

*Little old UK voting Brexit and some Austrian friends: A corpus-driven analysis of the 2016 UK right-wing tabloid discourse*

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So it no longer matters what Hollande or Merkel say any more. It's what the people say that matters. And this revolution is all down to the little old UK voting Brexit. EU could collapse long before Brexit process is finished THE Brexit vote in June was an earth-shattering political event. EU could collapse long before Brexit process is finished.

Stephen Pollard. The Daily Express, 2 December 2016.

## 1. Introduction

2016 was full of shocking events in the old continent. On 22 March, 32 people were killed in attacks at Brussels airport and Maalbeek underground station. On 18 April, over 400 migrants and refugees died in the Mediterranean Sea trying to make it into Italy from Egypt. In Austria, a gunman killed 2 and wounded 11 people in an open-air concert. On 23 June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union (EU). Jo Cox Labour MP had been shot dead a few days earlier. On 22 July a gunman killed 9 and injured 27 in a shopping mall in Munich. On 4 December, Alexander Van der Bellen, supported by the Green Party, won the Austrian presidential election in a re-run of the second round. He defeated right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) candidate Norbert Hofer. On 5 December, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned after losing the constitutional reform referendum.

Different authors (Corbett, 2016; Schmidt, 2017) have researched the political reactions and the media discourse around these events, before and after 2016, in the light of populism. Bonikowski (2016) claims that it is difficult to study populism on the European radical right as scholars have used interchangeably terms such as nationalism, Euroscepticism or the far right “when labelling a set of specific parties” (p.18). This author suggests that populist discourse has been successful due to both “a potent mix of populist and ethno-nationalist discourse, and [...] a confluence of contextual factors that makes such anti-elite, anti-foreigner, and anti-minority arguments resonant” (p.21). Some of the events described in the first paragraph (terrorist attacks, immigration, anti EU vote) create the backdrop against which radical right narratives emerge in the EU. Bonikowski (2016:21) suggests that such narratives “[...] can be easily exploited by anti-establishment” parties.

Rhetorical strategies have reshaped the political landscape by using new and old media that exploit the anger and the fear of an important part of the population in Western societies. Schmidt (2017) has argued that the ideational root causes behind Brexit and Trump's victory are:

(1) neoliberal economic ideas leading to the 21<sup>st</sup> century financial crisis, and to “the worsening of [middle class people] life chances due to stagnant wages, growing inequality and the increasing difficulty for the young to get a foot on the real estate ladder, or a steady well-paying job” (p.255);

(2) a discourse on culture and identity, in particular against cross-border mobility and immigration (p.256);

(3) a political discourse against the establishment, and “[...] against citizens’ growing sense of loss of control as a result of the removal of more and more decisions from the national to supranational level [...] because of increasing Europeanization in the case of the UK” (p.258).

The day after the Austrian elections, Julia Ebner wrote in *The Guardian* an article with the following title: “Austria defeated the far-right Norbert Hofer – finally, some hope for Europe”.<sup>1</sup> The author stated the following:

Unlike the Brexit referendum and the US elections, this vote was not just a choice between the status quo and change, or the establishment and the fringes. Mainstream politicians had already been eliminated in the first round, leaving only outsiders in the game: a xenophobic gun enthusiast and a green party-backed professor. It was a runoff between greed and solidarity, hatred and empathy, and, potentially war and peace.

Julia Ebner described the FPÖ as “partly founded by Nazis with a record of antisemitism and an agenda of anti-Muslim bigotry”. She stated that Norbert Hofer sparked an aggressive campaign that fuelled political violence and hate speech, and “increasingly hijacked religion as a populist mobilisation tool”. Wodak (2015) describes right-wing populism as showing, among others, a focus on EU-skepticism, and maintains that UKIP and FPÖ have developed a “broader integrative identity concept related to nativist body politics” (p. 41). Both parties thrived on the idea that the European identity is an invention of the elites, a top-down construction where the community of “us” is an imaginary one. Despite his defeat on 4 December 2016, Hofer was backed by 46% of the voters.

This research seeks to understand how the UK right-wing tabloids construed Norbert Hofer during 2016 and the themes that emerged in the articles where he was mentioned. We will adopt a corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; Baker, 2006) where we will seek to expose how “the patterns in [our corpus and the reference corpora] are noted as a way of expressing regularities (and exceptions) in language” (Baker, 2006:16). We will try to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How Norbert Hofer construed in the UK right-wing tabloid press during 2016?
- (2) How were Norbert Hofer and the FPÖ used in the discussions that appear in the UK right-wing tabloid press?

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<sup>1</sup> URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/05/defeat-austria-far-right-norbert-hofer-hope-europe>

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Thus, we hope to gain a better understanding of how right-wing media, supposedly populist and nationalist, use foreign politics in their discourse, and contribute to the debate on the use of rhetorical strategies to promote the right-wing agenda in Europe and beyond.

## 2. Methodology

Our research methodology is based on corpus-driven and corpus-based discourse analysis (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001), where keywords and collocations (Baker et al, 2008; Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2013a, 2013b; Pérez-Paredes, Aguado & Sánchez, 2017; Pérez-Paredes, 2018) help to how individuals and processes are discursively constructed. In the following lines, we will discuss how the corpus was collected and the different methods used in order to answer our research questions.

