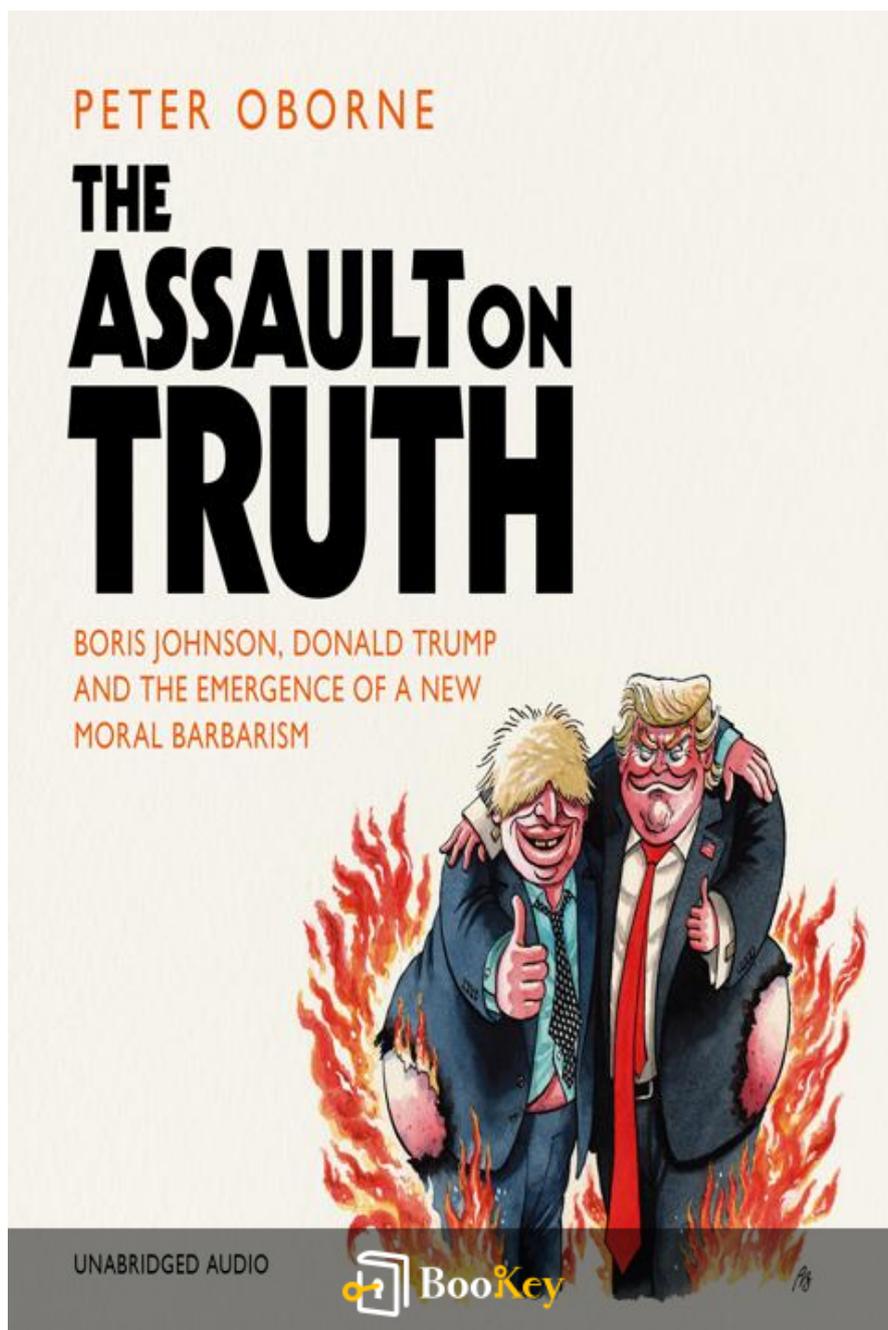


The Assault On Truth PDF (Limited Copy)

Peter Osborne



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The Assault On Truth Summary

Exposing the dangers of false narratives in society.

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About the book

In "The Assault on Truth," Peter Osborne delves deep into the troubling landscape of contemporary politics and media, exposing a relentless campaign against factual integrity and honest discourse. Through incisive analysis and compelling examples, Osborne illustrates how the erosion of truth has become not just a tactic, but a strategy in public life, impacting everything from journalism to democracy itself. As he navigates the dangerous waters of misinformation, propaganda, and the normalization of deceit, the author urges us to reflect on the profound implications this assault has on our collective understanding of reality. Engaging and thought-provoking, this book is a call to action for all who value truth and seek to reclaim it in an age of chaos and confusion.

