

# ‘The Vile Eastern European’: Ideology of Deportability in the Brexit Media Discourse

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*Pre-Brexit media discourse in the UK focused extensively on the end of free movement, the governance of European mobility, and its relationship with state sovereignty. This article, methodologically anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis, discusses how the potential post-Brexit deportee, namely the ‘Vile Eastern European’, is depicted by the leading pro-Leave British press. The Vile Eastern European is juxtaposed with a minority of hard-working and tax-paying migrants from the continent, as well as with unjustly deported Windrush and Commonwealth migrants. As the newspapers explain, the UK has not been able to deport the Vile Eastern European because of the EU free movement rights. The press links the UK’s inability to remove the unwanted citizens of EU countries with its lack of sovereignty, suggesting that only new immigration regulations will permit this deportation and make the UK sovereign again. The article concludes that the media discourse reproduces and co-produces the UK ideology of deportability that has been the basis for the EU Settlement Scheme and new immigration regulations.*

*Keywords: Brexit, discourse analysis, EU deportations, sovereignty, ideology of deportability*

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*AS THERESA MAY often tells us, the widespread feeling that Britain must regain control of its borders and immigration policy was a major factor in the EU referendum result.*

(Daily Mail, 20/12/2018)

### **Introduction: Brexit and ideologies of deportability**

In the times preceding the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, British newspapers representing the pro-Leave campaign (Levy, Aslan, and Bironzo 2016) condemned the European Freedom of Movement (FoM). The press openly identified the UK's inability to protect its shores from EU 'criminals' and deport them as the country's lack of sovereignty (Mădroane 2014). This attack on the FoM regularly took the form of ridicule; the pro-Leave press nicknamed FoM 'free movement of criminals' (*Daily Mail*, 29/03/2016 and 26/06/2017, and *The Daily Telegraph*, 21/07/2017), 'free movement of down and outs' (*Daily Mail*, 15/12/2017) and even 'free movement of terrorists (sorry, citizens)' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 30/03/2016). The readers were being convinced that in order to end this 'free movement of criminals' and to deport those who were already in the UK, they should vote leave, stay firm in this decision, and vote for Tories in the 2019 general elections.

The theme of this article is the discursive construction of the ideologies of deportability by the pro-Leave press, a discourse that defines who and why should be expelled from a state. In particular, we answer four research questions. Firstly, whom the pro-Leave press considers as deserving of deportation from the UK. Secondly, the reasons given for why they should be deported. Thirdly, we are interested in solutions leading to their successful deportation proposed by the pro-Leave media and, fourthly, the purported benefits their deportation will bring for the British state.

Ideologies of deportability are examined here within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), whose eclectic theoretical framework focuses on three main cornerstones of discourse, ideology and power (Weiss and Wodak 2003). An interdisciplinary approach of CDA focuses predominantly on power asymmetries, with a particular attention to the role of language as a resource of power abuse, as well as the means to create or reinforce social and political inequalities. Furthermore, discourse is considered dialectically as contextualised text, which reproduces 'society and culture as well as being reproduced by them' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). This dialectic aspect is particularly important for analysis of media discourse. Situated in the public sphere, media not only serve as a message conveyer, but 'as potentially influential actors' equipped with 'ability to shape social reality by naturalising certain selected views of the world' (Zappettini 2020: 4). Thus, discourse is directly connected to power (Fairclough 1992; Foucault 1970) *inter alia* through media. Another important principle of discourse is that it is based on, and shaped by, other synchronically produced as well as past discourses disseminated and distributed within society (Fairclough 1992, 2003; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak 1996, 2001).

Our focus on pro-Leave newspapers is guided by their active role in shaping Britons' preferences in the 2016 Referendum. While radio and television broadcasts demonstrated more balanced opinions, newspapers were found to support the Leave campaign (Levy *et al.* 2016; Deacon, Harmer, Stayner and Wring 2016). Moreover, pro-Leave messages, while thematically concentrated on issues of migrants (Keaveney 2016), rhetorically deployed emotional language to frame EU membership as a restriction of British sovereignty (Buckledee 2018). In his study of the UK Independence Party discourses, Cap (2019)

shows how British sovereignty from the EU is rhetorically argued as the only solution to the immigration threat. Such argumentation leads *inter alia* to a discursive out-grouping of migrants as THEM and BAD. Thus, discourses in circulation within the public sphere in the Brexit context, not only reinforced each other intertextually through referring to the same actors, namely EU migrants, but also transferred similar arguments between them. Also, they interdiscursively tap into earlier discourses of islanders' exceptionality (see, *inter alia*, Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer 2019), and the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Conservative party (Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravini, Krzyżanowski, McEnery and Wodak 2008: 293–295), strengthening the ideological convergence of sovereignty-cum-deportability.

This article aims to contribute to deportation studies by tapping into discursive qualities of deportability and placing it in a particular political context. Deportation scholars often see deportation and deportability as the foundation of sovereignty (De Genova 2010; Walters 2002). As we demonstrate in this article, the logic presented by the British media has been an inverted one, as the pro-Leave newspapers claim that Britain has to regain sovereignty in order to effectively deport the EU convicts. In the media narrative, the EU deportations are impossible because the United Kingdom was not a sovereign country when it remained in the EU. The research on the discursive bases of deportations, so far neglected by deportation studies, needs to become an integral part of this field of research.