### 2.1 Corpus compilation and clean-up

We selected the UK conservative tabloid papers *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun*, and searched the Factiva platform<sup>2</sup> for news articles from 1/1/2016 to 3/12/2016<sup>3</sup> where the full name “Norbert Hofer” was mentioned. All information in Factiva is tagged with a classification system allowing users to retrieve exact content from nearly 33,000 global sources, and “[...] eliminate the noise that comes with free text searching”<sup>4</sup>. While this is mostly accurate, corpus linguists and discourse analysts need to refine the results.

The search returned 19 texts (Appendix 2). After examining each, one of the articles was removed as “Norbert Hofer” was not part of the main body of the text but part of a “Read More” section in the middle of the piece. 18 news items were retained and cleaned up before carrying out POS tagging and applying corpus analysis methods. The clean-up involved removing unnecessary sections such as metadata, *Read more* sections, formatting code (h2, caption, etc.) and appeals to contribution, generally in the final paragraph. In some of them, particularly in *The Sun*, it was decided to remove sections that were not concerned with the main news item where Norbert Hofer was alluded. That was the case of the column by Conservative Party supporter and journalist<sup>5</sup> “Tony Parsons: “Moronic Remain poster is offensive to both black AND white people”, published in *The Sun* on 29 May 2016.<sup>6</sup> After examining the item, it could be attested that the piece was divided into different sections all written by Conservative Party supporter and journalist Tony Parsons: “Moronic Remain poster is offensive to both black AND white people”, “FACISM-I BLAME ANGELA MERKEL”, “Insane.....Sharon Osbourne”, “HARRY STYLES IS A PLUCKY SOLDIER”, “MONEY-GRABBING WARMONGER’S

<sup>2</sup> URL: <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.jbs.cam.ac.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> The day before the presidential elections in Austria.

<sup>4</sup> URL: <https://www.dowjones.com/products/factiva/>

<sup>5</sup> URL: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/tony-parsons/1222188/tony-parsons-moronic-remain-poster-is-offensive-to-both-black-and-white-people/>

<sup>6</sup> URL: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/tony-parsons/1222188/tony-parsons-moronic-remain-poster-is-offensive-to-both-black-and-white-people/>

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LOOKING A BIT AGED” and “LUVVIES GO ACTING SUPERIOR” (Upper/lower case as in the original).

All 18 articles comprising the 2016 Hofer UK Tabloid Corpus (HUKT Corpus) were published across 11 different days, most of them in the months of May (4 articles) and December 2016 (8 articles). Our corpus was uploaded to Sketch Engine where it was POS-tagged using the English Tree Tagger tagset with Sketch Engine modifications. The HUKT corpus contains 18,564 words and 4,316 types.

## 2.2 Methods

Baker (2006:7) points out that “all methods of research have associated problems which need to be addressed and are also limited in terms of what they can and cannot achieve”. Following Baker (2004:357), we will carry out analyses of multi-word keywords and “[...] supplementary concordance and collocational analyses [which] enable researchers to obtain a more accurate picture of how keywords function in texts”. In this research, we will triangulate results from three different methods that will explore the corpus (as well as other reference corpora). By using a combination of approaches, we aim (1) to provide richer results (2) derived from a variety of research methods that (3) will contribute to discussing our initial research questions from multiple perspectives and, to some extent, (4) reduce researcher’s bias (Baker, 2004; 2006). These methods are keyword analysis, Word sketches and collocational analysis. Keyword analyses and word sketches will be mined, that is, the resulting items will be the product of different statistical tests. We will use collocation analysis to examine *Norbert Hofer* and related terms. The difference between corpus-driven and corpus-based methods is that, in the former, the keywords and sketches to examine will emerge from the statistical analyses carried out; the latter have been selected a priori based on our interest in Norbert Hofer’s role in British right-wing tabloids.

### 2.2.1 Keyword analyses

In cultural studies, keywords are seen as the body of meanings of the practices central to our societies and institutions. In corpus-informed discourse analysis, however, keywords are mined through statistical analysis. In corpus linguistics, the clustering of lexical items reveals different co-textual environments built upon co-collocation and colligation (Pace-Sigge 2013; Pérez-Paredes, 2017). These lexico-grammatical environments built on repeated linguistic patterns are “[...] widely shared in a discourse community” (Baker 2011: 13), and create the conditions for the identification of lexical items characterizing a text or a whole corpus (Pérez-Paredes, 2018). Stubbs (2007: 130) highlights that “[...] unique events can be described only against the background of what is normal and expected”. It follows that “what is normal and expected” has to be modelled, and hence the need for a reference corpus that can be contrasted with our focus corpus. Following Baker’s (2004) methodological guidelines, in the following paragraphs we intend to specify how keywords were mined.

Single-word and multi-word extractions were performed using Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, 2012). Table 1 summarises the criteria selected for keyword extraction:

Single word keywords reference corpus	enTenTen15
Multi-words reference corpus	BNC
Attribute for keywords	Lemma
Minimum frequency	3

Table 1. Criteria used for the extraction of single- and multiple-word keywords

For the single-word keyword extraction, we used the English Web Corpus (enTenTen) as reference corpus. This is a crawled corpus (Kilgarriff, 2012) made up of texts collected from the Internet and part of the TenTen corpus family. The enTenTen English corpora were tagged by TreeTagger using Penn TreeBank tagset with Sketch Engine modifications. The English Web corpus 2015 (enTenTen15) contains 15 billion words. The use of a recent, large reference corpus was deemed more appropriate for the extraction of single words, while for the multi-word keyword extraction, the British National Corpus (BNC) was chosen. Keyness is calculated using *Simple maths*, “a method for identifying keywords of one corpus vs another [...] and identify instantly what is typical in language and what is rare, unusual or emerging usage [...] The statistic [...] for keywords is a variant on “word W is so-and-so times more frequent in corpus X than corpus Y”<sup>7</sup>. In our analysis, we only considered the top 100 keywords although for the sake of space we report the top 50 in Tables 2 and 3. Some of the limitations of keyword analysis pointed out by Baker (2004) have been met by exploring the actual concordance lines and, particularly, by triangulating results with other methods (word sketches and collocations). However, we could not measure keyword dispersion as this feature is not offered on Sketch Engine. For the sake of analysis, keywords are grouped semantically according to meaning.

