens creates a feeling of injustice, whilst it specifically skips much of history, and current human rights and economic issues that would become apparent if the ECHR was left. Secondly, his focus on the grooming gangs report and the murder of Henry Nowak, whilst extremely important issues, are the only two major criminal enquiries mentioned by Farage, further entrenching the ethnic outgroup as the sole problem. These selective comments, boost the narrative of Reform, and heightens anti-immigrant sentiment through colonial aphasia, where a real issue, such as the two mentioned, purely become vehicles for an ethnonationalist narrative, relying upon suppression of colonial memory. Thirdly his comments surrounding immigration further belittle the outgroup, as all immigration is narrowed down to a small boat ‘invasion,’ once more creating a sense of moral panic within the ingroup. This is further concretised through his ‘throwaway comments,’ which can be seen as inconsequential, but further entrench division (‘the odd Iranian terrorist’ comment is not meant to minimise, it is meant to increase panic surrounding immigration, as well as mentions of an invasion). This is done through irrational rationality, as it makes logic sense from a floored starting point. Finally, his comments regarding the USA placing him as the pseudo-diplomat, as the only one who truly can speak on foreign relations with the USA. Furthermore, his comment regarding Charlie Kirk, an American killed in the USA with a gun, something that does not have immediate relevance in a UK context, is spoken about to create a prosthetic memory where the ingroup can feel even more concerned about their safety, therefore needing the populist leadership of Reform to help them, something only Farage is able to do.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 2- Outside of Parliament

This chapter will focus on what is said and written outside of parliament. Usually, this leads to speakers being more candid, as parliamentary language generally keeps this civil. Whilst one can analyse the parliamentary language, when outside the House of Commons, less dog whistles are needed, and things are said more frankly. Furthermore, this chapter will not look only at Nigel Farage, but also other Reform MPs, and major names in the Reform UK Party, such as Lee Anderson, and Nadine Dorries. Comments made outwith parliament usually avoid immediate criticism, as interviews and speeches cannot be immediately rebutted like comments made in the House of Commons, and as such, more outlandish things can be said. This chapter will be split into the following sections; Reform UK's manifesto for the 2024 General Election, the Reform UK Conference in 2025, Lee Anderson's speech launching their local campaigns in 2025, and two speeches from Nigel Farage on his YouTube channel, relating to the murder of Henry Nowak, and his announcement of an emergency by-election in 2026. These specific speeches/videos are chosen as they are the most popular on said channels, so they have the most relevance in the public zeitgeist. Regarding the manifesto, the invocation of 'patriotism' but with a clear nationalist ideal is clear, as well as a consistent memory bridge between Trumpian American issues, which are either not things in the UK (DEI), or the banning of postal voting. Furthermore, their concept of a 'patriotic education' is stated as a balancing act, but modern viewpoints and statistics are not true of a hatred of the UK. Whilst decolonial perspectives are there in the UK education system, it is presented by Reform as an attack on the UK, and one that must be immediately redressed. Secondly, the Reform UK Conference, whilst they are the most popular party in opinion polls, but without any real power, helps further their populist narratives. Through comments about a societal breakdown, cultural decline and general anti-immigration sentiment, the patriotism is thinly veiled nationalism, and negatively defined communities (ingroup/outgroup dynamics). Thirdly, Lee Anderson's speech will be mapped against Assmann's six characteristics of cultural memory, highlighting the intentionality of each comment, and how it appeals to the ingroup whilst demonising the outgroup. Finally, Nigel Farage's YouTube speeches about Henry Nowak highlight a much more direct use of violent rhetoric, overt mentions of violence, stating enough is enough for the attacks on his ingroup, clearly being white Britons. This narrativity pulls on memory bridges from America, as well as the thin centred ideology of populism.

Reform UK's manifesto (or contract, as called by them) for the 2024 General Election was markedly shorter than the other major political parties²³¹, highlighting the populist ideology behind (68) the party. A lot of their main policies were based upon the broken country left behind by the Conservative party's fourteen-year rule, with a largely headline-heavy, substance-lacking 28 pages. As the preamble says 'Our country is worse off, both financially and culturally²³².' Financial damage is a largely quantifiable concept, but cultural damage is more diffuse, and as such, it can be overrun with tropes that fit the narrativity²³³ of Reform's stated aims, which being limiting immigration. Regarding narrative and the Reform UK manifesto, a generalisation of immigration in the negative, whilst stating its ill effects to the 'true' nation, but avoiding any mention of immigration in the creation of said country, Kończal and Moses write that,

'By combining nationalist and narcissist narratives and by disregarding or distorting historical evidence, "patriotic" history promotes mythicised, monumental, and moralistic interpretations of the past that posit partisan and authoritarian essentialisms and exceptionalisms²³⁴.'

