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# Legitimising Euroscepticism?

## The Construction, Delivery and Significance of the Bruges Speech

### Abstract

*This paper reassesses the construction, delivery and significance of the Bruges speech by Margaret Thatcher in 1988. Widely seen as a critical moment in the shift towards the legitimising of Euroscepticism, this paper exploits newly released archival material to analyse the internal dialogue between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and her advisors as they constructed the speech. The paper then analyses how the speech was delivered and argues that it represents a classic example of what is known as epideictic or display rhetoric. This involves constructing a rhetorical choice between the Delors vision of a future Europe based on further intervention, integration and interdependence, and her alternative vision of a market based and deregulated Europe, based on preserving national independence and defending British national sovereignty. By reassessing the construction and delivery of the Bruges speech in this way, we can consider the significance of the speech by assessing the reactions that it provoked. Through this process we identify how and why an essentially anti-federalist speech became viewed as an anti-European speech.*

**Keywords:** Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, British Government 1979-1990, Conservative Party, Euroscepticism, Bruges speech.

### Introduction:

Since securing entry to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 the relationship between the United Kingdom and the various questions surrounding further European integration has been fraught. Respective governments, of both political persuasions, as well as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, have been accused of being ‘semi-detached’; or of being ‘awkward partners’; ‘reluctant Europeans’ or the ‘stranger in Europe’<sup>i</sup>. For the Conservative Party, the questions surrounding European policy would become a source of division, undermining their claims to both party unity and governing competence<sup>ii</sup>. The credibility of the Macmillan governments (1957-1963) would be undermined by their failed

application to join the EEC<sup>iii</sup>. The Heath government (1970-1974) would experience a significant number of backbench rebellions during the passage of the European Communities Act of 1972 confirming EEC entry<sup>iv</sup>. The Thatcher governments (1979-1990) experienced disagreements over budgetary contributions, the creation of the single European market, and the case for or against joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), and linked to this Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)<sup>v</sup>. The Major government after 1992 was destabilised by the consequences of their ejection from the ERM in September of that year; parliamentary rebellions over the ratification of the Treaty of European Union; and debates about the single European currency<sup>vi</sup>. The Cameron era (2010-2016) was defined by debates about the repatriation of powers, the case for renegotiating the terms of membership, and ultimately the referendum on continued membership of the European Union (EU)<sup>vii</sup>.

Between 1961 and 2010 the attitude of the Conservative Party would evolve from ‘pragmatic pro-Europeanism’ to ‘pragmatic Euroscepticism’<sup>viii</sup>. On the shift to Euroscepticism, the Prime Ministerial tenure of Margaret Thatcher was critical in ‘breaking with the prevailing views in her party’<sup>ix</sup>. Indeed, Fontana and Parsons claim that the ‘dynamics’ in terms of British ‘ties’ with Europe would have ‘evolved in less anti-European directions’ had Thatcher ‘not personally inspired this course’ by her ‘individual action’<sup>x</sup>. A key moment in terms of the shift in thinking within British Conservatism and the drift towards Euroscepticism was Thatcher’s Bruges speech of September 1988. Here she identified her preference for cooperation between sovereign states and her rejection of being controlled by pan European supranational institutions, and by doing so she ‘reconfigured the boundaries of discourse about Europe within the Conservative Party’<sup>xi</sup>. In her memoirs, Thatcher recorded that ‘not even I could have predicted the furore the Bruges speech unleashed’<sup>xii</sup>, which was surprising as ‘by her depiction of the increasing powers of the EEC as a threat to the British sovereignty’ she was ‘legitimising Euroscepticism’<sup>xiii</sup>. In the final two years of her premiership her ‘populist anti-Europeanism’<sup>xiv</sup> fuelled conflict within her party, pushing the pro-European wing onto the political defensive and mobilised Eurosceptic sentiment, with the latter gaining an organisational and campaigning focus through the creation of the Bruges Group, a new Thatcherite-sympathising think tank formed in 1989<sup>xv</sup>. Any discussion about her removal as leader of the Conservative Party in November 1990 has to recognise the feud over European policy as a significant part of the explanation<sup>xvi</sup>.

Although many speeches in post war British political history have been subject to historical reappraisal – for example, Winston Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain’ speech<sup>xvii</sup>; Harold Macmillan’s ‘Wind of Change’ speech<sup>xviii</sup>; and Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech<sup>xix</sup> -

the same does not apply to the Bruges speech. Given its importance to the future trajectory of thinking within the Conservative Party vis-à-vis the European question, this is a significant omission within the academic literature.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to consider the following three themes in relation to the Bruges speech:

- (1) To utilise the recently released archives to examine the construction of the speech. Here we are interested in establishing the primary influences upon the speech, be they insiders from her team of advisors, as compared to the input of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).
- (2) To analyse the Bruges speech in terms of how Thatcher sought to persuade – i.e. to reassess the delivery of the speech. The means by which an orator can seek to persuade have been broken down into three methods (a) *deliberative* rhetoric, in which the orator expresses support or opposition to a particular course of action or policy, and attempts to persuade their audience to endorse their viewpoint; (b) *judicial* rhetoric, which is forensic in approach, in which the orator seeks to identify evidence or facts to support the position or policy under debate; and (c) *epideictic* rhetoric – i.e. the extent to which the orators delivery is based on drama and theoretical performance, or display rhetoric. What was the balance in terms of which of these persuasive techniques within the Bruges speech?
- (3) To consider the significance to the Bruges speech, focusing in on the reactions that it provoked. Here we concentrate on the domestic audiences to whom Thatcher was communicating to, and seeking to persuade, with this covering press reaction and the response within the Conservative Party.

However, before doing so the paper will offer a background discussion on the debates within the Conservative Party regarding the European question leading up to the Bruges speech. This background section to the paper is essential to understanding how and why the Bruges speech became seen as a turning point in Conservative Party history vis-à-vis the European question(s).

## **Thatcher and Conservative Party the European Question pre-Bruges**

When Thatcher acquired the leadership of the Conservative Party they were regarded as the ‘party of Europe’<sup>xx</sup>. This reflected their commitment to inter-governmentalism – i.e. that the benefits of membership as a solution to slow economic growth and diminishing global influence outweighed the supposed loss of sovereignty that implied<sup>xxi</sup>. When Thatcher became Prime Minister, she remained supportive of intergovernmental co-operation within the EEC. Her position – defined as a con-federalist – was the dominant position within the PCP. The assumption of a two-way divide between pro-EEC and anti-EEC faction is an oversimplification when applied to the early to mid-Thatcher era. Rather three strands of thought existed. The majority position involved engagement within the EEC. On either side of that position were a) small number of anti-EEC figures who disregarded the message of the 1975 Referendum; and b) another small minority who were comfortable with a federalist agenda<sup>xxii</sup>. Located within the mainstream con-federalist position were the dominant ministerial figures within the Thatcher administration, including Geoffrey Howe (Chancellor 1979-83 and Foreign Secretary 1983-89) and Nigel Lawson (Chancellor 1983-1989), who were advancing her economic liberalisation strategy, which was designed to replace a corporatist economy with a market-based economy<sup>xxiii</sup>.