### 2.2.2 Word sketches

Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, 2012) developed Word Sketch, a function that offers a “[...] word’s collocates categorised by grammatical relations”.<sup>8</sup> A word sketch is then a group of collocations displayed according to grammatical relations, and sorted either by their frequency or an association score. In the context of this research, logDice is used as association score, and overall lexical word frequency in the corpus as the criterion to choose which sketches to examine (Appendix 1).

### 2.2.3 Collocational analysis

In the context of this research, collocations are understood as “co-occurrence patterns observed in corpus data” (McEnery and Hardie, 2011: 123) as calculated by Sketch

<sup>7</sup> URL: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/simple-maths/>

<sup>8</sup> URL: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/user-guide/user-manual/word-sketch/>

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Engine and which uses the logDice association measure based on the likelihood function within a range of -5/+5 words. The significance cut off point was established at 6.63 ( $p = 0.01$ ). The words examined with this type of analysis (i.e. *Norbert Hofer, Freedom Party, Austria and Britain*) were selected before carrying out the keyword and the word sketch analyses. Given its prominence in the corpus, *Italy* was included at a later stage.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Single-word keywords

Table 2 shows the top 50 single keywords in the HUKT corpus. 36% of them are countries or nationalities (e.g. Italian, Europe, Britain, etc.); 24%, people (Hofer, Grillo, Merkel, etc.); and 14%, politics-related lexical items (Party, Labour, Freedom, Star, etc.)

Rank	Item	Score	Freq	Rank	Item	Score	Freq
1	EU	7948.77	168	26	Sunday	757.93	16
2	Brexit	3076.03	65	27	Star	757.93	16
3	I	3028.72	64	28	No	757.93	16
4	Italian	2981.41	63	29	May	757.93	16
5	Italy	2886.8	61	30	Five	757.93	16
6	Europe	2792.18	59	31	Trump	710.62	15
7	Britain	2650.26	56	32	Pen	710.62	15
8	European	2366.41	50	33	Le	663.31	14
9	Renzi	1656.79	35	34	Greece	663.31	14
10	Mr	1372.94	29	35	Turkey	616.01	13
11	Party	1231.01	26	36	Movement	616.01	13
12	France	1231.01	26	37	What	568.7	12
13	Hofer	1183.7	25	38	Polish	568.7	12
14	Germany	1136.4	24	39	Marine	568.7	12
15	Austria	1136.4	24	40	Angela	568.7	12
16	Labour	1089.09	23	41	Mrs	521.39	11
17	UK	994.47	21	42	Eurosceptic	521.39	11
18	Minister	994.47	21	43	Dutch	521.39	11
19	Grillo	994.47	21	44	Spain	474.08	10
20	British	947.16	20	45	Saatchi	474.08	10
21	Prime	899.86	19	46	Remain	474.08	10
22	Merkel	899.86	19	47	Poland	474.08	10
23	Freedom	852.55	18	48	PM	474.08	10
24	Brussels	852.55	18	49	Matteo	474.08	10
25	Norbert	805.24	17	50	Juncker	474.08	10

Table 2. Top 50 Keywords extracted from the corpus

Titles are unsurprisingly significant (Mr, Ministers, Prime, Mrs, etc.), and while *Brexit* and *Remain* make it into the top 50, *Leave* did not make it even in the top 100. EU

(7948.77), Brexit (3076.03), Europe (2366.41), Britain (2650.26) and European (2366.41) are in the top 8 of the extracted keywords; in other words, these lemmas are most salient in the corpus under analysis when compared to enTenTen15. What is even more interesting is that, if we used the enTenTen13 as the reference corpus instead of the enTenTen15, the top 8 keywords would be *Brexit, Renzi, Hofer, Grillo, referendum, Norbert, Euroskeptic* and *Juncker*, which reinforces the relevance of the keywords *EU, Europe, Britain* and *European*. In short, in 2013/2014 our corpus would have been characterized by a very strong presence of proper nouns such as Renzi or Grillo, whereas in 2015/2016, it is the nations and the political structures that, based on our keyword analysis, seem to dominate the debate in the right-wing press. Additionally, *I* stands out as top 3 keyword as quoted speech is a trademark of tabloids according to Lefkowitz (2018). In the corpus, *I* represents different speakers, columnists as well as politicians, among whom we find Mr Hofer.

### 3.1.2 Multi-word keywords

Table 3 offers the top 50 multi-word keywords in the HUKT corpus. In the top 10 we find 4 noun phrases where the word crisis is a headword: *migration crisis* (284.85), *migrant crisis* (142.92), *banking crisis* (130.29) and *financial crisis* (119.01). *Eurozone crisis* is top 13 and *next crisis* is top 30.