This article is therefore an invitation to study the ideologies of deportability – discursive bases that underpin and legitimise a deportation regime. Ideologies of deportability define who should be excluded from a polity. They are an element of what John Agnew (2008: 177) calls border thinking, that is, a way of thinking about nation-state borders that consists of the philosophy and practices of bordering and othering. Discursively-created, the ideologies of deportability are a type of everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2018) performed by those without immigration powers (e.g., newspaper journalists and readers). In the media discourse, the ideologies of deportability both reproduce the categories existing in immigration legislation, and create new boundaries (Wodak 2001), by defining who deserves to remain and who does not, and should therefore be expelled from the territory of a state. By deeming some non-citizens as 'deportable', the ideologies of deportability affect public opinion, which can, in turn, shape immigration policies and immigration laws. The historic moment of the Referendum, and the Brexit negotiations that followed, involved the re-thinking of the UK deportation regime and the decision of whether (and, indeed, which) EU citizens should be excluded, or become more deportable than they were under FoM.

After the announcement of the Brexit Referendum, the pro-Leave newspapers described a plethora of reasons for EU citizens' deportations, such as the anticipated post-Brexit illegalisation of EU workers, the insignificance of their labour, and policies that will prioritise the home-grown workforce. During the almost four years that preceded the date of the UK's departure from the EU, the press speculated that all EU citizens may have to leave the country following Brexit, as they were used as a bargaining chip by the negotiators to secure the best treatment for the UK citizens abroad. Media also named more specific groups, such as medical doctors, who will no longer be needed because the UK will train local medics. The pro-Leave press extensively wrote about groups that it considered as deserving to be deported, for example 'low-skilled' workers or jobless EU citizens. But there was no other group more deserving of deportation than EU convicts.

Media discourse on the deportable EU citizens draws upon the distinction between the 'good' and the 'bad' European. The 'good' migrant belongs and contributes to the fiscal and social security system without weakening it (cf. Mădroane 2014). The line between the 'good' and the 'bad' European reflects the boundaries between the citizens of the 'old' and the 'new' member states. In the ideologies of de-

portability, the distinction between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ migrant respectively translates into ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ to remain. The ‘new Europeans’ ‘are deemed less worthy of free travel’, which ‘to a certain extent creates a hierarchy within EU citizenship’ (Brouwer, van der Woude, and van der Leun 2018: 456). For Central and Eastern Europeans, this means more frequent detention and deportations than for the citizens of the ‘old’ Member States (Radziwinowiczówna, under review).

As we argue below, the pre-Brexit ideologies of deportability were underpinned by **cultural racism** (Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy 2012). They attribute otherness that lies at the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity and nationality. In the case of the ideology of deportability analysed in this article, the poorest men, coming from the ‘new member states’, seemingly most exotic for the British reader, were depicted as the least deserving to stay in the UK. According to Irina Mădroane (2018: 142), ‘the British conservative media “owned” the definition of the problem even before the referendum debate’ in 2016, and stigmatised the Central and Eastern Europeans before the opening of the UK labour market in 2004 and 2014 (Mădroane 2014).

Brexit media discourse attributed a wicked and immoral character to the Central and Eastern European (CEE) ‘others’. Romanians and Bulgarians – newcomers from the poorest EU member states – were the most targeted group in the Brexit discourse, as they were often compared to criminals (Balch and Balabanova 2016; Fox *et al.* 2012; Light and Young 2009; Mădroane 2018). This narrative was not surprising, as the comparison of the ‘other’ to ‘criminal’ is one of the classic ‘metaphors we discriminate by’ (El Refaie 2001: 362). The pro-Leave media were active in selecting and contextualising types of crimes that were presented, and silenced other types of crimes (e.g., committed by the natives). In so-doing, they shaped public consciousness regarding what should be seen as problems (Sacco 1995). As the 2016 Referendum drew closer, the topic of public security related to FoM became increasingly more important (Balch and Balabanova 2017: 14), and the criminal CEEs were problematised as deserving immediate deportation. We propose to speak about the representational pattern of the ‘**Vile Eastern European**’ constructed as the criminal coming to the UK from the ‘new member states’. While ‘Eurovillains’ (Lafleur and Mescoli 2018: 481) are Eastern Europeans problematised as ‘welfare tourists’ and threatening social security systems, the Vile Eastern European is a threat to public security and moral order with his innate criminality (Castello 2015). He is presented as an outsider who becomes ‘defined as a threat to societal values and interests’ and has the potential to produce moral panics (Cohen 2011: 1; see also Jewkes 2004).

Although the media vilification of the EU convicts was a useful strategy for the pro-Leave press, as we explain in the following section, the UK had legal powers to deport them before it left the European Union. In 2019, EU deportations made nearly half of deportations from the UK. Among 7,361 people deported under the enforced return procedure, 3,498 were EU citizens (Home Office 2020).

### **The legal context of deportations of EU convicts**

The terms of FoM are explained in Article 7 of the Citizen’s Directive.<sup>1</sup> The right of residence for more than three months in another member state is not absolute, but applies to ‘qualified’ EU citizens who either (1) seek a job, (2) work (also as self-employed), (3) study, (4) have sufficient resources to be self-supporting, or (5) are family members of categories 1–4.

As a member state, the UK could deport EU citizens who exercised their right to FoM if they constituted a ‘genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat affecting one of the fundamental interests of society’, as stipulated by the Regulation 27 of the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations

2016. According to the Directive, the possible grounds for deportation become more limited for EU citizens residing in the UK for a longer period of time. The UK, however, removed the sentencing threshold for the convicts considered for deportation in 2015. In practice, any EU citizen who interacted with the criminal justice system in the UK was considered for deportation with reference to the grounds of public security (de Noronha 2018; Radziwinowiczówna, under review).

