Rising Populism and European Elections
Collection of selected contributions
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Populism, Polarization, Politicization, Participation.
Projecting the EU Beyond the Market?

Francesco Nicoli

The goal of this study is to investigate whether the rise in Euroscepticism observed in the Euro Area in the last years may have democratic-enhancing effects alongside its often-discussed negative implications. The paper focuses on the emergence of Eurosceptic forces in the Euro Area countries, engaging both in horizontal comparative analysis and in the discussion of two case studies, Italy and the Netherlands. The first part of the work focuses on the presentation of the main theoretical approaches that expected a rise of populism as a reaction to the politicization of the European construction. The second part of the paper analyses the effects of populism on the sequential chain of polarization, politicization and participation of European policies both at national and European level. The results suggest that although the rise of populism may have short term negative implications for the political system, it also provides a push to pursue a more democratically-oriented pattern to the full politicization of the EU.

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1. Introduction

Since the French and Dutch rejections of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, there has been a growing attention on the rise of Eurosceptic parties in the member states and the structural features of the European Union that might have triggered the change. However, Euroscepticism has acquired a primary political relevance only after 2010, when the nationalist parties traditionally opposing European integration have been flanked by new groups identifying the European governance and institutions as the leading political agents responsible for the resilience of the financial crisis in the Euro Area.²

1 Ph.D. Candidate in International Studies at the University of Trento
3 It must be pointed out that it is methodologically unrefined to equate populistic Euroscepticism with opposition against European policies, although the different groups often overlap.
The methodology adopted in this work classifies as eurosceptic and populistic parties only the political forces that actively claim a reduction of the level of institutional integration, either as a consequence of a multilateral decision, or as a unilateral action performed by member states. Consequently a number of national parties opposing given European policies, without however campaigning for a substantial decrease of the European Union competences, have not been
On the one hand, the rise in populism and Euroscepticism observed in several European countries is surely a worrying by-product of the current crisis. However, this paper argues that the European project and the democratic stance of the continent may also be positively influenced by the entrance of these forces in the electoral arena at national and European level. In both arenas, the democratic-enhancing effect may occur as a consequence of multiple phenomena.

This study will show that the sequential chain of populism, polarisation, politicisation and participation may be consistent with a new phase of the European integration, where the integration of polities, and not only of policies, is the characterising factor. The analysis focuses on Euro Area countries with particular attention given to countries with more than 4 millions of inhabitants; in addition, Italy and the Netherlands are adopted as case studies for a comparative exercise. While the possible threats of a surge of nationalism and Euroscepticism are clear and must not be downplayed, this eventuality had long been expected as a consequence of the progressive expansion of the integration process beyond the pure market—enhancing regulatory policies.

The paper is organised as follows. The second section will look in detail into the traditional theories of European integration in the attempt to disclose some clues on the correlation between the rise of populism and “the end of the market Honeymoon”, presenting the theoretical approaches that contribute to explain why the rise of Euroscepticism is inevitable. The third section will deal with the impact of the Euro crisis on the structure and competences of the Union; the fourth section will discuss the issue of political polarisation over European policy occurring at national and European level, investigating the emergence of Grand Coalitions. The fifth sections will deal with the progressive politicisation of European policies studying the impact of Euroscepticism domestically, abroad and at European level. Finally, the seventh section will deal with participation, discussing whether the rise in Euroscepticism may actually generate an increase in democratic participation at national and European level.

classified as Eurosceptic populist parties. This includes the Greek leftist party Syriza, the German FDP, and the Irish Sinn Féin.

This criterion is today required as the European crisis has boosted a number of political forces that do not oppose European integration or the European institutions for their nature, but rather they claim a substantial change in the policies indicated and pushed forward by the EU. The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance represents the main exception to this criterion. The Treaty, as such, cannot be considered purely as a policy. However, it does not formally belong to the body of European law, and it has a very strong stance in terms of policies required at national level. Automatically identifying forces opposing the Fiscal Compact as populist and eurosceptic would both expand enormously the account of Eurosceptic forces, and shade the particular traits of contemporary Euroscepticism—its resurgent nationalistic nature.


2. Eurosceptic Populism: an expected surge.

Populist and nationalist Eurosceptic parties are growing in many Euro Area countries.\(^6\) While this development may have surprised policy-makers and mainstream parties, it was hardly unexpected for scholars of European integration. In particular, three long-standing theoretical approaches contribute to explain why the rise of Euroscepticism is inevitable- and why we should be only limitedly worrying about it.

The first explanation is provided by early\(^7\) and contemporary\(^8\) versions of neofunctionalism. The second can be found in the theory on party formation by Lipset and Rokkan.\(^9\) The third in the growing body of literature concerning the so-called “democratic deficit” of the European Union, and in particular, in Weiler,\(^10\) and Majone.\(^11\)

Early neofunctionalist theorists expects a surge of nationalism against the process of centralization as a phenomenon characterising the fourth and conclusive phase of integration of a federal state, when the ruling groups are engaged to proceed with political integration.\(^12\) The absence of solidarity and common nationhood among the countries of the Union implies that central institutions cannot be based on truly democratic values. Instead, central institutions are likely to acquire an authoritarian nature in the attempt to perform central government functions without having the necessary democratic backstop. As a reaction, “traditional nationalism” would emerge in the nation states, where dissident units try to regain their autonomy achieving secession.\(^13\)

The issue of secession from the process of integration is discussed also by Etzioni:\(^14\) the units opposing integration face a choice between –on one side- “taking over” the central institutions, either from within the political process or through a revolution, and –on the other side- pursuing a secession from the system. In the author's views, the final choice is determined by the level of integration achieved by the Union when the opposition gains momentum: the more the different

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\(^8\) Schmitter, P. (2002)


\(^12\) Haas, E.B. [1964]

\(^13\) In Haas’ vision, the federation can be saved only by the establishment of a shared “liberal nationalism”, where common values and norms are built over time among the different units. Ibid.

polities of the Union are integrated, the more an endogenous change will be likely in respect to secession.¹⁵

Late Neofunctionalist theory refines the theoretical framework. Schmitter’s understanding of the integration process is built on two cornerstones: the concept of functional cycle, and the concept of functional crisis. A functional cycle is a series of incremental (or regressive) transfers of power from the nation states to the central institutions (or the opposite in case of a regressive chain), ignited by a major functional crisis. A functional crisis is a political and/or economic series of events concentrated in a relatively short period of time, triggered by the sub-optimal or dysfunctional integration between the states composing a regional system.

A functional crisis has either a progressive or a regressive solution, meaning that either the central institutions are endowed with the powers required to deal with the crisis, or the re-nationalisation of the competences previously integrated is likely to occur in the attempt to remove a dysfunctional integration. Schmitter identifies three successive cycles of integration, each characterised by an original functional crisis. The initiating cycle implies the creation of a custom union and the institutions required for its management; the priming cycle refers to the progressive process of politicisation of the institutions, as well as the transfer of new competences required to deal with even larger issues; finally, a transforming cycle implies a qualitative change of the integration process, from integration of policies to the integration of polities.¹⁶

In other words, the incremental solution of a functional crisis triggering a transforming cycle must include substantial political integration, so implying the centralization of some of the central powers characterizing national democracy. The nation states involved in a transformative integration cycle experience a twofold limitation of their powers. From “above”, their autonomy is substantially reduced as a consequence of the powers they have transferred to the central institutions to solve the crisis. From “below”, the non-governmental agents, political parties and groups integrate as well in the attempt to adapt their structure and pressure capacity to the new centralised powers. Thus, a transforming cycle is characterised, in Schmitter’s vision, by a constant struggle between the central institutions and the groups with high expected gains on one side, and the ruling national elites and the groups with nationalistic feelings on the other side.

In sum, neofunctionalist analysis identifies the returning wave of nationalism as a characterizing feature of the conclusive phase of integration, when political integration is at stake. Other authors come to similar solutions, although in a different context. In particular, Rokkan identifies four main

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 314
cleavages characterising the process of party formation in Western Europe. Interestingly, he comes to the conclusion that the first cleavage experienced by a newborn political entity is the centre-periphery struggle, identifying the early phases of formation of a nation state. The centre-periphery cleavage identifies the tensions inherent to the process of state formation, when the central units are building their authority and powers at the expenses of peripheral units. As a result, the first sign of a newborn political entity is the emergence of regionalist parties using local nationalism against the central nationalism: their emergence is an unavoidable consequence of the process of statehood construction.

In addition, Majone, discussing the democratic deficit of the European Union, argues that the existence of a democratic deficit does not depend on institutions alone, but also on the policies object of integration. As long as the international institution does not deal with essential powers characterising democracy, democracy as such is not required; democracy becomes essential only when central institutions acquire powers essential for democratic decision making. Provided that the EU deals primarily with regulatory policies, there is no need for direct democratic legitimacy. However, if new competences are transferred to the central institutions and these competences have important redistributional effects, then a democratic deficit may actually arise.

The 2009 judgement of the German Constitutional Court partially shares this perspective. The Court identifies a set of essential policies that define democracy and thus must be object of democratic decision making. In addition, the Court argues that the European Union is not a fully democratic entity and cannot become so without the creation not only of a full democratic institutional setting, but also of a public sphere and of a civic demos. In other words, the Court partially shares Weiler's well-known “no demos argument”. The no demos argument implies that democracy implies majority-voting thus redistribution; and democracy is possible only within a single demos, identified by linguistic, cultural and ethnic features. The attempt to establish a democratic decision making process (thus majority-voting redistribution) among different national polities is doomed to fail as a consequence of nationalistic pressures.

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17 “The early growth of national bureaucracy tended to produce essentially territorial oppositions; (...). The early waves of countermobilization often threatened the territorial unity of the nation, the federation, or the empire”. Lipset, M. and S. Rokkan [1967] p.13. for a more detailed analysis, see Flora, P., S. Kuhnle and D. Urwin (eds) [1999] p. 174 and following.

18 Majone, D. [1997]


20 Weiler, J.H.H. [2000]

21 However, a substantial difference exists between Weiler and the German Constitutional Court. While the Court considers that the existence of a common democratic constitution and a common public sphere are sufficient elements for a democracy, Weiler’s reasoning implies that no democracy is possible outside the nation.
3. The effect of the European Crisis

As shown, the rise of nationalistic and Eurosceptic forces was hardly unexpected. The preconditions were all in place before the financial crisis, but the ignition of the process was triggered by the response given to the crisis. As shown by Merler and Pisani-Ferry\textsuperscript{22} the solution to the crisis must include either a proper fiscal union, or a full-fledged banking union, or a central bank with a large mandate. However, as shown by several authors, e.g., Sinn;\textsuperscript{23} De Grauwe;\textsuperscript{24} De Grauwe and Yuemei;\textsuperscript{25} Pisani-Ferry and Wolff,\textsuperscript{26} the three options all require a degree of fiscal integration; no credible solution excludes it. In other words, a leap towards fiscal and economic policy integration is required in order to ensure the stability of the area: failure in proceeding with some degree of fiscal integration may trigger the collapse of the single currency.

In the attempt to avoid the disaggregation of the Eurozone, the Euro Area has slowly moved towards fiscal integration. A wide number of institutional improvements have been achieved under the pressure of the crisis, aiming to increase the effectiveness of supervision over national finances, achieve better economic policy coordination, as well as ensuring financial stability of the Euro Area. But again, fiscal and economic policy does represent one of the essential features of democracy and must be handled by a Parliament in order to qualify a political system as democratic. However, this is not the case of the Euro Area today, as no European demos exists (either in the cultural definition of Weiler, or in the functional definition of the German Constitutional Court) to justify such fiscal integration. In other words, the Euro Area is entrapped in a functional trilemma requiring not only integration of policies, but integration of polities- or, alternatively, the dismantling of the single currency or the abandoning of the principle of democratic control on fiscal policies.\textsuperscript{27}

This struggle explains much of the rise in populism we observe today.\textsuperscript{28} Following late functionalism, we expect a rise in the politicisation of the European integration, provided that a

\textsuperscript{28} Serricchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia claim instead that the crisis has had only a very limited effect on the rise of populism. However, their findings do not invalidate our perspective. in fact, their analysis of the effects of the crisis on Euroscepticism has three important limits. First, they equate Euroscepticism with Eurobarometers’ survey data on
tension exists towards the integration of new policies and the creation of a common public sphere. Rokkan’s political cleavages theory identifies the nascent political system as characterised by a centre-periphery cleavage: *polarisation* of the political forces on the new cleavage is likely to occur. Similarly, early neofunctionalism and the *demos argument* contribute to explain why the nationalistic and populist rhetoric is characterising the growing opposition to centralisation. For these reasons, although the phenomenon cannot be restricted to the Euro Area, this work looks specifically to the emergence of Eurosceptic populism within member states in the currency union.\(^{29}\)

As shown, the growing nationalism can be considered, under many points of view, a natural feature of the long transition of the EU from an international organization *sui generis* towards a pre-federal polity. The emergence of strong parties opposing political integration, and the polarisation of the political system on the new cleavages, are symptoms of the deep change occurring in the EU and in particular in the Euro Area. The change is deemed to affect both national and European political arenas. Nationally, the new *polarisation* is likely to constitute a key factor for the stable creation of new majorities cutting diagonally the traditional right-left divide; the subsequent *politicisation* of the European issues may create not only a better environment for reform, but may also provide a ground for the emergence of a public sphere. At European level, the emergence of a clear divide in the Parliament may reinforce the link between the majority of the Parliament and the European Commission (art. 17.7 of the TEU). The European Commission would also result politically responsible in front of the majority for its actions, creating the condition for a strengthened involvement of the Parliament in fiscal and economic policy. The sequential chain of *polarisation, politicisation, and participation* at national and European level will be studied in the next sections.

\(^{29}\) Also, as a second criterion in the selection of the case studies, only member states with at least 2 millions of inhabitants have been considered.
4. Polarisation

- 4.1 Polarisation at national level

Since 2010, the support for parties actively promoting a decrease of the competences of the EU or even secession from the Union has increased widely. While the short-term causes may vary from country to country, the attempt of proceeding with fiscal unification (thus moving towards a political union) can be considered a common driver for the surge of Euroscepticism across the Euro Area. As noted above, Euroscepticism should be distinguished (as far as possible) by opposition to austerity measures: the latter concern the policies and political decisions undertaken by the leadership of the Union, while the former includes a clear institutional claim. As suggested by Rokkan, the emergence of a new, centre-periphery cleavage is driving a re-organisation of government coalitions across the new divide.

The stance towards the European Union is the leading factor determining the creation of governmental coalitions: on the one hand, the relative electoral power of traditional parties has substantially decreased in many Euro Area countries, implying that the number of parties necessary to form a ruling coalition has increased. On the other hand, the relevance of European politics and the Eurosceptic qualification of the emerging populist forces implies that parties formerly divided over the right-left political axis are today obliged to join their forces to form a pro-European government. For example, Hix shows that countries characterised by non-majoritarian voting systems are less likely to observe the development of a euroscepticism within a mainstream party, because the opportunity to join a grand coalition government provides better incentive to keep a moderate stance towards Europe. The process is thus twofold: the emergence of Eurosceptic parties drives the emergence of grand coalitions, and the opportunity to join a governmental coalition moderates mainstream parties’ stance towards Europe.

Table 1: Results of Eurosceptic parties, turnout change and grand coalitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Latest national government elections</th>
<th>Cumulative anti-EU forces %</th>
<th>Turnout change</th>
<th>&quot;Grand coalition&quot;</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Presidential Elections 2012</td>
<td>17,9</td>
<td>-4,32</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Presidential system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Federal Elections 2013</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>AfD+NDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Political Elections 2013</td>
<td>29,6</td>
<td>-5,31</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>M5S+LN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>General Elections 2011</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>-4,9</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Parliamentary Elections 2011</td>
<td>19,1</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>True Finns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Second legislative Elections, 2012</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>golden dawn + ANEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>General Elections 2011</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>-1,7</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>General Elections 2012</td>
<td>15,1</td>
<td>-0,8</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>PVV+RDP+CU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this regard, table 1 shows the data of the most relevant Euro Area countries. A correlation exists between the emergence of a strong eurosceptic sentiment and the creation of “grand coalitions” between centre-left and centre-right parties to run a pro-European government. Naturally, such a correlation does not hold in presidential systems like the French one: despite having one of the stronger Eurosceptic forces in the Euro Area, the electoral system of the French republic prevents the need for a coalition government. Excluding France from the analysis however produces striking results. In particular, no country where Eurosceptic forces have obtained more than 10% in the most recent elections created a “coloured” government in the traditional meaning. Grand coalition governments have been also created in two countries (Germany, and Ireland) with limited Eurosceptic political consensus, suggesting that the political Euroscepticism is the leading factor, although not the only one, behind grand coalition governments in the Euro Area.

In addition, at least in the German case, the creation of a grand coalition may be attributed to the surge of Eurosceptic parties. Data show that more than a quarter of former FPD voters were reported to be likely to change their vote in favour of AfD, the newly created Eurosceptic party. As a result, the former coalition partner of Merkel was unable to pass the 5% threshold required to enter in the parliament, forcing the CDU/CSU to enter in a grand coalition agreement with the SPD. In other words, the emergence of anti-EU parties has represented a very strong element in the emergence of a new polarisation of the political system over the European issue. Two countries can be used as a reference cases: Italy and the Netherlands.

**Polarisation in Italy and the Netherlands**- In the Italian case, the grand coalition government emerged already before the 2013 elections, when a government led by Mario Monti replaced the previous centre-right government led by Silvio Berlusconi, who resigned on November 12, 2011.