Rank	Item	Score	Freq	Rank	Item	Score	Freq
1	migration crisis	284.85	6	26	real uncertainty	94.86	2
2	far-right leader	237.54	5	27	rising nationalism	94.02	2
3	european project	223.67	5	28	banking capital	93.19	2
4	youth unemployment	150.53	5	29	speech today	92.38	2
5	constitutional reform	146.2	7	30	next crisis	91.59	2
6	migrant crisis	142.92	3	31	refugee exodus	91.59	2
7	banking collapse	139.3	3	32	top job	91.09	3
8	banking crisis	130.29	3	33	polish community	89.28	2
9	financial crisis	119.01	5	34	political mood	89.28	2
10	presidential election	115.41	7	35	referendum campaign	87.16	2
11	far-right candidate	95.62	2	36	italian economy	87.16	2
12	populist candidate	95.62	2	37	referendum result	84.39	2
13	eurozone crisis	95.62	2	38	economic uncertainty	84.39	2
14	dirty divorce	95.62	2	39	next president	83.07	2
15	popular fury	95.62	2	40	local bank	81.79	2
16	first far-right leader	95.62	2	41	free movement	81.47	4
17	polish leader	95.62	2	42	political uncertainty	79.42	2
18	visa liberalisation	95.62	2	43	recent poll	78.83	2
19	italian referendum	95.62	2	44	political establishment	78.25	2
20	puerile racist trash	95.62	2	45	open-door policy	77.67	2

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21	racist trash	95.62	2	46	political class	76.55	2
22	such puerile racist trash	95.62	2	47	damage limitation	74.47	2
23	asian lady	94.86	2	48	fourth term	73.95	2
24	right politician	94.86	2	49	leading light	73.44	2
25	own referendum	94.86	2	50	upper house	61.21	3

Table 3. Top 50 multi-word keywords extracted from the corpus

A second group of keywords is made up of societal problems such as *youth unemployment* (150.33), *banking collapse* (139.3), *rising nationalism* (94.02) or *refugee exodus* (91.59). *Youth unemployment* is consistently mentioned together with the 37.1% rate in the case of Italy and 11.7 % in the case of Austria. In every case, (the number of) migrants in those countries appear in the vicinity:

1. With **youth unemployment** at 37.1 per cent and a record 171,000 migrants arriving this year from north Africa, the Italian Establishment is terrified of Five Star. (Appendix 1, text id 13)
2. **Youth unemployment** of 11.7 per cent and 90,000 migrants last year – one per cent of the population – mean he has a good chance. (Appendix 1, text id 13)
3. His opponent, a potty comedian, Beppe Grillo, above, is hostile to immigration and, with **youth unemployment** at 37 per cent, on the front foot. If Renzi is defeated it will trigger a financial crisis as the banks are all skint. (Appendix 1, text id 15)

A third group of keywords has *uncertainty* as a headword in the noun phrase: *real uncertainty* (94.86), *economic uncertainty* (84.39) and *political uncertainty* (79.42).

**Uncertainty** in these cases lies in the EU camp, and not in the UK. Economic uncertainty, for example, is created in Europe as a result of the UK leaving the EU:

4. Voting Remain is a greater leap into the unknown than freeing ourselves from the EU's **economic uncertainty**. WE may not always like it but one of the intractable realities of the human condition is that nothing ever stays the same. (Appendix 1, text id 6)

Similarly, *political uncertainty* rests with the EU, not with the UK:

5. What has changed since then is the increasing **political uncertainty** in several European countries, which is likely to further undermine any



appetite the EU might have for a fight to the death with Britain.  
(Appendix 1, text id 11)

A fourth group of two keywords expresses Europeans' anger and frustration both at the UK's decision to leave the EU and at migrants in Austria: *dirty divorce* (95.62) and *popular fury* (95.62). The former is allegedly used by the EU press to refer to the consequences of Brexit, while the latter is used to, purportedly, describe Austrians' concern with migrants:

6. Thanks largely to **popular fury** at the migration crisis, the country's far-Right Freedom Party is now comfortably the most popular in the land. (Appendix 1, text id 2)
7. Since Austria was famously the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, the prospect of a far-Right government taking power in Vienna has a peculiarly sinister resonance. But **popular fury** at the advent of 700,000 migrants into a country of barely eight million people means it is probably inevitable, turning Austria into a European pariah and inflaming tensions with its neighbours. (Appendix 1, text id 2)

### 3.2 Word sketches

In the following lines, we will report how the grammatical relations found in the corpus construct the following most frequent nouns in the corpus: *EU*, *country*, *Brexit* and *Italy*. LogDice scores are provided in brackets.

#### 3.2.1 The EU

While the most significant modifier of EU is *punch-drunk* (11.83), as a modifier, EU presents a more neutral, less evaluative profile: *membership* (12.24), *leader* (10.82), *citizen* (10.80), *country* (10.43) or *state* (10.24) are some of the top nouns modified by *EU*. As an object, apart from *leave* (13.17), we find, among others, *join* (10.54), *plunge* (9.67), *cripple* (9.67) or *blame* (9.67):

8. Voters in Austria and Italy go to the polls and could **plunge** the EU into a political and economic crisis. (Appendix 1, text id 17).
9. People are turning against Brussels' as Italy hits the polls it may well **cripple** the EU and serve a boost to Brexit TOMORROW will be another nervous day in the Chancelleries of Europe. (Appendix 1, text id 17).
10. But Italians are not the only people whose vote on Sunday could shatter the EU. (Appendix 1, text id 2).