## Data and Method

The results presented in this article come from BRAD ('Brexit and Deportations: Towards a Comprehensive and Transnational Understanding of a New System Targeting EU Citizens'), a two-year multidisciplinary research project that studied the forced removal of EU citizens from the United Kingdom in the context of Brexit. While elsewhere we have compared the right- and left-wing media representational patterns of EU citizens (Radziwinowiczówna and Galasińska 2019), here the media discourse analysis focuses on two right-wing newspapers (Balch and Balabanova 2017): a broadsheet and a tabloid. In the UK, broadsheets, or quality press, are believed to provide more in-depth analysis of the described facts. Tabloids have bigger circulation in the UK and – as we have assumed – consequently have more influence on the society. Our analysis involves *The Daily Telegraph* (DT) as an example of quality press and the *Daily Mail* (DM) as a tabloid. Both adopted a strong pro-Leave stance before and after the Referendum (Levy *et al.* 2016). Table 1 below summarises the core information about the analysed titles.

We selected articles that concern EU citizens and the subject of deportation in DM and DT. The texts contained, on the one hand, a keyword that referred to EU citizens ('EU migrants', 'EU workers', 'EU citizens', 'EU nationals') and, on the other, a keyword referring to deportation ('deportation', 'expulsion', 'kick out', 'send home', 'go home', 'repatriate'). This combination of search terms allowed for closer examination of the linguistic associations between EU citizens and forced expulsions. We used the ProQuest database to search the articles.

The analysis covers almost four years, spanning from the announcement of the Referendum on 20 February 2016 to 31 January 2020 when Brexit occurred after two extensions. As a result of the keyword-driven selection process, we obtained 141 DT articles, and 140 DM articles. As our analysis covers a 47-month period, we were able to examine if the way the EU deportations were presented changed before the Referendum, before and during the negotiations with the EU and finally before the general elections on 12 December 2019 and in the month to Brexit.

**Table 1. Newspapers included in the analysis**

Coverage in the EU membership Referendum	Pro-Leave
Quality press	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> Circulation: 363,183 (December 2018) Partisanship: Conservative Party Number of analysed articles: 141
Tabloid	<i>Daily Mail</i> Circulation: 1,181,023 (May 2019) Partisanship: Conservative Party Number of analysed articles: 140

With the use of qualitative analysis software (nVivo), we thematically coded (Ryan and Bernard 2003) the selected data set according to different reasons for deportation of EU citizens. In the period

under analysis, the press discussed the post-Brexit immigration regulations and deportation as a hotly-debated tool of the future governance of EU migration to Britain. As a consequence, the analysed articles were not only about deportations that occurred (those were very few), but about potential deportations. The latter were desired in the moment (but not possible because of the EU) and in the future, such as deportations of convicts and jobseekers.

Below we present the outcomes of the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) of the articles that mention deportation of EU 'convicts'. By doing so, we want to reconstruct the representational pattern of the topos (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009) of the Vile Eastern European. The selected themes mapped their criminal charges. Once we identified the themes, we analysed how the press linked the topic of deportation of EU convicts with UK sovereignty. This CDA-driven part of the analysis aims at explaining 'how language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and [affect] social maintenance and change' (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996: 3). We were interested in how discourse users achieved certain communicative goals, which maintained (or challenged) the social, the political, and the cultural *status quo*.

## Results

### *The Vile Eastern European*

In March 2016, the Vote Leave campaign published a list of 50 EU citizens who entered the UK in spite of criminal convictions. Forty-five of them reoffended in the UK but were not deported. The list had a long life. DM and DT covered the topic extensively from March 2016, and mentioned both the list and the enlisted in numerous articles, before and after the Referendum. In each case, the migrants' provenance was foregrounded, with 'Eastern European', 'EU' and 'Romanian' attributions frequently found in close proximity. The idea re-emerged before the general elections in December 2019, when security minister Brandon Lewis published:

*... a detailed dossier highlighting 20 terrorists who would be 'free to enter the UK under Jeremy Corbyn'. The dossier also issued a list of EU nationals who either entered the country despite having criminal records and committed further offences, or who could not be deported after offending in the UK. (DM, 11/12/2019)*

The Vile Eastern European is a dangerous criminal. However, the pro-Leave press draws the line between the desirable and undesirable Europeans:

*Ever since the Brexit vote, there has been an argument about the future status of EU citizens currently living here. Clearly it would be absurd and unfair to expel anyone who came here legally, is working, paying taxes and making a contribution to society. (DM, 15/07/2016)*

In the next paragraph, the author goes on, providing a list of undesired individuals:

*But that shouldn't mean we have to continue to give houseroom to foreign undesirables, rough sleepers, welfare scroungers, gangsters, murderers, rapists, terrorists, beggars, muggers and cashpoint crooks who have set up shop here – and who at present we seem powerless to deport. Three weeks ago, Britain*

*voted emphatically to leave the EU, to regain the right to make our own laws and control our own borders. Our inability to manage immigration and kick out those who don't belong here was a decisive factor. (DM, 15/07/2016)*

It is interesting to note how a difference between desirables and undesirables is discursively managed in the above extract. While the reader is directly informed that the desirables 'came here legally', there is no information about how the other group entered the UK. This nuanced omission suggests that, even at the entry point, undesirables might have done something illegal. A description of desirables, short and straightforward, follows a golden rule of just three elements: work, tax payments and a general contribution to society. Such persons are defined by their actions, which reinforces their usefulness for Britain and its economy. In contrast, there is a list of nine extremely negative nouns describing undesirables. A discursive strategy of criminalisation and problematisation is at play here, combined with an intensification strategy. The 1:3 ratio used to depict both groups reinforced a message of mass invasion of those who do not belong, *vis-à-vis* a relatively small group of hardworking incomers. The attribute 'foreign' is used in a similar way to draw a line between 'us' and 'them'.