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**Table 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Election Type</th>
<th>Euroscepticism</th>
<th>Coalition Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Legislative Elections 2013</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Federal Elections 2010</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Parliamentary Elections 2011</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Parliamentary Elections 2011</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Parliamentary Elections 2011</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>General Elections 2011</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>General Elections 2013</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Legislative Elections 2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-10.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>General Elections 2013</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

31 Expressed by the aggregate electoral results of the Eurosceptic parties, although they often differ on other issues so they are unlikely to form a political alliance
The coalition government lasted for almost one year and a half and ended when the centre-right party led by Berlusconi ceased to support it.

Monti’s cabinet was supported by a wide majority of 88% of the lower house and 89% of the upper house. The government took office in the middle of the harshest phase of the economic crisis, with rising unemployment and sovereign yields up to 7%. The only parliamentary forces opposing Monti’s government was the populist and Eurosceptic party Lega Nord and the small IDV party, flanked by the Movimento 5 Stelle, the political movement led by the former comedian Beppe Grillo scoring about 15% in the polls but not represented in the Parliament at the time.

The subsequent elections in February 2013 gave a fragmented political landscape. None of the mainstream parties achieved a widespread victory, although the centre-left coalition led by Pierluigi Bersani resulted first by 0.41% over the centre-right coalition of Berlusconi, thus obtaining 55% of the seats of the lower chamber thanks to the majority premium included in the electoral law. However, no electoral coalition was able to secure a majority for the upper house where no national-wide majority premium was assigned, and the centrist conglomeration lead by the incumbent Prime Minister Monti was unable to obtain enough consensus to become the only partner of a political government. The populist and eurosceptic forces of Grillo and Maroni, new leader of Lega Nord, reached together 29.6% of the valid votes.

The coalition formed by the vice-president of the Democratic Party, Letta, was thus composed of a pro-European grand coalition majority similar to the one supporting Monti’s government, although with a smaller majority of 71% of the lower House and 73% of the upper House. While the Monti government was explicitly created in the attempt to secure the European stance of the country thus preventing the collapse of the Monetary Union, the Letta government was dictated by the mathematical impossibility of any other coalition equally excluding Eurosceptic forces: only a grand coalition government or a government with Eurosceptic parties could have prevented new elections.

In the Netherlands the formation of the current government followed a slightly different pattern. The conservative People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy of the current premier Mark Rutte won the 2010 elections but was unable to form a centre-right coalition due to the low results obtained by the centrist Christian-democratic Party of the former Prime Minister Balkenende. Instead, Rutte led a minority government supported by the right-wing Eurosceptic Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders. The government lasted for two years and finally collapsed in April 2012 when the Freedom Party and the People’s Party were unable to find an agreement on deficit

reduction measures needed to fulfil the country’s obligations in the European Semester.34 The new elections, held in September 2012, had a contrasting result. On the one hand, the eurosceptic Party for Freedom led by Wilders experienced a loss of around one third of its votes, falling from 15.4% to 10.8%. On the other hand, although the centre-right party of Rutte won the first place, no government could be formed without support from centre-left parties. A grand coalition government had thus to be created, involving both the leading parties in the centre-left and the centre-right formations.

4.2 Polarisation at European level

The new polarisation of the political landscape that emerged as a consequence of the surge of Euroscepticism at national level might eventually appear also at European level. The rise of a new, integrationist/disintegrative cleavage has been widely studied since the second half of the 2000s. At the beginning, the integrationist/nationalist cleavage was mainly studied as a matter of institutional interests, instead of political interests: in other words, literature has often considered the pro-European or anti-European stances as built-in within certain institutions; for example the European Parliament was often considered a unitary actor in favour of more integration.

However, as demonstrated by Hix, Noury and Roland35 the pro/anti-European integration divide emerged in the European Parliament in the late 1990s. In the first European elections after the crisis, the new cleavage is deemed to acquire importance and thus to shape differently the policies pushed forward by the European Union. Similarly, Hooghe and Marks36 identify an emerging non-economic cleavage growing around the issue of national sovereignty and identity. As shown by Hix and Crombez37, the European Union, although not a full democratic system, was still substantially influenced by the results of the European elections and by the centre-left/centre-right divide in the Council. If in the Council (and especially in the Eurogroup as shown in section 2) a stable pro-Europe coalition emerges, and the main cleavage characterizing the European Parliament will be the pro/anti-European stance, then the policies of the EU will also be characterised by a shift towards integration.

Looking at institutions may provide a useful point of view on the new polarisation characterizing the Euro Area. Among the Euro Area countries in the European Council, the grand-coalition

governments today hold a majority of 131 votes out of 217 and 8 member states out of 18. Although the number of votes and member states is not sufficient to grant a successful qualified majority, for the first time since its inception, the Council restricted to the Euro Area members does not dispose of a clear centre-left or centre-right majority. In addition, the grand-coalition countries dispose of a blocking minority of 131 votes within the extended Council of the EU.

In the European Parliament, the effects of the new political divide that is characterizing the European Union will be clear only after the May 2014 elections. At this regard, the Eurosceptic parties, although they all expect to obtain positive scores in their home countries, are today facing a vital dilemma. In fact, the new strengthened link between the results of the European elections and the Presidency of the Commission, provided by article 17.7 of the amended TEU, opens the way for a top-candidate for the position of the President of the Commission. The five most important coalitions of European parties have all decided to proceed with the nomination of a frontrunner candidate for the position: the European Socialist party nominated the German Martin Schulz in November 2013; the European Left nominated the Greek Alexis Tsipras; the liberal ALDE coalition will hold the Congress on the first of February 2014, choosing between Olli Rehn and Guy Verhofstadt;38 the European People’s Party will select the candidate at the 7 March Dublin Congress39, while the European Green Party will hold Primary Elections on-line deciding a candidate by March 2014.

With five frontrunner candidates from the mainstream parties absorbing the media attention and polarising the vote, the Eurosceptic parties risk to underperform. At this regard, the leaders of the Lega Nord, the French National Front and the Dutch Party for Freedom have met with the intention to create a “patriotic alliance” and run under the same banner in the elections.40 However, they face a complicate dilemma: if they present their own candidate for the Presidency of the Commission they might achieve better results, attracting media attention and polarising the European elections over the pro-EU/anti-EU debate. If conversely they decide not to run under a joint banner in the attempt to maintain their nationalistic and Eurosceptic stance, they risk to underperform and to be ignored in favour of traditional conservative-socialist political cleavage. Either way, they may face unwanted consequences: in the case they join under a common coalition, maybe choosing a frontrunner candidate, they may end up legitimizing the European construct and still face a now-legitimated Commission strongly dependent by the pro-European majority; in the other case, they

risk to underperform and assist anyway at the politicisation of the European Union over the conservative-socialist cleavage.

5. Politicisation

As shown above, the rise of Eurosceptic parties has triggered a change in the party-system, paving the way for coalition agreements built on the common pro-European stance rather than on traditional socio-economic similarities, progressively constituting the new pole of the new cleavage characterizing national and European political systems. The new polarisation of politics, however, entails a further evolution of European integration that may be moving towards a deeper politicisation.

Politicisation of European politics is not a new issue. The process has been widely studied over the last 20 years, focusing especially on the traditional right/left divide and its expressions in European politics. The lack of salience of European policy for mass-politics has been often referred to as one of the most worrying features of the EU, pushing some scholars like Viviane Schmidt to argue that the EU is creating “policies without politics”. On the other side, Majone and Moravcsik argue that, as long as the EU deals primarily with non-redistributive policies, the EU does not need politicisation and can better pursue its goals being kept “insulated” from party politics. In sum, the pre-crisis debate over politicisation was embedded in the debate on the democratic deficit of the EU and on the absence of a single, shared public sphere. As shown in section 3, however, since the second part of the 2000s scientific production has started to take into account the emergence of new cleavages on European issues (polarisation), how they affect existing levels of politicisation, and whether the emergence of new cleavages may trigger new waves of politicisation over the EU. In this regard, Hooghe and Marks present some interesting insights. In fact, they expect (a) to observe a rise in nationalistic and populist euroscepticism when the process of integration moves beyond market integration, and (b) to observe a stronger process of politicisation where populist and Eurosceptic parties are stronger. This section will discuss the process of politicisation of the European issues in three arenas: the domestic political process, the foreign (European) political process, and the properly European one. At domestic level, the process appears to be twofold: first, the ability of Eurosceptic parties in catching media attention implies that European policy becomes a central element of electoral

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42 Majone, G. [1997]
44 Hooghe, L. and G. Marks [2008] p. 18
campaign. This process has already been assessed by Kriesi\textsuperscript{45} for the national elections between 1970 and the end of the ‘90s, but has gained momentum only with the most recent campaigns. Second, the existence of grand coalitions \textit{may} create a political environment more prompt to implement European legislation, eventually proceeding with constitutional reforms. The domestic effects of populism may also spill across the borders. In particular, the emergence of important Eurosceptic parties in a country may trigger similar developments abroad when new “political entrepreneurs” perceive that there’s consensus to be capitalised: “\textit{political entrepreneurs must mobilize the tension}”.\textsuperscript{46} In addition, the presence of strong Eurosceptic parties across the border may increase the public attention to political events (in particular, elections) in the different European countries, creating the foundations of a European public sphere, although fractured over national and linguistic lines. Finally, at European level, we can expect a stronger dependence of the European Commission over the political majority emerged by the European elections. Of course, the new art. 17.7 TEU facilitates the emergence of this dependence, but the existence of a strong and organised Eurosceptic opposition in the European Parliament would make the confidence relation unavoidable.\textsuperscript{47}

- 5.1 \textit{Politicisation at domestic level}

Politicisation of the European issues led by the emergence of Eurosceptic parties may appear, at national level, under different forms. This section will first look at the relevance of European policies in the electoral debates in Italy and the Netherlands, and then try to assess whether the creation of grand coalitions supporting European integration has created momentum for implementation of EU law.

As noted by Dehousse\textsuperscript{48}, the Italian 2013 elections were highly Europeanized. According with his analysis of the European issue in the electoral campaign, Euroscepticism assumed two main forms: the open critics to the EU and its structures, and the critics to the European policies and the leaders of the other European countries. In particular, the Movimento 5 Stelle of Beppe Grillo openly criticised any attempt to restrict the sovereign action of the country and had, among its proposals, a referendum on the Euro Area membership, alongside with Lega Nord, the other Eurosceptic party. Cumulatively they reached almost 30% of consensus. As noted above, the centrality of European


\textsuperscript{46} Hooghe, L. and G. Marks [2008] p. 13. See also p. 19

\textsuperscript{47} Naturally, this does not imply that the \textit{politicization} of the European Commission would be possible only with a strong pro-anti Europe divide. Of course, also a left-right divide may produce such politicization. What we argue is that, given the current situation and the emergence of the new cleavage, politicization is more likely to emerge as a consequence of the centre-periphery divide rather than as a consequence of the right-left divide.

issues in the elections made it impossible to avoid a grand coalition government, because the differences between the pro-European and anti-European parties were far deeper than the differences between centre-left and centre-right parties.

Similarly, the 2012 Dutch elections were considerably influenced by European policy, although with different results. The first Rutte government fell in 2012 on the lack of agreement over the budgetary agreement to be presented in the European Semester; the following elections were characterised by a high relevance of the European issue in the debate, with the Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders campaigning for a EU-exit. Interestingly, the hard stance of Wilders against the EU obliged the other parties to clarify and articulate their respective positions, providing better ground for informed vote by the citizens. In particular, four elements of European policy dominated the debate: “the rationale for European Integration, the issue of national sovereignty, solutions to overcome the Euro Crisis and the issue of institutional reform”.

The emergence of Eurosceptic populism may generate a further politicisation of European domestic policy as a consequence of grand coalitions’ decisions. As noted by Hix and Noury, the centre-left split is, in parliamentary democracies, already a secondary issue in determining the voting behaviour of elected representatives, who in turn usually vote following the stance of their party in the government or in the opposition. Naturally, government coalitions in parliamentary systems were usually still built over the traditional divide; nevertheless, in the Euro Area this practice is changing today as a consequence of the emergence of Eurosceptic parties. This implies that the government-opposition split individuated by Hix en Noury becomes also a split over a single dominant issue, the European stance of the country. The phenomenon appears clearly also in the empirical analysis carried out by Maatsch. She finds substantial evidence that the dominant socioeconomic cleavage in the parliaments of the Euro Area countries has shifted from the traditional Keynesian-Liberal cut towards a more pro-European/anti-European economic policy divide. Thus the implementation of European directives (not only in the field of economic policy) becomes not only a much politicised issue, but also the “battlefield” where the pro-European coalition agreement is verified and re-iterated. Data provided by the European Commission for Italy and the Netherlands seem to support this view. In 2012, 12 countries achieved their best scores ever in implementing European Legislation. Of them, six are relevant-sized Euro Area countries (more than 4 million inhabitants) and four of these six are run by Grand Coalition governments: Ireland,

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Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands. Other two grand coalitions’ governments, Finland and Austria, have ameliorated their previous score without breaking the record; only one Grand Coalition government (Belgium) marginally worsened its position. However, the reason d’etre of the Belgian Grand Coalition has nothing to do with European stance- rather, it is the result of the internal agreement between Flemish and Francophone parties to preserve and reform the Belgian state; thus, we do not expect a Grand Coalition established for completely national issues to over-perform on European policy implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grand Coalitions</th>
<th>best performance</th>
<th>increased performance</th>
<th>decreased performance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE IT EL NL</td>
<td>AT, FI</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political governments</td>
<td>FR SK</td>
<td>DE, PT</td>
<td>ES</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


In the Italian case, Monti’s coalition government achieved important results in implementation of European Law. The 0.8% implementation deficit reported by the European Commission represented an impressive improvement in front of the 2.8% implementation deficit of the previous year and of the 1.8% average implementation deficit of Berlusconi’s political government. In addition, Monti’s government also decreased the number of outstanding directives by 21, the most positive result in the European Union in a single term. The Netherlands have also ameliorated their results during the first term of Rutte’s coalition government, decreasing the transposition score from 0.6% in the previous term to 0.4% and reducing by 4 the number of outstanding directives (3 in the previous term). Also, the grand coalition government reduced, in average, the time required for the transposition of a directive by about 3 months in respect to the previous term. In sum, data seem to suggest that –in the two case studies under analysis- the existence of a grand coalition provides a suitable ground for compliance with EU law, provided that the Grand Coalition is structured around a common pro-European stance of the various parties.

- 4.2 The impact abroad: Europeanization of the public sphere.

The effects on politicisation of European issues determined by the emergence of a Eurosceptic party may not end at the country’s border. As theorised by Eder and Trenz, the development of a set of domestic-Europeanized public spheres is mainly driven mainly by the mirroring of (often negative) discourse abroad (“resonance”) rather than by a single, unified political discourse cross-cutting the political boundaries. The issue is not trivial because, as noted by Meijers, “Recognizing this

At this regard, a substantial literature has been produced, before the crisis, on the particular form of integration of domestic public spheres ongoing in the European Union. For example, Pfetsch, Silke and Eschner find substantial evidence concerning the emergence of common trends in the media coverage of European news, as well as increasing attention paid by the public opinion to European-related themes. Instead of universal pan-European media, the European public sphere is rather assuming the form of a Europeanization of domestic ones. However, the empirical analysis carried out by the authors reveals the emergence of two main common debates: first, they individuate a cleavage concerning the sovereignty issue, meaning the relation between the existing European institutions and the national government; second, they note the emergence of a debate concerning the dilemma of enlargement versus deepening of integration. In addition, the authors note that the wide majority of the newspapers studied until 2007 take a very integrationist stance.

The crisis and the emergence of a diffuse Euroscepticism has substantially changed this scenario. As noted by Patz, the European crisis, the rise of populism and other European issues as immigration are now at the centre of the media coverage. Kokhanova finds substantial evidence of a process of ongoing Europeanization of public spheres in Germany and Spain during the crisis, noting that, although from their national perspective, the public attention to the events and the economic developments in the different countries has increased thanks to the strengthened media attention.

Euroscepticism is today playing a substantial role in the process of Europeanization of national public spheres. Meijers finds substantial evidence in support of the fact that between 2008 and 2011 the television coverage of European news in two representative countries (Germany and the Netherlands) substantially increased, from about 15% to 22% of the total in Germany, and from 14% to 18% in the Netherlands. The author also distinguishes European news over two variables: their tone (meaning whether they convey a positive or negative discourse on the issue) and their evaluation (meaning whether they take a precise political stance over the issue). In both dimensions, we can observe a striking change in attitude. Concerning the tone of the news on

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55 Ibid. p.3
58 Kokhanova, O. (2012) Europeanization of National Public Spheres: Comparative analysis of the readers’ on-line debate on Europan issues in German and Spanish Newspapers. *Centre for German and European Studies, Working paper No.02/2012*
59 Meijers, M. [2013] p.14
European issues, the share of European news reported with a positive tone declined from 62.5% to 8.7% in the Netherlands, while negative discourse concerning Europe increased from virtually 0 to 52%. Similarly, German “positive” attitude towards European news declined from 31.6% to 3%, while negative discourse increased from 10.5% to 53%. Concerning evaluations (explicit political statements concerning integration) the share of explicitly Eurosceptic judgements represented 30% of the political evaluations in Germany and 15% in the Netherlands.

While the results cannot be generalised for all the European countries, the surge in political Euroscepticism observed in many countries suggests that media coverage might have followed a similar pattern. Also, the domestic attention to the increase in foreign Euroscepticism is likely to have increased: while there are no aggregate data available yet to formulate a conclusive judgment, the attention paid by European publics at the elections in Greece, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, and to the electoral scores of the Eurosceptic parties, has likely been important. Moreover, as noted by De Wilde et al., “As dissensus draws media attention and crystalises opinion, patterns of conflict are replicated over time and space.”