It is a clearly partisan storyline that is being presented. Whilst, in parliament, Farage generally starts his comments about immigration stating that it is not all immigrants that are doing something wrong (regarding whichever specific situation is de jure), the tone of this manifesto does away with even a minor mention of immigration positively effecting the UK, with the preamble also stating, 'Record mass immigration has damaged our country... Multiculturalism, has imported separate communities that reject our way of life²³⁵.' 'Our way of life' is an extremely broad statement that thrives on its own ambiguity, it makes sure that whatever feeling someone has can be transcribed onto this, and multiculturalism, and immigration, can be to blame. Something this broad is not an empirically truthful statement, as there is nothing really quantifiable that can be looked at. However, what it does to, is essentially drown out other voices, by metaphorically shouting the loudest, and as is in the populist playbook, is built around a vertical narrative without one group as the victim (the people) and one group as the perpetrator (the immigrant), making clear the in-group out-group dynamics.

²³¹ Reform UK, 'Our Contract with You' (Reform UK, June 17th 2024) <<https://general-election-2010.co.uk/2024-general-election-manifestos/Reform-UK-Party-Manifesto-2024.pdf>> accessed May 16th 2026.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Rigney (n22).

²³⁴ Kończal and Moses (n99) 154.

²³⁵ Reform UK (n231).

Another main section of the Reform UK 2024 manifesto is the disavowing of all things ‘woke.’ The contract takes aim at ‘woke policing²³⁶’ practices, and states that ‘Divisive, ‘woke’ ideology has captured our public institutions’ (preamble). Additionally, they had the stated aim of replacing the 2010 Equalities Act, and scrapping ‘Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DE&I) rules that have lowered standards and reduced economic productivity²³⁷.’ This particular theme of the manifesto is couched in Trumpian rhetoric²³⁸, and despite the mix of generalisations and individual cases to create a negative narrative surrounding immigration, the attacks against ‘woke policy’ and ‘DE&I rules’ are not based in either. Firstly, the talk of DE&I is a clear transplant from the Trump administration’s ‘War on DEI’ that has become a theme of his Presidency²³⁹. Secondly DEI/DE&I does not exist in the UK, it is EDI (equality, diversity, and inclusion²⁴⁰), DEI is the American Term, only further entrenching American rhetoric into the British psyche. An FOI request found that, ‘across the 10 Reform-run English councils there was a combined 4.56 full-time equivalent jobs connected to equality and diversity²⁴¹.’ Less than 5 jobs being cut is not the crux of a culture changing-policy, and is one that, despite the amount it is mentioned, is not bogging down the economy. This links back to Landsberg’s ‘prosthetic memory²⁴²,’ as the continual usage of proxy-rhetoric, which is shoved onto the UK public, whilst not being something of importance, in the way described by the manifesto. However, if this inconvenience can eventually be drowned out²⁴³ by constant attacks against those who are ‘woke,’ and cultural flashpoints, as well as actual crises, can be capitalised upon to further this narrative, it will be done.

Another part of their manifesto that relates to prosthetic memory was their stated aim to ban postal voting (apart from those unable to leave their homes²⁴⁴). Firstly, this is unfounded concern, as the Electoral Commission found there were 236 alleged instances of electoral fraud, with 94% resulting in no further action after a small investigation, or were locally resolved²⁴⁵, and between 2019-2023, there

²³⁶ Ibid 9.

²³⁷ Ibid 22.

²³⁸ Eddy Ng and others, 'The anti-DEI agenda: navigating the impact of Trump's second term on diversity, equity and inclusion' (2025) Equality Diversity and Inclusion An International Journal 1.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Samuel Earle, 'Will Nigel Farage's attempt to copy and paste Trump's policies work in the UK?' *The Guardian*, (July 16th 2025).

²⁴¹ Peter Walker, 'Reform wants to cut council diversity roles. The problem is there are already barely any' *The Guardian*, (July 13th 2025).

²⁴² Landsberg (n9).

²⁴³ Mahmutović and Lovec (n11).

²⁴⁴ Reform UK (n231).

²⁴⁵ The Electoral Commission, '2024 Electoral fraud data' (*The Electoral Commission*, May 19th 2026)

<<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/electoral-fraud-data/2024-electoral-fraud-data-0>> July 10th 2026.

were only 2 criminal convictions regarding electoral fraud²⁴⁶. Protecting the integrity of an election is very important, but electoral fraud through postal voting is statistically a non-issue. Attacking the postal voting system was also a commonality of the Trump Administration, in an attempt to discredit the validity of the opponent if he was losing. Similar statistics are apparent, with research stating that only 4 cases of mail voting fraud being apparent for every 10 million mail votes²⁴⁷. Overall, this is a false narrative, which is now in the public zeitgeist due to Reform's following of a Trump comment, one which has decreased faith in these systems, meaning winning is accepted, but losing is questioned, creating further division, and thus highlighting once more that the populist narrative of Reform is reified to be true, as they are the only ones telling the truth against the 'corrupt elite'²⁴⁸.