These strategies are continuously used by DM two years later. Consider the following example, in which the first part echoes the argument used previously:

*After Labour threw open the borders, immigration from Eastern Europe rocketed. No one is denying that the majority of those who arrived are hard-working, pay their taxes and have filled jobs the locals are either unable or unwilling to accept. But we've also been forced to accommodate thousands of itinerant beggars, pickpockets and cashpoint crooks, including the colourful, raggle-taggle gypsies, tramps and thieves who have added so much to the rich diversity of our city centres ... The courts have ruled that homeless EU migrants who were detained or deported are entitled to thousands of pounds in compensation, courtesy of the mug British taxpayer. Tomas Lusas, from Lithuania, who was arrested after being found sleeping rough in London, appealed against being sent home and was awarded £10,000 damages. As a result, the Home Office – which was so enthusiastic about sending 'home' genuine British citizens of Caribbean heritage – has abandoned all investigations into rough sleepers from the EU. (DM, 15/05/2018)*

There is widespread media practice of illustrating an argument with 'a real-life case': an individual crime (Graber 1980), providing many details about the Eastern European villain and – almost every time – his personal data. In the above extract, a Lithuanian rough sleeper (case 1) exemplified the group of undesirable Eastern Europeans, who cause a lack of safety and disrupt public order on the British streets.

The above quotation touches upon the diversity of rough sleepers and people begging on the streets ('the colourful, raggle-taggle gypsies, tramps and thieves who have added so much to the rich diversity of our city centres'), however, the question of ethnicity and race is persistently silenced in the deportability discourses in the British media. It is problematic, given that the Roma have often been targeted with deportation, not only in the UK, but also in other EU countries. The issue of race is rather only slightly implied (Virdee and McGeever 2018) in the confusion between Romanian and Roma, suggesting the two are treated as the same. Given that Romanians are overrepresented as the exemplification of the Vile Eastern Europeans, it may imply that the Romanian has discursively replaced the Roma. As the above quotation shows, the colour-blind discourse speaks about the 'genuine British citizens of Caribbean heritage' instead of mentioning that it was 'Black Britons' who fell victim to the Windrush scandal

(de Noronha 2020). As the question of race has been repressed in the ideologies of deportability in the UK press, we render it a discourse of cultural racism (Vasilopoulou 2016).

**Rough sleepers** from the EU became the embodiment of several problems. First of all, a general number of them increased significantly after the EU enlargement in 2008. DM (02/05/2017) reported that ‘almost one fifth, 17 per cent, were EU nationals. Most of the increase was outside London. While rough sleepers in the capital grew by 3 per cent, the year-on-year increase elsewhere was 21 per cent’, introducing ‘their charming Transylvanian culture of criminality to the streets of our cities – sleeping rough and specialising in aggressive begging, pickpocketing and cashpoint robbery’ (DM, 01/03/2016).

The pro-Leave press depicted rough sleeping as a way of life fashioned not only by undesirable criminals, but also as a norm among hard working Eastern Europeans, as in a following example:

*According to a source with knowledge of Home Office enforcement, many central and eastern European rough sleepers reject the chance to rent property. The source pointed to one builder earning £1,000 a month chose [sic!] to sleep rough to avoid paying £500 for accommodation and £200 for travel. From 2012, dozens of homeless people, mainly Romanians and Bulgarians, descended on the capital's Marble Arch. (DM, 23/10/2017)*

We find this piece particularly interesting due to the very subtle way of ‘othering’ its main protagonist, the builder. He is different from ‘us’ not only due to his choice of rough sleeping, even though he earns wages in the construction business, which is perceived as a relatively well-paid sector, but not for this builder. In fact, what DM reveals is an example of earning below poverty wages, but this detail is conveniently omitted here for the sake of argument. Additionally, and even more noteworthy, there is a list of potential expenses of someone who works away from home. In this way, the builder is pushed to a category of those who are not from here, the ‘others’: CEE workers, who could be cynically exploited due to a silent agreement between interested parties.

The pro-Leave press paid little attention to the deportations of rough sleepers when they were occurring. This is one of the few examples of reporting them:

*According to figures compiled by the Mayor of London, the number of rough sleepers in the city increased year-on-year from 3,017 in 2007–08 to 8,108 in 2016–17. But between April and June this year, the number sleeping rough on at least one occasion dropped by 4 per cent. It follows moves to deport about 1,000 Romanians and Poles in the past year, with some 200 leaving voluntarily and the rest removed by immigration officers. (DM, 23/10/2017)*

Deportation of the rough sleepers gained pro-Leave attention only when the High Court declared them unlawful. On the day of the ruling, DT published a short article ‘EU nationals can now sleep rough in UK’ that read, ‘(a)ccording to official figures the number of Romanians sleeping rough in London rose from 496 in 2012–13 to 1,545 in 2015–16’ (DT, 15/12/2017). The High Court decision was considered as a serious setback by the pro-Leave press, as in the next example:

*In a major blow to Home Secretary Amber Rudd, the High Court said the policy was discriminatory and broke controversial freedom of movement rules. Two Polish men and a Latvian successfully challenged the rules after they were threatened with removal from Britain when they were found sleeping rough by police and immigration officers. The judgment means hundreds of people who arrive in Britain from*

*the EU and sleep in doorways or parks will be allowed to stay irrespective of whether they are thieves, beggars or have drug or alcohol problems.* (DM, 15/12/2017)

DM here presents the High Court ruling mainly as a security problem. In this context, the rough-sleeping Eastern Europeans could potentially use the streets as a safe haven to hide from justice, by using the controversial FoM policy. Moreover, they can use this ruling retrospectively and claim compensation for unlawful deportations, as did Tomas from Lithuania (cf. case 1). Thus, undesirables not only symbolise lack of contribution to the British society, but at the same time they use the legal system to drain British taxpayers' pockets, which in turn makes them even more evil. The most sinister discursive manipulation is, however, just one word – 'irrespective' – which hides the truth that thieves can be deported. They also can be deported if they are not in work, but such information did not appear here for the sake of a pro-Leave argument. Nor does the argument appear that rough sleepers might be a group of unfortunate people who are not usually linked with criminal activities and, despite being at work, simply could not afford the inflated rent prices in the South of England.