When the EU takes an 's genitive is in EU's *failings* (12.19) and EU'S *stalwart* (12.19) in the context of Italy or in *economic uncertainty* (12.19). The EU appear in coordinated phrases and following *Muslims* (11.41), *Ankara* (11.41) or *immigration* (11.00).

### 3.2.2 Country

The noun *country* is used in the corpus to signify the idea of *otherness*. Using Sketch Engine grammar, we find out that this lemma is preceded by *other* (11.70), *European* (11.36), *Eurosceptic* (10.87), *EU* (10.43), *angry* (10.19) or *Mediterranean* (10.19). In *normal* (10.19) *country*, we find an Italian citizen that complains that banks and politicians scheme against citizens' interests, so a normal country is one where all of them would be in prison. The title of the article is "Will QUITaly sink the EU?". In *self-satisfied* (10.19) *countries*, we find a reflection on the resignation of Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann in May 2016 as a symptom of the dangers of the xenophobic far right: "[...] thanks largely to popular fury at the migration crisis, the country's far-Right Freedom Party is now comfortably most popular in the land" (Appendix 1, text id 2). *Country* is also the subject of copular *be* in the following:

11. To say the country is **pessimistic** is putting it lightly. With that mood prevailing, Italians watched events in America – and saw a non-politician wrest power from a cynical establishment figure. (Appendix 1, text id 13).
12. Some economists say the Italian story will be a much bigger version of the Greek crisis, but with one crucial difference – the country is too **large** to be rescued. (Appendix 1, text id 18)

### 3.2.3 Brexit

Modifiers of Brexit include *Poland* (11.99), *UK* (11.54) and *Italian* (9.64). *Brexit* is the subject of *trigger* (11.54), *give* (10.91) and *have* (9.46), as shown in the next examples:

13. Brexit has also **triggered** concerns about what will happen to the peace process. Italy Recent polls have revealed that 48 per cent of Italians believe they would be better off out of the EU. (Appendix 1, text id 9)
14. As Brexit **gives** Europe's far-right leaders cheer, it's now clear punch-drunk EU has over-extended itself. (Appendix 1, text id 9)

Brexit modifies *vote* (12.02), *negotiation* (11.41), *talk* (11.24) as well as *bomb* (10.54) and *gloom* (10.35) in "Enough of all this Brexit gloom" (Appendix 1, text id 11).

### 3.3 Collocations

As in 3.2, logDice scores are provided in brackets.

#### 3.3.1 Norbert Hofer, the Freedom Party and Austria

Most of the collocates of Norbert Hofer describe his status as *candidate* (12.80) or *presidential* (11.77), as well as his political orientation as member of the *Freedom* (11.83) *Party* and *far-right* (11.54) politician. The *Freedom Party* only collocates with *Hofer* (11.76) or *candidate* (11.22), while *Austria* does not collocate with any lexical word in the corpus.

#### 3.3.2 Britain

*Britain*, on the other hand, offers quite a rich range of collocates: *leave* (11.73), *if* (10.98), *EU* (10.93), *deal* (10.91), *should* (10.69), *voted* (10.60), *Brexit* (10.40), *Europe* (10.28) or *could* (9.72). In the HUKT corpus, Britain is seen as a nation that, after the Brexit vote, has left the EU in shock, although in two concordance lines we can read that (1) Sweden's finance Minister warns that it would be a mistake to *chastise* the UK, and (2) the readers of *Le Figaro* thought Brexit was a good idea. Modal verbs *should* and *could* are used to describe different scenarios that present a profound division in terms of different unfolding events between the UK and the EU.

#### 3.3.3 Italy

*Italy* collocates with *euro* (10.83), *across* (10.70), *likely* (10.35), *referendum* (10.32), *polls* (10.20), *France* (10.15), *may* (10.14) and *could* (9.66). Most of these collocates are used in the context of the constitutional reform referendum that was held on 4 December, when 59.12% of the voters rejected the reform. That night, Matteo Renzi announced his resignation as Prime Minister. *Euro* always appears in the corpus as a collocate of *Italy* when discussing the hypothetical referendum the Five Star Movement would hold on Italy's Euro membership. *Likely* is used to hypothesize on the political future of both Renzi and Italy if the voters rejected the constitutional reform, creating thus "a political earthquake comparable to Brexit and the election in America of Donald Trump" (Appendix 1, text id 13). The use of the preposition *across* is statistically significant. It is complemented either by *eurozone* or *Italy*:

15. Experts are now fearful that uncertainty provoked by a political crisis in Italy could spark panic **across** the eurozone, and Italy may even end up leaving the euro and returning to the lira. (Appendix 1, text id 13)
16. So will there be an fresh earthquake right **across** Italy tomorrow night? I expect a No vote. (Appendix 1, text id 18)

As we can see in the above two articles published in the *Daily Mail* in early December 2016, *panic* and an *earthquake* are the likely results of a referendum on a constitutional reform. Moreover, *polls* is used to convey the idea that “48 percent of Italians believe they would be better off out of the EU” (Appendix 1, text id 8); that the referendum “may well cripple the EU and serve a boost to Brexit” (Appendix 1, text id 17); and that “Italy go to the polls and could plunge the EU into a political and economic crisis” (Appendix 1, text id 17).

#### 4. Discussion

Baker (2006: 18) points out that “corpus data does not interpret itself, it is up to the researcher to make sense of the patterns of language which are found within a corpus, postulating reasons for their existence or looking for further evidence to support hypotheses”. In this section, we will interpret the results in the previous section by examining how discourse is constructed around the keywords, word sketches and collocations analysed. We will use Abts and Rummens (2007) right-wing populism twofold vertical structure framework to discuss how the media analysed integrate *Norbert Hofer, Austria* and the *Freedom Party* as part of a rhetorical strategy to support the ideological makeup of English nationalism as “[...] opposition to bureaucracy, open borders and migration” (Wellings 2010: 498).