The section of the manifesto dedicated to education is heavily entrenched in the politics of memory, and further describes the ideologies that they are against, providing a populist rewriting of history, hidden behind 'fair' language. There is an advocacy for 'A Patriotic Curriculum in Primary and Secondary Schools'²⁴⁹, with the manifesto stating, 'Any teaching about a period or example of British or European imperialism or slavery must be paired with the teaching of a non-European occurrence of the same to ensure balance'²⁵⁰. As is a common theme throughout, this, on the surface, is a widely acceptable comment, it is fairly neutral, assuring balance in the education system. However, to understand this is to look holistically. Meusburger, Heffernan and Wunder write, 'When new historical research endangers a predominant narrative, power elites frequently seek to counteract these developments by fixing memories associated with the previously accepted versions of events'²⁵¹. Decolonial thought, and a general distaste for the UK's colonial past, is not a black-and-white issue. What is clear, however, is that this thought is new to permeate the British psyche, and is also new to general academic, and schools in the UK. As such, it is not overrunning the system, just presenting a new picture. However, this is felt by the populist right as a harbinger of the already common cosmopolitan social change in Europe²⁵². The concerted effort is not one of highlights the ills committed by the UK, but by explaining away these with a sense of whataboutism. This is done,

²⁴⁶ Joseph Hook, 'Fact check: Little evidence of postal vote fraud in the UK' *The Independent* (June 19th 2024).

²⁴⁷ Samara Angel, Jonathan Katz, and Randi Wright, 'Mail voting in the US: Data points to very low fraud and significant benefits to voters' *Brookings* (November 6th, 2025).

²⁴⁸ Nicolas Berlinski and others, 'The Effects of Unsubstantiated Claims of Voter Fraud on Confidence in Elections' (2023) *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 34.

²⁴⁹ Reform UK (n231) 11.

²⁵⁰ Ibid 11.

²⁵¹ Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan and Edgar Wunder, 'Cultural Memories: An Introduction', in Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan and Edgar Wunder (eds), *Cultural Memories. Knowledge and Space* (4th edition, Springer 2011) 8.

²⁵² Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

according to Reform, as the country is one of self-hatred nowadays, and one must be patriotic. Firstly, it is simply not the case that left-wing and woke ideologies²⁵³ have eroded any care for the country, A YouGov survey in 2025 found that 33% of the British public say that the British Empire is something to be proud of, 21% said it was something to be ashamed of, and 39% saying it neither a source of pride nor shame²⁵⁴. Whilst this was more pronounced amongst the youngest demographic (16–24-year-olds), it is not enough to suggest a moral collapse of society, and a self-hatred of one's country. Secondly, nuance is important, one can enjoy the country they live in, whilst also having an understanding of history. Even if one is to conflate patriotism and blind support, it is not a statistically huge issue. Overall, however, this is purely an attempt at creating a discourse that things are changing too fast, in a place of changing demographics, and people are being told to hate the country. The nostalgic nationalism²⁵⁵ discussed in the previous chapter is once again obvious here.

Furthermore, the UK education system is a broad church, and regarding history, the only mandated topic to teach during secondary school is the Holocaust²⁵⁶. Additionally, the narrative from Reform UK is that the 'woke ideology'²⁵⁷ has permeated education, and this is something that must be stopped. An analysis of history education would suggest the opposite however, and that there was a colonial slant to education in the UK, and there still is, albeit much less than previously. Firstly, as Elias and Spafford write, due to the broadness of the education mandate, 'In theory... an English student could graduate with a history A-level without ever having systematically learned about the British Empire²⁵⁸.' An analysis of textbooks used in the British education system found that, despite a development in postcolonial narratives, there was a tendency to frame the UK's colonial past through concepts like 'progress' and 'modernisation'²⁵⁹. The leaky bucket metaphor is important here, as when a lot of historical teachings are inherently not the things that people can remember, the narrative that's created is seen as the full truth²⁶⁰. Whilst Reform's manifesto has the claim of balance, it is through the idea that the teachings of history are against the state, but this is a patently false accusation, based largely around vague patriotic and unfounded criticisms, especially when textbooks rarely ever mentioned the

²⁵³ Reform UK (n231).

²⁵⁴ Matthew Smith, 'British attitudes to the British Empire' (*YouGov*, January 29th 2025) <<https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/51483-british-attitudes-to-the-british-empire>> accessed July 9th 2026.

²⁵⁵ Couperus, Tortola, and Rensmann (n2).

²⁵⁶ Helfier (n10).

²⁵⁷ Reform UK (n231).

²⁵⁸ Hannah Elias and Martin Spafford, 'Teaching Britain's 'civil rights' history: activism and citizenship in context' (2021) *Teaching History* 164.