It is thus likely that the spill-over of Euroscepticism from country to country not only generates an alignment of the different public spheres, but also provides ground for the “Europeanization of Euroscepticism”, when new political entrepreneurs seek to enter in the political arena.

In sum, the Euro crisis and the contemporary surge of political Euroscepticism seems to have triggered a wave of domestic attention to facts, news and political developments in other European countries. While this Europeanization of public spheres has been driven by negative discourse towards the EU, it still presents an appreciable development, considered that a common public sphere is often considered as an essential element for the emergence of democracy: in this regard, Eurosceptic populism seems to have triggered a widespread media attention, raising the public awareness and stimulating discussion on European policy.

4.3 politicisation at European level

Finally, the emergence of Eurosceptic forces is likely to influence the process of politicisation of properly European politics. As said in the introduction of section 4, there has been a lively debate in the last decade over the implications of a stronger politicisation of the EU, especially in relation to the alleged democratic deficit of the European Union. However, a consensus seems to be merging over the fact that a progressive politicisation of the European Union may represent positive news, especially in light of the clear involvement of the EU in fiscal economic policy during the crisis, reducing the weight of the objection of Majone to the EU as a purely regulatory and non-

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61 As considered for example by the German Constitutional Court in its 2009 judgement on the Lisbon Treaty.
redistributive state. Indeed, a further politicisation of the EU and the emergence of a common public sphere has acquired, being a substantive requirement for democracy, the status of a quasi-legal condition for further integration, as noted by the German Constitutional Court in 2009.\textsuperscript{62}

The European Elections may become more important both for Eurosceptic forces, perceiving to have an advantage in an election decided by themes essential for their success and credibility, and for the mainstream parties, obliged to find new ways to mobilise their electorate. A more detailed analysis of the politicisation of the European elections, as well as of the role of the Eurosceptic parties in the process, will have to wait the results of the May 2014 elections.

However, a series of considerations can be made here. First, the appearance of a strong Eurosceptic political party in the public sphere will have, as a likely effect, to “harmonise” the electoral campaign in the countries where these parties emerge. As put by Hobolt and Spoon: “Two key indicators of the level of politicisation are the degree of party polarisation on the issue and the contentiousness of European integration in the campaign coverage.”\textsuperscript{63} Party polarisation is a central determinant of the politicisation of European issues. In fact, while previous European elections were dominated by national themes, European political choices had only a secondary role in the different (national) electoral campaigns. Empirical results seem to support this interpretation of the previous rounds of European elections as “second-order” elections: in particular, Hix and Marsh\textsuperscript{64} find substantial empirical evidence in support of this thesis, identifying the willingness to punish national governments as the main driver for voting in the elections.

However, the emergence of anti-European parties putting the EU-related choices at the centre of the agenda may oblige the traditional mainstream parties to focus, for the first time, on truly European issues. The theoretical model built by Hobolt and Spoon provides interesting insights at this regard. As they conclude, “Examining the conditioning effect of party polarisation on the EU dimension shows that voters only take EU-specific considerations into account when political parties provide them with clear choices. (..) This is good news for European democracy as it suggests that the increasing politicisation of European integration makes voters more likely to make choices on the basis of party positions on EU issues, but no more likely to simply cast a protest vote ‘against Europe’.”\textsuperscript{65} Their conclusion is also supported by empirical analysis. As demonstrated by De Wilde et al. In the case of the 2009 European Elections, an increase in the salience of the EU in the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item[]\textsuperscript{62} Bundesverfassungsgericht. Second Senate [2009] Par. 250-251
\item[]\textsuperscript{64} Hix, S. and M. Marsh (2011) Second-order effects plus pan-European political swings: an analysis of European Parliament elections across time. Electoral Studies No.30
\item[]\textsuperscript{65} Hobolt, S. B. and J.-J. Spoon [2012] p.19
\end{thebibliography}
political debate do not imply a further rise in Euroscepticism: rather, “the debate about Europe becomes more specified as it becomes more intense”\(^{66}\)

In addition, a second phenomenon can be inferred. Provided that, under the new article 17.7 TEU a link now exists between the European Commission and the majority in the Parliament, a polarisation of the European Parliament (as noted in the previous section) is likely to generate a Commission, and as a consequence, a policy-mix, respecting the position of the majority. If the Eurosceptic parties manage to obtain a good result in the ballots, the Commission will have no other choice than to rely on the pro-European majority of the Parliament; similarly to pro-European grand coalitions in nation states, a pro-European grand coalition in the European Parliament might adopt a more integrationist stance than a coalition built on the traditional right/left cleavage.

6. Participation

Eurosceptic Populism is increasing polarisation of politics around a new centre-periphery cleavage, and is thus strengthening the political relevance of European issues. Europe may not be, today, a secondary element of the political debate discussed: rather it could lie at the core of contemporary mass politics. The analysis of recent domestic electoral campaigns, as well as the increasing relevance of pro-European Grand coalitions, supports this view; an ultimate confirmation, however, can be provided only by an analysis of the upcoming European elections. In order to confirm the Hobolt-Spoon hypothesis – that is, the increasing populism is transforming the European elections from a second-order into a first-order election- we must observe also a changing pattern in participation rates. While the 2014 European elections are still ahead thus no data are available, we can look at national elections to see whether the increasing populism is changing participation in the domestic elections.

At a first glance, a correlation seems to hold among most of the main Euro Area countries. Figure 1 shows the linear correlation between the turnout variation and the results of Eurosceptic populist parties in the Euro Area elections in large countries between 2010 and 2012. The correlation between 10 countries (out of 12) shown in the graph is clearly strong (0.71). Between these 12 countries, an increase in Eurosceptic consensus is almost invariably contextual to a decrease in the electoral participation. Two important countries however substantially fall outside of the correlation: Spain and Finland. Both elections occurred in 2011 at a distance of only a semester.

While the correlation is interesting, inferring causality would be wrong not only because of the lack of more compelling data, but also because a solid theoretical framework explaining why the increase of Euroscepticism should imply a rise in voting abstention is today missing. Rather, the two dynamics may be driven by the same events. On the one hand, many Eurosceptic parties have also an anti-politics rhetoric: this is surely the case of Italy, where the fall of the turnout has been relevant. So a general dissatisfaction against mainstream politics simultaneously decreases political participation and increases Eurosceptic consensus.
In this regard, figure 2 shows the (weak) correlation between the turnout change and the change in the confidence in mainstream parties between the election semester and the base-semester 1/2009. Again, the distortive effect of small countries is remarkable: excluding Cyprus, Malta and Luxembourg from the analysis implies a correlation almost twice as strong (0,65) than with them included. This clearly indicates that very small countries follow a different and independent political cycle. Also, the general economic developments in the Euro Area matter (let alone the economic performance of the individual states): figure 3 shows how turnout is influenced by Euro Area GDP change in the quarter before each election.

In fact, a more refined analysis seems to suggest that Eurosceptic populism has had, at least until a certain extent, the opposite effect, limiting the fall of the turnout due to mainstream parties’ turnout. Table 3 divides the Euro Area countries object of the analysis in 5 groups depending on their percentage change in party mistrust between 2009 and the moment of the elections. The groups have been designed in order to allow meaningful comparison of countries with similar levels of change in party trust. In the first group are included all the countries where trust in the party system has increased; in the second group the countries where the trust in the party system has experienced a limited fall (between 2% and 5%). In the third group, the countries experiencing a small fall (between 6% and 9%). In the fourth group, the countries experiencing an important fall in the trust in the Party system (between 10% and 14%). In the last group, the countries experiencing a very important fall (above 15%). For each group (where meaningful) the correlation between turnout and scores of Eurosceptic populist parties has been recalculated. The only two groups with at least 3 observations (groups 2 and 4) show a common (although not conclusive) pattern: in both cases, the increase in the results of Eurosceptic populist parties is associated with a lower loss in electoral participation, in group 2 more than in group 4 more than in group 5. The correlation is somehow valid also for Estonia and Malta, the only countries experiencing an increase in party trust and experiencing also an increase in the turnout. While it is clearly not valid for countries in group 3. In group 5 the correlation is basically 0.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 Turnout</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group 2 Turnout</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group 3 Turnout</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group 4 Turnout</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group 5 Turnout</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE 1,6</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>SI 0,2</td>
<td>2,00</td>
<td>IE 3</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>EL -3</td>
<td>14,80</td>
<td>IT -5,31</td>
<td>29,60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT 5,23</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>SK 2,5</td>
<td>4,55</td>
<td>FR -4,32</td>
<td>17,90</td>
<td>NL -0,8</td>
<td>15,10</td>
<td>CY -10,31</td>
<td>1,02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK 2,6</td>
<td>19,10</td>
<td>DE 0,7</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>AT -3,9</td>
<td>20,50</td>
<td>ES -4,9</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>LU 0,65</td>
<td>6,44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT -1,7</td>
<td>1,00</td>
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<td>Correlation: 0,47</td>
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<td>Correlation: 0,22</td>
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<td>Correlation: 0,016</td>
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Source: European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer No. 75-80
In sum, there is little evidence, as expected, that the rise of Euroscepticism has had a determinant effect on participation in national elections. Rather, common phenomena, like increase in mistrust vis à vis mainstream parties, and general economic performance, may both have triggered a decrease in turnouts and fuelled populist Euroscepticism. The data seem also to suggest that, at least under certain conditions, the increase in populism may have prevented more substantial decreases in electoral participation- data however are far from being conclusive at this regard.

The real effect (if any) of the increased attention towards European issues on participation will likely be at European level. As noted previously, the increased politicisation of Europe, the emergence of the new cleavage, and the pressure put on mainstream parties is likely to increase the resources invested both by mainstream parties and by emerging Eurosceptic parties in the campaign. The renewed media attention, the presence of presidential candidates, the pressure put by Eurosceptic parties on mainstream parties (and the contextual need for a clarification of their European stance) are likely to increase participation. This implies that while increasing populism is correlated with a decreasing participation at national level, increasing populism might be correlated with increased participation at European level. This intuitive hypothesis must be tested against electoral data coming from the next round of European election, but it seems in line with the reason for low turnout in the European elections identified by the literature: an increase in the salience of the EU-related themes, as well as a relative increase of the powers of the EU parliament vis à vis national governments, may produce an increase in both Euroscepticism and turnout. As noted by Hobolt and Spoon commenting their simulation, “We might expect politicisation to have different direct effects on the likelihood of abstaining and switching. For example, it seems plausible that politicisation would have a mobilising effect in EP elections, and thus decrease the likelihood of abstaining but increase the likelihood of switching.”

7. Conclusions

The analysis carried out in the previous pages has several implications. As a first finding, it underlines that the emergence of an organised Euroscepticism targeting not only certain policies or outcomes of the European integration process, but the very concept of European integration, was a phenomenon well studied by classical theory of political integration. In particular, the emergence of a new centre-periphery cleavage is consistent with, and in a way, implied by, a substantial progress towards a truly political Europe. From this perspective, Euroscepticism should not be simply considered as a worrying phenomenon, but as a clear signal suggesting that European integration has now reached a depth where truly democratic legitimacy is unavoidable.

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The second part of the paper analyses how the emerging Eurosceptic populism is in fact not only a consequence of a European Union moving beyond the Market; but also may represent one of the driving forces behind this shift. The effects of the rise in Eurosceptic populism were studied in three dimensions: polarisation of national and European politics, politicization of European integration issues at domestic and European level, as well as in partner countries; and participation at national and European level. The analysis shows that Eurosceptic populism is a major driver of Grand Coalition governments in many Euro Area countries, and might also generate a similar shift within the European Union’s institutions. Looking at politicization, our results suggest that the emergence of Euroscepticism has brought European integration at the very centre of domestic electoral campaigns, obliging mainstream national parties to clarify their positions on European issues. Also, the two Grand Coalition governments analysed in this study seemed partially more willing, at least at the beginning of their mandate, to take seriously European integration performing relatively better than political governments in adopting European legislation. Abroad, the emergence of Eurosceptic populism, coupled with the high coverage given by Euro-crisis related issues, seems to have triggered a widespread media attention, raising the public awareness and stimulating discussion on European policy. In other words, the debate on European issues promoted by Eurosceptic parties has a tendency to spill-over in partner countries, promoting the Europeanization of public spheres. Finally, the high salience of European policy as electoral issue may imply a stronger political responsibility of the European Parliament vis à vis their electorate, and of the European Commission vis à vis the majority of the Parliament. As for participation, the indications provided by data are contrasting. While, overall, a clear correlation exists between Eurosceptic Populism and fall in electoral participation, a more detailed analysis seems to suggest that, at least in certain cases, the creation of Eurosceptic parties may have limited the turnout fall due to high mistrust towards mainstream parties. Consistently, a rise of Eurosceptic Populism may imply an increase salience of European elections, raising the turnout; naturally, the 2014 election will be the test bed for this hypothesis.

Overall, this paper did not look into the negative implications of the emergence of Eurosceptic populism, although surely many worrying implications can be easily inferred. Nor it aims to downplay the potential dangers entailed by this returning wave of nationalism. Rather, it proposed a collection of arguments suggesting that Eurosceptic populism may have also a democratic-enhancing impact, providing a substantial boost to fill the gap between the milieu where substantial decisions for contemporary democracy are agreed, the European Union, and the actual political debate where mass politics get involved.
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**Databases:**

Tradingeconomics, Euro Area economic data: [http://www.tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/indicators](http://www.tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/indicators)
Populism, Elites and Euroscepticism: the case of Austria

Costanza Caputi

Populism is a spreading phenomenon across Europe. Much of it is directed against the European Union, as austerity and economic stagnation seem to fuel anti-EU protest votes. The Austrian case, however, demonstrates that populism is a complex phenomenon that cannot be dismissed as a product of socio-economic malaise. Rather, its presence points at a profound discontent with the political system and distrust of political elites. Furthermore, its root causes are to be found in the ‘wounded’ relationship between elites and peoples. The lessons drawn at national level hold true for the EU, too. The time of ‘permissive consensus’ is over and European elites need to mend fences with the broader public, if they are seriously concerned about the risks of populism.

Introduction

Since the emergence of the euro crisis electoral successes of populist parties are making headlines all over Europe. Old and new populist parties are mushrooming across the continent. The Front National under Marine Le Pen is strengthening its foothold in French politics, and so are the Dutch Party for Freedom, Golden Dawn in Greece, the True Finns, and the Freedom Party in Austria, just to name a few. While these parties present many differences in their ideologies and the extent of their radicalism, they are united in their opposition to the European Union and related policies.

The correlation between rising anti-EU populism and economic crisis has led to the simplistic assumptions about populism and euroscepticism. The recurring argument goes as follows: austerity policies commanded by EU institutions fuel—at best—populism (garnished with an anti-Europe touch) or even outright extremism. Consequently, the backlash against EU institutions is to be ascribed solely to deteriorating economic conditions. In other words, should EU institutions deliver on economic performance, populism and euroscepticism would vanish as quickly as they appeared. This argument—admittedly, stylized—is deeply flawed. While socio-economic grievances may certainly fuel populism (in particular in its far-right version), they are rarely the root causes neither for populism nor for euroscepticism.

1 Research analyst based in Brussels
The Austrian case is very revealing in this respect. In fact, economically speaking Austria is one of the most successful countries in Europe. Its per capita GDP is about a third higher than the EU average making it the second most prosperous EU country.\textsuperscript{4} Economic growth has been modest but positive, and is projected to pick up in 2014. The unemployment rate at 4.8 percent in 2013 is very low, especially by European comparison.\textsuperscript{5} Furthermore the country is one of the most competitive economies worldwide ranking 16\textsuperscript{th} in the Global Competitiveness Index.\textsuperscript{6} Overall, Austria has weathered the financial and euro crisis almost unscathed. Nevertheless, levels of populism (and related euroscepticism) have reached a record high in the latest election of September 2013.

This paper suggests that answers are to be found in the distortion of the relationship between the elites and the peoples, which is an expression of the de-politicization of Western democracies.

In the first section, this paper will analyze the presence of populism and euroscepticism in Austria. The term ‘populism’ will be defined and the key features of Austria’s populist parties will be discussed on the basis of the populist discourse. Further, the socio-economic profile of the average populist voter will be discussed. In a next step, the origins of euroscepticism in Austria will be analyzed. The second section is devoted to the emerging risks stemming from populism and euroscepticism, notably the impact of populist vote in the European parliamentary elections in 2014. Lastly, this paper will discuss the implications of the lessons drawn from the Austrian case on the European ‘permissive consensus.’

Part 1: Populism and euroscepticism in Austria, discourse and causes

Austria is no exception to the European populist trend. In fact, three parties considered ‘populist’ dominated the national election of September 2013. Taken together, these parties accounted for a staggering 30 per cent of the vote. Even though populism in Austria is primarily associated with the radical right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), the populist landscape has become increasingly crowded in recent years. The Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ) emerged from the Haider’s split from the FPÖ in 2005. It enjoyed successes in its first years but is now struggling to survive its charismatic leader. In fact, in the past election it did not pass the 4 per cent threshold to enter parliament. The

\textsuperscript{4} “GDP per capita, consumption per capita and price level indices” - Statistics Explained (2014/1/5) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/GDP_per_capita,_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices
\textsuperscript{5} OECD, "Austria - Economic forecast summary (November 2013),” in Economic outlook, analysis and forecasts (2013).
new player Team Stronach, founded by the Austro-Canadian billionaire Frank Stronach, on the other hand, managed a breakthrough gaining close to 6 per cent of the vote. With 51 out of 183 seats in parliament, populists have gained considerable weight in Austria’s current legislative period.