Part of their agenda involved signing up to the Single European Act (SEA). Thatcher was a ‘willing participant’<sup>xxiv</sup> to the SEA, and it was a process that was achieved ‘relatively harmoniously’<sup>xxv</sup>. She was committed to the ‘practical achievement of a free internal market’ and she thought she had achieved her objective of turning ‘the direction’ of reform within the EEC ‘away from discussions’ about institutional development<sup>xxvi</sup>. It was interpreted as ‘Thatcherism on a European scale’<sup>xxvii</sup>, as it demonstrated the ‘convergence of economic policy across Europe with that of the British Conservative Party’ and that it would ‘entrench neo-liberalism as a global hegemonic project’<sup>xxviii</sup>. However, this represented the high point of her vision of a future Europe and the cohesion of the majority con-federalist grouping within the PCP. Some of those economically dry ministers, who like Thatcher had been part of the aforementioned con-federalist grouping, would endorse the approach that she was about to take. However, some economic dries – e.g. Howe and Lawson - within the aforementioned con-federalist grouping wanted to constructively engage within the EEC about membership of the ERM.

Whereas Thatcher thought the SEA was ‘an end itself’, the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, saw it as a ‘means to an end’<sup>xxix</sup>. Delors used the SEA as the

‘basis for spill-over initiatives’ and that ‘the British guard was lowered’ by ‘playing to Thatcherite neo-liberalism’<sup>xxx</sup>. It was because she ‘believed that her free market agenda had been victorious’ Thatcher ‘underestimated the expansionist elements’<sup>xxxii</sup> of the SEA. As Delors began to outline his vision of greater European unity and harmonisation – including the promotion of the social dimension (i.e. guaranteed workers’ rights and conditions) to run parallel to the development of the single market<sup>xxxiii</sup>, Thatcher recalled that ‘the greater my frustration and the deeper my anger became’<sup>xxxiii</sup>. By time she delivered the Bruges speech, Thatcher had a ‘backlog of concerns’ that ‘she wanted to address’.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The final two years of her Prime Ministerial tenure (1988-1990) were characterised by the following assumptions. First, the free market principles of the SEA had been reneged upon by member states. Second, the spill over effects of the SEA, notably in terms of social policy, but also in terms of fiscal, economic and monetary policy, were unacceptable. Third, that parliamentary sovereignty was under threat by the integrationist process that advanced the reach of autonomous European institutions, and that these were incompatible with British legal, social, economic and political institutions<sup>xxxv</sup>. The Bruges speech served as evidence that her administration wanted to advance an *alternative* vision within Europe<sup>xxxvi</sup>. Within the Conservative Party it was significant as the three strands of thought vis-à-vis European policy at that time – a). the minority federalist grouping; b). the majority, mainstream and leadership position of con-federalist grouping, and c) the minority anti Community grouping – were in the process of reconfiguring. From this process of reconfiguration, a simplistic binary divide between pro-Europeanism and Euroscepticism would emerge, within which the majority, mainstream and leadership con-federalist would splinter. The emerging pro-Europeanist grouping would comprise that small band of Conservatives open to a federalist future, plus members of the con-federalist grouping who were open minded vis-a-vis ERM and potentially even the single European currency. The emerging Eurosceptic grouping saw the incremental coming together of the rejectionist anti Community grouping, with the revisionist con-federalist grouping, who wanted to openly challenge the integration process being mapped out by Delors, within which the ERM was to develop a ‘Trojan horse’ symbolism. Although Bruges was to be a speech that was seen as legitimising Euroscepticism<sup>xxxvii</sup>, it was a term that would come to have fluidity of meaning over the late and post-Thatcherite era, as our subsequent analysis and conclusions section demonstrate.

## Constructing the Bruges Speech: April to September 1988

Recently released archival material provides scholars with the opportunity to assess the process through which the Bruges speech was constructed – i.e. drafted, amended and redrafted in the period between April and September 1988. This allows us to identify the influences upon the construction of the speech.

The Bruges speech did not take place at the initiation of the British Government. Rather it occurred as a response to an invitation by the Rector of the College of Europe for Thatcher to be a guest of honour at the opening of the new academic year at the College. When determining whether to attend or not, the advice given by Stephen Wall (Head of the European Community Department – Internal – within the FCO) and John Kerr (Assistant under Secretary at the FCO) was to recommend acceptance. However, it was a lukewarm recommendation. He noted ‘there are no overriding reasons why the Prime Minister should make a speech in Europe now’, and as such ‘I do not think we should sell the idea too hard’<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Within days Howe made his views clear via a letter from his private secretary to Charles Powell (the Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister), outlining how the College of Europe was ‘small’ and that there would be ‘no difficulty in saying “no” to the invitation’<sup>xxxix</sup>. If, however, Thatcher did want to use the invitation as an opportunity to make a major speech on Europe, then the advice from Howe was clear – i.e. the speech should ‘outline the reforms we have secured within the Community’ and it should be geared towards ‘bringing Britain’s economic success to the attention of a wider European audience’<sup>xl</sup>. Powell confirmed that Thatcher would deliver the speech in late April<sup>xli</sup> and over the next two months the FCO set about developing the themes of the speech<sup>xlii</sup>.

Through these initial discussions the economic arguments remained predominant, as they argued that ‘progress today rests on moving with [the] world tide of deregulation, openness and competition, not going against it’<sup>xliii</sup>. However, it became clear that the speech would move beyond the economic confines that Howe had wanted. The FCO would add to the first draft of the speech that ‘the western military alliance must not be taken for granted by [EC] members: its vitality needs to be nurtured and sustained with proper vigilance’<sup>xliv</sup>. Beyond the economy and security, the FCO talked about the proposed tone of the speech, arguing that speech should be seen as an opportunity to ‘reject’ the ‘accusations’ that the British are ‘insular’, and ‘tend to be pragmatic not visionary’<sup>xlv</sup>. In contributing to the drafting of the speech the FCO were increasingly focused on challenging the notion they were too ‘proud’ of ‘our island history’<sup>xlvi</sup>, which had created their isolationist reputation.