²⁵⁹ Helfier (n10).

²⁶⁰ Rigney (n25).

violence of colonialism²⁶¹. 'Textbooks traditionally have been key vehicles through which governments transmit national identity to younger generations²⁶²,' and once more, if one can create a climate where there is less faith in the education system (just as that of the electoral system), then it only follows that those who are correct, and those who can be trusted, are the populists, i.e. Reform UK.

The second section of this chapter will focus on the Reform UK Conference in September 2025²⁶³. The main speeches given were by Nigel Farage, as well as Nadine Dorries (former Conservative MP, now member of Reform). This was one year after the 2024 General Election, and polling indicated at this time, that Reform had the highest share of voting intent compared to any other party, with Reform polling at 28%, Labour at 22%, and the Conservatives at 17%²⁶⁴. Despite a strong showing vote-share wise in 2024, due to the first-past-the-post system used in these elections, they only won 5 seats. This meant that Reform had a strong base of support, whilst still not having enough actual power to be judged upon, a strong situation for a populist party to be in, and one which can be capitalised upon, especially in the political climate of an unpopular Labour leader, and a constant switching of Prime Ministers in the decade prior. The main theme of these speeches were anti-immigrant, with Farage stating, "We are in societal breakdown with law and order. We are in cultural decline. It's as if our leaders have forgotten who we were²⁶⁵," and "They [the government] will not be forgiven for their betrayals over the course of the last 5 years. Mass migrations, illegal immigrants crossing the channel²⁶⁶." The linkage between cultural decline, and immigration is clear. The claim to push a patriotism²⁶⁷ that is exclusionary, is the unique part of right-wing populism, as inherently shrinking one's popular base is not common in the general definition of populism²⁶⁸, but it places the verticality of the people against the establishment and changes it to the people against immigration, something that is not an upwards attack. As Kallis states, this is a 'radically redefined community²⁶⁹' where there is a reliance on a group other than the 'elite' that is generally at fault for most things. Societal breakdown is once more a diffuse suggestion that can create an accusation against a whole group,

²⁶¹ Helfier (n10).

²⁶² Lind (n3) 522.

²⁶³ Reform UK, 'Nigel Farage Full Speech | Reform UK Conference 2025.' (September 12th 2025) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBG7KBVWo6M>> accessed July 9th 2026.

²⁶⁴ YouGov, 'Voting intention: Now, thinking specifically about your own constituency, if there were a general election held tomorrow and these were the parties standing, which party would you vote for?' (YouGov, July 13th 2026) <<https://yougov.com/en-gb/trackers/voting-intention>> accessed July 13th 2026.

²⁶⁵ Reform UK (n263).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Mudde (n120).

²⁶⁹ Kallis (n96) 2.

and relies on an individual experience to confirm validity. For example, despite there being many crimes committed each year, if the ones discussed by Farage and others at Reform are usually committed by those who are not white/British, there becomes a biased dataset, and only one needs to see one instance of a crime by someone who is not white/British to confirm these thoughts. This can be seen in relation to the individual stories of survivors in the 7/7 terrorist attacks, where the individual becomes the narrative, with Brown, Allen, and Reavey writing,

‘We may summarise these issues that survivors confronted in ‘telling their story’ By proposing that the personal or individual recollections of the bombings are not clearly distinct from the collective narratives of the event, which rapidly emerged in media and political discussion. The experiences of survivors were more or less immediately recruited into these broader, shared narratives²⁷⁰.’

Just as prosthetic memory works with mass media's help, so too that a populist message, focused on individual experience, is aided by these messages being published for a larger audience, a starting point where political debate benefits. Additionally, a narrative does not always need to have stories be truthful²⁷¹, furthering obscuring what is necessary for one to further their agendas.

A second comment made by Farage in said speech was “I’m off to have lunch in a few weeks with the prime minister of Albania. I might book a very big plane and take a load with me²⁷².” A common theme of modern populist rhetoric, and what is being seen as a feasible tactic regarding the politics of memory, is off-handed comments that have an offensive element to it, said in way akin to a joke that allows for it to pass, but creates the environment for it to be acceptable to continue saying things like this. Small boat crossings from Albanians in the first half of 2025 totalled 118²⁷³, an infinitesimal amount compared to the total of small boat crossings. But the comment is made in a way that can be played off as nothing, but is clearly there to indicate their intent, as he goes on to say, “We will stop the boats within two weeks of winning government²⁷⁴.” As discussed in the previous chapter, ‘parliamentary language’ is done in a way that stops things like this from being said a lot of the time, but in a conference, there are less backstops against more directly offensive language. The cultural

²⁷⁰ Brown, Allen, and Reavey (n40) 434.

²⁷¹ Innes and Steele (n4).

²⁷² Reform UK (n263).