This paper examines how Norbert Hofer is construed in the UK right-wing tabloid press during 2016 and how his party is portrayed in the discussions that appear in this type of press. Our results show that the discourse involving *Norbert Hofer* in British right-wing tabloids during 2016 is restricted to a limited set of keywords and themes that characterize the HUKT corpus. The 18 texts present a marked interest in Brexit and its consequences on international politics, and the negative impact of other political events on the EU. The multi-word keyword analysis is particularly illuminating as it paints a picture where numerous crises sweep away the EU and threaten to end the EU project sooner than later, to the apparent satisfaction of the three papers under analysis. This finding corroborates Leconte’s (2015) suggestion that the European project is under attack from different right-wing actors across Europe.

##### 4. 1 Right-wing populism against the elites

Abts and Rummens (2007: 418) maintain that right-wing populism blames the intellectual, economic and political elites for abusing their positions of power and influence, and ignoring the *people*. The keyword analysis has shown that the main focus of interest of the corpus rests with countries, European institutions and Brexit. Leconte (2015: 258) describes populism as an anti-establishmentarian discourse that emphasizes the *people* against the *elites*. The top 3 multi-word keywords are unequivocally revealing: *migration crisis*, *far-right leader* and *European project*. While the second is arguably the immediate result of our inquiry, *migration crisis* and *European project* reveal themselves as relevant themes in our corpus. Let us focus on the latter now.

The European project, that is, the EU, and Brexit are the top 2 most significant individual keywords in the corpus. *Brexit* is seen as being damaging to *punch-drunk EU* and to the interests of *senior officials*. The enemy in the corpus, according to the logic of identity, is the *EU*, not the Europeans. The EU personifies the role the elites play in populist discourse: “[...] all political forms and offices which institute mediated forms of representative power will be targeted as inimical to the direct rule of the people” (Abts and Rummens 2007: 418). The narrative in the corpus suggests that *Britain* has started an earthquake that will be followed by other countries. In this context, Italy and Austria are instrumental. They are the other European countries that will show how dissatisfied the *people* are with the EU project and the “invented” European identity (Wodak, 2015:41).

The Italian vote against the constitutional reform is seen as a punishment against the establishment, one that will extend *panic* across the *eurozone* and will *cripple* and *plunge* the EU, that is, their remote elites. As a result, Brexit will be *boosted*. Corbett (2016: 14) maintains that the populist media depiction of EU policy has “[...] promoted an especially ‘right-wing Euroscepticism’, that is ‘regressive and conservative within the British political culture, [whose] strength lies in its capacity to be populist and appear contemporary and radical” (Gifford 2006: 857). The radical and populist Eurosceptic elements are found in the HUKT corpus in the way in which the EU is seen as a scapegoat of all major problems (unemployment, migration crisis, economic crisis), and in the neutral treatment Norbert Hofer and his party are given in the corpus. Our word sketch and multi-word keyword analyses reveal that the Austrian far-right is not explicitly associated with collocates other than neutral descriptors. Unsurprisingly, when it comes to the EU, the right-wing media show no hesitation in blaming the EU or *Brussels* (Geddes, 2013) for many of the issues outlined in Table 3. An exploration of the concordance lines of *European* suggests that this is often used to portray threats to the common people’s values and the logic of identity pursued by populists as opposed to the discourse of constitutional democracies as guarantors of individual freedoms and “[...] constitutive conditions of the democratic process” (Abts and Rummens, 2007: 418). The following are some examples of how *European* is consistently associated with some obscure elites and the construction of the EU as a delegitimized idea:

17. Brutalised by recession, stricken by austerity and outraged by what they see as the **European** elite’s callous indifference, thousands of Greeks have been driven into the arms of the far Right and extreme Left. (Appendix 1, text id 2)
18. Is it likely that an EU in such a weak and confused condition will come together with the specific intention of punishing Britain? I don’t believe so. Of course, some **European** politicians – especially in Brussels – like to talk tough. (Appendix 1, text id 11)
19. This month, Austria’s new chancellor, Christian Kern, said that Brexit could mean the "slow goodbye of the **European** idea" unless serious reform is carried out. He claimed that Brexit would trigger "enormous

economic upheaval and a shift in the continent's political balance". (Appendix 1, text id 8)

20. Plenty of experts think that a rejection of Renzi's reforms will trigger a crisis which could eventually bring down the entire **European** project – the EU, the euro, the Brussels gravy train, Uncle Tom Juncker and all. (Appendix 1, text id 18)

Abts and Rummens (2007: 419) maintain that political opponents can "[...] no longer appear as legitimate representatives of the popular will", which validates the exclusion and lack of recognition of what is different, in this case, the EU as embodied by the Brussels elites and politicians. The extract below showcases how the Brexit vote is constructed as a reaction to the elites by the "ordinary voters":

21. The political establishment here [Germany, France and Italy] has carried on the battle against Brexit by maintaining that the referendum vote was some sort of irrational aberration. It was nothing of the sort: it was a vote by ordinary voters who were fed up with being told they had no choice but to go along with the EU elite. (Appendix 1, text id 16)

As seen in 3.2.3, *Brexit* is constructed as an extraordinary movement full of vigour and enough potential to bring the EU down. This picture is consistent with *Britain's* portrayal (see 3.3.2) as a visionary country that will set trend and will be followed by others:

22. The other countries who could follow **Britain** out of the EU after becoming disillusioned with Brussels FAR right political parties across Europe are calling for their own countries to stage referendums on leaving the EU just hours after Brits voted in favour of Brexit yesterday. (Appendix 1, text id 8)

Paradoxically, this populist construction of the EU as an elitist project contrasts with Gifford (2008), who states that Euroscepticism, as the hegemonic position within the British political order, is the brainchild of the British political elite.