Countering this was input of Hugh Thomas, Chair of the Centre for Policy Studies. He argued that ‘we could be at a turning point in our history’<sup>xlvii</sup>, and now was the opportunity to make not just a case against the ‘present moves in Europe’<sup>xlviii</sup> but to make the case for a future Europe based around ‘diversity’<sup>xlix</sup>. The need to make that case about diversity, Thomas argued, stemmed from historical precedent. As such he recommended that Thatcher should remind her European audience that ‘ever since the Middle Ages we have known that Europe should be united (or re-united)’, but ‘the trouble has been that the previous efforts at “collaboration” would always have resulted in the dominance of a single power’<sup>1</sup>. Having implied the advocates of harmonisation and further integration within the EEC had essentially authoritarian instincts, Thomas concluded such ‘federalists’ did ‘their original thinking thirty or more years ago’<sup>li</sup>. John Whittingdale, who was the Political Secretary to the Prime Minister, confirmed that the speech should avoid overly celebrating the concept of a united range of continents, saying ‘nor would we benefit if the world as a whole were to move ultimately towards a world of united continents’<sup>lii</sup>. However, the argument that integration was an outdated concept was contested by the briefing notes from the FCO, which countered that the ‘virtue of the Treaty of Rome [is] that it allows of expansion of liberty against [the] might of member states’, and ‘moving from one market to unified market of 12 countries [is] no simple matter’, which will be ‘on the whole of great benefit’<sup>liii</sup>.

Another influence upon the how the drafting of speech evolved was to be the interventions of Delors, whose vision for Europe was ‘an anathema’ to Thatcher<sup>liv</sup>. Delors delivered a speech to the European Parliament in July 1988 in which he argued ‘within ten years he expected 80 per cent of economic legislation, and perhaps social and taxation legislation, would be made by the European Community’<sup>lv</sup>. He called for ‘full cooperation between the European Parliament and the national Parliaments in stepping up the organisation of conferences and other meetings to give thought to the institutional framework of the future’<sup>lvi</sup> to determine ‘which matters can best be dealt with at Community, national, and regional levels respectively?’<sup>lvii</sup>. That Delors had provoked Thatcher was evident during an interview she gave to BBC *Radio Two*. Based on briefings from Powell<sup>lviii</sup>, Thatcher used the interview to (1) state the case for making ‘Europe less theoretical and more practical’; (2) dismiss those ‘who spend far too much time talking about these airy-fairy ideas’, and (3) claim that Delors was ‘wrong’ and that ‘he went over the top and I do not think he should have said it’<sup>lix</sup>. Within the FCO there was a concern ‘the Number 10 market for constructive language on the Community’ was ‘poor’<sup>lx</sup>. Thatcher would feel that the speech Delors then delivered to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September 1988 was an ‘intolerable, political interference’<sup>lxi</sup>.



The critical period in the final drafting of the speech was to be the first two weeks of September, as various parties were given access to a further draft with the expectation of further redrafting. At this juncture, the draft provoked a more detailed response from the FCO, as it was clear much of the advice that had emanated from the FCO was being downgraded. Howe feared that the August draft was built upon a misunderstanding of how Britain functioned within the Community and how Europe as a concept can be seen. Via a memo from Wall, reflecting Howe's concerns, they identified 'fundamental errors in the draft'<sup>lxii</sup> – for example, the implication that 'we alone fought against tyranny and for freedom' was factually inaccurate; and the line 'if they cannot even decide to give up exchange control' should be deleted given the European Community had recently done so<sup>lxiii</sup>. The FCO also wanted the reference to a 'United States of Europe' to be deleted, as 'a stronger Europe does not mean the creation of a European super-state' but, they acknowledged, it 'will require the sacrifice of political independence and the rights of national parliaments' and that 'is inherent in the treaties'<sup>lxiv</sup>.

Thatcher received a draft from Powell on August 30<sup>th</sup>, with a memo saying he had 'taken account' of 'some of the comments'<sup>lxv</sup> that he received from circulating the earlier around Whitehall, and this had resulted in him deciding to 'tone down the original a bit, but not too much'<sup>lxvi</sup>. Thatcher made annotated notes on the speech, and advocated the removal of some paragraphs (especially the ones covering the detailed historical sections), and the rephrasing of others. It is this document which provides us, as political historians, with the strongest insight into her own personal contribution to the development of the speech.

Some of her comments are relatively inconsequential – for example, she did not like a metaphor used early on the speech about the bravery of inviting her to speak on these matters. Powell had inserted a reference that inviting Thatcher was like inviting 'King Herod to speak on the subject of nurse education'<sup>lxvii</sup> – she did not object to the sentiment, but scribbled to the side 'bearing in mind this was about children, I think we should find something as telling but different'<sup>lxviii</sup>. The result was that the final draft kept the metaphor, but it was changed to a reference to Genghis Khan being asked to speak about peaceful co-existence<sup>lxix</sup>. On more substantive matters, she changed the tone and emphasis when discussing security matters; she added key phrases, such as about how Europe 'must not be ossified by endless regulation', and her resistance to the notion of an 'identikit European personality'; and removed references to Europe speaking as a single voice 'where it can' and replaced it with a reference to 'many great issues'<sup>lxx</sup>. The section of the speech that appeared to interest her the most was on future relations within the EEC. Her rhetorical preference was for the term 'willing co-operation

between sovereign states<sup>lxxi</sup>, which she preferred to the use of the term ‘strength through diversity and individual freedom’<sup>lxxii</sup>.

Four intriguing issues emerge from the final stages of redrafting. First, any suggestion that the critique of the European project, as envisaged by Delors, could be seen as a personal attack on the President of the European Commission was addressed in the final redrafting process. To ensure that personalities were not the issue, references to Delors were removed or minimised, and replaced by references to either the Commission or the Community<sup>lxxiii</sup>. This was against the advice of Alan Clark, Minister of State in the Department of Trade and Industry. He argued that by speaking at the TUC, which amounted to an ‘opposition conference’ and ‘offering them a deal and a return to their old privileges if they support him’, Delors had ‘put himself outside any immunity that might attach itself to his position as President’<sup>lxxiv</sup>.