²⁷³ Peter William Walsh and Pragya Upreti, 'Albanian asylum seekers in the UK and EU' (The Migration Observatory, October 22nd, 2025) <<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/albanian-asylum-seekers-in-the-uk-and-eu-a-look-at-recent-data/>> accessed July 12th, 2026.

²⁷⁴ Reform UK (n263).

memory introduced originally by Halbwachs is present here, but not directly. The consistent references to culture, and keeping 'British culture' for Brits, is there, but not a strong mention of what this 'culture' consists of. The closest mentions are the want for a 'Judeo-Christian culture and heritage'²⁷⁵ and the large amount of England flags being put up in the country, a right-wing phenomenon of this time. A clear thought process is clear here. The appeal to culture is not enough, it has to be done in an exclusionary way. The self-described true party of patriotism, when it is a right-wing populist party, does not obviously espouse the markers for being patriotic, only that of an ethnonationalist tint. As Malinova writes, 'Mnemonic actors invoke myths and symbols of the national past to shape and delimit their societies' identities, legitimize their power, mobilize electoral support, and exchange power resources... which means that quite often memory appears as an instrument for other political goals'²⁷⁶. The closest thing mentioned is Britain's self-determination. Whether that's from the EU, which led to the Brexit referendum, or the consistent mentions of leaving the ECHR, something which the other right-wing party (Conservative Party) does not support, at least according to Nadine Dorries, where she said, "The majority of Conservative MPs will never support leaving the ECHR"²⁷⁷." However, instead of the group the UK is beholden to being above them (The EU and ECHR), or at minimum equal to them, the diffuse group of the 'other,' usually boiled down to immigrants, is a clear punch-down, and thus develops a harder cultural memory practice to develop. As such, the attacks are needed in said direct manner.

Nigel Farage has been in the political sphere for a long time, but as the UK does not have a Presidential system, a political party is needed to gain power, and as such, less polished speech is apparent. This is clear at the launching of Reform's Local Election Campaign, and the speech of Lee Anderson²⁷⁸. Comments in his speech included things such as, "There's no such thing as Islamophobia"²⁷⁹, and about illegal immigrants, "It is high time that we kicked all of them about before they trash our country"²⁸⁰. Whilst Lee Anderson has had a long political career, uniquely being a member of both the Labour and Conservative parties before Reform, but he has not been in the political spotlight as much as Farage, and thus, is much more direct with his language. Whilst a non-populist

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Malinova (n27) 998.

²⁷⁷ Reform UK (n263).

²⁷⁸ Reform UK, 'Lee Anderson | Full Speech | Local Election Campaign Launch.' (April 1st, 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9_3hXffnSU> accessed July 9th, 2026.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

party usually presents a nuanced view regarding political issues, Reform tends to present the majority of issues as the fault of immigration, and once more, rhetoric that pushes the Overton Window towards them become clearly apparent. As Rigney writes,

'Behind these discussions is the idea that 'narrativity' is a cognitive scheme rather than a property of events; accordingly, that experiences are not in themselves stories, but become narrativized through the application of models of storytelling which help turn events into meaningful structures²⁸¹.'

The narrativity is what is clear, and it is framed as one group being placed as the crux of all issues. It is important that, despite the framing of things, or the consideration of what actually is 'British,' immigration is a large part of the British identity, and immigrants are a large party of the UK, and migration from their former empire specifically²⁸². Global immigration is on the rise, but Britain as a former empire does have an additional layer, and there have been a lot of calls from the UK to its former colonies to essentially help the country function, be that welfare, health, care and education services²⁸³.

A second comment from Lee Anderson in this speech was, "These spineless, weak politicians allow people who hate us to rip down statues, cancel our historical heroes, and they continually apologise for our past²⁸⁴". This relates to the above analysis. It is done in a way that points to specific instances and then draws this to a larger narrative. He goes onto say after this, "Anyone who speaks out against this nonsense gets labelled as a racist²⁸⁵." This creates a situation where the 'other side' is a monolith. If 'one statue' or 'one cancellation' takes place, the 'other side' is immediately tarring them with the same brush. It is a comment without nuance, that only develops a clear boundary between the in-group and out-group. This is the first characteristic of Assmann's cultural memory, which being 'what are we, and what do we differ from²⁸⁶.' The group is defined by who they are not, and designating the outgroup as one of hate for any single decision by the ingroup. As Mälksoo writes, scholars of populism focus on the 'negative mobilisation possibilities²⁸⁷' and thus try to further division. Hence, Farage and

²⁸¹ Rigney (n22) 70.

²⁸² Vince Cable, 'The evolving politics of immigration Report Subtitle: UK experience' (March 2025) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep68511.6>> March 1st, 2025.

²⁸³ Popple (n161).

²⁸⁴ Reform UK (n278).

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14) 129.

²⁸⁷ Mälksoo (n1) 5.