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About the author

Peter Osborne is a veteran British journalist and author, renowned for his incisive commentary on politics and media. With a career spanning over three decades, he has held prominent positions at several major publications, including The Daily Telegraph, where he served as Chief Political Commentator. Osborne is celebrated for his fearless critiques of political norms and his commitment to unveiling the complexities of truth in journalism, exemplified in his works such as "The Assault on Truth." His background in history adds depth to his analyses, while his advocacy for integrity in political discourse has resonated across diverse audiences, establishing him as a significant voice in contemporary British journalism.

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Chapter 1 Summary: An Introduction to Political Lying

Chapter One: An Introduction to Political Lying

The chapter begins with a stark reminder of the ethical obligations placed on government ministers to provide truthful information to Parliament.

According to the Ministerial Code, misleading Parliament knowingly is grounds for resignation. This sets the stage for discussing the contradictions observed in the political landscape, exemplified by the election of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister on December 12, 2019.

The author outlines two primary objectives: first, to substantiate claims that Johnson, alongside his advisers, engages in habitual deception and lies; second, to explore the societal and political context that allowed such a figure to ascend to the highest office in Britain. The challenges of the inquiry lie not only in cataloguing Johnson's fabrications but also in understanding the cultural shift that has made his election possible.

Historically, Britain was known for its emphasis on public and private integrity, where dishonesty was looked down upon. The trajectory of British politics, however, reveals a troubling transformation, where dishonesty has become common under Johnson's leadership. The chapter provocatively questions whether the British populace still values truth, given that a known

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liar has taken up residence in Downing Street.

The author traces the underpinning of modern political integrity back to the Victorian era, when reforms aimed at combating corruption and enhancing accountability fundamentally reshaped British governance. This system thrived through the 20th century, fostering public trust and a shared commitment to truth among political figures. Even amid the lies that inevitably surfaced, they were largely individual failings rather than systemic issues.

The narrative shifts with the election of New Labour in 1997, wherein the perceived moral superiority of left-wing politics led to a willingness to bend the truth when deemed necessary. This culminated in the questionable justification for the Iraq War based on misleading information about weapons of mass destruction. Successive leaders from Tony Blair to Theresa May, while occasionally deceptive, did not engage in the systemic dishonesty that characterizes Johnson's approach.

The chapter posits that the standards of political truth-telling eroded completely when Johnson became Prime Minister. The previously shared understanding of factual accuracy as a common ground dissolved, leading to a political climate where lies operate as currency. The author vehemently argues that political lying not only undermines public trust but threatens the democratic foundations that rely on a shared understanding of truth.

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A critical element of the argument focuses on the complicity of the media. Historically, while British newspapers have disseminated falsehoods, they have also worked to uncover and expose lies, taking pride in their role as independent watchdogs. However, under Johnson's regime, much of the media has failed in this duty, often becoming complicit in the propagation of false narratives. This dangerous shift conflates truth with political expedience, embedding dishonesty at the heart of governance.

The author draws parallels between Johnson and Donald Trump, suggesting both leaders utilize deceit as a tool against democratic norms. This raises questions about societal complicity, as many voters resign themselves to the belief that all politicians lie rather than recognizing the harm caused by sweeping generalizations that absolve political deceit.

Cynicism about politics, while understandable, risks eroding societal values and the foundations of democracy. It allows habitual liars to thrive while dissuading honest political engagement. The author warns that neglecting the importance of truth jeopardizes the freedoms the public takes for granted, reinforcing the idea that political lying is akin to a theft of democratic agency.

As the chapter concludes, the author stresses the necessity to reclaim a shared public discourse grounded in truth. The erosion of institutions

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designed to uphold these values, combined with a government hostile to accountability and integrity, heralds a dangerous crossroads for British democracy.

The insistence upon defining 'lie' serves to differentiate between misleading statements made with intention and inadvertent errors, emphasizing the weight of the accusation that an individual is a liar. The chapter ultimately sets the stage for a deeper exploration of Johnson's specific deceptions while contextualizing their significance within the broader narrative of declining political standards in Britain.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The necessity of truth in public discourse

Critical Interpretation: Imagine a world where your voice matters, where every word you speak holds the power to shape reality and influence those around you. The core message of this chapter urges you to prioritize truth in your own dialogues and interactions.

Recognize that, just as political leaders have a duty to be honest, so too do you have the responsibility to foster integrity in your personal life. By standing firm in your commitment to truthful communication, you not only reinforce your own values but also inspire others to embrace honesty. This ripple effect can restore faith in collective discourse, reminding society that truth is not merely a commodity, but the very foundation upon which trust and democracy are built.

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Chapter 2 Summary: The 2019 Election: One Lie after Another

Chapter Two: The 2019 Election - One Lie After Another

In the lead-up to the 2019 election, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was found to be engaging in a pattern of deceit and misleading promises while campaigning, especially during a live address in Oldham where he boasted about building "forty new hospitals." Contrary to this grand claim, only funding for six hospitals had been allocated, illustrating a trend where Johnson made inflated promises that bore little resemblance to reality. His assertion of an increase of "20,000 more police" was similarly misleading, as the recruitment would merely replace cuts made since 2010 during the Conservative government's tenure.