Second, there was departmental input beyond just the FCO. The Treasury confirmed their support for the FCO interpretation – their formal feedback was that the redraft was a ‘great improvement upon the original’<sup>lxxv</sup>. The proposals from the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) were less accepting. They requested some rewording of the text, so that it stated: ‘Europe needs a stable and efficient farming industry, but the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has become unwieldy and inefficient’<sup>lxxvi</sup>. The most significant input, in terms of identifying internal departmental conflict, was within the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Civil service feedback indicated their scepticism about the tone of the draft, arguing the ‘contrast between pragmatic Brits and the inflated utopian rhetoric of the Europeans is overdone, silly and patronising’<sup>lxxvii</sup>. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young, expressed similar reservations, emphasising how there was a ‘risk that your draft would set off an unproductive debate which would distort the real message of the speech’. As a consequence, Young endorsed the toned-down arguments being put forward by the FCO, which he felt created an ‘opportunity to take the lead in the Community and to ensure that [a] pro-competitive approach is adopted’ – i.e. to make the case for a future Europe based on a ‘deregulatory, liberalising approach to the single market’<sup>lxxviii</sup>. However, in defiance of his departmental senior, Clark wrote to Thatcher arguing that the first draft was ‘excellent’ and the redrafting process had been overly sensitive to the concerns of the FCO resulting in a significant ‘dilution’<sup>lxxix</sup> of the arguments needed.

Third, the work of Thomas emerges as key. It is his line that was to become the most famous part of the speech, and it is interesting to note that there are no annotation from Thatcher in relation to the phrase ‘we have not embarked on the business of throwing back the frontiers of the state at home only to have a super state getting ready to exercise a new dominance’<sup>lxxx</sup>.

However, by the time of its delivery ‘embarked’, becomes ‘succeeded’ and the latter part of the sentence, is amended to ‘only to see them re-imposed at a European level’<sup>lxxxix</sup>. The importance of Thomas is also intriguing because the ‘outcome of Bruges’ would not turn as he had ‘hoped for’. Although Thomas was sceptical of federalism, he was essentially pro-European, and he would have ownership of a speech that was to become ‘famous as an anti-European speech rather than one that set out a workable alternative European ideal to compete with that of the federalists.’<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Fourth, in a display that later would look misplaced, the FCO concluded that they had done rather well out of the redrafting process – for example, when speaking of the final draft, Kerr wrote: ‘I don’t think that the Bruges speech is now likely to cause trouble with Community partners’<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. This self-congratulatory tone reflected their supposed success at securing concessions in the drafting of the speech – they concluded that they had secured 80 percent of what they wanted, and although they would have wanted more concessions, this was a ‘damage limitation exercise’ which was ‘heading for success’<sup>lxxxiv</sup>.

Before assessing the delivery of the speech, it is worth outlining the principles that underpinned the final draft. According to Aughey, the speech was rooted in principles that underpinned Conservative thought, i.e. nation, pragmatism and globalisation<sup>lxxxv</sup>. That is to say:

- (1) The idea of nation was central as the future of Europe should be intergovernmental. Nations should be working together closely, but this did not require an increasing bureaucratic centralisation of power emanating from Brussels<sup>lxxxvi</sup>. Europe belonged to all of its members or nations, and there was not one manifestation of European identity.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> This reflected her belief that sovereignty could not be pooled – i.e. it could not be ‘over-ridden by some theoretical European nationhood’<sup>lxxxviii</sup>. These assumptions justified her inclusion of her vision of the future of Europe, based on the ‘willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states’<sup>lxxxix</sup>.
- (2) The idea of pragmatism was central as decision-making should be between sovereign states. To Thatcher policy between nations should be based on ‘practical ways’<sup>xc</sup> between nations rather than via an ‘abstract federalist blueprint’<sup>xcii</sup>.
- (3) The idea of globalisation was central as her vision for the future was based on rejecting protectionism and the promotion of free trade<sup>xcii</sup>. These assumptions would explain her emphasis on ‘getting rid of barriers’ and ‘making it possible for

companies to operate on a European scale<sup>xciii</sup>. Deregulation was central to this, and explained her rejection of the social dimension that Delors was advocating. Thatcher felt that such regulatory interventions would be a ‘handicap’ as they would lead to less market flexibility and lower competition<sup>xciv</sup>. From these assumptions would flow her fear that Delors was seeking to introduce ‘creeping back-door socialism’<sup>xcv</sup>, which was to be clearly rejected by the ‘dynamite’ rolling back the frontiers quote from the speech<sup>xcvi</sup>. However, it is worth noting that for Thatcher, the future of Europe may involve the removal of barriers in terms of trade but that should not extend to physical frontiers – i.e. when it came to borders ‘it is a matter of plain common sense that we cannot totally abolish frontier controls if we are to protect our citizens<sup>xcvii</sup>’.

### **The Delivery of the Bruges Speech: September 1988**

Having considered the background circumstances to the speech in section one, and the construction of the speech in section two, this section of the paper will assess the delivery of the speech. The rationale for doing so is to assess the means by which Thatcher used the speech to persuade – i.e. to what extent is there evidence that Thatcher relied on a *deliberative* style; or did she rely on a forensic or *judicial* style; or an *epideictic* style (i.e. one based on drama and performance)<sup>xcviii</sup>. Subjecting the Bruges speech to this type of reappraisal allows us to consider the means by which Thatcher sought to prove her argument and persuade her audience. By her domestic audience we mean fellow ministers, parliamentarians and Conservative Party members, but most importantly to mean voters, be they existing Conservative voters, or non-Conservative voters, as built into the rationale for this type of analysis is the argument that elite politicians do have the ability to shape, and re-shape public attitudes<sup>xcix</sup>.

Before we do so it is worth noting that a recent study on the rhetoric of Thatcher – based on analysing her in Parliament, Conferences and set piece speeches, and in interviews - emphasised the following. Instead of showcasing an equal reliance upon all three oratorical approaches – i.e. considered or deliberative oratory and forensic or judicial oratory, Thatcher relied heavily upon epideictic oratory, or a delivery style based on drama and performance<sup>c</sup>. Within her reliance on drama and performance was a ‘tendency towards apportioning blame or praise’, a reliance on the ‘construction of binary opposites’ or ‘simplistic ways of presenting the world in black and white or good and bad terms’, within which ‘her view was right and her

opponents wrong'<sup>ci</sup>. To what extent are these conclusions about Thatcher's rhetoric evident within the Bruges speech?

Thatcher delivered her speech in an 'uncompromising' and 'abrasive' style<sup>cii</sup>. Although the speech does show evidence that Thatcher was deliberative – i.e. making the case for a specific policy positions and explaining why; and although the speech does show that Thatcher was forensic or judicial in her approach - aspects of her discussion were detailed and evidence based – it is clear that the primary driver of how the speech was delivered was epideictic. To explain how and why we can make this claim we now turn to the work of Condit on epideictic oratory<sup>ciii</sup>. Condit argued that epideictic oratory relies on three components: (a) the ability of the orator to make a connection with their audience, based on drama and performative skill; (b) the ability of the orator to educate by identifying a policy problem and help the audience to understand more; which is linked to the reassurance that the oratory can offer in the third component – i.e. (c) the ability of the orator to construct a shared sense of identity or community, whereby the policy solution the orator offers can serve to bind the audience (i.e. voters in the UK) together<sup>civ</sup>. The latter point is crucial as the construction of a unifying identity is usually achieved by contrasting it with an 'other' who is positioned outside of that shared community. It is also interesting to note the establishing of both the shared community and the external 'other' can be demonstrated by orators using praise for the shared community and criticism or blame for the external other<sup>cv</sup>. Therefore, using the ideas outlined by Condit provides us with an innovative way of reassessing the delivery of the Bruges speech.