Anderson largely do not give a blueprint for the ingroup but mainly aim for what negative characteristics the outgroup has. As such, this means that they (the leaders, the memory entrepreneurs), are the only ones who can protect from this, and provide a safe haven for them. The second characteristic of Assmann's cultural memory is the capacity to reconstruct²⁸⁸, essentially putting history onto a modern template. The 'cancellation of historical heroes'²⁸⁹ is a way to narrativize history to create modern worries. On the face of it, historical cancellations do not have a modern effect, but it is clear that the attempt to state that the outgroup does not let anyone be proud of anything. Memories of everyday things are reified to create memories²⁹⁰, and when the fabric of it is seen to attack it, worry can be created.

The third characteristic is formation²⁹¹, how memories are formed, be that through speech, monuments, pictorial etc. Anderson's speech was through a linguistic form, but a phenomenon spoken about by Farage was the influx of England flags around this time. A large amount of these were placed around immigration centres, but generally it created a double narrative, where one could hide behind the innocence of loving one's country, but at the same time highlight one's ingroup, and create a situation where the flag is put with a jingoistic narrative. As Rigney writes, 'modern media need to be taken into account as an integral factor in the production of cultural memory today'²⁹². The media that is used to produce cultural memory is key, and the mass media led this flag narrative to reach new heights. Whilst the discrepancy between the storyteller and the listener cannot be too different²⁹³, the language and media used makes sure more can be reached. Assmann's fourth characteristic is organisation²⁹⁴, that being the cultivation and reinforcement through specific events. The biggest event that relates to this is the small boat crossings made from Calais, France to Dover, England. It is a common theme of the Reform Party's speeches, exhibited in Anderson's speech where he says, "Our weak, pathetic parliament has done nothing apart from arrange for these illegal migrants to be picked up in the sea"²⁹⁵. Small boat crossings, even at their peak, were a fraction of the amount of total immigration to the UK²⁹⁶, and, more importantly, they peaked in 2022, and halved in 2023, rising

²⁸⁸ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

²⁸⁹ Reform UK (n278).

²⁹⁰ Susannah Radstone, Bill Schwarz, 'Introduction: Mapping Memory' in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory- Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham University Press 2010).

²⁹¹ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

²⁹² Rigney (n25) 15.

²⁹³ Apfelbaum (n13).

²⁹⁴ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

²⁹⁵ Reform UK (n278).

²⁹⁶ Cable (n282).

slightly in 2024, highlighting that this was neither a massive issue in the entirety of immigration, and that the government had implemented steps to negate this from happenings. However, the 'invasion' myth is one that invokes strong emotion, so using it to curry favour from their voting base is useful.

The fifth characteristic is obligation, the creation of a clear system of values and differentiations for one's group, created through memory. Whilst this is a clear characteristic, this is common throughout all other characteristics. Once more, it is clearer throughout the speeches of Reform members that defining what is not constitutive of the ingroup, compared to what is. Anderson states, "Here at Reform, we are not bothered about your colour of your skin, your religion, your sexuality²⁹⁷". It is hard to qualify this statement in the broader sphere of comments made by those in Reform UK, chiefly as, despite getting 14% of the total vote in the 2024 UK General Election, only 7% of ethnic minorities reported intent to vote for Reform²⁹⁸. Furthermore, Farage's comments about the political history of the country do not fall in line with an inclusive party, as Hayton writes, 'He has made no secret of his admiration for Enoch Powell, who he named as his political hero, and defended the 'basic principle' of Powell's notorious 'rivers of blood' speech²⁹⁹.' Whilst Farage, and Reform more generally try to distance themselves with the extreme-right³⁰⁰, with ousted member Rupert Lowe creating the Restore Britain party as a result. However, both political intention, and language suggests that a statement about equality and non-discrimination falls on deaf ears. Finally, the sixth and final characteristic of Assmann's cultural memory is reflexivity³⁰¹. The memory entrepreneur, the memory receptor are not always in binaries, and, to revert back to the example of the flags being put up across England, the receptor needs to create to keep cultural memory flourishing. Overall, this speech from Lee Anderson is one that has much deeper meaning when analysed through cultural memory, and it is clear that there are other meanings present despite what is said by him. Furthermore, the many high-profile members of Reform are inherently less polished than Farage, and as such, things are more apparent in who the outgroup is. That being said, a recent example of Farage's rhetoric has taken a more overtly divisive leap.

The murder of Henry Nowak, written about in the previous chapter, was one that has captured the emotions of the nation, and is one that has been used by Farage to further stoke the flames of a culture

²⁹⁷ Reform UK (n278).

²⁹⁸ Tanya Abraham and Matthew Smith, 'Ethnic minority Britons at the 2024 general election' (YouGov, June 28th, 2024) <<https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/49877-ethnic-minority-britons-at-the-2024-general-election>> accessed July 16th, 2026.