Johnson directed harsh attacks at Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, fabricating claims concerning supposed detrimental economic policies, such as a fictitious £1.2 trillion spending plan that was not substantiated by Labour's yet-to-be-released manifesto. In an attempt to portray Corbyn as anti-home ownership and against the military, Johnson's assertions were unsupported by evidence and seemed to be tactical fabrications characterizing Corbyn as a dangerous adversary.

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The media's failure to challenge Johnson's falsehoods, exemplified by Sky News presenter Samantha Washington's lack of inquiry during Johnson's speech, contributed to a larger issue wherein misinformation was allowed to go unchecked. As a seasoned political reporter noted, Johnson's habitual dishonesty was striking; instances included a blatant denial of alcohol consumption captured on film and absurd claims regarding a supposed baby boom post-Olympics, which was ultimately proven false.

Johnson's deceit extended to issues of public health; he claimed extraordinary NHS funding increases while ignoring the need for inflation adjustments that showed his numbers were exaggerated. His comments during visits to NHS facilities painted a hopeful picture for voters, undermined by the harsh realities citizens faced under his administration.

Significant lies were also aimed at Corbyn, including false assertions regarding his intentions toward MI5 and exaggerated claims about Labour's immigration promises. Johnson evoked historical comparisons, suggesting that Corbyn's policies bore a resemblance to Stalin's persecution of the kulaks, a dangerously misleading claim that undervalued the severity of historical atrocities.

Amid the backdrop of Russian interference allegations in UK politics, another falsehood involved delays surrounding the publication of a report by Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, which scrutinized these

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concerns. Despite Johnson's assertions that standard protocol delayed publication, the report had already been vetted and was being withheld by the Prime Minister himself.

The campaign turned increasingly chaotic as Brexit loomed large on the horizon. Johnson promised no customs checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland—a claim that contradicted subsequent government assessments indicating otherwise. Throughout his campaign, he repeatedly claimed that leaving the EU would be devoid of additional administrative burdens, a statement that laid bare his disregard for the implications of his agreements.

Johnson's strategic fabrications were ultimately part of a broader Conservative Party campaign mechanism, designed to mislead voters. The Conservative Research Department developed false narratives promoting reckless spending, tax increases, and immigration policies attributed to Labour that were significantly distorted. Social media played a critical role, with deliberate misinformation techniques, including the fake Twitter account mimicking a fact-checking service, showcasing the extent to which the party was willing to deceive.

As the election neared, the Conservative Party's strategy became evident: overwhelming voters with false claims, overriding actual political discourse, and characterizing competitors through a lens of deceit. This culminated in a

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profound example of how lies and orchestrated misinformation were leveraged to secure electoral victory, betraying both the election process and the public trust.

Topic	Summary
Boris Johnson's Deceit	Engaged in misleading promises during the election, claiming to build "forty new hospitals" when only funding for six was allocated.
Misleading Claims on Law Enforcement	Claimed to increase police by "20,000 more," which merely offset past cuts since 2010.
Attacks on Jeremy Corbyn	Fabricated economic claims against Corbyn, including an unsubstantiated £1.2 trillion spending plan.
Media's Role	Failed to challenge Johnson's factual inaccuracies, contributing to unchecked misinformation.
NHS Funding Claims	Exaggerated NHS funding increases, failing to account for inflation's impact.
Historical Misrepresentations	Wrongly compared Corbyn's policies to Stalin's, trivializing historical atrocities.
Russian Interference Allegations	Misled the public on the delayed publication of an intelligence report, which was held back by Johnson.
Brexit Promises	Promised no customs checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, contradicting later assessments.
Conservative Party's Strategy	Utilized a campaign mechanism of misinformation, developing false narratives about Labour's policies.
Social Media's Role	Employed deceptive tactics through social media, including fake accounts to promote misinformation.

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Topic	Summary
Conclusion	The campaign exemplified how orchestrated lies were leveraged to secure victory, undermining public trust.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of truth in leadership and communication

Critical Interpretation: In a world where political leaders can distort reality and mislead the public through bold, unsupported claims, it's essential to recognize the power of truth in our own lives. Just as Boris Johnson's deceptions during the 2019 election blurred the lines between reality and fiction, you too can be inspired to seek authenticity in your interactions and commitments. By valuing honesty and transparency, you not only foster trust in your relationships but also empower yourself to build a more principled and reliable presence in both personal and professional spheres. Embracing truth as a guiding principle in your actions can lead to more meaningful connections and a stronger sense of integrity in an otherwise chaotic world.