DM discourse on the Vile Eastern European, who deserves but escapes deportation, is characterised by a multiplication of his crime. In the researched period there is a large number of examples of **gangsters, drug dealers, and drunk drivers**, as in the following case of a Lithuanian (case 2):

*Baibokas was caught driving under the influence in 2008 and in 2012 was convicted of possession with intent to supply over 7kg of amphetamine found in a jet ski in his garage. His tribunal ruled he did not pose a 'genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat to the interests of society' and expulsion would be 'in breach of the EEA Regulations'.* (DM, 7/06/2016)

An intensification strategy can be deployed not only to depict a multitude of crimes, but also by the multiplication of offenders. There are no individual offenders anymore, but members of a criminal organisation instead, as in the two following examples (case 3):

*Arqr<sup>2</sup> Wazny, of Poland, was part of a gang that beat up Royal Marine Nigel Leppington, who stepped in to protect a neighbour under attack, in Dorset.* (DM, 07/06/2016)

*A GANG was convicted yesterday of trafficking slaves from Eastern Europe to Britain under EU freedom of movement rules .... The family, themselves EU migrants, paid human traffickers £200 for each of the victims who came from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The slaves worked 12-hour shifts, loading tyres onto trucks, cleaning bricks or removing springs from mattresses for scrap metal ... Police described the Rafaels as 'a well-established Slovakian Roma organised crime group'.* (DM, 12/04/2018)

As the leading pro-Leave newspaper, DM, concentrates both on crimes itself, as well as on how the Vile Eastern European abuses members of British society, be it a taxpayer, or an innocent member of the public. In the last example, however, the cynicism and cruelty of gangsters is augmented by a detailed description of the hardship of the victims, who came from the gangsters' own country. The Vile Eastern European spares no one. On the other hand, DT's coverage of the instances of violent crimes was significantly lower than DM's. The former newspaper described the crimes in less detail.

The article published in DM on 11 August 2016 titled 'Romanian **murderer** we tried to deport wins right to claim 5-figure payout' describes the case of a man targeted with deportation after his former criminal convictions of murder came to light (case 4). Claimant X is the only Vile Eastern European

whose identity was not disclosed in the media, 'because he suffers from anxiety' (DM, 11/08/2016). The newspaper identifies with the deportation regime – 'We tried to deport' – that disposes of foreign dangerous criminals, while criticising and mocking the UK justice system that gives a former murderer right to compensation, by stating: 'The claimant – who is a recovering alcoholic and has been deemed "high risk" – has also won the right to remain in the UK after his lawyers argued that deportation would breach his human rights'.

Both newspapers repetitively wrote about the murder of a schoolgirl by a Latvian citizen (case 5). Although the case happened in 2014, it was recorded extensively before the Referendum, shortly after it (30/06/2016), in September 2016, and in the following years.

*POLICE are failing to carry out checks on foreign suspects who enter Britain under EU free movement rules, a coroner has warned, after an inquest found that teenager Alice Gross was 'unlawfully killed' in a sexually motivated attack. Arnis Zalkalns, who killed the 14-year-old in 2014, was allowed into Britain despite having previously served a prison sentence for murdering his wife in his native Latvia ... Zalkalns was arrested in Britain in 2009 for an alleged sexual assault but police failed to ask Latvian authorities if he had a criminal record. (DT, 08/09/2016)*

This extract not only converges violent crimes with need of deportation within the Brexit context, but also concentrates on reoffending practices directed on the vulnerable members of society. Reports noted that the man murdered his wife and was only sentenced for seven years. 'I know. Maybe wife-murdering isn't considered a big deal in Latvia' (DT, 06/07/2016), ironises the author, which serves here as a reminder of 'us', who systemically protect our vulnerable, versus 'them', who bring barbaric practices to our country. This case of violence against a girl was an example of the ultimate vile character of the Eastern European. By the same token, in August 2016, DM reported on the case of a **rapist**, who abused a mentally ill 69-year-old woman (case 6).

*A ROMANIAN migrant brutally raped and robbed a vulnerable pensioner just three months after arriving in Britain. Gabriel Lupu, 23, exploited the controversial EU freedom of movement laws to move to the UK to earn money for his family in Romania. He then carried out a horrific sex attack on a 69-year-old mentally ill woman after following her into a car park. Yesterday Lupu was jailed for 14 years and ordered to be deported because he posed such a danger to the public. (DM, 20/08/2016)*

This powerful case strikes a depth of horror in all of us. There is a panicked sense of vulnerability, as the victim is an elderly ill woman. The paper made sure to underline not only the intersection of vulnerabilities of the victim, but also the nationality of the perpetrator, as the title of the article reads 'Romanian jailed for raping woman, 69'.