²⁹⁹ Hayton (n159) 389.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

war in the UK. In a speech posted on YouTube on June 2nd, 2026, Farage stated, “Henry’s family have responded to this in just the most extraordinarily dignified way. But I suggest the rest of us respond to this with pure cold rage³⁰².” This comment was a break from the usually more restrained language, especially where there is usually a qualification along the lines of everyone being important regardless of ethnicity, or the preference for all immigrants, and instead was a largely outward invocation of violence. The tone of this speech was that things had gone too far. This was spoken about in a much more toned-down way in the House of Commons, but every throwaway comment has enough to hide behind, and as Hayton writes, ‘This desire to distance himself from the extreme right, while no doubt driven at least in part by strategic calculation, has been a consistent feature of Farage’s politics³⁰³.’ It is a concerted effort by Farage to appeal to the broader public, by stopping people like Tommy Robinson from being associated with him, those that did respond with extremely violent rhetoric, where there is not any nuance, something he has been criminally prosecuted for³⁰⁴. To be clear, Farage has consistently stated things that have been used as a vehicle for protests, but a direct invocation that responses must be through rage, due to anti-white discrimination in the legal system, is a new attack.

The ingroup has now been given an overt ethnic affiliation, and this leads to 'collective narcissism'³⁰⁵, where all offensives are responded to with 'retaliatory hostility'³⁰⁶, including the self-adoration of one's own group and nation. As such, when Farage's populist rhetoric is stated, it is for a specific people only, despite the normally qualifying statements regarding equality, and that they are for everyone that abides by the law³⁰⁷, when the usual tropes regarding an 'invasion,' or said comments on two-tier policing, it is clear that the patriotism is a form of ethnonationalism, unique to the right-wing populist ideals³⁰⁸. Essentially, the speech regarding Henry Nowak's murder is that 'enough is enough,' as he also stated, " We brought in what is called positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities in favour of those of white people whose families have lived in Britian, in many cases, for centuries³⁰⁹.” The ingroup are those that feel disadvantaged, but instead of clear solutions, it is a clear

³⁰² Nigel Farage, 'Farage Addresses the Nation on Henry Nowak's Murder.' (June 2nd, 2026) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBFH3ydyfKs>> accessed July 1st, 2026.

³⁰³ Hayton (n159) 389.

³⁰⁴ *Jamal Hijazi v Stephen Yaxley-Lennon* (aka Tommy Robinson) (Transmission Direction Order) QB-2019-001740 (KB, 14 June 2024) <<https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/jamal-hijazi-v-stephen-yaxley-lennon/>> accessed 18 July 2026.

³⁰⁵ Peter Bull, Ashley Weinberg and Sharon Coen, 'Populism in the UK: An Analysis of the Rhetoric of Nigel Farage' in Isabel Íñigo-Mora and Cristina Lastres-López (eds), *Discourse Approaches to an Emerging Age of Populist Politics* (Springer 2024) 199.

³⁰⁶ Ibid 199.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Hallgrímsdóttir, Finnsson, Brunet-Jailly (n5).

³⁰⁹ Nigel Farage (n302).

showing that building political capital is the first point. Regarding Assmann's characteristics of cultural memory³¹⁰, it is the concretion of identity that are clear. Populism is tied with this for of cultural memory, as it is a thin-centred ideology³¹¹ that has a narrow conclusion for a broad set of problems. And once this conclusion is stated consistently, it can only be ramped up over time, as without this, the appeal of the stated populist aim goes away. Specifically, in a world with social media, things must be constantly eye-catching to keep the interest of the public, whether that be in the form of an echo chamber³¹² or not. Either, the ideas are further perpetuated to an extreme level, to keep the ingroup consistent, or to further demonise the outgroup.

Finally, a comment of Farage's further appeals to the memory bridges and concept of prosthetic memory³¹³. The beginning of Farage's speech stated, "What does he [Henry] say? I can't breathe. Familiar words. Remember career criminal George Floyd who died in appalling circumstances in Midwest America a few years ago³¹⁴". He goes on to state that the protests surrounding the Black Lives Matter, which defaced the Cenotaph and Churchill's statue were faced with support by leadership ("Within a few days Keir Starmer was taking the knee³¹⁵"), and that the murder of Henry Nowak was faced with silence³¹⁶. This is not true, as Keir Starmer (the Prime Minister at the time) described the murder as 'harrowing³¹⁷' and 'demanded answers³¹⁸.' Once more, Farage is using mainly US examples to describe how the UK police system is corrupt, when they are not directly comparable. The policing system in the USA and its potential biases are not relevant in a UK context, but the narrativity of these comments make the George Floyd example an easier example. Whilst part of Farage's comments was about the UK's reaction to the murder of Floyd, it was also there to make one feel that the policing system was corrupt as a result, and that is only possible through memory bridges.