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Chapter 3 Summary: The Triumph of Political Lying

Chapter Three: The Triumph of Political Lying

In this chapter, the author delves into the decline of political integrity, exemplified through the lives of key political figures, particularly focusing on the scandal involving John Profumo. Meeting Profumo at a charity event revealed to the author a man of dignity, despite his history as a central figure in one of Britain's most notorious scandals. Profumo's political career included being instrumental in the transition to Winston Churchill's leadership during WWII and serving with distinction in military roles. However, his affair with Christine Keeler—a model entangled with Soviet naval attaché Yevgeny Ivanov—led to his dramatic downfall. When questioned in Parliament, Profumo initially denied any wrongdoing, only to resign after his lie was unveiled.

This incident pushed the boundaries of political truthfulness, as misleading statements in Parliament are regarded with utmost seriousness. The proper conduct expected from MPs is outlined in the procedural manual *Erskine May*, which warns against making deliberately misleading statements. Yet, in modern politics, such expectations have eroded. The author argues that the tradition of candor has succumbed to a culture where politicians, including Prime Ministers, lie and evade accountability, leading to the need

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for this book, which seeks to understand the collapse of traditional values of integrity in the public sphere.

The chapter details a shift in political honesty, starting with the attitude of ministers towards truth-telling. In 1994, Conservative Minister William Waldegrave admitted to situations where deception might be deemed acceptable, igniting controversy. Yet, Waldegrave's assertion was ultimately an appeal to a higher moral imperative, and he argued that truth-telling should prevail, though exceptions could exist. Wartime lies, such as those used in the D-Day deception of 1944, are often understood as justifiable. The narrative of political honesty further deteriorated with the advent of Tony Blair's leadership in 1997. Unlike his predecessors who valued integrity, Blair fostered an environment of deceit, epitomized by the false justification of war against Iraq based on non-existent weapons of mass destruction.

The author recounts Blair's persistent dishonesty and his unwavering belief that his claims were justified. His administration's method of managing information set a dangerous precedent for future politicians, notably paving the way for Boris Johnson, whose habitual lying appears unconstrained by moral considerations. Johnson's approach to truth mirrors that of Donald Trump, as both men revel in crafting false narratives without the pretense of justification offered by their predecessors.

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While there are superficial differences between Johnson and Trump—such as their backgrounds—the author highlights their shared commitment to populism and disdain for detailed, factual governance. Their political antics create an illusory environment, allowing them to thrive amidst distrust and past misdeeds. As media narratives shift, both leaders exploit their charisma and public personas, which allows them to captivate audiences, forming a new norm in political discourse.

The chapter ends with a promise to elaborate further on the dynamics of their political deceptions in subsequent sections, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of the implications of this decay in political integrity.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The erosion of political integrity and the acceptance of lies in leadership

Critical Interpretation: Imagine walking through life guided by a compass that has begun to lose its true north—this is the challenge many face today as political integrity deteriorates. The story of John Profumo teaches us that honesty used to hold a sacred place in political leadership, but once this foundation crumbles, it creates a ripple effect that influences our societal values. As you navigate your own path, whether in your personal relationships, workplace dynamics, or community interactions, the key takeaway is profound: uphold your commitment to truthfulness. Allow Profumo's downfall to remind you that integrity is not just a political ideal but a vital principle that must guide your actions. In a world where deception can seem expedient, choose to embody honesty and accountability, thereby inspiring others to do the same, and ultimately, foster a culture where truth matters.

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Chapter 4: Britain's First Gonzo Prime Minister

Chapter Four: Britain's First Gonzo Prime Minister

In a prophetic essay written over twenty-five years ago, philosopher Bernard Williams posited that political leaders now resemble characters in a soap opera, portrayed by individuals of the same name. Their presentation, laden with first names and humorous nicknames, creates a narrative where they emerge and disappear like scripted characters, often leaving audiences to "half believe" in their authenticity. This observation foreshadowed the political landscapes shaped by figures like Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, who capitalized on this shift in public perception, blurring the lines between politics, entertainment, and truth.

Boris Johnson's early career encapsulated this transformation. At the age of twenty-three, he was sacked from *The Times* for fabricating a quote in an article about a historical palace related to King Edward II. This set a precedent for a career marked by embellishments and sensationalism. Johnson transitioned to the *Daily Telegraph* where he found his stride as Brussels correspondent, delivering exaggerated tales about European Union absurdities—like a supposed ban on prawn cocktail crisps and bizarre bureaucratic plans. While these stories often contained a kernel of truth, they mostly served to caricature the EU, igniting eurosceptic sentiments among



the British public and shaping a narrative that would culminate in Brexit.

Despite a second dismissal from the Tory party for dishonesty in 2004—following an affair labeled “complete balderdash”—Johnson’s political narrative continued to evolve. His eventual rise to the position of Prime Minister in 2019 represented not only the culmination of his political journey but also the wider acceptance of a new style of politics that was shaped by his earlier journalistic transgressions.

This new political discourse, often referred to as gonzo journalism—a style popularized by Hunter S. Thompson—blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction. Thompson's work demonstrated how subjective experiences could convey a deeper truth than traditional journalism. Johnson adopted similar techniques, blending humor, drama, and surrealism into political commentary that resonated powerfully with the public.