**Defining populism**

While the FPÖ has a longstanding tradition in Austria’s political landscape, the BZÖ is a product of its founder, the controversial Jörg Haider, and Frank Stronach is a complete newcomer to politics, all of them share the ‘populist’ label. So what does unite these quite distinct political actors and why do they qualify as populists? In current media, populism is a ubiquitous term; almost any politician has been branded a populist at some point or other. It usually has a derogatory connotation, but has also been used as a synonym for ‘popular.’

In the academic literature, too, populism figures prominently with great variations in its definition: from ideology to discursive style and political strategy, scholars have given manifold interpretations to the notion of populism. Two key features, however, are held constant among different authors: ‘the elites’ and ‘the people.’ Most importantly, to be worthy of their name, populists have to champion the people’s side at all costs. In an influential paper, Cas Mudde defines populism as a ‘thin-centred ideology’, which separates society in two antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite.’ Furthermore, populism calls for politics as ‘expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.’ Accordingly, populism is essentially anti-elitist and anti-establishment. Beyond that, it claims to express the true vox populi and appeals to the common sense of the ordinary man. In this respect, populism is not tied to a political ideology neither on the right nor on the left, but can accommodate ideology flexibly. Charismatic leadership, emotional appeal as well as vast simplification of complex issues through rhetorical style contribute to the success of populist forces.

As Fieschi describes it, the populist juxtaposition of ‘elites’ and ‘people’ determines a quite distinctive Weltanschauung: ‘one in which no form of representation can be trusted; one in which a hunger for power, together with elite manipulations, are really the only driver of politics.’ Furthermore, another characteristic feature is the populists’ essentially illiberal understanding of

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7 Results of Austria’s 2013 national elections available at [http://orf.at/wahl/nr13/ergebnisse/#ergebnis](http://orf.at/wahl/nr13/ergebnisse/#ergebnis)


10 Fieschi, "Who's afraid of the populist wolf".


12 Fieschi, "Who's afraid of the populist wolf".
democracy. On the one hand, their claim to be the sole interpreter of the will of the people prompts them to support forms of direct democracy; on the other, political representation is understood as an ‘imperative mandate’ that leaves no room for debate.¹³

Beyond its defining characteristic as ‘Manichean outlook’ of ordinary people against evil elites,¹⁴ populism comes with country-specific facets. In fact, populism does not grow in a vacuum and is closely tied to the political reality of a determined context. The emergence of radical right-wing populist parties across Europe is a case in point: for instance, the Lega Nord, Front National as well as the FPÖ share a number of common elements, yet each of these parties has its distinct characteristics, which are derived from their national context.

Following this definition, in Austria only the FPÖ fully qualifies as ‘populists,’ as it applies the entire worldview described above. Team Stronach, on the other hand, has not (yet) developed into a full-fledged populist ideology, even though it relies heavily on anti-establishment and anti-EU rhetoric.¹⁵ Given that the BZÖ is vanishing from the political scene, it will not be assessed in this analysis.

**Discourse of Austrian populism**

In order to identify key aspects of populism in Austria, this paper will first focus on the ‘supply side’ of populism by analyzing recurring populist elements in the political discourse. The themes such as ‘corrupt elites,’ the ‘heartland’ and ‘common sense’ and ‘unspoken truths’ are part of the populist repertoire and used consistently by the FPÖ and to some extent by the Team Stronach. ‘Anti-immigration’ and ‘Austro-patriotism’ instead are typical of the radical right. Looking at its discourse allows drawing conclusions on the specific features of Austrian populism.

1. ‘Die da oben’ -- Critique to corrupt elite

Given the nature of populism, the elite is the main target of populist attacks. The ‘elite’ as a blanket term can take many forms, from the ruling political establishment, to powerful business elites as well as Brussels technocrats, depending on where the scapegoating of ‘the other’ resonates better. As Fieschi puts it, partisan politics are perceived as simply a ‘smokescreen for elites

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¹⁴ Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist."
machinations,’ which have ‘betrayed the trust of the people’ and work only for their personal gain.\(^\text{16}\) In fact, dissatisfaction with the political system runs high in Austria, despite the country being economically and politically stable. A series of corruption scandals and the stalemate produced by years of grand coalition governments have led to rapidly declining trust in national government and parliament.\(^\text{17}\) Incidentally, the FPÖ 2013 electoral campaign was based strongly on anti-establishment tones with slogans such as ‘red-black [the grand coalition SPÖ-ÖVP] have sold and betrayed us.’\(^\text{18}\) The newcomer Stronach used similar rhetoric for his campaign: in a television spot he claimed that Austria is run behind closed doors by a power-hungry and corrupt elite.\(^\text{19}\)

But the discontent with the political class has deeper roots than the current grievances. Much of it can be traced back to Austria’s particular institutional and societal structure, i.e. to its ‘consociational democracy.’ Since the postwar years, Austria has been characterized by a system of power sharing (Proporz) between the two ‘catch-all’ parties, i.e. the Christian-conservatives (ÖVP) and the socialists (SPÖ). Proporz is short for proportionality and describes a political system, whereby appointments in personnel are political in nature and allotted proportionally to the electoral result. Given the deep entrenchment of the two main political parties in Austrian society, these appointments are not only reserved for political functions, but for many posts across society, such as the bureaucracy, labour market associations and public enterprises. Thus, the ÖVP and SPÖ were able to develop a web of control over virtually all areas of public life.\(^\text{20}\) The term ‘Proporzdemokratie’ coined by Gerhard Lehmbruch precisely describes this system of hegemony by the two main political parties.\(^\text{21}\) This culture of political comprise was further strengthened by the strong corporatist orientation in business (Sozialpartnerschaft).\(^\text{22}\) Both the Proporz system and the Sozialpartnerschaft were envisioned to guarantee stability in a country torn apart by the war. Perhaps more importantly, they served as a cornerstone for the construction of the identity of the

\(^{16}\) Fieschi, "Who's afraid of the populist wolf".


\(^{18}\) Fabio Wolkenstein, "The success of anti-system parties in the Austrian election reflects very real problems with political corruption," (LSE EUROPP Blog, October 9, 2013).

\(^{19}\) See the Videospot: Team Stronach, "Wahl 2013 Motto," (2013). Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzIkRqhpnNk


\(^{22}\) Anton Pelinka, "Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich: Zwischen Rechtspopulismus, Deutschnationalismus und Österreich-Patriotismus," conflict&communication online 1, no. 1 (2002).
newborn Republic. Yet, by the 1980s the institutionalized compromise between the socialist and the conservatives had entered a severe crisis of legitimation. Declining party membership meant that parties were losing grip on society, yet their political influence remained largely intact. As a result, resentment against this hyper-stable and clientelistic political system was growing high. The FPÖ managed very successfully to interpret the protest mood and re-branded itself as the champion of the ‘common man’ against the ‘unaccountable elites.’ This was a significant departure from its tradition. In fact, until the mid eighties the FPÖ had constituted a third minor force in Austrian politics, the pan-German ‘camp’ (Lager), which had always been excluded from power given its affinity to and sympathy for Nazism.

The complex system of European governance with its nontransparent and unaccountable nature is another typical prey of the populist anti-elite, anti-establishment critique. The FPÖ has been riding the anti-EU tide since 1992, thereby radically shifting course from its earlier supportive stance. This U-turn was in line with the broad transformation of the party into a populist force. Again, by opposing European integration the FPÖ successfully expressed popular anxieties towards a supranational entity, which was largely alien to Austrian people until the collapse of Communism. The critical attitude towards the EU allows the FPÖ to pitch itself as ‘the representative of the peoples’ in opposition to ‘EU-traitors’ (‘Volksvertreter statt EU-Verräter’).

2. The ‘heartland’

In stark contrast to the evil elites, ‘the people’ are the source of all good in populist rhetoric. This reference, however, depicts much more an imaginary community, rather than a real population. Paul Taggart speaks of the ‘heartland’ as a place, where the in populists’ eyes a ‘virtuous and unified population resides.’ Thus, the ‘heartland’ in Austria is seen a ‘harmonious unity of hard-working, moral, native community,’ which must be protected from damaging external influences.

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24 Ibid., 150.
26 Pelinka, "Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich: Zwischen Rechtspopulismus, Deutschnationalismus und Österreich-Patriotismus."
28 Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist."
Beyond the imaginary community of the ‘pure people,’ populist rhetoric by the FPÖ presents itself markedly Austro-patriotic. Once again, the FPÖ under Jörg Haider performed a skillful metamorphosis: by the mid-1990s the party had abandoned its position as the stronghold of pan-Germanism and instead became the starkest defender of Austro-nationalism.\(^{30}\) In fact, references to the ‘homeland,’ ‘our people,’ ‘Austria first’ are ubiquitous in FPÖ’s rhetoric.\(^{31}\) Moreover the party defines itself as the ‘social homeland party’ (soziale Heimatpartei).\(^{32}\) Thanks to the shift to Austro-patriotism, the FPÖ appeals to a much larger audience than with its previous borderline extremist position. The strong resonance of the patriotic message is very much connected to Austria’s ambiguous relationship with its national identity. Modern day Austria has little history—or a rather shameful one—from which to draw its creation myth. Instead, its identity relies heavily on a ‘collection of customs, values, habits and social mores’ that make up ‘the Austrian way of life’ or Lebensart.\(^{33}\) The shaky national identity, however, results in greater ‘collective vulnerability’ vis-à-vis foreign influences.\(^{34}\) Thus, with its emphasis on safeguarding national heritage the FPÖ exploits voters’ fears stemming from the potential ‘cultural leveling’ of globalization.\(^{35}\)

3. Anti-immigration, xenophobia and right-wing extremism

The ugly face of Austro-nationalism is the xenophobic streak of the FPÖ, which often presents itself as welfare chauvinism. To be fair, xenophobia and tough talk on immigration are less traits of populism per se, but are part of the creation of ‘the other’ as a scapegoat. In the FPÖ’s rhetoric, lazy ‘foreigners’ are characterized as parasites to the Austrian welfare state (‘Sozialschmarotzer’) that rob taxpayer of their money and services while threatening cultural integrity. Well-known controversial elements of the FPÖ campaign in 2008 are the slogans ‘daham statt Islam’ (Home instead of Islam) and ‘Abendland in Christenhand’ or even the rap songs of FPÖ leader H.C. Strache. The most recent campaign had Christian charity as its theme—clearly intended for Austrians only. As Heinisch observes, anti-immigration is the strongest ‘brand’ of the FPÖ.\(^{36}\) While the FPÖ’s xenophobic stance can be seen primarily as political expediency aimed at luring voters that are confronted with immigration and related problems, it hints at the extremist wing in

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\(^{30}\) Fröhlich-Steffen, "Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus."

\(^{31}\) In this study, 27 references were coded for the broad term ‘the people’ in Austria. See: Jasper de Raadt, David Hollanders, and André Krouwel, "Varieties of Populism: An Analysis of the Programmatic Character of Six European Parties," Working Papers Political Science, no. 04 (2004).


\(^{33}\) Heinisch, "Austria: The Structure and Agency of Austrian Populism."

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Fröhlich-Steffen, "Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus."

\(^{36}\) Heinisch, "Austrian Right-wing Populism: A Surprising Comeback und a New Leader."
the party. As discussed above, the FPÖ has undergone a significant ideological shift that separated it from pan-German and neo-Nazi ideology. Nevertheless the FPÖ maintains a radical core, as the party leadership is mostly recruited from far-right fraternities. In this respect, recurring expressions of xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism may suggest more than just populist politics.

4. ‘Common sense’ and ‘unspoken truths’

At the heart of the populist worldview lies the ‘conviction that ordinary people and common sense have all the answers’ and are in fact to be regarded as the only ‘true political compass.’ Consequently, populists present by default simplified and quick-fix solutions to complex problems, as in-depth analysis and debate would be ‘anathema to common sense.’ This is easily found in the discourse of Austrian populists. In fact, the Team Stronach ran its campaign by appealing to emotions and common sense (‘Herz und Hausverstand’). Furthermore, provocative stances, for instance on immigration and Islam in the FPÖ’s case, gives the party the chance to play another typical populist card: it allows them to claim that ‘they alone have the courage to say what everyone is ‘really’ thinking.’ In this respect, the taboos of politically correct are seen as a limitation to one’s right of expression. Jörg Haider was making this point already in 1994 by claiming that people no longer had the right to express themselves freely, especially concerning critical opinions towards the government. His brilliant tactic—now copied by Strache—works as follows: political opponents are provoked to the point that they overreact with outright indignation to non-politically correct remarks. In turn, the populist FPÖ leader portrays himself, but perhaps more importantly, his sympathizers and potential voters as victims that are unrightfully marked as Nazis. As a result, latent radicals are strengthened in their choice of a populist party. The slogan ‘They are against him, because HE is for YOU’ captures this mood perfectly. Interestingly, according to a survey of the newspaper Profil about a third of Austria’s population believes that media—generally unsympathetic to the FPÖ apart from the influential tabloid Krone—is treating the Freedom Party unfairly.

37 Catherine Fieschi, "A plague on both your populisms," openDemocracy (2012).
41 Fröhlich-Steffen, "Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus."
43 "H.C. Strache: Ein Drittel ortet Ungleichbehandlung in den Medien."


**Voters’ profiles and motivations: A typology**

1. Modernization losers?

Voters of rightwing populist parties have often been described as ‘modernization losers,’ who are susceptible to radical ideology given their perceived or factual downward mobility in society. Populist rightwing and far-right parties seem to offer the best protection against the challenges of rapid societal change, if only in rhetoric. To a large extent this can be claimed for Austria’s FPÖ. By looking at the socio-economic status of its electorate, it appears that blue-collar workers are the largest FPÖ supporters with a share of 33 percent in the 2013 elections. In fact, the FPÖ managed to surpass the traditionally working class party SPÖ. The second most represented groups are white-collar workers (25 percent) and self-employed professionals (18 percent). Furthermore, the level of education of the average FPÖ voter is modest: 15 percent completed compulsory education, while 35 percent have vocational training, 21 percent have attained advanced-secondary education, 19 percent A-level, and only 4 per cent have a university degree.

While the correlation between low levels education and low-skilled work holds true, thus confirming the ‘modernization losers’ hypothesis, economic motivations do not appear to be the primary driver for FPÖ vote. Instead, immigration is mentioned as the key variable that prompts radical right-wing support. In line with this, the study conducted by Oesch on working class support for radical right-wing parties suggests FPÖ vote is motivated above all by the perceived threats stemming from cultural loss due to immigration. On the other hand, the potential negative impact of immigration on workers’ economic condition (i.e. competition for jobs and for welfare provisions) is less a reason for voting FPÖ. These findings are coherent with a Chatham House report as well as with a study of online radical activism by the think tank Demos: fears related to loss of cultural identity trump economic woes.

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
In terms of cleavages, it appears that liberalization and modernization of the economy since the 1990s have created a dividing line between employees: on the one hand, those in flexible and innovative jobs have benefited from this development, on the other workers in vulnerable economic sectors have reacted with calls for protection.\textsuperscript{49} According to Betz, both these categories are drawn to right-wing populism, the former attracted by a neo-liberal agenda, and the latter by anti-foreign attitudes.\textsuperscript{50} Findings by the Institut für Strategie-Analyse, in fact, suggest that FPÖ voters on a ‘downwardly mobile’ and ‘upwardly mobile’ path were almost equally represented in the 2008 elections with 14 and 12 percent respectively.\textsuperscript{51}

Statistics show that the FPÖ scores significantly higher with men.\textsuperscript{52} However, it is not clear why. The journalists Vlasich, Eisenreich and Hamann attempted an explanation through reportage in the Viennese outskirts. It appears that girls and women in general are less ‘rebellious’ and even more ‘obedient to authority.’\textsuperscript{53} In this sense, they are less drawn to a party of outcasts. On the other hand, women have a stronger track record than men with respect to education, both in terms of performance but also in the pursuit of higher education.\textsuperscript{54} These findings seem to point at psychological explanations for the attraction of radicalism. However, given their anecdotal character, they cannot provide a complete account of the situation and further academic research is needed in order to address the question more thoroughly.

2. Stronach voter?

Running on an anti-corruption and the anti-establishment platform, Frank Stronach aimed at capitalizing protest votes of those who oppose the red-black grand coalition, but are neither comfortable voting the far-right nor share anything with the Greens.\textsuperscript{55} In terms of demographics, there is a gender gap with men twice more likely to vote for Frank, but no significant differences in terms of age. Stronach was most successful with the self-employed (13 percent) and workers (10 percent).\textsuperscript{56} The level of formal education is low among Frank voters, too: those who have completed compulsory schooling support the Team Stronach disproportionally.\textsuperscript{57} Overall Pelinka

\textsuperscript{49} Heinisch, "Austrian Right-wing Populism: A Surprising Comeback und a New Leader."
\textsuperscript{51} Heinisch, "Austrian Right-wing Populism: A Surprising Comeback und a New Leader."
\textsuperscript{52} SORA/ISA, "Wahlanalyse Nationalratswahlen 2013."
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Anton Pelinka, "Der bessere Populist," \textit{Die Zeit} March 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{56} SORA/ISA, "Wahlanalyse Nationalratswahlen 2013."
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
holds that the stereotypical Stronach voter corresponds to the cliché Strache supporter, i.e. male, anti-intellectual and angry.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{Euroscepticism in Austria}

Euroscepticism in Austria is far from a populist prerogative. In fact, Austria is consistently one of the most critical countries of the EU. In the 2009 Eurobarometer survey, only 42 percent of the population thought that EU membership was positive compared to the 53 percent EU average.\textsuperscript{59} In 2013, distrust of the EU was at 55 percent, thus marking an increase from 49 percent in 2005.\textsuperscript{60} Scepticism towards the European Union runs deep among Austrians despite their ‘utilitarian’ gains from membership. Admittedly, Austria is a net contributor—and the populists never forget to mention that—nevertheless, the economic benefits from the common market and enlargement to the East are by far greater than paltry contributions to the EU budget.