On the first component of epideictic driven oratory – that of making a connection by the ability of the orator to engage or entertain their intended audience – Thatcher was working from a position of strength. That strength flowed from the office that she held, but even more so from her political reputation. At the time of the Bruges speech, she had a large parliamentary majority (of 101) which had been secured just fifteen months earlier, the Conservatives remained ahead in the opinion polls as the economy was still buoyant, and the Labour Party had spent the majority of 1988 side-tracked by a time-consuming party leadership election between Neil Kinnock and Tony Benn<sup>cvi</sup>.

Asserting that credibility does emerge as a theme within the speech. Her speechwriters made sure the audience understood her reputation as a *successful* politician, with that going beyond the confines of domestic UK politics. This was achieved by identifying her contributions to the apparent victories of the west, as she argued 'things *are* going our way: the democratic model of a free enterprise society *has* proved itself superior; freedom is on the offensive, a peaceful offensive the world over, for the first time in my life-time'.<sup>cvii</sup> Moreover,

her speechwriters made sure that her audience was aware of her reputation as a *conviction* politician, rather than a consensual politician. Just as domestically she had challenged the prevailing Keynesian social democratic pillars of consensus<sup>cviii</sup>, she was now willing to position herself as an opponent of further European integration. Her status as a conviction politician was underpinned by the use of humour early on in the speech, as she said to her hosts ‘perhaps I should congratulate you on your courage’ for extending the invitation, because ‘if you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting Genghis Khan to speak on the virtues of peaceful coexistence’.<sup>cxix</sup> This joke reflected the audience in the room in front of Thatcher. Her hosts in Bruges were the College of Europe (whose academic activities were in part funded by contributions from member states) and Thatcher was speaking on the opening ceremony of the 1988 academic year. That the joke was inserted reflected the fact that the College, and thus the European audience directly in front of Thatcher, was well known for its commitment to European federalism, thus explaining why Wall had been doubtful about the wisdom of accepting the invitation in the first place.<sup>cx</sup> It is also worth noting, that those who are admirers of Thatcher could interpret the section of the speech on European identity as visionary, as she argued that: ‘the European Community is one manifestation of that European identity. It is not the only one’, but ‘we must never forget that east of the Iron Curtain, people who once enjoyed a full share of European culture, freedom and identity have been cut off from their roots. We shall always look on Warsaw, Prague and Budapest as great European cities.’<sup>cxix</sup>

The second component part of epideictic driven oratory within the speech relates to how Thatcher sought to redefine the debate about European integration. That was clear as Thatcher outlined her objectives for the speech by stating ‘I want to start by disposing of some myths about my country, Britain, and its relationship with Europe’, as she identifies how the ‘British are as much heirs to the legacy of European culture as any other nation’<sup>cxii</sup>. By doing so Thatcher was identifying that part of the problem was the concept of Europe has been fundamentally misunderstood by integrationists. Thatcher emphasised how ‘Europe is *not* the creation of the Treaty of Rome. Nor is the European idea the property of any group or institution’<sup>cxiii</sup>, and how ‘the European Community is *one* manifestation of that European identity, but it is not the only one’<sup>cxiv</sup>. The speech was thereby identifying how this vision of integration within Europe being advanced was potentially problematic.

The first strand to the problem, as defined by Thatcher, was in relation to wider global economy and international community. In setting up this critique, she identified how Europe never will prosper as a ‘narrow-minded, inward-looking club’, and warns that ‘the Community

is not an end in itself', or an 'institutional device to be constantly modified according to the dictates of some abstract intellectual concept<sup>cxv</sup>. To ensure that this is no ambiguity on this, Thatcher identified the importance of the Commonwealth and the special relationship with the United States as being core components of British foreign policy, and although she reaffirms UK commitment to membership of the EEC, 'that is not to say that our future lies only in Europe'<sup>cxvi</sup>. The second strand to the problem was her fear that the interventionist and integrationist mentality of the EEC risked it being 'ossified by endless regulation'<sup>cxvii</sup>. She described the obsession with 'arcane institutional debates' as a 'waste of our energies'<sup>cxviii</sup>. Her emphasis was on mutually beneficial co-operation, but not on institutionally driven conformity as she warned that 'closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy'<sup>cxix</sup>. The third strand to the problem related to the erosion of sovereignty implicit within the integrationist tide. This captured her vision of 'willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states' as 'the best way to build a successful European Community'<sup>cxx</sup>. Not only was she rejecting the 'European vision or ideal', which she derided as 'utopian goals', she made the case for allowing 'Europe [to] be a family of nations, understanding each other better, appreciating each other more, doing more together but relishing our national identity no less than our common European endeavour'.

The final component part of her epideictic driven oratory was the way in which Thatcher sought to emphasise the distinctiveness of British national identity<sup>cxxi</sup>. She warned that 'to try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve'<sup>cxixii</sup>. Rather, argued Thatcher 'Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, and Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity' and 'it would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality'<sup>cxixiii</sup>. To emphasise her objection to the federalist ambitions of a European super-state, she was making it clear that it would lack the 'legitimacy' and 'appeal of a nation-state'. Moreover, on the suppression of nationhood, her rhetoric carried a warning: 'the denial of nation-hood' risk provoking 'nationalism rather than the benign state patriotism of the mature liberal democratic nation state'<sup>cxixiv</sup>.

Thatcher would use emotive language to generate a connection with her domestic audience. In this context the Bruges speech was reliant upon romanticised notions of British history. For example, early into the speech she commended her hosts for the sacrifice they made during the two world wars. This enabled her to remark that 'over the centuries *we* have fought to prevent Europe from falling under the dominance of a single power', before noting

that ‘we have fought and we have died for her freedom’<sup>cxxv</sup>. Thatcher also outlined the contribution of the British, as she emphasised how ‘it was British support to resistance movements throughout the last war that helped to keep alive the flame of liberty in so many countries until the day of liberation’<sup>cxxvi</sup>.