Drawing a parallel between Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, this chapter explores their parallel ascensions in a landscape transformed by media and celebrity culture. Trump framed his campaign narrative around a fabricated success story in real estate, promoting himself as a self-made mogul despite significant financial instability and bankruptcy. His reality TV persona in "The Apprentice" allowed him to present an idealized version of himself, which ultimately laid the groundwork for his political career.

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Both Johnson and Trump emerged as products of this new media age, utilizing showbiz tactics that disrupted traditional political discourse, allowing them to captivate audiences by inviting them into a fantastical narrative. However, the realities of governance, such as the management of the coronavirus pandemic, threaten to reveal the flaws inherent in this performance-driven approach.

As the chapter concludes, the reader is primed for an examination of Johnson's and Trump's handling of serious crises in the next part, questioning whether their showbiz-infused tactics can withstand the real-world pressures of leadership.

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Chapter 5 Summary: The Candour of Angela Merkel

Chapter Five: The Candour of Angela Merkel

In this chapter, the contrasting responses of political leaders to the coronavirus pandemic are examined, particularly focusing on the actions of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and U.S. President Donald Trump, especially when juxtaposed with Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The author begins by highlighting the inadequacies of Johnson and Trump in managing the public health crisis. Neither leader communicated effectively about the severity of the pandemic, allowing misinformation and sensationalism to proliferate. While Trump infamously dismissed the virus as a "hoax" and made dangerous health recommendations, Johnson, though not as extreme, engaged in deceit by misrepresenting government achievements and delaying necessary actions.

A key point of discussion arises from a Johns Hopkins University study published shortly before the pandemic, which assessed global readiness for health crises. Despite initially ranking the U.S. and the U.K. as well-prepared, the reality proved starkly different. By October, both nations experienced some of the highest death tolls and economic impacts globally. In stark contrast, countries like New Zealand and Germany, which were

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seemingly less prepared on paper, managed to control the virus far more effectively.

Merkel's leadership is portrayed as a study in transparency and accountability. Her address to the European Parliament on July 8, 2020, underscored the need for factual communication in a democratic society and highlighted how populist leaders were failing to manage the crisis. She gave Germany a proactive, expert-driven response from the outset, relying on prompt testing and strict adherence to WHO guidelines. Specifically, German health authorities developed reliable testing long before the WHO confirmed human-to-human transmission, while the U.K.'s response was hindered by delays and poor decision-making.

As the chapter progresses, it details the timeline of events during the early days of the pandemic. Johnson is criticized for neglecting health warnings and attending public events well after the virus's implications had been recognized in other parts of Europe. His delay in attending crucial Cobra meetings significantly impacted the U.K.'s response. Meanwhile, Merkel's government acted decisively, instituting measures that curtailed the spread of the virus effectively.

The author starkly contrasts the experiences of the two nations concerning coronavirus-related deaths, particularly within care homes. While Germany was proactive in preventing outbreaks by requiring testing for individuals

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discharged from hospitals, the U.K. failed to implement similar measures, leading to a vastly higher mortality rate in care homes. The misleading statements from Johnson and Health Secretary Matt Hancock regarding care home policies further illustrate a pattern of blame-shifting and dishonesty that characterized the U.K. government's strategy.

Finally, the chapter emphasizes the extent to which Johnson's administration was willing to deceive the public to maintain a façade of competence, while Merkel's honest communication engendered public trust. The analysis raises critical questions about leadership accountability and the underlying political cultures in both countries, foreshadowing a deeper exploration of these themes in subsequent chapters.

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Chapter 6 Summary: How to Destroy a Country

Chapter Six: How to Destroy a Country

In this chapter, the author presents a critical examination of Boris Johnson's leadership, asserting that, beyond his ambition and perceived incompetence, he represents a profound threat to the foundation of British democracy.

Central to this deterioration is Johnson's apparent disregard for truth and accountability, which, as articulated by philosopher Immanuel Kant, undermines our ability as citizens to critically assess our leaders and make informed political choices.

Drawing parallels to George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, the author highlights Johnson's administration's manipulation of facts to project an image of success. Examples include Health Secretary Matt Hancock's false claims about lockdown timelines and Dominic Cummings' fabricated narrative regarding pandemic warnings. Such disinformation not only erodes public trust in government but also undermines the essential framework of democracy.

The chapter underscores the long-standing principle of ministerial responsibility, a concept evident in historical resignations by figures such as Lord Carrington and Estelle Morris, who accepted personal accountability

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for their departments' failures. In stark contrast, Johnson's government has chosen to deflect blame onto civil servants, exemplified by the treatment of Sir Mark Sedwill, the Cabinet secretary, whose departure marked a shift in the traditional respect for impartial governance.