#### 4.2. Right-wing populism against foreigners and immigrants

An important number of the keywords analysed shows that the articles where *Norbert Hofer* was mentioned were concerned with the EU and migration. Corbett (2016:17) thinks that dissatisfaction with the enlargement of the EU and the movement of people, "[...] especially from new member states in central Europe opened up tensions in British politics that neither New Labour nor Conservative parties could address". In this light, Brexit is seen as a direct consequence of these tensions. In our corpus, *political uncertainty* is something EU countries need to deal with, in particular Italy. *Youth unemployment* appears inexorably linked to migration, as if there was a direct,

undisputed causal link between the two. Some of the uses of the keyword *European* show how it was used to suggest that the EU can pose threats to the readers of the media analysed. The following example links *European decline* with migrant workers and asylum seekers' sexual assault in Germany:

23. The calendar of **European** decline begins not with last month's referendum in Britain or the unrest in Turkey. For the Germans at least it probably started on New Year's Eve in Cologne when hundreds of women were sexually assaulted by migrant workers and asylum seekers. Information was initially withheld by the authorities because they did not want to admit that the state could no longer cope. (Appendix 1, text id 9)

However, this never happened according to German police, *The Bild* and *The New York Times*<sup>9</sup>. This incident appears on another article in the corpus (Appendix 1, text id 2). The presence of anti-migrant and anti-asylum seeker discourses against migrants and asylum seekers in the press is deeply worrying because of their effect on the formation of public attitudes, opinions and will (Wodak, 2015). As with the elites, it seems that a topos of cause was used in the corpus around the ideas of economic crisis and migrants. According to Wodak (2015: 53), "if the cause exists then so does the effect. If the cause does not exist, then there is no effect". Such a causal link is implied in our corpus. In all the instances where the top 1 multi-word keyword *migration crisis* occurs, what we find is not a humanitarian interest in the situation of migrants coming to the EU to improve their life conditions (away from a war in Syria), but a breakdown of the negative effects on countries (see 3.2.2) and citizens in the EU:

24. That figure has increased from 35 per cent over the last year, suggesting that Eurosceptic momentum is building due to the country's **migration crisis**, poor economy and unemployment figures.

The extended concordance line refers to *Italy*, one of the unexpected protagonists of our initial search. In 3.3.3 *Italy* was constructed as one of the EU countries that may eventually follow the UK in leaving the EU. *Italy* and *Austria* provide the backdrop against which the migration crisis unfolds and against which a populist pro-Brexit discourse emerges, possibly suggesting "an idealized conception of a [nation's] imagined past, which has since been weakened or destroyed by enemies of the people" (Corbett, 2016: 15), especially by the EU project (Wellings, 2010; Geddes, 2013). Part of that conception remains implicit in the HUKT corpus, as if the invocation of the topos of cause would suffice for the effect of crises and disasters to validate the effects and the consequences of the Brexit vote. In some of the keywords, however, we find a more explicit vindication of Brexit. This is the case of *free movement*:

25. Joseph Muscat effectively said there wasn't a cat's chance in Hell of our having access to the single market while restricting **free movement** of labour. Sometimes it seems intransigent Remainers actually want

<sup>9</sup> URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/world/europe/bild-fake-story.html>

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negotiations to founder so that Brexit can be universally recognised as a total disaster.

26. Expanding the EU to include additional countries, which is very much Brussels' plan, would exacerbate opposition to the **free movement** of people. Given all this, Remain needs to explain why we wouldn't be better off trying to diversify our economy towards more resilient parts of the world

*Remainers* and *Brussels* are used here in similar ways as elites in the previous section as part of the topos of threat (Wodak, 2015): if Remainers continue their fight to repeal Brexit, we are warned, the voices of the people will be unheard and the EU elites will triumph. Freedon (2017:1) states that Brexit has "[...] occasioned the need to reassess the ranges and guises of populism, especially when populist agendas are voiced in part from within the political Establishment of a democratic state". The results of the study reveal a discourse that tries to blame the EU and migrants (Wodak, 2015) for the many challenges and problems the UK and the EU are facing in 2016 and beyond.

## 5. Some conclusions

Data-driven methods such as keyword analyses and word sketches were used to surface the themes and the aboutness of our corpus (Scott, 2008). This study has tried to gain further understanding of the role played by Austrian far-right politics in the discourse of right-wing press in the UK during 2016. Using a combination of corpus linguistics research methods and the analytical framework provided by Abts and Rummens (2007), the results of this research show evidence that Norbert Hofer and the FPÖ were used to articulate the EU on a vertical axis where right-wing tabloids' populist discourse against the EU elites and migrants could be framed. Complementary collocation analyses support the idea that, while far right leaders in right-wing media are portrayed as neutral stakeholders, their politics and beliefs are used to showcase populist discourse against the EU and migrants. This is an interesting finding that lends support to Wodak's (2015) analysis of right-wing populisms as embodying the feelings of fear of the future and the desires for change. In this context, "fear is easily converted into scapegoating and is politically instrumentalized" (p. 186). This study also corroborates that the Brexit vote was a reaction to a narrative about immigration as a danger to UK values and sovereignty:

[...] immigration was central to the debate in the UK. The Leave campaign was relentless in its narratives about the problems of immigration in Britain, in particular by UKIP, where opposition took on racist overtones as party leaders claimed foreigners were taking jobs and overburdening the social services (despite evidence to the contrary) (Schmidt 2017:256).