Therefore, we can argue that the purpose of the Bruges speech was to draw a distinction between two competing visions for the future of Europe, and to create a choice for her audience. This approach was entirely consistent with her wider oratorical style<sup>cxxvii</sup>. Underpinning the speech was her willingness to identify specific examples of the failings of the EEC, as currently operating. Moreover, she identified a possible link between failings and consequences – for example,

‘...if we cannot reform those Community policies which are patently wrong or ineffective and which are rightly causing public disquiet, then we shall not get the public support for the Community's future development’.<sup>cxxviii</sup>

The aim of this intervention was to identify limitations with the current operation of the EEC, and to legitimise her case for an alternative vision. To demonstrate an example of ineffectiveness, she turned to the issue of their approach to food production. She argued that ‘it was not right that half the total Community budget was being spent on storing and disposing of surplus food’<sup>cxxix</sup>. This allowed her to critique CAP, which she described as ‘unwieldy, inefficient and grossly expensive’, as she complained about how the ‘production of unwanted surpluses safeguards neither the income nor the future of farmers themselves’<sup>cxix</sup>. Having identified for her audience the evidence of policy failure, she then presented the solution arguing that ‘we must continue to pursue policies which relate supply more closely to market requirements, and which will reduce over-production and limit costs’, thus reflecting the rewording of MAFF in the drafting process<sup>cxix</sup>. This argument reflected her longstanding ideological position concerning economic management and deregulation, as she argued

‘...if Europe is to flourish and create the jobs of the future, enterprise is the key... The basic framework is there: the Treaty of Rome itself was intended as a Charter for Economic Liberty. But that it is not how it has always been read, still less applied. The lesson of the economic history of Europe in the 70s and 80s is that central planning and detailed control do not work and that personal endeavour and initiative do’.<sup>cxix</sup>



Thatcher thereby concluded that a ‘state-controlled economy is a recipe for low growth’, whereas a ‘free enterprise’ economy ‘within a framework of law brings better results’<sup>cxxxiii</sup>. The evidence to support her claims was the performance of the domestic British economy which, she argued, was benefitting from her market reforms, in the shape greater prosperity and global investment. She presented it as beyond dispute that it was advantageous to ‘widen choice’ and ‘reduce government intervention’, and that ‘by getting rid of barriers, by making it possible for companies to operate on a European scale, we can best compete with the United States, Japan and other new economic powers emerging in Asia and elsewhere’<sup>cxxxiv</sup>. Moreover, Thatcher argued her preferred policy solutions were what ‘the European consumer wants’, as ‘they will widen his choice and lower his costs’ and that ‘it is to such basic practical steps that the Community’s attention should be devoted’<sup>cxxxv</sup>.

As Thatcher set about identifying her preference – ‘to deregulate and to remove the constraints on trade’, and what she wanted to reject – ‘more and more detailed regulation from the centre’<sup>cxxxvi</sup>, she reminded her audience that the EEC must preserve ‘the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one’s own country; for these have been the source of Europe’s vitality through the centuries’.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Reinforcing her discontent with the centralising and integrationist drift, would lead her to deliver the following controversial comparison:

‘...it is ironic that just when those countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction’<sup>cxxxviii</sup>.

It would also lead her to deliver the most memorable line of the speech, which acted as her rebuttal to the Delors inspired plan for closer economic and political co-operation. She concluded that:

‘...we have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels’<sup>cxxxix</sup>.

## The Significance of the Bruges Speech: Reactions Post September 1988

As we identify the significance of the Bruges speech our analysis will focus on how it was interpreted by the British press, the Conservative Party and within Cabinet. Although the domestic sphere is the primary focus on our discussion here, we do acknowledge that the domestic audience was not the only intended audience whom she hoped to influence. We note that her intervention was viewed as ‘a real crusade against European unity’, according to West German national press agency DPA; whilst in France *Le Monde* noted that Thatcher had delivered her speech in a ‘raw and provocative style’.<sup>cxli</sup> Making her European partners aware of her willingness to speak out in her alternative European vision was part of the motive for delivering the speech<sup>cxli</sup>, but it clear that this was secondary to the domestic motivation for the speech.

The pre-speech briefing was significant. Key to the briefing process was the role of Bernard Ingham, the Downing Street spokesperson<sup>cxlii</sup>. Powell would identify how Ingham interpreted the Bruges speech and then sold it to the lobby was significant. He recalls how

‘if you read it, it’s still a very sensible vision in many ways despite its explosive effect at the time. It was mis-sold, mis-sold, I think, by Bernard [Ingham] as a great attack on Europe, and it was not intended to be a great attack on Europe – rather, the opposite. It was intended to set out a different perspective, something which would probably have been more beneficial if it had come a year or two earlier. If it had been delivered two years earlier it might have had more of an effect on the future direction of Europe; but nonetheless, coming on top of the divisions, above all in the run-up to ERM, it helped shatter the government consensus from then on’.<sup>cxliii</sup>

Rather than emphasise areas of commonality or how beneficial membership was, Ingham spun the speech around the most controversial line of the draft - ‘we have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level’<sup>cxliv</sup>. This emphasis would explain why the Bruges speech would generate such publicity.

The general interpretation of the press was that it as a ‘triumph’<sup>cxlv</sup>. In many ways they replicated the choice, or the competing visions, that Thatcher was identifying, and they framed the debate via an ‘us versus them’ distinction. For example, the Conservative supporting *Daily Mail* ran a headline ‘Maggie makes Europe mad’<sup>cxlvi</sup>. They described it as ‘a major speech’, to ‘an audience of high-powered Europeans’, in which she ‘warned’ them ‘against attempts to

create identikit citizens' who would be 'directed by a massive bureaucracy in Brussels'<sup>cxlvii</sup>. Moreover, they informed their readers that Thatcher had plunged the 'Common Market into turmoil' by 'insisting' that 'she would never allow Britain to be submerged into a United States of Europe'<sup>cxlviii</sup>. Their editorial described Thatcher as a 'Britannia in Bruges' and 'De Gaulle re-incarnate', as she delivered a 'resonant performance that pulled out all the stops'<sup>cxlix</sup>. Although delivered in less complementary language, the leftward leaning *Guardian* identified that Thatcher had chosen to 'unfurl the banner of a British Gaullism' directly to an audience of 'those who want ultimately to see a United States of Europe'<sup>cl</sup>. On the latter theme, *The Times* noted that the speech made it abundantly clear that 'so long a Mrs Thatcher lived and breathed in Downing Street there would be no United States of Europe'<sup>cli</sup>. In 'imitating the nationalism of De Gaulle', they noted that Thatcher was serving 'notice on the rest of the European Community'<sup>clii</sup> that she would 'oppose' their integrationist path 'tooth and nail'<sup>cliii</sup>. Her 'unrelentingly negative' speech had provoked real 'anger, sadness and disbelief' throughout 'continental capitals'<sup>cliv</sup>, according to *The Times*.