Thus, Austria’s critical attitude towards Europe needs to be examined in the light of its historical trajectory. In fact, much of the eurosceptic stance derives from the country’s different experience of the Cold War compared to the rest of Western Europe. As a result of the post-war settlement, the Austrian Republic is permanently neutral and has built much of its national identity on its neutrality. Further, Austria’s position as ‘front-line’ to the Iron Curtain shaped its self-understanding as a buffer zone between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Even though it was ideologically tied to the West and deeply anchored in the European tradition, it had no formal commitment to ‘Europe.’ In fact, Austria sought EU membership only in 1989 and eventually joined the EU in 1995.\textsuperscript{61} The European course championed by the ÖVP and the SPÖ in the wake of the collapse of Communism was strongly elite-driven, as the political class recognized the enormous economic, political and security benefits of membership. Instead, popular identification with the EU was low and had to be countered through ad-hoc pro-EU campaigns.\textsuperscript{62} This ‘europeanization’ of national elites, however, destabilized Austria’s already vulnerable national identity.\textsuperscript{63} While the mainstream parties were shifting their focus to Europe, the FPÖ—previously a supporter of EU membership—was turning to Austro-patriotism. Furthermore, the FPÖ’s patriotic outlook initially consisted almost exclusively of opposition to supra-national European

\textsuperscript{58} Pelinka, "Der bessere Populist."
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{———}, "Country Factsheet Austria." \textit{———}, "Eurobarometer 64," (2006).
\textsuperscript{62} Fröhlich-Steffen, "Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus."
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
Given 40 years of separated paths from European peers and the top-down European integration orchestrated by political elites, Austria’s distanced attitude towards the EU should not come as a surprise.

As discussed, anti-EU tones have been part of the populist arsenal since the 1990s, yet the significance of anti-EU sentiment should not be overestimated. According to Wert et al., euroscepticism only ranks third as motive for populist vote; it is fear over immigration and loss of national culture that drives people into populist arms, less so Brussels bureaucrats. In fact, the EU only played a marginal role in the 2013 campaign for national elections. Even Stronach, who gained initial notoriety by being very vocal against the euro, chose to run his electoral campaign on an anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform. In addition to the FPÖ’s usual anti-EU rhetoric (defense of national sovereignty against supra-nationalism, abandoning Judeo-Christian roots, the evils of Europe without borders, and attack to government as coward EU-traitors), the euro crisis gave motive for another quintessentially populist truism: the hardworking Austrian taxpayer has to foot the bill of lazy Southerners. But apart from enriching the populist imagery, the advent of the euro crisis and euroscepticism in general have little explanatory power for the populist advance in Austria.

**Populism and elites: de-politicization and ‘wounded’ relationship**

The consistent success of the radical right-wing FPÖ builds on a number of structural factors. Consociational democracy has led to mounting frustration with the political system, in particular since the ‘de-pillarization’ of society has undermined the legitimacy of such a system. Further, Austria’s troubled national identity makes it more vulnerable to perceived cultural threats; the FPÖ capitalizes very successfully on Austro-patriotism and related xenophobia. Furthermore, the bulk of its voters are working class ‘modernization losers’: fearful to lose their Austrian Lebensart at the hands of rising immigration they turn to the party that addresses these concerns. Euroscepticism, too, has its historical roots in Austria’s neutrality and its experience of the Cold War.

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64 Ibid.
67 H.C. Strache: "Why do the Austrians, as well as the Germans or the Dutch, constantly have to pay for the bottomless pit of the southern European countries?" Cited in: Peter Walker and Matthew Taylor, "Far right on rise in Europe, say report," *The Guardian* November 6, 2011.
Finally, rising support for populism (in particular right-wing) has little to do with socio-economic conditions given Austria’s prosperous economy. Moreover, Mudde finds that relationship between worsening economic conditions and rise of the far right does not hold the empirical test in a number of European countries. Instead, the recent surge in populism is to be interpreted primarily as frustration with the political class and its clientelistic modus operandi.

But beyond contingent frustration with politics, it is worth reflecting on the relationship between elites and people. In what Mudde calls the ‘populist Zeitgeist’ an irrevocable fracture between citizens and governing elites occurred. Two dynamics are happening that contribute to a ‘wounded’ relationship: citizens—regardless of their formal education—are increasingly confident enough to question the authority of elites, while the latter practice TINA (There is no alternative) politics in favor of hard-fought battling for ideas.

Thanks to the universalization of education, people today are more educated and emancipated than ever before. Moreover, as Inglehart argued, the post-modern value shift towards individualization is accompanied by the questioning of ‘authority.’ Thus, the perceived distance between political elites and average electors has diminished significantly. Egalitarianism on the one hand, and loosened ties to institutionalized structures such as parties on the other, further contributed to widen the gap.

Today’s citizen feels more competent to judge politicians and no longer ‘blindly swallows what the elites tell them.’ Furthermore, Mudde argues, the ‘emancipation of the citizens has undermined the elite’s competence or at least their perception of it.’ In other words, the leader’s qualifications to perform his or her job are no longer held in high esteem—in particular the formal ones. As a result, another type of authority is gaining the upper hand: charisma.

In this sense, populists profit from their role as taboo breakers and defender of common sense against politically correctness. Arguably, by taking on populist views, people seem motivated by defying the authorities—on purpose, just because they can. All of the above, however, indicates that the poorly educated are more susceptible to the easy promises of populist messages, and will continue to remain so.

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68 Mudde, "The myth of Weimar Europe".
70 Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist."
73 Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist."
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
Admittedly, the job of elites has gotten more difficult. On the one hand elites are having a
tougher time in steering their peoples, as they are confronted with a more critical and demanding
mass yet at the same time they face the ‘straitjacket’ of external constraints such as globalization;
on the other, they have blatantly failed the people—at least in some respects. Globalization forces
are increasingly reducing the space for political and ideological maneuvering on the left and the
right. In fact, many authors have noted an ongoing process of ‘de-ideologization’ and
‘technocratization.’ The catch-all parties increasingly resemble one another in terms of political
offering; this was epitomized by the so-called ‘Third Way.’ Furthermore, many aspects of current
politics fall under the category of TINA, i.e. ‘there is no alternative.’

Nevertheless, political elites have failed to address difficult issues, which could cause them
to lose votes. As Cuperus describes it, the parties maxim in running their affairs has become ‘risk
management,’ instead of fostering an ‘open and intellectual debate.’ Moreover, party politics
resembles more and more a ‘marketplace’ of political entrepreneurs chasing ‘consumer-voters’
instead of a battleground for political ideas. Modern parties no longer really need to be loyal to
their founding principles (‘grundsatztreu’); instead they are becoming more pragmatic in their
decision-making. In this respect, even mainstream parties are subject to populism, argues Wolfgang
Schäuble, the German Minister of Finance.

Part 2: Risks and implications of anti-EU populism

Self-hating parliament?

Warning cries about rising populism are been raised from all sides, including personalities
such as Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta, President of the European Council Herman van
Rompuy and EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso. The outcry is particularly acute
since the European parliamentary elections in May 2014 are approaching. Anti-EU populists are
expected to be the winners at the upcoming European elections, especially since these are perceived
as ‘a poll without consequences’ by a large part of the European electorate. Therefore, voters are
more inclined to cast a vote for parties at the fringes of the political spectrum. Commentators have
been painting various scenarios for a ‘self-hating parliament’ ranging from game as usual to a US-

76 Cuperus, "The populist deficiency of European social democracy."
77 Ibid.
78 Michael Fleischhacker, "Können die etablierten Parteien im Populismuscontest bestehen?," Die Presse
May 6, 2013.
style ‘shutdown.’ While it is expected that this year’s EP election anti-EU populist parties will gain a record share of votes (ranging from 16 to 25 percent),\(^79\) the concrete implications for such an anti-European parliament are still anyone’s guess. If a significant number of Eurosceptic MEPs manage to coalesce as the French *Front National* and Dutch PVV they are planning to do,\(^81\) stalemate is the likely result. If, on the other hand, the populist share of votes will be more modest than currently hyped, no significant changes are to be expected. A study on past voting behavior of anti-European MEPs concluded that so far their impact on policy making has been little: ‘populist radical right focuses its role on gaining publicity rather than participating in policy-making activities in the European Parliament.’\(^82\) Above all, it is far from certain that the anti-EU populist groups will be able to cooperate. Even in the run up to the elections, ideological cracks are beginning to appear between the different parties, which may undermine a united anti-EU front.

Provided that the EP will be able to cope with its internal ‘dissenters,’ the likely *modus vivendi* after the 2014 elections will see greater cooperation among the two main parties, the European People’s Party (EPP) and the social democrats resembling something like a grand coalition. This may not have a significant impact in terms of the EP’s ability to carry out its parliamentary duties, but it would certainly be detrimental to European politics over the long-term. People across Europe are turning to populists because they sense that mainstream politics offers no meaningful alternatives to a prescribed course. A grand coalition at European level might therefore exacerbate what is already felt now: a mounting gap between elites and people and no choice to select political alternatives.

**Permissive consensus?**

As discussed, populism has to be understood as a symptom of the wounded relationship between the elites and the people, which is exacerbated by lack of political discussion and choice. The European system of governance epitomizes this kind of distorted relationship between elites and peoples. In a functioning political system, political parties would distil different political opinions and resulting choices as well as mediate among those. Yet, lacking proper parties,
government and a public sphere, the European system is structurally flawed in this respect.83 For decades the European project has been carried out under the auspices of a ‘permissive consensus’ driven by ‘enlightened and far-sighted elites.’84 This kind of unquestioned support can no longer be taken for granted. The popular rejection of the European constitution was a clear signal in this respect. Similarly to national politics, European citizens no longer accept elites deciding for them. Instead they and are demanding ‘re-politicization of politics.’ As long as these underlying causes of anti-EU sentiment are not properly addressed, European elites will only be muddling through from one crisis to the next. This seemed to have worked up until now, but it is certainly not a recipe for a well-functioning, sustainable and democratic institution—albeit *sui-generis*, which the European Union strives to be.

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Populism and the European elections in Cyprus

Ellada Ioannou

The aim of this paper, is to examine the rise of Populism in Europe and its association with the increase in anti-European sentiments, using Cyprus as a case study. A questionnaire in the format of a survey, was completed by 1009 Cypriot participants. The findings, were that compared to other European Union member states, show that Populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus seem, at present, not to be extensively prevalent. However, there seems to be a slight shift towards Euroscepticism and pre-conditions for the emergence and rise of radical right-wing Populism in Cyprus, are evident.

Introduction

While definitions of populism have varied over the years, making “populism” a rather vague and ill-defined concept, scholars and political analysts agree that its general ideology is that society is divided into two groups: the “pure people” and the “corrupt elitist” and that politics should be, above all, an expression of the general will of the people.²

With its positive connotation, it is argued, that populism can have a positive, corrective impact on democracy, by pointing out the need to integrate people’s ideas and interests into the political system and the political agenda.³

However, “populism” in general has acquired a negative connotation, as a potential threat to democracy, due to its historical association with authoritarian rule and due to some of its characteristics such as “illiberal democracy” and its exclusive nature. “Illiberal democracy” is described as the rejection of all limitations on the expression of majority will, such as protection of the rights of minorities and the independence of key institutions.⁴ The exclusive nature of populism as a threat to democracy refers to the tendency of populists to exclude certain groups of people that

¹ Economist and Political analyst
³ Kaltwasser C.R. 2012. Scholars should not just assume that populism is bad for democracy, but should instead concentrate on explaining populism’s positive and negative effects. LSE EUROPP Blog. 15 October 2012. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50146/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk_Scholars_should_not_just_assume_that_populism_is_bad_for_democracy_bu.pdf
do not fit to their definition of “the people”.

In other words, populist parties and movements are often attributed with being intolerant, xenophobic, racist and as having the tendency to divide people into “friends” and “enemies”.

In Europe, populism is also closely associated with anti-European tendencies and Euroscepticism. The European Union (EU) tends to be described as an ‘elite driven’ project from the beginning and that the process of European integration, has so far relied on a pro-integration propensity among mainstream, political elites and on the permissive consensus at a mass level. Eurosceptics accuse the EU of a “democratic deficit” and of being “a club of elite”, thus employing the populist argument of “the people” vs “the elite” on a European level.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2002) distinguish between two types of Euroscepticism: “hard” Euroscepticism and “soft” Euroscepticism. “Hard” Euroscepticism is defined as a principled opposition to the EU and to the process of European integration; whereas “soft” Euroscepticism refers to an expressed concern on one or a number of EU policy area(s) or to the sense that “national interest” is at odds with the EU’s trajectory.

As the emergence of populist parties and movements is particularly observed during social and economic transition periods, the combination of the economic crisis in Europe and long term trends of political mistrust and disappointment, have provided fertile ground for the rise of populist parties and movements in Europe. Indeed, recent years have seen the rapid rise of European populist parties and movements, many of which have triumphed electorally, or have succeeded to establish themselves as relevant political forces with solid electoral bases. While the ideology and/or the

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Taggart. P. 1997. The Populist Politics of Euroscepticism. In: UNSPECIFIED (Unpublished). Archive of European Integration. Available online at [http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism_a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf](http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism_a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf)
platform of these populist parties may differ, they have something in common: their hostility towards the EU and particularly, the prospect of further European Integration.

A comprehensive discussion and research on the topic of growing populism and its association with Euroscepticism, is timely, pertinent and warranted. With the next European Parliament (EP) elections approaching, there are fears that populist parties which advocate for less European integration or even for outright withdrawal from the Eurozone and the EU as such, could make significant gains in these European elections. This could possibly have significant implications for the European agenda, European democracy and the EU as a whole.

The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the challenges posed by the recent rise of populism in Europe and its association with the increase in anti-European sentiments, by examining the case of Cyprus. This paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

* Is there a rise in populism and in anti-European tendencies in Cyprus?
* If yes, what could be the main reasons for this?
* What could be the effect of growing populism, on the results of the EU election in Cyprus?

In this paper it is argued that, compared to other member states, populism and especially “hard” Euroscepticism in Cyprus, are not as present and seem to be a limited force.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the current situation in Europe. The second section provides an overall view of the current situation at the Cypriot level. Here, the focus is on the current political situation in Cyprus and on the Cypriots’ attitudes, by employing the use of survey responses on mass-based populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus. The final section of this paper discusses the future implications of the rise in populism.

1. Situation in Europe
For some time now, disillusionment with the EU has been spreading throughout the Member States, largely due to the emergence of the economic crisis. The Eurobarometer indicated that, in 2007, 52% of EU citizens had a positive image of the EU\textsuperscript{11}, while in 2013, following the eruption of the economic crisis, this percentage fell to 30%.\textsuperscript{12}


This rise in Euroscepticism has been accompanied by the rise in many populist and Eurosceptic parties which aspire in the coming EU elections, to cash in on the protest votes of the people who feel they have been disappointed by the EU. Many analysts warn that there is a mostly, highly conservative shift among the European citizens, something which will feed many right wing populist parties, gaining them votes and sending them in greater numbers to the EP.

Many consider “the rise of the populist parties and especially the rise of the far right”, as a mere consequence of the economic crisis that hit Europe.\textsuperscript{13} However, this is not the case entirely.\textsuperscript{14} Many right-wing populist parties were already present in the political scene well before the crisis erupted and even had big electoral successes.\textsuperscript{15} Such a party is the National Front (Front National) in France which was originally founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. It has succeeded to become a major force of French right-wing nationalism by the 1990s, and in the 2002 French presidential elections, Le Pen, progressed to the presidential run-off election.\textsuperscript{16} Mudde (2013)\textsuperscript{17}, while examining the successes of the far right populist parties between the years of 2005-2013, found that there have been examples of gains for such parties in Austria, Britain, France, Hungary and the Netherlands, but that there have also been examples of electoral losses for far right parties in Belgium, Italy and Slovakia.

However, there are clear examples of populist parties for which the economic crisis has been the main reason behind their electoral success and their increase in popularity. Greece, offers two examples of such parties, albeit of completely different ideologies: the case of the populist radical left-wing party of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and of the far-right populist party of Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn). Both these parties, before the crisis were struggling to stay afloat on the political scene and had a very low percentage of popular votes. Amidst the crisis however,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Mudde. C. 2013. The Myth of Weimar Europe. \textit{Open Democracy}. 20 August 2013. Available at \url{http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/myth-of-weimar-europe} [Accessed 8 January 2014]
\end{itemize}
their popularity rocketed enabling them to become major political powers in the current political scene of Greece.\(^\text{18}\)

In general, the reasons behind the successes of many populist parties go beyond the economic crisis and its effects. Rather, what we are now experiencing, with the crisis and its disastrous effects on the economies and the people of Europe, is the setting of a scene which offers fertile ground and favors, mostly, the rise of populist right wing parties.\(^\text{19}\) Right wing parties, like the French Front National (FN) and Geert Wilder’s Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), use the crisis to advance their nationalistic rhetoric and promote their Euroscepticism.\(^\text{20}\)

It is interesting to note however that, amidst the economic crisis many right-wing populist parties have adopted many left wing attributes in their economic policies to broaden their electoral appeal. Rather than advocating for neo-liberalism, many right wing populist parties, like for example the FNs’ and the Danish Peoples’ Party, promote economic policies which can be described as social democratic, by supporting protectionist policies, the welfare system and even for some renationalization of key state assets.\(^\text{21}\) Nevertheless, all their economic positions are in line with their nativism, that is, that they are restricted to protect the native’s interests only.\(^\text{22}\)

According to polls and the last results of national elections, 12 of 28 right wing populist parties of the EU Member states, (in France, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark) who recorded double digit percentages at the national level, are expected to enter the EP.\(^\text{23}\)


\(^{22}\) Ibid.