As the author explains, the role of the Cabinet secretary has historically symbolized the integrity of the British state, providing neutral advice and maintaining the boundary between politics and administration. However, under Johnson's leadership, this boundary has begun to blur, leading to a loss of trust in the civil service. The chapter discusses the increasing politicization of civil servants and the unprecedented turnover among senior officials, indicating a deliberate strategy to dismantle the non-partisan nature of governance.

The author warns that this erosion of truth and integrity poses a grave danger to the public domain, which encompasses vital public goods and services that cannot be valued in market terms but are essential for a functioning democracy. The chapter further critiques the Tory Party's long-term ambition to reshape the public domain, a goal now closer to fruition under Johnson.

Media reports of cronyism and conflicts of interest, such as Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick's controversial planning approval for a developer connected to the Conservative Party, highlight the administrative decay stemming from this new regime. Such actions signal a regression to a

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pre-modern system of governance, where public service is increasingly viewed through the lens of personal gain.

The author illustrates that Johnson and his cohorts operate with the belief that traditional rules do not apply to them, supported by early warning signs of his disregard for norms and accountability. The chapter notes Johnson's failure to adhere to proper protocols following his resignation as foreign secretary, as well as prior instances of lapses in transparency regarding expenses.

Despite historical breaches of ethics in politics, previous administrations, including John Major's government during the arms-to-Iraq scandal, demonstrated a commitment to reform through the establishment of the Nolan principles—key guidelines for public service integrity that stress accountability, honesty, and leadership. Unfortunately, the author laments, these principles have become obsolete under Johnson, who, in a moral emergency for public life, flouts accountability without repercussion.

Ultimately, the chapter paints a dire picture of contemporary British governance under Johnson, emphasizing the essential role of truth and accountability in preserving democratic integrity. The author's reflections on the historical importance of honesty in public office serve as a somber reminder of what is at stake in the current political landscape.

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Chapter 7 Summary: The Failure of the British Press

Chapter Seven: The Failure of the British Press

In this chapter, the author contends that the British press failed in its essential duty of holding power to account, particularly during the premiership of Boris Johnson, who is depicted as a master of manipulation and deceit. The chapter begins with a quote from Sir Winston Churchill, emphasizing the role of a free press as a guardian of rights. However, it goes on to illustrate how British newspapers not only failed in this role but actively facilitated Johnson's dishonesty.

Johnson, a former journalist himself, surrounded himself with other media professionals, including his senior adviser Dominic Cummings and fellow politician Michael Gove, whose backgrounds in journalism brought both cleverness and a propensity for distortion into the political arena. The author suggests that these individuals employed their media savvy to craft narratives that normalized falsehoods and smears, particularly against political opponents, while downplaying any critical reporting on Johnson.

The narrative touches on significant figures in the media landscape, including Rupert Murdoch, a key backer of Johnson's rise to power. Murdoch's media empire, alongside that of the Barclay brothers and

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Associated Newspapers, dominated public opinion, securing a collective readership that accounted for over 30% of newspaper circulation. Despite the newspapers' awareness of Johnson's fabrications—evidenced by his previous dismissal from *The Times*—their support for him during his ascent to leadership was unwavering.

The chapter contrasts the leniency shown to Johnson with the aggressive scrutiny directed at his political rival, Jeremy Corbyn. While Johnson's lies were often ignored, Corbyn faced ceaseless attacks. This lack of critical oversight by the media signifies a double standard, undermining the supposed role of the press as a watchdog.

The discussion shifts to specific examples of journalistic collaboration with the Johnson administration, starting with the backlash against former Chancellor Philip Hammond, who became a target following his resignation. A leaked Treasury document warning of the consequences of a no-deal Brexit was publicized, revealing the government's political peril. In response, Downing Street launched a smear campaign against Hammond, labeling him as the source of the leak, propelling a shift in media focus from the validity of the warnings to sensational speculation about betrayal.

Further illustrating this deceitful partnership, the chapter references an exaggerated claim involving leading MPs supposedly colluding with foreign powers, which was substantiated neither by evidence nor by the very civil

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servants within the government, who denied any such investigation existed. These fabrications were credibly reported by the press, showcasing a collusion in misrepresentation that served Johnson's agenda.

The author criticizes not only Johnson's tactics but also the media's role in perpetuating these lies, likening it to the dishonest campaigning typically associated with Donald Trump. While Johnson maintained a façade of detachment from the dirty work, his administration engaged in systemic deceit.

The chapter concludes with the author's personal experiences of attempted whistleblowing within the media, resulting in a decline in opportunities as a consequence of challenging the status quo. It highlights the erosion of journalistic integrity and the painful reality for those who dare to expose such complicity. With the narrative weaving through the actions and motivations of key characters, the chapter ultimately underscores the dire implications of a compromised press in a democracy.