Turner argues that the 'jingoistic British press' actually had the effect 'of making the speech appear even more anti-European' than it actually was<sup>clv</sup>. Hitherto the British press had adopted a broadly supportive tone in their coverage of the EEC, the Bruges speech would coincide with a shift from what Daddow called a 'permissive consensus' towards a 'destructive dissent'<sup>clvi</sup>. At the vanguard of hostility towards the EEC would be *The Sun*, who ran a simple headline post-Bruges: 'we stay British'<sup>clvii</sup>. Ultimately it was the higher sales and larger readership of *The Sun* which was to generate greater attention (and condemnation) for the Delors European vision of economic and political union<sup>clviii</sup>. Later on, they famously ran a front page entitled 'Up yours, Delors', and called upon their 'patriotic family of readers' to 'tell the French fool where he can stuff' his European vision<sup>clix</sup>.

The Bruges speech was also significant in terms how it played within the PCP. That impact was evident on both the front and the backbenchers. The frontbench impact reflected the complex dynamics that existed between Thatcher, Howe, and Lawson. There were actually 'fluid lines of division' between them<sup>clx</sup>. Howe accepted the case for joining the ERM and that was a sentiment also shared by Lawson on the basis the ERM was an 'agreement between sovereign states'<sup>clxi</sup>. They believed that it would aid domestic statecraft<sup>clxii</sup> - i.e. it could provide an external economic anchor and act as an anti-inflationary strategy, by overcoming the impact upon the domestic economy of fluctuating exchange rates<sup>clxiii</sup>. To facilitate a possible future entry into the ERM, Lawson had (since 1986) began shadowing the deutschmark<sup>clxiv</sup>. Thatcher was opposed to the single currency or EMU, a sentiment shared by Lawson, on the basis that

EMU was a ‘step towards a federal Europe’<sup>clxv</sup>. Howe was the only one of the three ‘amendable’ to joining both the ERM and then EMU. Lawson was willing to join the ERM as he felt that engaging with stage one of the Delors plan would show ‘good faith’, but that the British would still possess enough leverage to ‘ward off’ the case for EMU<sup>clxvi</sup>. Thatcher had no faith in the Lawson strategy of saying yes to ERM and no to EMU, and was increasingly distrustful of Howe’s willingness to complete both ERM and EMU. It was due to this distrust of Howe, and the view of advisors within the FCO, that pushed towards trying to ‘circumvent’ their advice, and explains the dominant role of her own foreign policy advisor, Powell, in the drafting of the Bruges speech<sup>clxvii</sup>.

This slight divergence that existed between Lawson and Howe would be evident in their own reactions to the speech. In his memoirs, Lawson noted that she ‘said a number of things that needed to be said’ and ‘in a perfectly reasonable manner’, whilst he viewed the famous line – on the re-imposition at a Community level – as a ‘perfectly valid statement’<sup>clxviii</sup>. However, for Lawson what was a relatively reasonably constructed argument gained greater traction because of how it was reported by the British press, and the pre-briefing that was conducted. He concluded that: ‘few of them bothered to read the text’, but their reporting was ‘different in tone’ to the actual text, and was ‘truer to her own feelings’ that are ‘intensely hostile’ to the EEC<sup>clxix</sup>. The reaction of Howe, an increasingly disgruntled Foreign Secretary, was more straightforward than Lawson. He thought the speech was ‘sheer fantasy’ and that her description of the EEC ‘veered between caricature and misunderstanding’<sup>clxx</sup>. Howe had previously assumed that Thatcher was pragmatically pro-European, on the basis on her support for the yes campaign in the EEC referendum of 1975, with this view solidified by her advocacy of the Single European Act of 1986. Bruges affirmed her hostility towards European integration, and as such Howe ‘began to see her...as a natural member of the gallant but misguided backbench group... who had fought so long and hard against the European Communities Bill in 1971’<sup>clxxi</sup>. Howe admitted that he was ‘deeply dismayed by the Bruges speech’, and likened Thatcher’s conversion to ‘being married to a clergyman who had suddenly proclaimed his disbelief in God’<sup>clxxii</sup>.

The impact of the Bruges speech went beyond the confines of the Cabinet. At the Conservative Party annual conference in the autumn of 1988, the former party leader, Edward Heath, spoke out against Thatcher on a foreign policy motion, and ‘her increasingly emotional public behaviour’<sup>clxxiii</sup>. In critiquing her speech Heath was motivated by two inter-connected factors: first, ‘I could not stand back and watch history, and my own record, be grossly misinterpreted’; and, second, that ‘the aim was, and remains, ever closer political union [and]

there is nothing sinister in the means for bringing this about being particularly economic'<sup>clxxiv</sup>. Heath had 'ridiculed the idea that Britain would lose its identity'<sup>clxxv</sup> and 'dismissed the notion that a united Europe would be corporatist'<sup>clxxvi</sup>. Howe realised that finding 'common ground'<sup>clxxvii</sup> within the Conservative Party, post-Bruges, was going to be increasingly problematic. Former Cabinet minister, Michael Heseltine, whose challenge to Thatcher in the Conservative Party leadership election of November 1990, contributed to her eventual resignation, concluded that:

'...the Bruges speech was designed to draw a line in the sand, or to erect a kind of political Maginot Line to prevent any further advance of what she saw as socialist European centralism. The speech attracted enthusiastic support from her likeminded colleagues and admirers. It sent a chill of despair down the spines of many others. She had divided the Tory Party and unleashed the hounds that were to eat away at the vitals of party unity from then on – to no discernible political benefit'<sup>clxxviii</sup>.

Is that correct in terms of what was motivating Thatcher? Gowland argues that she was motivated by two issues. First, the Bruges speech could redefine the terrain upon which the European debate was taking place within the party, as she was increasingly concerned that 'events' were going in a 'pro-European way' and thus a 'bold statement' on her behalf could 'win over some of the pragmatists in the centre of the party'<sup>clxxix</sup>. Second, she also felt that with 'the aid of a more sceptical press, she could galvanise public opinion', which was 'already suspicious of European integration'<sup>clxxx</sup>. The irony for the Conservative Party under the leadership tenure of Major (1990 to 1997) was that support for European integration amongst voters declined markedly but that the Conservatives, due to their internal divisions, were unable to exploit the growth of Euroscepticism<sup>clxxxi</sup>.