This paper will focus on analyzing the situation in Europe in relation to far right-populist parties as they are the ones mostly perceived as a “threat”.

2. Current situation in Cyprus

Compared to other EU member states, populism in Cyprus seems at present, to be a limited force. The few examples of seemingly populist parties and movements in Cyprus do not attract much support and have not become a threat to the mainstream political parties.

Furthermore, currently in Cyprus “hard” Euroscepticism is barely present among the parties. In Cyprus there are four mainstream parties: DISY, AKEL, DIKO and EDEK. DISY (Democratic Rally), DIKO (Democratic Party) and EDEK (Movement for Social Democracy) have been traditionally pro-European. Originally, principled opposition to the EU came mainly from the communist party, AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People). In the past, AKEL maintained a hard Eurosceptic position, mainly on ideological grounds. However, the positive trends in the Cypriot public opinion of the EU, along with the prospect that Cyprus’ accession into the EU could contribute to the reunification of Cyprus, led the party to alter its stance in 1995 and subsequently, AKEL’s position has shifted from hard to soft Euroscepticism.  

In Cyprus there are no “single issue Eurosceptic parties”, as is the case in other EU member states and overall the political parties in Cyprus are in broad agreement about the desirability of the European project. Euroscepticism is thus mostly expressed as a form of protest to various policies of the EU and as a result of feelings of disappointment and disillusionment. However, there seems to be a slight increase in Euroscepticism amongst the Cypriot citizens, who have been traditionally pro-European, due to the effects of the economic crisis and the role of the EU in Cyprus’s bailin agreement.

On the 25th of March 2013, Cyprus agreed to a last-ditch deal with Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) to shut down its second largest bank and impose a bank deposit haircut for deposits over €100,000 in return for a

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€10-billion bailout. This unprecedented deposit haircut shocked the Cypriot people and sparked anger, dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the politicians and mostly towards the EU.25

Along with a rise in Euroscepticism, the populist trend, which at present sweeps across Europe, has also not bypassed Cyprus. While there are various movements operating in Cyprus which could be affiliated to right-wing populism, the majority of these are very marginal. There is however, one exception, the National Popular Front, which has attracted much attention and raised some concerns about the future development of far right wing populism in Cyprus.

The National Popular Front (Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο - ELAM)

In 2008, the same year that the communist leader of AKEL, Dimitris Christofias, was elected as the new President of the Republic of Cyprus, a nationalist movement, the National Popular Front (ELAM) was founded in Cyprus. In May 2011, ELAM was approved as a legal political party by the former Attorney General of Cyprus. Currently there is a dispute between ELAM and the current Attorney General who claims that ELAM is not registered as a political party under the current law.26

ELAM is considered to be the brother party of the far right, extremist party of Golden Dawn in Greece and it initially existed under the name Golden Dawn Cyprus Branch. On its website, ELAM has the webpage link of Golden Dawn and often posts press releases and other documents issued by Golden Dawn. Its current leader Christos Christou, as well as a lot of ELAM’s members, were initially members in the Golden Dawn.27 ELAM and Golden Dawn share the same ideology and have close cooperation with each other.

ELAM has the features which are attributed to far right populism: a strong sense of nationalism, xenophobia, authoritarianism and populism. Its ideology is described as “popular and social

nationalism” and ELAM’s main goal is to protect and promote Greek nationalism in Cyprus. The main position of ELAM is the rejection of the bizonal, bi-communal federation as a solution to the Cyprus problem. ELAM supports that instead, the only viable solution is to have a strong central government to cater to the Greek Cypriots and to the extent that it must, to the minorities, such as the Turkish Cypriots.

ELAM puts forward strong populist and anti-systemic rhetoric, declaring that it is the only true representative and advocate of the “people” and the only party that opposes the Memorandum agreement which was signed for the “bail-in” of Cyprus and which obliges strict austerity measures. It accuses politicians and the other political parties as being corrupt, labeling them as “faithful and obedient servants of Troika” while also accusing the Cypriot President and his government of being “perjurers”.

Anti-immigration is the other issue which dominates the platform of ELAM.

The number of foreign citizens residing in Cyprus has been increasing vastly in the last years. In 2001 the population census recorded that 9.4% of the total population were foreign citizens. By 2011, this percentage increased to 21.4%. Of this, 62.6% were EU citizens and 37.3% were Eastern Europeans and Asians. The large number of legal immigrants, especially the number of illegal immigrants along with the number of refugees and asylum seekers, became a cause of increasing concern among the Cypriots in the recent years.

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ELAM advocates for quotas for EU nationals and declares to put an end to illegal immigration.\textsuperscript{34} It believes that immigrants and asylum seekers, especially Muslims, pose a real threat to the socio-demographic, religious and cultural identity of the Greek Cypriots, while also exacerbating the problem of unemployment in Cyprus with immigrants depriving Greek Cypriots of jobs.\textsuperscript{35} ELAM members, many of which are young adults and teenagers, have been accused of racism and acts of violence against immigrants as well as against Greek Cypriots, especially communists, who oppose ELAM’s views.\textsuperscript{36} However, so far, ELAM does not portray the same violent image, mobilization and rhetoric of Golden Dawn, nor does it publicly display the same strong attachment to the Nazi ideology.

Contrary to other far right wing populist parties in Europe, ELAM does not have a charismatic leader whose strong personality or rhetoric would appeal to the masses, gathering support for the party. Rather, ELAM managed to acquire visibility mainly due to its association to Golden Dawn which has in the recent years enjoyed widespread public support and vast media attention in Greece and abroad. ELAM seeks to boost its popularity by mirroring the methods and policies of the Golden Dawn, for example, hosting charity events exclusively for Greek Cypriots facing hardships, portraying an image of military discipline and offering nationalistic solutions for the problems faced by the country.\textsuperscript{37}

With regards to the EU, ELAM expresses “soft” Euroscepticism. As a principle, ELAM does not oppose the EU or Cyprus’s membership, supporting that “as Greeks, we belong with the other European people”.\textsuperscript{38} However, ELAM opposes further European integration and argues in favor of an intergovernmental EU. Furthermore, ELAM has been increasingly hardening its position towards the EU, as it accuses the EU of “turning a blind eye” to Turkeys’ consistent violation of human rights in Cyprus. ELAM also states that it would support Cyprus’s exit from the Eurozone, if it believed that the Euro endangered the country’s best interests.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.
Following a year after its creation, ELAM participated in the European elections of 2009 where it won only 663 votes (0.22% of the votes).\(^{40}\) In two years’ time however, in the last parliamentary elections of 2011, ELAM gained 4,354 votes and 1.08% of the votes, albeit without being able to elect any Members of the Parliament.\(^{41}\) In the 2013 presidential elections, ELAM won 3,899 votes, a percentage of 0.88% and ranked 4th among eleven candidates.\(^{42}\) While ELAM is predicted to have some gains in the upcoming elections, it does not yet have a very strong electoral appeal among Cypriots and it is not expected to gain a seat in the EP.

Rather, the implications of a possible rise in ELAMs’ popularity will be felt only at the national level. ELAM has tripled its percentage in the last 13 years and keeps seeing its percentages rising. It is believed that in an abnormal or crisis situation, right wing populist parties can acquire political momentum and dynamics that boost their popularity.\(^{43}\) Consequently, the recent rise of the populist radical right parties is to a large extent a product of the ongoing systemic (economic and political) crisis in EU.

In the effort to better comprehend the reasons for ELAMs’ success, this study seeks to investigate the attitudes of Cypriot citizens, in order to identify whether the conditions which favor the rise of radical right wing populist parties are present in Cyprus. The intention of this analysis is therefore to identify and examine (i) possible traits of populism among Cypriot citizens that benefit or could benefit right-wing populist parties and secondly (ii) to examine whether there has been an associated rise in Euroscepticism.


2.2 Survey on Populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus

Methodology

Participant Demographics
A questionnaire designed by the researcher, was completed by 1009 participants. The participants were Cypriot citizens residing in areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus (in the southern government controlled part of the country as opposed to the northern Turkish occupied areas). Fifty two percent of the participants were males and 42.8% were females. Four age groups were examined. The first was the age group of 18-24 year olds which comprised 13.8% of the sample group, 51.5% were in the 25-40 years of age category, 26.7% were in the 41-60 years of age category and 8% were in the category of 61 years and over. In relation to the level of education of the participants, 2.5% achieved a primary school level, 19.3% achieved a secondary level education, 38% had attained a Bachelor’s degree, 35% had achieved a Masters level education and 5.3% had attained a Doctorate level of education.

With respect to professional occupation, 18.6% of the participants were unemployed, 8.5% were students, 0.6% were farmers, 32.8% were private sector employees, 15.3% were public servants, 10.6% were self-employed, 1.4% were military officers, 0.5% were homemakers, 5.7% were pensioners and 5.9% were of other profession.

Participants that resided in cities comprised of 73.4 % of the sample group, 16.8% were residents in villages and 9.7% resided in towns. Additionally, six income groups were established, 22.4% of the participants had no income, 24% earned up to 1000 euros per month, 29.8% earned between 1001 and 2000 euros per month, 13.1% attained between 2001 and 3000 euros per month, 5.6% earned between 3001 and 4000 euros per month and 5.1% earned above 4001 euros per month.

When questioned about their political ideologies, the participants were classified into nine categories. 8.6% of the participants identified themselves as social democrats, 13% as centrists, 30.6% as right wing, 8.3% as left wing, 2.1% as environmentalist, 5.8% as nationalists, 3.3% as communists, 6% as other and 22.2% stated that they had no political ideology.

Sampling
Data was collected using a questionnaire which was distributed via social networking sites and by hand at various community centers. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed via email to representative bodies of all political parties in Cyprus, as well as various tertiary institutions. Approximately 5000 questionnaires were distributed. All completed questionnaires sent back to the researcher were submitted and used as data.
Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using KwikSurvey, a free online survey creator. It was distributed as an electronic link, via email and published on social network sites, informing prospective participants of the purpose of the survey and secures their anonymity. The questionnaire was also printed as a hard copy in order to be distributed to people who did not have the necessary technical skills to complete an electronic questionnaire (for example, pensioners). Data collected using hard copies was later recorded electronically. Once all the required responses were collected, the survey data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The survey was built in a manner that would enable comparable results with other similar European studies; hence some of the questions used were influenced by Zapryanova’s paper, “Party Competition, Corruption and Electoral Behavior in the New EU Member States.” The questionnaire was comprised of a total of 28 questions. The first six questions were socioeconomic demographic questions. Question 7 examined the participants’ political ideology. Questions 8-17 aimed to identify possible traits of populism among the participants, measuring variables such as nativism, attitudes towards minority groups and immigrants, trust in government institutions, views of corrupted officials, social class distinction and identification with a “heartland”. Questions 18 and 19 aimed to measure the participants’ democratic values. Questions 20 – 27 were used to measure the participants’ perception of the EU, measuring variables such as perception of Cyprus’ membership in the EU and in the Eurozone, the image of the EU, areas of satisfaction and disappointment with the EU, feelings associated with the EU, knowledge of the EU and the participants’ opinion about European integration. Finally, question 28, required the participants to state whether they are going to vote in the upcoming European Elections in 2014.

Results and Discussion

Populist Trends

Strong sense of identification with ethnicity and country

The sense of national identity seems to be very strong among Cypriots. Most participants (52%) mostly identified themselves with their ethnicity, and secondly with their country (43.4%). EU identification rated relatively low scores, since only 6.7% of participants identified themselves primarily as Europeans and 13.8% secondarily identified themselves as Europeans.

Perceptions of Political Party similarity

In order to measure the perceived similarity of political parties, that is, to capture the degree to which citizens perceive all parties to be the same, participants were asked to choose whether they believe that “all large parties are the same”, “all new and small parties are the same” or whether they believe that “all political parties are the same”. The goal of this question was to try and identify the people who vote for mainstream large parties and those who vote for small and new parties. The large mainstream parties in Cyprus are: the right wing DISY, the communist party AKEL, the centre-right DIKO and the socialist party, EDEK.

We can thus make the following hypotheses:

- If the respondent chose the first option, “all large parties are the same”, then it can be inferred that he/she is most likely to be a supporter or cast a protest vote to one of the small or new parties, the category in which, for example, ELAM falls in.
- If the respondent chose the second option, which is that “all small and new parties are the same”, then it can be assumed that he/she is a voter of mainstream large parties.
- In the case where the respondent has chosen the third option, “that all political parties are the same”, we can assume that the person is likely to not be strongly affiliated to any existed political party and likely to be a protest voter. That person may either wish to abstain from all party politics or be more inclined to vote in favor of any other viable party alternative.

The vast majority of participants perceive that “all political parties are the same” (60.6%), while 27.6% believe that all large parties are the same and only 6.8% perceive that all small and new parties are the same. The 60.6% of participants who perceive that “all parties are the same”, could include a percentage of protest voters. Such voters (unsatisfied / protest voters) are more likely to vote in favor of any other political party which will present itself as something “different” from the mainstream parties and not because he/she positively endorses that party. A protest voter will thus register discontent rather than vote to express an ideological affiliation with a party. Given that a feature of populist parties is their “anti-establishment” image, it is more likely for a populist party to find fertile ground (target) among this type of voters.

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The results show that there is a significant difference between the peoples’ political ideology and their views on political party similarity \[\chi^2 (16, N = 1009) = 63.53, p < 0.001\]. Interesting to note is that, 72.9% of the participants who identify themselves as nationalists believe that “all parties are the same”, while 25.4% believe that “all large parties are the same” and 1.7% believe that “all small and new parties are the same”. In relation to the participants who identify themselves as Communists, 63.6% believe that “all parties are the same”, 30.3% believe that “all small and new parties are the same” and 6.1% believe that “all large mainstream parties” are the same. This relatively high percentage of communists who perceive small/new parties as the same, in a way verifies our hypothesis that participants who perceive “all small and new parties to be the same”, are voters of one of the large mainstream parties, in this example, AKEL.

Very low levels of trust in National Institutions

Using a scale of 1 to 5, choosing 1 for no trust and 5 for complete trust, participants were asked to indicate the level of trust they have in different national institutions which constitute the country’s political system (courts, political parties, army, parliament, police, president, trade unions, church, mass Media). Overall, the majority of participants responded that they do not trust almost all national institutions. The highest percentage of “no trust” was observed for the political parties (65.9%), 52.1% for the Cypriot Parliament, 40.5% for the President and 64.3% for the Army. The lowest percentage of “not trust” was observed for the Judiciary System (Courts, 15.7%) with the majority of participants responding that they neither trust nor distrust it (30%). These results indicate a great disappointment among the Cypriot citizens with the political system. Populists, through their markedly anti-elite discourse, appeal most to the people who have a sentiment of intense disenchantment and distrust of traditional political elites.\(^{46}\)

The findings show that there is significant difference between the participants’ political ideology and their trust in political parties \[\chi^2 (32, N = 1009) =126.44p < 0.001\], their trust in the Judicial System (courts) \[\chi^2 (32, N=1009)=137.64, p < 0.001\], their trust in the parliament \[\chi^2 (32,N=1009)=90.75.p < 0.001\], their trust in the President \[\chi^2 (32, N=1009)=224,507p < 0.001\] and in their trust in the army \[\chi^2 (32,N=1009) = 222.450 p < 0.001\]. Examining all the political

ideologies of the participants, the nationalists seem to be the ones with the highest percentages of no trust in all of the above mentioned key institutions.

**Perception of corruption among public officials**

Most participants believe that corruption among public officials is widespread (43.7%). The percentage of participants who believe that almost all public officials are engaged in corruption was 23.9%, 26.7% believe that some public officials are engaged in corruption and only 4.9% believe that almost no public officials are engaged in corruption. Furthermore, in a following question, corruption was also perceived as one of the two most important problems that are faced in Cyprus at present. Corruption is often cited as a pre-condition for the emergence of populism. Corruption issues feature high on populist parties’ campaign agenda and populists often use anti-corruption rhetoric to attract people’s support away from “elitist” mainstream parties which could be engaged in corruption.

**Turkey and Immigration: The perceived two real threats to peace and security**

When questioned about what they perceive as a real threat to peace and security in Cyprus, given seven choices to choose from (including the choice of “none”), the vast majority of the participants (68%) viewed the neighboring country of Turkey as a real threat. The second most popular threat perceived by participants was the threat of immigrants (25.4%) and third, the threat of ethnic minority groups (18.5%).

There is significant difference between the participants’ political ideology and their perception of threat of immigrants \(\chi^2(8, N = 1009) = 39.68 \ p < 0.001\) and for political ideology and perceived threat of minority groups \(\chi^2(8, N = 1009) = 17.19 \ p < 0.005\). The highest percentage of participants who view minorities and immigrants as threats to peace and security is found among the nationalists. Specifically, 40.7% of the participants who have identified themselves as nationalists view minority groups as a threat and 33.9% view immigrants as a real threat.