³¹⁰ Assmann and Czaplicka (n14).

³¹¹ Bull, Weinberg, and Coen (n305).

³¹² Hannah Marshall and Alena Drieschova, 'Post-Truth Politics in the UK's Brexit Referendum' (2018) Institute of International Relations 89.

³¹³ Landsberg (n9).

³¹⁴ Nigel Farage (n302).

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Danielle de Wolfe, 'Sickened' Starmer demands answers over 'harrowing' Henry Nowak murder as he questions role of racism claims in police decision-making' (*LBC*, June 2nd, 2026) <https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/henry-nowaks-murder-serious-questions-starmer-racism-police-5Hjdb4C_2/> accessed July 17th, 2026.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion-

To conclude, Nigel Farage, and the Reform UK party's usage memory politics tactics continually sow division, and whilst they largely push away the extreme far-right elements of the party, whether in Parliament or outside of Parliament, their language further entrenches division, keeping the ingroup as white Britons, and the outgroup generally as immigrants. As stated in the first chapter, Parliamentary language means that overt attacks on people/groups are not allowed, but after an analysis of Farage's language in Parliament, throwaway comments are used to build up a narrative that both highlights the supposed wrongs of immigration, but also shows that he is the only person who can solve this issue, as he is outwith the powerbases of Government, and the two main political parties, as only the Labour and Conservative party have been in power in the last century. When he is in Parliament, his comments have focused on self-determination, two specific major crime investigations (the grooming gangs enquiry, and the murder of Henry Nowak), and more generally the relationship with the USA, and immigration to the UK, largely illegal immigration conducted through small group crossing from France. Through Mudde and Hayton's conceptions of populism, as well as the specificity of right-wing populism from Ivaldi and Mazzoleni, this thin-centred attacks on outgroups become clearer. Furthermore, what is not mentioned is equally key, as the two major crime investigations mentioned by Farage are one's where ethnicity is a key factor, and ethnicity being one that either highlights crimes from other ethnicities (the grooming gangs enquiry) or, in the example of the murder of Henry Nowak, instances where a white Briton was potentially discriminated against. Narrativity, colonial aphasia, and nostalgic nationalism are all key lenses here, as they give a clear concept as to how this fits with Reform and Farage's broader narrative, that of the demonisation of the outgroup, and nationalism (veiled as patriotism) for the 'true heirs' of the country.

The second chapter was broader, looking at the most watched speeches, as well as Reform UK's 2024 General Election manifesto. Throughout all of this, the same analysis is apparent, ingroup/outgroup dynamics, and one which rely on memory politics to divide, and to further their right-wing populist agenda. Regarding their election manifesto, a focus on prosthetic memory is clear. America's cultural and political reach is extremely large, and as such, a lot of Reform policies reflect this. The ban on postal voting, both a non-issue in the USA and UK, but constantly mentioned by President Trump, as well as Farage, attacks on DEI (which does not exist in the UK, it is DE&I) initiatives, which have consistently shown to not affect jobs, or have an economic effect at all, as well as the removal of all things 'woke,' are done to sow doubt in the political system, highlighting Reform as the true heirs for

power. Furthermore, the ‘patriotic’ education mentioned is clear a part of the narrative of nostalgic nationalism and colonial aphasia. Whilst espoused as fair, it removes a history of oppression against other groups, and purposely rids any culpability in these acts. Textbooks have been seen to be balanced, if anything still underplaying the darker sides of Britain’s history, but it is once more framed by Reform UK as having gone ‘too far. In the Reform UK conference in 2025, and Lee Anderson’s local election launch speech, consistent referrals to cultural decline to due immigration show that the innocent patriotism espoused is clearly nationalism, and it is done so through consistent cultural memory references. The painting of England flags is, on-the-surface, an innocent showing of patriotism, but its deeper meaning is part of the larger narrative of the ingroup, and its placements (a large amount outside immigration centres) once more demonises the outgroup. Finally, Farage’s recent comments on his YouTube channel are a departure from the throwaway comments, or the feigned interest in equality, and is a direct invocation of violence, asking for ‘pure cold rage.’ This narrative can only take place if there is a concerted effort to make the ingroup feel victimised, and only do so because of the ‘invasion’ of the outgroup.

Overall, comments from Nigel Farage, other members of Reform UK, and official communications from the party itself, are all part of a concerted effort to create, dismiss and attack. A populist and nationalist narrative is cultivated through the politics of memory, whether that is what is mentioned in parliament, what is borrowed from the USA, or what is avoided in speeches. Furthermore, language, whether direct or indirect, consistently vilifies immigration, or those different to the white Briton, and the colonial aphasia, nostalgic nationalism, and prosthetic memory usage is one that promotes Reform as the only true party, and the white Briton as the only true group in the UK.

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