Section	Summary
Overview	The British press failed to hold Boris Johnson accountable, facilitating his deceit.
Quote	Starts with a quote from Churchill on the free press as a guardian of rights.
Johnson's	Johnson, supported by media professionals, crafted narratives



Section	Summary
Manipulation	normalizing dishonesty.
Media Figures	Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls supported Johnson, dominating public opinion.
Double Standards	Media scrutiny was harsher on Jeremy Corbyn while Johnson's lies were often ignored.
Examples of Collaboration	Journalism aided Johnson's smear campaigns, such as against Philip Hammond.
False Claims	Press reported unverified claims about MPs colluding with foreign powers.
Comparison with Trump	Johnson's deceit mirrors tactics used by Donald Trump, with media complicity.
Whistleblowing Experience	Author's attempt to expose media complicity met with career repercussions.
Conclusion	The chapter underscores the danger of a compromised press in democracy.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Need for Accountability in Media

Critical Interpretation: This chapter serves as a crucial reminder of the power and responsibility of the press in a democracy. It inspires you to be an active participant in seeking out truthful information, recognizing that our understanding of the world is heavily influenced by the narratives constructed by the media. The failure to hold power accountable not only undermines trust but can lead to widespread deception. Therefore, let this be a call to demand integrity and transparency from media outlets, encouraging you to cultivate critical thinking in your consumption of news and to support those who strive to uphold journalistic standards. In doing so, you contribute to a healthier society where truth is valued and accountability is the norm.

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Chapter 8: The Capture of the Conservative Party

Chapter Eight delves into the transformation of Boris Johnson from editor of *The Spectator* to Prime Minister of Britain, tracing the ideological and operational shift within the Conservative Party under his leadership. This exploration begins with Michael Oakeshott's Conservative philosophy, which advocated for moderation in governance as a means to pacify passionate individuals rather than inflaming their sentiments. Contrastingly, Johnson's tenure as Prime Minister embraced a more aggressive and divisive approach, embodying the mantra of "Whatever it takes," indicating a stark shift from his earlier values.

Reflecting on the past, the author recounts personal experiences with Johnson back when he was a brilliant editor known for his eclectic and honest political views. Johnson's sharp critiques during his time at *The Spectator*—particularly against Tony Blair's handling of the Iraq War—contrasted with the deceitful practices he would later employ as Prime Minister. The author questions how the optimistic Johnson evolved into a leader seemingly indifferent to the integrity once championed in traditional conservatism.

Key to understanding Johnson's rise is the context of his political trajectory, which included being ousted as a spokesperson for the Conservative Party in the early 2000s for dishonesty—an event overlooked at the time. Despite

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this, Johnson's popularity burgeoned as Mayor of London, where he fostered connections and poured ambition into national politics. This success black-boxed his earlier shortcomings, paving the way for a significant role in the pivotal Brexit campaign.

As the Conservative Party's membership dwindled and its identity fragmented, it became susceptible to a 'reverse takeover.' With only around 100,000 members compared to millions in the post-war era, the party had become a viable target for external influences and high-net-worth donors aiming to doggedly influence policy. The necessity for funding transformed party dynamics, shifting power from grassroots engagement to concentrated control facilitated by wealthy benefactors.

The Vote Leave campaign emerged as a small but powerful faction disdainful of both the Conservative Party and the established political system. Johnson's appointment as prime minister marked the consolidation of this faction's power, as his administration was populated by loyalists from Vote Leave, undermining the traditional cabinet's strength. The author outlines how this shift prioritized loyalty over competence, leading to a cabinet characterized by mediocrity devoid of serious deliberation.

Johnson, advised by Dominic Cummings, utilized the tactics of concentrated messaging and innovative communication strategies that often blurred the lines between truth and propaganda. Like political movements worldwide,

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the Johnson administration relied on inciting division and culture wars, mirroring strategies employed by figures like Donald Trump. The phrase "Take Back Control," resonated politically with disillusioned voters and adeptly encapsulated a broader ideological appeal.

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Chapter 9 Summary: Conclusion

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The state of British politics, epitomized by the leadership of Boris Johnson, raises unsettling questions about the moral character and collective judgment of the electorate. Johnson, perceived by many as a fabricator and cheat, ascended to the highest office in a country celebrated for its liberty and virtue, prompting critical reflection on the political path that led to his election.

The 2019 election revealed a lack of formidable opposition within the Conservative Party, with Johnson fending off minimal criticism during his leadership bid. He ultimately faced Jeremy Corbyn, whose own contentious choices inadvertently facilitated Johnson's rise. This begs the question: how could someone with such evident character flaws gain power? The answer may lie in a broader historical context. Since the end of World War II, Britain has basked in peace and prosperity, cultivating a generation unaware of the struggles that shaped previous political leaders. This political stability may have bred complacency, allowing an entertainer like Johnson to flourish in a culture that prioritizes spectacle over substance.