**View on Multiculturalism**

To examine their views on multiculturalism, participants were asked to state whether they agree that “ethnic diversity destroys the unity of a country”. 14.3% of participants responded that they strongly agreed, 29.5% agree, 18.6% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed. Again there is a

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48 Ibid.
significant difference between the participants’ political ideology and their perception on ethnic diversity $[\chi^2(32, N = 1009) = 281.62p < 0.001]$. The highest percentage of participants who strongly agree that ethnic diversity erodes a country’s’ unity are nationalists (44.1%).

**Economic situation and corruption, the two important problems faced by Cyprus**

When asked to prioritize the two most important issues faced by the country, participants ranked in order of importance: the country’s economic situation (45.4%) and corruption (31.5%).

**Perceptions on Socioeconomic changes**

In exploring the perceptions of participants about possible increases in the social class gap due to the economic situation in Cyprus, 35.8% of the participants believed that it has increased ‘very much’, while 28.6% believed that it has increased ‘much’. There is significant difference between participants’ political ideology and their perception of how much the economic crisis has increased the social class gap $[\chi^2(32, N = 1009) = 113.88 p < 0.001]$. The majority of the participants who believe that there is a large increase in the social class gap were primarily the communists (69.7%) and then the nationalists (55.9%). When asked whether they believe that Cyprus in the past years was better than present Cyprus, 68.9% of the participants agreed.

Participants answered two questions which were used to measure their authoritarian tendencies/democratic values. Presented with the argument that “we would be in a better position if we cast aside elections and the Parliament and instead had a strong leader who could take all decisions”, 67.1% of the participants disagreed while 18.6% agreed. In the second question, when asked to choose the statement with which they agreed the most, most participants (69.6%) chose that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, in relation to 22.2% of participants who chose the statement that “under some circumstances, authoritarianism is preferable to a democratic government”. These results indicate that overall Cypriot citizens have high level of democratic values.

There is a significant difference between the participants’ political ideology and authoritarian tendencies $[\chi^2(16,N=1009)= 86.05p < 0.001]$. The vast majority of the participants who believe that it is better to have a strong leader who can take all decisions rather than having elections and parliament are nationalists (49.2%). Similarly, there is a significant difference between the participants’ political ideology and the perception that an authoritarian government under some circumstances is more preferable than a democratic one: $[\chi^2(16,N=1009)=151.78p< 0.001]$. 57.6% of the participants who said that they prefer an authoritarian government are nationalists.
Feeling, knowledge, areas of discontent and of content

The survey results also indicate a high level of distrust in the EU. The majority of participants (30.3%) answered that they have no trust in the EU while only 3.1% said that they had complete trust. The results come in contrast with the results of the Eurobarometer of Spring 2008 (before the economic crisis hit Cyprus) which showed that Cypriots exhibited high levels of support for the EU, as 71% said that they trusted the EU.49 In line with the same Eurobarometer report, the majority of participants in the survey consider Cyprus’ membership in the EU “a good thing”, however the percentage is lower (52% in 2008 and 47.5% according to this survey).50 A large percentage of participants (34.4%) consider Cyprus’ membership to be neither a good nor a bad thing.

In relation to the feeling inspired by the EU, 36.9% of participants answered that the EU inspires in them “hope” while 26% that inspires in them “mistrust”. Compared to the results of the report of the Eurobarometer in Autumn 2004, (a few months following Cyprus’ accession in the EU), the percentage of participants who said that the EU inspires in them “hope” has fallen (60% in 2004 to 36.9%, according to this survey) and the feeling of “mistrust” has increased (14% in 2004 to 26%, according to this survey).51 When asked to rate their knowledge on the EU, the majority of participants (34.7%) felt that they had an average level of knowledge, while 26.6% said that they had a good level of knowledge.

When requested on which issues, if any, they feel disappointed with the EU, the majority of participants chose support of the EU on the Cyprus issue (71.1%), followed by the support on the management of the economic crisis in Cyprus (70.2%) and then the management of the economic crisis in Europe (42%). As the most positive results of the EU, the majority of participants chose “freedom of movement” (65%), “peace and security” (53.2%) and “the student exchange programs such as Erasmus” (28.9%).

The majority of participants (51.6%) are in favor of more European integration (“more Europe”) and oppose Cyprus’ exit from the Eurozone (65.2%). With regard to the upcoming EU elections

50 Ibid.
only 42.4% of the participants said that they will vote, 19.9% will probably vote, 18.8% will probably not vote and 13.7% will not vote.

Conclusions

So far, Cyprus has been an exception in Europe, lacking a strong populist party and “hard” Eurosceptic parties. However, the findings of the survey indicate that there is movement among citizens towards Euroscepticism and evidence of pre-conditions for the emergence and rise of populism in Cyprus. Currently, Cyprus experiences a period of immense crisis, with unprecedented high levels of unemployment, harsh austerity measures and deep economic recession. There are very low levels of trust in the political institutions, large discontent with all political elites, large socioeconomic discontent and there is perception of widespread corruption.

Whilst one cannot exclude the possibility of a left-wing populist party emerging from these conditions, the likelihood of an emergence or surge in right wing populism in Cyprus is more prominent. The majority of participants who seem to be more affiliated to populist traits are participants who identify themselves as nationalists. Nationalists perceive a higher degree of party similarity, have the lowest trust in the political system and are the most hostile to liberal democracy tending to authoritarianism. Furthermore, nationalists exhibit strong populist right wing traits, such as anti-immigration tendencies and objection to multiculturalism.

Overall, Cypriot citizens seem to continue having a general good image of the EU and the majority still support both Cyprus’ membership to the EU and in the Eurozone. However, trust in the EU has fallen, as the findings of the survey suggest, due to the perceived lack of support of the EU on the Cyprus issue and in relation to the management of the economic crisis in Cyprus.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

With only a few months left to the European elections, the question of whether populist Eurosceptic parties will be able to have significant gains and increase in their number of seats in the EP, becomes more pertinent. In the case of such a potential success, more questions arise: To what extent will they be able to affect decision making at the level of the EP and to what extent will they be likely to affect the overall process of European integration and the European agenda? According to polls and results of previous national elections, the right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties which are most likely to have significant gains from these elections are: the French Front
National, the UKIP in the United Kingdom (UK), the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), the Austrian Freedom Party, the Bulgarian Ataka, the Hungarian Jobbik, the Greek Golden Dawn and the Swedish Democrats. The Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, the Italian Northern League, the British BNP and the Danish People’s party, are also expected to be represented in the EP.

Le Pen and Wilders, the leader of the PVV, had long been mobilized to persuade other likeminded parties to join them in forming an alliance to collaborate in the elections. Their aim is to create a formal Eurosceptic group in the EP which will act as a “Trojan horse” and wreck the EU from inside.52 By having a political group, their Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will secure access to committee seats and chair and to more prominent chamber speaking rights, as well as, access to additional funding which they can use for promotional activities in their national constituencies.53

Thus far, the likelihood is for the political group to include the National Front, the PVV, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Italian Northern League, the Belgian Vlaams Belang and the Sweden’s Democrats. The UKIP and the Danish Peoples’ Party have turned down the offers by Le Pen and Wilder to join the group, due to their refusal to collaborate with the FN because of its extremist reputation and its anti-Semitism.54,55 Perceived extreme right wing political parties such as the Hungarian Jobbik, the Greek Golden Dawn and the British party of the BNP have been excluded from joining the group.56

In order to be able to form a political group, the alliance needs to have at least 25 MEPs which will represent a quarter of the EU member states, that is, seven out of the 28 EU member states. The major force driving the new group is Marine Le Pen’s Front National, which if it succeeds as predicted, will gain 20 or more seats. Mudde (2013) predicts that the far right would gain a total of

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53 Ibid.
34 seats, which is roughly 4% of all EP seats and at best, up to 50 seats, which is 6.5% of the seats in the EP.\textsuperscript{57}

There has been a debate among scholars and political analysts as to whether this alliance will eventually bear fruit, given many past failed attempts. Even if the group is formed, there are expressed doubts as to whether it can be a coherent group and whether it will stand in time.\textsuperscript{58} This could be proven unlikely, as political scientist Kai Arzheimer supports, given the parties’ ideological differences, their often conflicting nationalisms and the difficult personalities of many of the far right politicians.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, some of these parties could refuse cooperation with right wing parties which could be labelled as extreme so as to avoid stigmatisation.\textsuperscript{60}

But even if the alliance becomes a political group and even if all other populist right parties have significant gains from the elections, political analysts have doubted the extent of power they can have in the EP. After investigating the current behaviour of populist radical right (PRR) MEPs in the EP, Morris (2013)\textsuperscript{61} supports that even if there is a significant gain in the representation of radical right parties in the new EP, this does not necessarily mean that this will lead to a dramatic rise in their influence. He bases his assumption on the fact that they have, in general, been more active in making speeches and asking questions at the plenary sessions, rather than involving themselves in the committee work of the EP, thus not really affecting policy making.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, Morris finds that radical right MEPs have “no blackmail powers” over other party groups, as in general they have an impact on a policy, only if a mainstream group with sufficient political influence happens to agree with them.\textsuperscript{63} Given that the PRR face significant barriers to forming strong alliances in the EP, the likelihood for them to affect policy making is limited.\textsuperscript{64} Finally, Morris’ findings show that the three larger political groups (the EPP, S&D and ALDE) exert

\begin{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{58} Fischer, H. 2013. Denmark's populists on the rise. DW DE. 19 November 2013. Available at \url{http://www.dw.de/denmarks-populists-on-the-rise/a-17238507} [Accessed 8 January 2014]

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
disproportionately greater influence over the policy making process and thus the effect of the populist radical right parties on EU legislature is constrained.\textsuperscript{65}

The major effect of possible successes of the PRR in these EU elections is the impact at the national level, as this could bring pressure on the national mainstream parties to harden their approach towards the EU or in relation to EU policies, such as immigration, out of fear of losing their electoral appeal.\textsuperscript{66} This is especially the case with the predicted success of the UKIP party which poses the most serious challenge for the EU at present, as it can affect UK’s relationship with the EU. If the UKIP party is the winner of the EU elections in the UK, (as widely predicted), then this could have great implications for the British Prime Minister David Cameron and his governing party of Conservatives.\textsuperscript{67} Having being under an enormous pressure, he eventually bowed to demands and promised to call an EU referendum in 2017, in order to determine the UK’s membership in the EU.\textsuperscript{68} A win for the UKIP party in the elections could be a bad omen for the result of the referendum and thus a bad omen for the future of the UK’s membership to the EU.

Furthermore, once elected to the EP, the right populist parties are given the chance to boost their image at a national level. Given that their interest in the proceedings of the European parliament, as well as their power over policy making is limited,\textsuperscript{69} right populist MEPs seek to speak out at plenary sessions so as to publicize their views and show to their supporters back home that they are sabotaging the EU from inside, as in the case of Nigel Farage.\textsuperscript{70}

With respect to the Cyprus European Elections, the right wing populist party of ELAM is predicted (according to a recent poll) to have an increase in its percentage in relation to the EP elections in 2009 from 0.22% to 1%.\textsuperscript{71} Although this increase in its percentage may be a source of concern at

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
the national level, it is not enough to enable it to enter the EP by electing an MEP, forecasted to finish in sixth place in the elections.

The same recent poll indicates that the likely winner of the elections will be the alliance between two traditional pro-European parties, the governing right party DISY and the smaller centre-right party, EVROKO (European Party). The communist, “soft” Eurosceptic party of AKEL is predicted to gain the second highest percentage of votes and subsequently to follow, the centre-right, pro-European DIKO, the pro-European alliance of socialist EDEK and the Cyprus Green Party and the newly founded party of the Citizens’ Alliance.

CONCLUSION

In the recent years many populist parties and especially right Eurosceptic populist parties have experienced a major increase in their percentages and many are expected to gain seats in the new EP with the upcoming EU elections in May 2014.

The reasons behind the rise of these parties are associated not only to the economic crisis that has hit the EU, which divided the Member states to debtors and creditors, but also on socioeconomic problems such as immigration and corruption issues. By capitalizing on the feelings of disappointment and mistrust towards domestic political elites and EU “elites”, populist parties, have increased their appeal to voters with their anti-establishment, anti-corruption, anti-immigration and anti-EU discourse.

European leaders, such as the Prime Minister of Italy Enrico Letta and EU top officials such as the European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, warn that possible gains for the populist parties could “backlash” against the EU. Mr. Letta especially has warned that populist parties could have the ability to cripple the EU by blocking legislature in the EP associated with the pursuance of economic growth policies.  

However, the recent study of Morris (2013) suggests that while the radical right parties might be able to increase their representation in the EP, given their current operation in the EP and the various constraints they face, they will be less likely to affect policy making to an extensive level. This surge of Eurosceptic populist parties will likely have more implications for mainstream parties

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at a national level who might be pressured to harden their approach on European issues and the process of European integration.

The rise of the populist parties in Europe has been mostly considered as a threat. However, as Bryder (2009)\(^4\) suggests, it can be seen also as corrective to democracy as well as corrective to the political system, both at the national and the EU level. The rise in populism is mostly a product of citizens’ dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the political system and the politicians. Thus, the rise in populism should be perceived as a wakeup call by the political “elites”, in order to look more closely and respond to the concerns of the people, thus restoring their trust and confidence in the EU and national political systems.

\(^4\) Bryder, T. 2009. Populism- a threat or a challenge for the democratic system? [pdf] Department of Political Science. University of Copenhagen. Available at http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism__a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf/
Appendix A: The Questionnaire

Survey Titled: «The Risks of growing Populism and the European Elections: The case of Cyprus»

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your age?
   - 18-24
   - 25-40
   - 41-60
   - 61+

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Primary education
   - Secondary education
   - Bachelor’s Degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Doctoral degree (Ph.D)

4. What is your current occupation?
   - Unemployed
   - Student
   - Farmer
   - Private employee
   - Public employee
   - Self-employed
   - Military
   - House person
   - Retired
   - Other

5. Where do you live?
   - City
6. What is your average monthly income?
- 0 €
- Up to 1000 €
- 1001 – 2000 €
- 2001 – 3000 €
- 3001 – 4000 €
- 4001 € and over

7. With which of the following do you most closely identify yourself? And which do you identify with secondly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Local Community</th>
<th>Football Team</th>
<th>The EU</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Choice</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Choice</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. How would you describe your political ideology?
- Social democratic
- Right wing
- Left wing
- Centrist
- Environmentalist
- Nationalist
- Communist
- Other
- I do not have a political ideology

9. Consider the existing political parties and choose the statement with which you agree the most:
- All large political parties are the same
- All new and small political parties are the same.
10. To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions to look after your interests? Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 for no trust at all and 5 for great trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Most of your countrymen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Most people you know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Union</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. How widespread do you think bribe-taking and corruption is in this country?

- Almost no public officials are engaged in it.
- A few public officials are engaged in it.
- Most public officials are engaged in it.
- Almost all public officials are engaged in it.

12. Do you think any of these pose a real threat to peace and security in this society?

- National and religious minorities in Cyprus
- Immigrants
- Turkey
- Other neighboring countries
- Terrorist groups
- Radical movements
None

13. “Ethnic diversity erodes a country’s unity”. What is your position on this statement?

- I completely disagree
- I disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- I agree
- I completely agree

14. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing the country at present? What is the second most important problem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The poor economic situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The loss of decision-making power and erosion of national identity after entry into the EU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>The poor condition of the environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decay of moral values in the society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>

15. How much do you think that the present financial situation of the country has increased the gap between social classes?

- Not at all
- Little
- Enough
- Very
- Very much

16. Cyprus in the past was better than Cyprus today. Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know
17. “Some people say that we would be better off if we get rid of the Parliament and elections and have a strong leader who can decide everything.” Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

18. With which of the following statements do you agree the most?

- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
- Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.
- For me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic regime or not.

19. Generally speaking, would you say that Cyprus’s membership in the EU is a….

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bad thing</th>
<th>Neither bad nor good</th>
<th>Good thing</th>
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</table>

Cyprus's EU membership

20. Do you believe that Cyprus should exit the Euro zone?

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

21. In general does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very negative</th>
<th>Fairly negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Fairly positive</th>
<th>Very positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

General image of the EU

22. In which of the following issues do you feel that the EU has disappointed you? (Please select up to three issues or select “none” if you do not feel any disappointment with the EU).

- Cyprus problem
23. Which of the following do you think is/are the most positive result(s) of the European Union (EU)?
- Free movement of goods, people and services
- Peace and security among Member States of the EU
- The Euro
- Student exchange programs such as Erasmus
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Economic power of the EU in the world
- Political influence of the EU in the world
- Other
- None

24. Does the EU give you personally the feeling of…? (Please choose one answer)
- Hope
- Trust
- Enthusiasm
- Indifference
- Rejecting it
- Mistrust
- Anxiety

25. How much do you feel you know about the European Union?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of the EU</th>
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</thead>
</table>
26. Some argue that we need more actions and decisions to be taken at a European level (we need “more Europe”). Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

27. Will you be voting in the upcoming European Elections?

- Yes
- Probably yes
- No
- Probably no
- I don’t know
Populism in France: 2014 European elections at stake?