### *Eastern European folk devils*

In addition to the above-mentioned article, between February 2016 and January 2020, DM published three articles that contained 'Romanian' in the title, all suggesting their involvement in violent crimes: 'Romanian murderer we tried to deport wins right to claim 5 Figure Payout' (11/08/2016), 'Romanian was released from jail, came to UK and raped woman 11 days later' (21/04/2017), 'Romanian thug came to UK to dodge justice... now he's got legal aid to fight extradition' (03/03/2018). Similarly, and in the same period, the DT published two articles mentioning nationality: 'Rapist can stay. Romanian beats UK

deportation order' (29/02/2016) and 'Romanian killer may win pounds 500,000 over unlawful detention' (11/08/2016).

Although Romanian citizens were the most stigmatised as 'criminals', the pro-Leave press mentions other Eastern Europeans as violent offenders. In the analysed period, DM and DT highlighted the cases of Polish and Lithuanian rough sleepers (case 1), a Polish thug, Slovakian human traffickers (case 3), a Lithuanian drug dealer (case 2), a Hungarian rapist, a Latvian murderer (case 4). Another example of the overrepresentation of the Eastern Europeans among the EU convicts deserving deportation was the already-mentioned dossier of 50 EU convicts. The analysed titles have never published the complete list, but whenever DM mentioned it, the majority of the convicts were from the 'new' member states (6 out of 10 in DM on 07/06/2016, 2 out of 4 on 04/10/2016, 5 out of 6 on 26/06/2017). DT (08/09/2016) also made this observation:

*All are bringing new pressures that simply did not exist even 10 years ago. As the retiring Old Bailey judge Tim Pontius tells this newspaper today, the criminal justice system is becoming clogged up with trials of Eastern European criminals. 'It is commonplace in the court list to see more Polish names, Romanian names, Albanian names, Russian names', he says.*

The pro-Leave press portrayed the Central and Eastern Europeans as having an innate criminality, which makes them suitable as folk devils, the centre of a moral panic. Only one case of the listed Eastern Europeans was a woman – a Pole who kicked her husband to death. All the remaining Vile Eastern Europeans were male, often offended against the British people and targeted minors or the elderly. Subject to intra-European orientalisation, the citizens of the 'new' member states are portrayed as violent barbarians. Their countries of origin are depicted as semi-civilised (Mădroane 2018), because they refuse to share data about their citizens' criminal records, or do not even have an adequate data base. Furthermore, these far-away countries do not share the same value with 'us', as they did not prosecute the former convicts seriously enough, as it was in case of wife-murderer Zalkalns (case 4).

#### *The Vile Eastern European in the UK ideologies of deportability*

In his analysis of the modern-day folk devils, Stanley Cohen wrote about the *Daily Mail's* campaign of vilification of asylum seekers that it is 'too deliberate and ugly to be seen as a mere moral panic' (2011: xxiii). Similarly, in the context of our research, the negative representational pattern of Eastern Europeans has a political agenda. Below we reconstruct how the pro-Leave discourse moved from the problem of individual crimes to the topic of the UK sovereignty.

Deportation of the Vile Eastern European is the only available solution to restore the public security endangered by his presence in the UK. This is the most salient principle of the British ideologies of deportability.

*Tory MP Philip Davies expressed concern about the 'lax' checks on criminal databases, adding: 'Migrants who commit crimes here should be deported unless there are extenuating circumstances. The Government seems to be taking the view that unless it is a very serious crime, they are okay to stay, which is the wrong way round'. (DM, 22/06/2018)*

In order to support the ideology of deportability of all convicts, regardless of the severity of the charges, DM cites an expert, a Tory Member of Parliament and a frequent source of pro-Leave and pro-deportation statements in this newspaper.

To support an argument for deportations of EU offenders, both newspapers widely utilised the economisation strategy. It resonates well with the already-presented reports on compensation for Eastern Europeans, who claimed damages for deportations (case 1), detentions (case 4), and allegedly wrong convictions. All paid, of course, from a taxpayer's purse.

*Despite committing the most horrendous offences, including murder, rape and child sex attacks, the foreigners are still clogging up our prisons. (DM, 04/06/2016)*

In the above extract, depicting the foreign prisoners as 'clogging up prisons' dehumanises them. Therefore, the convicts are 'the first ones to be deported' because otherwise it is 'us' – 'the British taxpayers' – who sponsor the high costs of their imprisonment. This, again, is backed up with a Tory Member of Parliament's opinion, who would like to take the matter into her own hands and 'pack the bags' of the foreign offenders:

*Tory MP Anne Main, a leading Leave campaigner, said: 'The fact that so many foreign criminals are in our jails at the expense of the British taxpayer is frankly outrageous. I'd like to pack their bags and send them home'. (DM, 04/06/2016)*

However, as the two newspapers explain, the deportation of foreign convicts is impossible because of the laws and institutions of the European Union, which are claimed to hinder all the attempts to remove the unwanted EU citizens from the British territory. In the article published two days after the Referendum, DM wrote:

*EXISTING EU law does make provision for the deportation of citizens of other EU states, but the country doing the deporting must prove there is a threat to security. (DM, 25/06/2016)*

This is one of the rare instances where the limits of FoM are explained. However, the Leave campaign is not satisfied with the conditionality of deportation, as the objective is to make it automatic for all convicts.

Aside from the EU Freedom of Movement and the Court of Justice of the European Union, another supranational institution criticised by the pro-Leave media is the European Court of Human Rights:

*The Eastern European beggars and pickpockets littering the streets of our cities, for instance, or the assorted criminals we can't deport because of the European yuman rites [sic!] racket? The Remoaners [sic!] don't want to talk about them, naturally. (DM, 03/03/2017)*

DM author Richard Littlejohn frequently mocks human rights as 'yuman rites'. The way the 'human rights' are mocked aims at ridiculing them and – by making a reference to native Americans' customs – aiming at representing them as 'uncivilised'. The columnist also complains that Britain has found itself in the 'European yuman rites racket' and urgently needs to be taken out of it as soon as possible. The 'racket' is quickly taking the country in the wrong direction, which is a metaphor for an uncontrolled and unplanned losing of state sovereignty.