Let us consider the Bruges speech within the context of the PCP. It is also clear that it 'galvanised' those with doubts within the PCP who now felt that she was 'legitimising their ideas'<sup>clxxxii</sup>. As alluded to earlier by Heseltine, by 'stressing the incompatibility of supranational authority and national democracy', Thatcher would bequeath to her successor, John Major, a PCP which split between the interdependent pro-European wing, who were willing to pool sovereignty, and the independent Eurosceptic wing, for whom sovereignty was sacrosanct<sup>clxxxiii</sup>. In the early Thatcher era pro-Europeanism was the dominant strand

numerically within the PCP in the 1970s and 1980s; and pro-Europeanism was predominantly located on the frontbenchers, and those with a sceptical mind-set tended to be found on the backbenchers<sup>clxxxiv</sup>. The post-Thatcher era would see pro-Europeanism within the parliamentary ranks collapse – from around 98 members of the 336 strong 1992 to 1997 PCP to only seven members of the 307 strong 2010 to 2015 PCP. Conversely, Euroscepticism gained a foothold within the PCP in the early 1990s, and within that the Bruges Group think tank, played a significant role in intensifying Eurosceptic sentiment within the PCP<sup>clxxxv</sup>. Approaching 60 percent of the 1992 to 1997 PCP were Eurosceptics, with that percentage increasing between 1997 and 2010<sup>clxxxvi</sup>. By the time of the referendum on continued membership of the European Union in 2016, the terminology of pro-Europeanism (open mindedness about further European integration) and Euroscepticism (hostility to further European integration), seemed anachronistic. The debate morphed into variants of Euroscepticism – i.e. between those who were soft Eurosceptics or ‘remaining’ Euro-realists, willing to accept the case for remaining within the European Union, and hard Eurosceptics or ‘leave/Brexit’ Euro-rejectionists, who advocated withdrawal. Although the 2015-2017 PCP was split between soft and hard forms of Eurosceptic – 174 were known to have voted to remain and 145 were estimated to have backed Brexit – the remain faction were not pro-Europeans in the style of a Heath, as they were on the sceptical wing of the Conservative tradition<sup>clxxxvii</sup>. Critically, those Conservatives who, as rejectionist hard Eurosceptics, came to advocate Brexit adopted Thatcher and her legacy to their cause. The fact that the Bruges speech was about projecting an alternative vision within Europe, and that Thatcher, who eulogised about the benefits of the single market, had wanted to maximise the benefits of membership, was bypassed<sup>clxxxviii</sup>. As such it could be argued that it was the rhetoric of Thatcher the former Prime Minister, not Thatcher as Prime Minister, or the Bruges speech, that aided the legitimising of the hard variant of Euroscepticism within the Conservative Party<sup>clxxxix</sup>.

## **Conclusion:**

Our paper contributes to this debate about the mainstreaming, or legitimising, of Euroscepticism by analysing the Bruges speech. Our paper identifies the construction of the drafts for the speech, and the key roles played by Powell and Thomas. It identifies the process through which the FCO desire for an economic dominated speech was downgraded, and later

on the misplaced confidence of the FCO in assuming that their interventions had ensured that the Bruges speech would have limited impact. Our paper also showcases the importance of oratory to political debate. The traction the Bruges speech gained was due to *who* delivered it, and *how* she delivered it. Indeed, it could be argued that the method of delivery mattered as much as the substance, as Gowland notes she was ‘on powerful’ and ‘evangelistic form’<sup>cxv</sup>. It represented an example of epideictic or display rhetoric – i.e. one based on its dramatic impact due to the performative skills of the oratory. Our paper also identifies why the Bruges speech was to acquire such significance, and how it has become interpreted as an anti-European speech, rather than an anti-federalist speech<sup>cxvi</sup>.

Powell argued the Bruges speech was ‘never quite the deliberate act that it is sometimes claimed to be’<sup>cxvii</sup>. The fact that the Bruges Group was set up in tribute to that speech, and that as a group that would evolve into a Brexit endorsing entity, is reflective of the altered dynamics of the European Union in the 2010s, and the not the actual content of the Bruges speech of 1988<sup>cxviii</sup>. An analysis of the content of the Bruges speech would place it more in line with a soft-Eurosceptic or revisionist mindset, rather than the rejectionist hard Eurosceptic positioning that gained traction within the parliamentary Conservative Party in the late Cameron era – i.e. ‘in no way was Bruges a manifesto for withdrawal’<sup>cxix</sup>.

Indeed, the reverse could be argued. In the speech itself she made an explicit rejection of the notion of Britain seeking a ‘dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes’, before confirming that ‘our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community’<sup>cxv</sup>. The Bruges speech was about competing visions of Europe and a choice, not between remain or leave, but as she told delegates at the 1988 Conservative Party annual conference, a ‘choice between two kinds of Europe – a Europe based on the wildest possible freedom for enterprise’, which explains her enthusiasm for the single market, or ‘a Europe governed by socialist methods of centralised control and regulation’<sup>cxvi</sup>. Reaffirming the principles upon which the Bruges speech had been constructed she attacked those who ‘see European unity as a vehicle for spreading socialism’, and again made the case for ‘willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states’ as the ‘best way to build a successful European Community’<sup>cxvii</sup>. She assured Conservative delegates, and the wider electorate, that ‘no-one should doubt’ her administration’s ‘wholehearted commitment to Europe’, as she concluded that ‘ours is the true European ideal’<sup>cxviii</sup>.

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<sup>iii</sup> Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain*.

<sup>iv</sup> Lord *British Entry to the European Community*.

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<sup>vi</sup> Stephens, *Politics and the Pound*.

<sup>vii</sup> Smith, 'Europe: The Coalition's Poisoned Chalice', 371.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.* 371.

<sup>ix</sup> Fontana and Parsons, 'One Women's Prejudice', 90.

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

<sup>xi</sup> Geddes, 'Europe', 125.

<sup>xii</sup> Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 746.

<sup>xiii</sup> Geddes, 'Europe', 125.

<sup>xiv</sup> Lawson, *The View from No.11*, 922.

<sup>xv</sup> Garry, 'The British Conservative Party' and Sowemimo, 'The Conservative Party and European Integration'.

<sup>xvi</sup> Heppell, *Choosing the Tory Leader*, chapter five.

<sup>xvii</sup> Hostetler, 'The enigmatic ends of rhetoric'.

<sup>xviii</sup> Myers, 'Harold Macmillan's "Wind of Change" Speech'; Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd and the 1960 Wind of Change speech'.

<sup>xix</sup> Crines, Heppell, and Hill, 'Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech'.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Young, *This Blessed Plot*, 333.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*, 89-94.

<sup>xxix</sup> Geddes, 123

<sup>xxx</sup> Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*, 89.

<sup>xxxi</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Geddes, 'Europe', 123.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 743.

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- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Turner, *The Tories and Europe*, 122.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Geddes, 'Europe', 125, and Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain*, 96.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European Integration*, 53.
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