The UKIP poster suggesting thousands of migrants trying to break into the UK will remain as one of the most dishonourable tricks in the history of social manipulation.



One of the contributions of this analysis is to unmask the dangerous discourse of populist media that tries to oversimplify complex issues such as migration and sovereignty and exploits the fear of those who feel their life style threatened. Another is to show how necessary is to challenge views on populism situating it as an ideology, as they take advantage of “[...] rising immigration, growing ethnic diversity of national populations, changes in cultural mores, persistent social inequality, economic crises, terrorist threats, and ineffective political governance” (Bonikowski 2016: 21). Understanding the rhetorical strategies of right-wing populist discourse is necessary to fight the ideological makeup (Wellings, 2010) covering up the use of foreign politics in UK tabloids in order to legitimize the hatred towards minorities, in particular migrants.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Corpus lemma list (Top 100)

Rank	Lemma	Freq	Rank	lemma	Freq
1	The	1199	51	leave	49
2	Be	767	52	their	48
3	Of	536	53	party	46
4	To	504	54	all	46
5	A	470	55	about	46
6	In	378	56	want	45
7	And	376	57	no	45
8	Have	273	58	now	44
9	That	244	59	do	43
10	It	183	60	make	42
11	For	176	61	leader	40
12	EU	168	62	than	39
13	On	150	63	there	38
14	As	123	64	people	38
15	Will	119	65	political	37
16	Not	110	66	one	37
17	By	101	67	poll	36
18	He	97	68	crisis	36
19	With	96	69	after	36
20	Would	96	70	or	36
21	This	95	71	many	36
22	Vote	95	72	Renzi	35
23	But	85	73	government	35
24	Say	85	74	come	35
25	They	76	75	into	34
26	If	76	76	she	34
27	referendum	74	77	next	33
28	An	73	78	like	33
29	Country	72	79	even	33
30	From	72	80	our	33
31	Brexit	65	81	see	32
32	His	64	82	also	32
33	I	64	83	most	31
34	Italian	63	84	up	30
35	At	63	85	go	30
36	Italy	61	86	over	30

37	Year	61	87	so	29
38	We	61	88	when	29
39	Could	60	89	Mr	29
40	Who	60	90	what	28
41	Europe	59	91	win	28
42	More	57	92	lead	28
43	Britain	56	93	call	27
44	Per	54	94	voter	27
45	Cent	53	95	just	27
46	Out	52	96	may	26
47	Which	51	97	Party	26
48	European	50	98	last	26
49	Its	49	99	France	26
50	election	49	100	Hofer	25

## Appendix 2

### Texts included in the Hofer UK Tabloid 2016 Corpus

id	Paper	Date	Title
1	Daily Mail	25/04/2016	EU MAKES IT HARDER FOR US TO CONTROL MIGRATION, ADMITS HOME SECRETARY
2	Daily Mail	14/05/2016	THE BIGGEST LIE OF ALL
3	The Sun	23/05/2016	David Cameron fighting back after PM's former guru backed Brexit
4	The Sun	29/05/2016	Tony Parsons: Moronic Remain poster is offensive to both black AND white people
5*	The Sun	30/05/2016	A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, found in a shed: Hitler's code machine discovered in Essex outhouse
6	The Sun	03/06/2016	EU Referendum: Voting Remain is a greater leap into the unknown than freeing ourselves from the EU's economic uncertainty
7	The Sun	24/06/2016	News sites in Europe react in shock as Britain votes to leave the EU, calling Brexit a 'dirty divorce'
8	The Sun	24/06/2016	The other countries who could follow Britain out of the EU after becoming disillusioned with Brussels
9	The Sun	27/07/2016	As Brexit gives Europe's far-right leaders cheer, it's now clear punch-drunk EU has over-extended itself
10	Daily Mail	29/11/2016	POLISH PM: TEACH MY LANGUAGE IN BRITISH SCHOOLS
11	Daily Mail	29/11/2016	ENOUGH OF ALL THIS BREXIT GLOOM! THE EU 'S IN TURMOIL - AND WE'VE SOME ACES UP OUR SLEEVES
12	Daily Mail	01/12/2016	NOW MORE GERMANS CALL FOR VOTE ON QUITTING EU
13	Daily Mail	01/12/2016	EUROPE ON A PRECIPICE
14	The Sun	01/12/2016	EUROPE'S MOMENT OF TRUTH Elections, rising nationalism and banking crisis could spark 'cataclysmic' break-up of the EU next year
15	The Sun	02/12/2016	We're all facing job uncertainty, but unlike business bosses, miners handle it with real dignity
16	The Daily Express	02/12/2016	EU could collapse long before Brexit process is finished
17	The Sun	03/12/2016	As Italy hits the polls it may well cripple the EU and serve a boost to Brexit
18	Daily Mail	03/12/2016	WILL QUITALY SINK THE EU?
19	The Sun	03/12/2016	Working class Brits did not ditch the Labour Party ... it ditched them

\*This text was excluded from the analyses and the final corpus