The narrative evolving from individual crimes that become public issues, and security problems that cannot be resolved with expulsion, inevitably brings the journalists to a conclusion that the United Kingdom is **not a sovereign country**. DM and DT negatively represent the European Union, as it prevents the deportation of the vile Europeans and exposes the British society to deadly danger. Michael Stables, quoted as an expert (former HM Revenue and Customs worker and independent borough councillor), said in an interview titled 'I think the Queen would vote to restore the sovereignty of her country':

*Do you believe we can control our border within the EU? No – we don't even have the right to deport criminals who are EU nationals. (DT, 10/06/2016)*

*A vote to remain is a vote to affirm the European Court of Justice's ultimate authority over whether we can remove persons whose presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good – in this and other respects we do not control our borders. (DM, 30/05/2016)*

This narrative exposing the UK's dependence appeared in both newspapers in the whole analysed period, but was particularly intensive before the Referendum (especially in June 2016). According to the pro-Leave press, upon **Brexit and ending the FoM**, Britain would be able to deny entry to former convicts (the press was silent on how the UK authorities will get a better access to EU citizens' criminal records than when the UK was part of the Union) and to **deport** offenders:

*The Out campaigners say Brexit would also enable a change in the law to allow criminals and extremists to be deported to the EU, adding: 'We will be able to remove those who abuse our hospitality'. (DM, 01/06/2016)*

This ideology of deportability narrative persisted after the Referendum, as the press and quoted politicians repeated that 'anyone considered undesirable will be deported':

*LEAVING the EU means taking back control of our laws, money and borders. (DM, 19/06/2017)*

[Brexit Secretary David Davis] *said EU citizens will have to undergo criminal record checks when they apply for 'settled status' that will allow them to remain in Britain for life and promised to deport anyone who is considered undesirable. After Brexit, the Home Secretary will only have to prove that removing EU citizens would be 'conducive to the public good' in order to deport them rather than proving that they are a serious threat to the 'fundamental interests' of society as the current EU directives require. (DT, 21/07/2017)*

*UK officials say EU citizens given permanent settled status in Britain must not become a 'privileged caste' who enjoy better rights than UK or other foreign nationals. (DT, 08/11/2017)*

DT, more focused on policies than its tabloid counterpart, explains the change in policies that the pro-Leave press expects from Brexit: from deportation of individuals who are a threat to the 'fundamental interests' of the British society to deportation 'conducive to the public good' (a lower threshold). For DM, Brexit means simply 'taking back control of our laws, money and borders', and the last component consists of re-constructing UK ideologies of deportability that do not favour 'a privileged caste'.

In the analysed articles, deportation is the ultimate goal, and not a means to regain the national sovereignty, as the political theory explains (Schmitt 1985; De Genova 2010). It is so, because, as framed in the British media discourse, there are two deportation-related actors that endanger UK state sovereignty – unwanted non-citizens and supranational institutions that prevent their deportation. As the Vile Eastern European has potential for creating moral panic, it is his deportation that appears as the ultimate goal.

In July 2017, the pro-Leave press heavily complained when the EU crossed out the possibility of systematic checks of overseas criminal records of EU Settlement Scheme<sup>3</sup> applicants during the Brexit negotiations:

*B(russels) is trying to block the UK from carrying out criminal checks on millions of EU citizens hoping to stay here after Brexit. The bloc's negotiators want to exert control over the UK's post-Brexit immigration system by trying to ban the simple checks as part of any deal. Britain has insisted that the 3.2 million EU citizens who live in the UK should be tested when applying for 'settled status'. The EU, however, has insisted this would represent a 'systematic' breach of rights and checks should only be used where there is suspicion of a criminal history. (DM, 21/07/2017)*

After the Referendum, EU deportations continued to be politicised in order to mobilise the Conservative electorate. In an article 'Labour border plan is UK security risk' (11/12/2019) DT claimed that the Labour party wanted to introduce a lax immigration policy. DM and DT misrepresented the Labour Party as faithful allies of the FoM and other EU institutions that limit UK sovereignty.

### *Unjust deportations*

The media campaign, contextualised in Brexit and its aftermath, partially coincided with the 2018 Windrush Generation scandal. The latter affair involved planned, and in many cases executed, deportations of people from Caribbean countries, who came to the UK between 1948 and 1973 as British subjects. The Pro-Leave press compared the Windrush Generation targeted with deportation with EU citizens. In case 1, discussed earlier, the Lithuanian who won damages for unlawful deportation is compared by DM with 'genuine British citizens of Caribbean heritage', who were unfairly deported. A juxtaposition of 'arrested' rough sleepers and 'genuine' citizens implied the bogus status of the former within provisions of a citizenship: one is a genuine, the other one is an imposter. Here, we do not witness sympathy for equal victims of the deportation regime, but a contrast between an embodiment of a bogus citizen and a legitimate one. The same topic is picked up by DT, where Trevor Phillips explained the unequal treatment of the Windrush generation and EU citizens:

*To add current insult to historic injury, the naturalisation process would have cost £1,200 for people who are more 'natural' Brits than millions of EU citizens who will get a free pass to stay in Britain post-Brexit. (DT, 17/04/2018)*