In contrast to Johnson's privileged ascent—including elite education and

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careers in prestigious media and politics—Angela Merkel's trajectory was forged in the crucible of East Germany's oppressive regime. Merkel's methodical approach to leadership, influenced by her scientific background, reflects a commitment to reason and evidence, in stark contrast to Johnson's penchant for populist slogans. The difference underscores a broader ideological shift: while British and American societies have increasingly embraced superficiality, Europe's leaders have guarded their democratic legacies.

Moreover, Johnson has thrived in a political atmosphere marked by manipulation of language and fact, utilizing slogans like "Get Brexit Done" that oversimplify complex issues. Such tactics align more with marketing than meaningful political discourse, eroding the rich language that characterized post-war politics—a time distinguished by depth and nuance.

The contrast extends to the political philosophy that underpins contemporary governance. Johnson and Trump, while ostensibly conservative, employ an insidious form of progressivism that dismisses institutional integrity in favor of disruptive rhetoric and emotional appeals. This reflects a Rousseauian attitude that prioritizes the will of the people over established frameworks designed to stabilize governance, favoring a troubled populism flourishing on both sides of the Atlantic.

These leaders represent a troubling synthesis of right-wing impulses and

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progressive methodologies that escape conventional political categorization. Their cynicism betrays an understanding of humanity as corruptible, mirroring historical authoritarian movements that have exploited such sentiments for power.

Tribal epistemology—a term referring to an inclination to accept information based on tribal loyalties—has taken root in this new political landscape, blurring lines between truth and falsehood. Under this paradigm, supporters of Johnson and Trump deem their leaders' statements as 'truth' based on partisanship, undermining the shared reality essential for democracy.

In facing this pervasive culture of deceit, the chapter outlines actionable steps for citizens to reclaim integrity in governance. It calls for parliamentary accountability, grassroots activism against dishonesty, and vigilance amongst public servants to resist complicity in misleading actions. Efforts to pressure the media to uphold journalistic standards are equally vital, as only through collective action can the erosion of truth be resisted.

Ultimately, the chapter argues for a rekindling of principles such as decency, tolerance, and honesty in public life. While the ascent of figures like Boris Johnson and Donald Trump may signify deeper systemic issues, it is a call to action for society to confront these challenges head-on and to safeguard the democratic values that define civil discourse. In these times of increasing

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division and hardship, the chapter emphasizes the importance of fighting for a political culture that prioritizes integrity and supports a shared understanding of truth.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of integrity in leadership

Critical Interpretation: Reflecting on the moral failures of leaders like Boris Johnson can inspire you to seek and uphold integrity in your own life. As the chapter highlights the erosion of truth in politics, it serves as a powerful reminder of how essential it is to value honesty and transparency in all your interactions, whether in your personal relationships, at work, or within your community. By committing to these principles, you not only become a beacon of trust in your own circles but also contribute actively to building a culture that prioritizes ethical standards, ultimately fostering a more honest society.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Postscript

Postscript Summary

The aftermath of the 2020 U.S. election marked a turbulent period, characterized by Donald Trump's refusal to concede defeat to Joe Biden and a wave of false claims surrounding electoral fraud. Trump's administration leveraged governmental resources to propagate these conspiracy theories, with Attorney General William Barr initiating investigations into alleged voting irregularities. Amid this chaos, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hinted at a "smooth transition to a second Trump administration," underscoring the administration's denial of the election outcome.

Across the Atlantic, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, notably refrained from denouncing Trump's actions, a stark contrast to Britain's historical stance against such misconduct. Johnson's delayed and clumsy congratulatory message to Biden, which inadvertently included references to Trump, led to speculation that his administration had anticipated a Trump victory.

The exit of Dominic Cummings, an influential figure in Johnson's government, further exemplified the troubling trends within British politics. Cummings, whose tactics mirrored Trump's combative style, left shortly

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after the election. Despite his departure, Johnson's administration remained committed to undermining established norms and processes. Evidence of this disregard for integrity emerged when Home Secretary Priti Patel was found guilty of bullying civil servants, violating the Ministerial Code that Johnson himself endorsed. Yet, he staunchly defended her actions.

Amid these political upheavals, the UK faced the grim reality of the Covid-19 pandemic, with official death tolls reported at 52,147, though actual numbers were believed to be significantly higher, around 75,000.

With Trump's presidency concluded, Johnson emerged as a prominent figure among Western leaders who challenged international norms, reflecting some of Trump's controversial rhetoric and behavior. Former British ambassador Kim Darroch noted Johnson's fascination with Trump's simplistic messaging and disdain for political convention, suggesting an alarming overlap between the two leaders' styles.

As Trump's influence waned in the U.S., the culture of political dishonesty and erosion of truth seemed to deepen in Britain under Johnson's governance, raising urgent calls for a return to decency and adherence to the rule of law.

In this environment of increasing political deceit, Peter Osborne urges a collective awakening and resistance against these troubling trends,

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underscoring the importance of integrity in governance.

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