The boundary of political justice and of whom to include or exclude from the imagined community is drawn, as there are groups who do not deserve deportation (Windrush Generation), and groups who do. The argument of injustice continued, as pro-Leave outlets investigated more instances of questionable deportations. In August 2016, DM described a case of an Australian family facing deportation due to not meeting visa requirements. Again, this nice Australian family is compared to EU criminals:

*'This family, who have a great deal to offer Scotland and their local community, are being thrown out, while we are keeping many immigrants convicted of heinous offences', [Scottish MEP David Coburn, leader of UKIP in Scotland] said. 'The sooner we end freedom of movement for EU citizens, the sooner we can have the fair and compassionate immigration system that would keep this family in Scotland and protect our country from foreign criminals'. Mrs Brain had taken a place at the University of the Highlands and Islands studying Scottish history and archaeology, with her family listed as dependants on her student visa. Mr Brain had been working full-time as a receptionist in a legal office, while their seven-year-old son was schooled entirely in Gaelic. (DM, 02/08/2016)*

The tabloid provides a long list of contributions the Brain family brings to the UK society. There are elements of the family story that are worthy of further attention. Firstly, they reside in Scotland, which demonstrates the greatness of the UK in terms of territory and political unity. Secondly, both the mother and the son are engaged in learning, which is a very desired activity. This point is even more salient when it is revealed that the mother studies in a higher education institution, celebrating the rich and ancient culture of the United Kingdom. Similarly, her son learns the Gaelic language, which is incredibly unique for foreigners (especially children!), and probably also quite unique even among native Scots due to, *inter alia*, its difficulties. Yet the language itself is very culturally connected to Scottish identity. Therefore, the Brain family are not only aptly named (smart and therefore living up to their name), but also 'super belonging'. Finally, the family legal predicaments are highlighted, as their visa forms were properly filled in and the husband's place of work is associated with legal professions. On the other hand, and in contrast to the said family, the text synonymises 'EU citizens' with 'immigrants convicted of heinous offences' and 'foreign criminals'. Note that the plural form of the latter presupposes the magnitude of the problem, and at the same time singles out a victimised, unique family, who stands no chance against the tide of criminals. A rhetorical question, which an attentive reader might ask, 'Who prohibits the UK from introducing a good policy of how to treat third country nationals?', is not even considered by DM journalists, which in turn reinforces the false comparison between the two groups even further. Comparable stories are often reported by the pro-Leave newspapers. Imperial political geographies unify them, as the examples consider cases from the Commonwealth and/or from a former British Empire. It is as if a cultural boundary between who belongs to 'us' and who is the 'other', has been frozen in the time of an imagined community of the colonised world.

## Conclusions

Pro-Leave media discourse has created a utilitarian proposal of immigration governance that would replace the Freedom of Movement. It has both represented and underpinned the immigration legislation that involves the European Union Settlement Scheme (Morgan and Radziwinowiczówna 2020) and future points-based immigration system (Radziwinowiczówna 2020). This article has focused on one element of this utilitarian proposal: the ideologies of deportability. On the one hand, the right-wing daily newspapers re-produced the ideologies of deportability prioritised by the pro-Leave politicians (as when they wrote about the dossier of 50 EU convicts published by the Brexiteers). On the other, they actively produced it, by choosing the topic of deportations and the topos of the Vile Eastern European, and by contrasting it with the unjust deportations of the non-EU citizens and the Windrush generation. Echoing the Leave camp, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* opposed mass deportations of EU residents in the UK and advocated for a streamlined regularisation of individuals who follow the golden rule of being in work, paying into fiscal and social security systems, and generally contributing to the

society. In the UK media discourse, the good migrants deserve to stay, and the culturally racialised bad migrants from the 'new' member states, such as the jobless, rough sleepers, 'welfare tourists' and – most importantly – the Vile Eastern Europeans, deserve to be deported.

The orientalised figure of the Vile Eastern European builds upon class inequalities and cultural diversity in the European Union. This representational pattern is a consequence of the vilification of the poverty of the citizens from the 'new' member states. This topos is orientalised as violent. The countries of origin of the Vile Eastern Europeans, in turn, are orientalised as not civilised enough, as they punish felons with short prison times and do not share their citizens' criminal record with other member states. By creating the image of the Vile Eastern European, highlighting his atrocious crimes and silencing the convictions of the natives, the British media not only created a demand for strict immigration regulations, border controls and deportations, but also built new prejudice and ethnic boundaries. The Referendum was followed by the hate crimes that targeted the Eastern Europeans that need to be interpreted in the context of the above analysis (Rzepnikowska 2019).

Recent changes in the UK immigration regulations have proven how powerful the ideologies of deportability are. The groups they targeted are currently the most prone to soon become undocumented or deported. As all the applicants to EUSS must declare any past criminal convictions, EU citizens with a serious criminal record abstain from applying. The rough sleepers, another protagonist of the above-analysed media discourse, may soon become subjects of mass removals, as under the new immigration rules rough sleeping has become the basis for deportation regardless of immigration status. These examples confirm that the ideologies of deportability set the stage for the UK deportation regime targeting the EU nationals before its legal components were created. The study of ideologies of deportability should, therefore, be an integral part of research of any given deportation regime.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC.

<sup>2</sup> This individual's name (Artur) was consistently misspelled by the British press.

<sup>3</sup> In the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) the EU citizens apply for the new digital status in order to continue living and working in the UK after the end of the transition period. Successful applicants get either 'settled' (Indefinite Leave to Remain or Indefinite Leave to Enter for those who apply from overseas) or 'pre-settled status' (Limited Leave to Remain or Limited Leave to Enter).

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