Mathieu Camescasse

After demonstrating strategies of populist political parties of only answering people’s personal beliefs and ideological preferences, historical circumstances will be analysed to explain the development of populist political parties in France and their particular progress during each European election, with a focus on Extreme-Right and Extreme-Left parties. Nevertheless, despite the media attention on a possible uprising risk of populism within the European Union, populist political parties will not have the capacity of blocking the European Union decision-making procedures and modifying the European Union structure. The French example of the Front National becoming the first political party at the upcoming European elections will not therefore have major consequences at the European level. Dissimilarities between populist political parties are therefore an obstacle for having greater influential roles and lower their ability to promote their aims and visions on Europe.

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1 Politicist
1. Introduction

The lack of knowledge of the European institutions and Union – especially amongst young
generations, linked to the democratic deficit and an important shift in European integration during
the 1990s, could provide an explanation for the emergence of Euro-scepticism and populist political
parties. At the European level, the development of a political identity and democratic infrastructures
could be seen as key elements to understanding the emergence of extreme political parties –
political parties struggling against the current political system and their desire for a fundamental
renewal. Since the 1990s, the rise of extreme political parties has been an important issue; recent
development in the European Union and the results of the last elections in different European
countries, such as in France, emphasise the importance of a study on this particular issue.

This will also be one of the most important problems we will have to face in the 2014
European elections. Nonetheless, we need to understand the concept of populism and its
consequences.

The question of populism is particularly important nowadays and more especially in the
coming months before the European elections. Nevertheless, this word is in fact polysemous. A first
general introduction to this political term could be given by this double definition: “the belief that
the instincts of the masses are the only legitimate guide to political action; or a movement that
appeals to popular instincts, resentments or aspirations”. However, nowadays, we need to go further for being able to define populism by using a
more historical approach and employ this term for our analysis during this research: “The term
takes its name from a US 19th-century movement when farmers expressed their disillusion that they
had been let down by false political promises and left to drift into debt.” This political approach is
not only reserved for non-mainstream political parties such as Extreme-Right or Extreme-Left
political parties. We can therefore see with the example of the United-kingdom that mainstream
parties are also prone to using this political strategy: “British politicians often allow their policies
or their rhetoric to become populist – the Thatcherite championing of capital punishment in the
1980s, for example – but they usually fall in line behind more responsible policies eventually, as in
the case of home secretary Douglas Hurd’s firm rejection of the death penalty during the key 1980s
debates.” Populism is therefore not only limited to populist political parties.

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4 Idem
Nevertheless, I will analyse in greater depth the problem posed by populism with the Extreme-Right parties. Mainstream political parties are less keen on only using a populist strategy and they have internal checks-and-balances to control this particular use due to their participation in local, national and European governing institutions. In France, or within the European Union, Extreme-Left parties such as *Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste*\(^5\) (New Anticapitalist Party in English) and *Lutte Ouvrière*\(^6\) (Workers' Struggle in English) are virtually non-existent\(^7\). Some journalists considered Front de Gauche as a populist coalition, but taking into account Andrew Heywood’s definition of populism, as follows: “Movements or parties described as populist have been characterized by their claim to support the common people in the face of ‘corrupt’ economic or political elites. […] Populist politicians therefore make a direct appeal to the people and claim to give expression to their deepest hopes and fears, all intermediary institutions being distrusted. Although populism may be linked, with any cause or ideology, it is often seen to be implicitly authoritarian, ‘populist’ democracy being the enemy of ‘pluralist’ democracy\(^8\), we cannot consider this coalition of parties as populist. This alliance and its elected Members of Parliament (henceforth MPs) or Members of European Parliament (henceforth MEPs) have not an entire anti-system approach: at the European Parliament, its MEPs are part of the group European United Left-Nordic Green Left and participate in European Parliament committees legislative work; and at local and regional levels, this coalition shares power with Left mainstream political parties.

For this study, we may therefore only consider Extreme-Right parties as populist political parties. Giving a clear definition of Extreme-Right political parties is in fact quite difficult. This differs across authors and is not unanimously recognised by scholars, and even the concept differs from author to author who variously define this stream of political parties as being either Extreme-Right, far-right or radical right. Herbert Kitschelt therefore defines this stream of political parties with the following characteristics and visions on democracy: “Radical right parties either explicitly reject democracy (regardless of their stance on xenophobia and racism), or they embrace democracy, but make xenophobic mobilisation against immigrants and insistence on a dominant national cultural paradigm obligatory for all residents the central planks of their policies\(^9\).” More

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\(^5\) This political party has any Member of national parliaments or European Parliament. This party was created in 2009 and only received 4.88% nationally of votes at the 2009 European elections.

\(^6\) This political party only received 1.2% nationally at the 2009 European elections.

\(^7\) The threshold for the European elections in France is 5%.


precisely, according to Steven Lukes’ definition\textsuperscript{10}, Extreme-Right political parties are against the Left and conservative-centre political parties, and more especially with regard to political issues; they are nationalists or localists, anti-immigrationists and racists, but he makes a difference between the Extreme-Right political parties and radical Right political parties, which I will not be considering for this research.

The French Extreme-Right could therefore be defined by different ideologies encountered during the last two centuries: “Since then, it has resurfaced many times under different forms such as Boulangism, \textit{fin de siècle} Nationalism, 1930s Leagues, IV Republic Gaullism, Poujadism, and finally National-populism\textsuperscript{11}.” Therefore, nowadays, French Extreme-Right is based on a national-populist ideology; as a focus against the European Union.

In France, several Extreme-Right political parties exist but, only one can really compete in national, local and European elections: the \textit{Front National}. This political party’s ideology is based on: “Both on nationalist appeal, veined with authoritarianism, racism, and anti-Semitism, and on an anti-system/anti-establishment appeal\textsuperscript{12}.” Nevertheless, as Piero Ignazi explains “the equation immigration + security = FN vote does not hold as such\textsuperscript{13}” and his first explanation placed the ethnocentrism as one of the most important reasons for voting \textit{Front National} in France, significantly more than racism\textsuperscript{14}.

More historically, Piero Ignazi explains the change of ideology and a redefinition of values within the \textit{Front National} during the second half of the 1990s; this political party had gradually become more populist: “After the 1995 presidential election success the FN accentuated its extremeness by declaring the ‘right of insurrection’ in the name of a ‘system alternative’. The FN denied any value or legitimacy to the democratic system by defining it false, formal, antipopular, anti-national, and so on. The populist reference became more and more pervasive in 1990s FN discourse\textsuperscript{15}” and after the 1995 presidential election and just before the 1997 General elections, the \textit{Front National} emphasised its populist attributes: “This dynamic touched its zenith in the Tenth


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Idem}.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 119.
party Congress held in Strasbourg in early 1997. The party showed off its organizational strength with a grandiose setting and reinstated its national-popular (and populist) standing."

We will question the capacity of populist political parties to blocking the European Union decision-making procedures. My hypothesis is that despite a potential high score of the *Front National*, which could become the first political party in France at the upcoming European elections, and of other populist political parties in other countries, these kinds of political parties will therefore face obstacles for gaining a greater influential role.

In order to respond to the growing concern about risks of populism at both national and European levels, we will therefore analyse the current situation at both European and French levels with a historical research on votes for populist political parties at presidential and European elections in France. Secondly, we will consider the possible development of a populist vote at the next 2014 European elections in France and within the European Union, and the reasons behind it. Eventually, we will question political objectives of these populist political parties and their relative strategies at the European and national level.

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16 *Idem.*
2. Current situation both at the European and national level

At the European level, Extreme-Right political parties have known a slow but continuous development from the first direct European elections in 1979: “The number of Western European extreme right parties which had entered the national or European parliament had passed from 6 at the beginning of the 1980s to 10 by the end of 1980s, then arriving at 15 in the mid-1990s. Their share of votes more than doubled by rising from 4.75 per cent in the decade 1980–9 to 9.73 per cent in 1990–917.” This slight increase is not homogeneous within the European Union.

Graph 1 Results of Front National at European elections since 1979

At the French level, Extreme-Right political parties and more especially the Front National have known two prosperous decades throughout the 1980s and the 1990s with around ten MEPs elected at each European election; however, Extreme-Right political parties have known a decline in the 2000s, as we can see in Table 1 and Graph 118.

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18 This graph represents the figures presented in table 1.
We can observe, by comparing results from European and presidential elections, that there is no correlation between these results. Its popularity at national and local elections does not have a direct effect on votes at the European elections. This effect is also a counter-example of the European elections being seen as second-order elections\(^\text{21}\), where electors are more prone to voting for anti-establishment and protest political parties, which are seen as being outside the political system.

**Table 2 Results of Front National at French presidential elections since 1979\(^\text{22}\)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Votes (%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>17.90</td>
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The Front National has therefore only three seats and this delegation represents less than 5% of the French delegation at the European Parliament. This is the sixth delegation after *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (European People’s Party), *Parti Socialiste* (Party of European Socialists), *Europe Ecologie-Les Verts* (European Green Party), *Mouvement Démocrate* (European Democratic Party) and *Front de Gauche* (Party of European Left). Their MEPs are not seated with a European political group. Their influence is therefore quite insignificant: no committees or

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delegation positions have been gained and their MEPs are often absent: based on participation\textsuperscript{23}, they ranked 536\textsuperscript{th}, 727\textsuperscript{th} and 731\textsuperscript{st}.

After analysing at the national level, Extreme-Right political parties, we will observe how Extreme-Right political parties have organised themselves and analyse their political influences from the first European elections in 1979 to the present.

An important issue with the presence of Extreme-Right political parties at the European level is the absence of a political group at the European Parliament. A European political group could be defined as follows: “In the European Parliament (EP), national political parties also form into party groups, groupings of like-minded national parties at the transnational level, fulfilling many of the legislative and representative functions of their national counterparts\textsuperscript{24}.” For their choice between different European Parliament groups, national political parties are mostly driven by “a concern to minimize policy incongruence between national and transnational levels\textsuperscript{25}.” Formally, a political group at the European Parliament must be composed of at least twenty-five MEPs coming from at least one-quarter of the Member-States – i.e. in 2014, from at least seven countries and shared political affinities\textsuperscript{26}.

Three Extreme-Right political groups were created at the European Parliament: the first one – Group of the European Right – was created after the 1984 European election with French \textit{Front National}, Italian \textit{Movimento Sociale Italiano} (Italian Social Movement in English), Greek \textit{EPEN} (\textit{Εθνική Πολιτική Ένωσις} or National Political Union in English) and later rejoined by Northern-Irish Ulster Unionist Party, and ceased in 1989. A second group – Technical Group of the European Right – followed the previous group with the \textit{Front National} as main political party but with German \textit{Republikaner} and Belgian \textit{Vlaams Blok}, and ended in 1994. These groups had between 3.3\% and 3.7\% of seats at the European Parliament as we can see in Chart 1.


\textsuperscript{25} Idem.

Between the second group and the third group, some Extreme-Right political parties participated in a mixed and technical group between 1999 and 2001; this European political group was not however based on a common ideology. This group was composed of MEPs from French Front National, Belgian Vlaams Blok, Italian Lega Nord (Northern League in English), neo-fascist Fiamma Tricolore (Tricolour Flame in English) and a third Italian electoral list Lista Bonino (Bonino List in English) which was Radical and pro-European. This group was dissolved after the

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27 This chart represents the results of each European election by their group in Parliament and comes from Wikimedia (URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EP_Groups_1979-2009.png). It was accessed on the 25th of January 2014.
decision by the European Parliament to disable the possibility for political parties and MEPs without common values and ideologies to create a mixed group.

A third political group, Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty was created in 2007 with Extreme-Right and nationalist MEPs from French Front National, Romanian Partidul România Mare (Great Romania Party in English) and a Romanian independent MEP, Belgian Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest in English), Bulgarian Amaka (Attack in English), Italian Alternativa Sociale (Social Alternative in English) and Fiamma Tricolore, an English Independent MEP and Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria in English). This political group, representing less than 3% of the European Parliament, was dissolved less than eleven months after its creation due to internal struggles and an attack on the Romanian people by an Italian MEP.

In 2009, the Front National lost more than half of its MEPs (from 7 to 3) and it therefore became difficult to create a political group. A few months after the June 2009 European elections, the Front National was not able even to reach the requirements for forming a European political party recognised by the European Parliament. A recognised European political party needs to have members seating in regional, national or European parliaments or tree percent cast at the last European elections from at least one quarter of the Member States\(^28\). Nevertheless, the Front National created a European political party called Alliance européenne des mouvements nationaux (The Alliance of European National Movements in English) with amongst its members the Hungarian political party Jobbik and the British National Party\(^29\).

To conclude, we can observe that even when Extreme-Right parties are able to form a political group, they remain to have low influence. They are not able to secure positions at the European Parliament such as chair of delegation or parliamentary committees. Their importance in decision-making procedures was insignificant due to an absence of cohesion\(^30\) and obtaining only a small role at the committee level: “Their protests are rarer in committee and non-attached members are rarely allocated the more significant rapporteurships\(^31\).”

[Accessed 01 February 2014].
3. Future development

Despite the low-risk situation during the last three decades, the next European elections could turn out to be risky. Since the 2009 European elections, populist political parties have tried to be less perceived as Extreme-Right political parties and more as only Eurosceptic political parties at both the left and right of the political system. Lastly, the Norwegian Extreme-Right political party The Progress Party entered in the government’s coalition; and in Slovakia, an Extreme-Right political party gained a provincial election and one of its members became governor. This trend is therefore perceived by some journalists as a larger support on Extreme-Right than on Extreme-Left political parties: “Count insurgents on the left, such as Syriza in Greece and the Five Star movement in Italy, and mainstream parties in Europe are weaker than at any time since the second world war.” Extreme-Right political parties are therefore the coming-together of anti-system voters, acting as populist parties.

Firstly, before analysing the possible development of populist parties at the next European elections, we will try to understand some of the reasons for a support on Extreme-Right and Eurosceptic political parties. France has known one of the biggest falls on support for EU membership in the last two decades (i.e. percentage of people saying membership was ‘a good thing’): support has decreased from 75% in 1990-91 to 43% in 2004 whereas the United-Kingdom, Germany and Italy has faced a decrease of -29 points. This could be explained by a change of values and identification towards the European Union and what EU membership means. The French Maastricht Treaty referendum in 1992 was an important swing point with a strong campaign against this treaty. The French referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in 2005 was also an important momentum. These two referenda gave different results: positive (51% for) for the former and negative (55% against) for the latter, but public opinion was divided with about 50% for each possible reply. The Front National was opposed to both referenda and strongly campaigned for their rejection.

The Front National is thus driven by an ideology focussing itself on national sovereignty. According to its president and future head of list in the Northern euro-constituency, Marine Le Pen:

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34 Ibid., p. 62.
“The European Union has neutered the sovereignty of member states and muzzled the French people’s say in policy decisions” and her motto is: “A Europe of ‘free nations.’” Front National agenda at the European level is therefore aimed at destabilizing the decision making procedures at the European level: “She [Marine Le Pen] promised to work with far-right parties from other countries to create a “crisis” in the Parliament with the goal of destabilizing the institutions of the European Union” and therefore repatriating the power to the nation-state.

Moreover, European elections in France are different from other local and national elections: most French elections are based on a majoritarian system whereas European elections are proportional with a low threshold (5%). They are seen as second-order elections as they: “lower[s] the threshold of access and eliminate[s] any considerations.” Nevertheless, as we can see in tables 1 and 2, in the last decade, the Front National obtained important scores at presidential elections but not at European elections. The electoral system is not the only explanation for greater support on Extreme-Right political parties. Due to the French specificities, for example with the presidential elections, European elections do not entirely eliminate voters’ consideration as in other countries such as the United-Kingdom.

On the other hand, as we have seen in the past with different nationalities of MEPs having joined different Extreme-Right or nationalist political groups at the European Parliament, Extreme-Right political parties do not have a solid presence in all the member states. Moreover, as Cas Mudde points out, these political parties have gained a relevant percentage of votes in national elections: “Only 19 of the 28 EU member states have a far-right party that has gained over 1 percent of the vote in national elections in the period 2005-2013. The far-right has gained votes in ten countries since the beginning of the economic crisis, although in only four was the difference relatively large, i.e. more than 5 percent (Austria, France, Hungary and Latvia). Against that stand nine countries with losses, of which three larger than 5 percent (Belgium, Italy and Slovakia). In other words, in only ten of the 28 EU member states (35 percent) did the far-right actually gain during the economic crisis and in a mere four (14 percent) were the gains relatively large, i.e. over 5

36 Idem.
37 Idem.
38 I compared this threshold with other thresholds at French elections; for example, in order to compete in the second round, a candidate must have a score higher than 12.5% of registered voters or become one of the two first candidates at the general elections; or, as well, a candidate must obtain a score higher than 10% at local elections.
percent. The causal relationship between the economic crisis and the uprisig support for Extreme-Right political parties is counterbalanced by the following observation in Europe: populist right political parties are stronger in the Scandinavian countries and in Austria where the effects of the economic crisis are lower than in the Iberian Peninsula: Spain and Portugal were two countries the most hit by the crisis. Following, as we can see in Figure 1 Trust towards the European Union and one’s own country”, Extreme-Right political parties are growing in countries which are on the top-tier in Europe concerning the “Trust towards the European Union”, and even with a higher percentage of “Trust on the democratic functioning of the European Union”. These two factors could explain a differentiation of political objectives between Extreme-Right political parties that we can find in France, Austria or Latvia; and Eurosceptic political parties such as in the United-Kingdom. At the European level, the risk is low of having a strong Extreme-Right presence with the economic crisis as being the sole cause.

The latest observations and polls give us therefore a possible win or a two-digit result of Extreme-Right or Eurosceptic political parties in only three countries: France with the Front National, United-Kingdom with United Kingdom Independence Party and the Netherlands with the Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom in English). Consequently, these gains and wins are not sufficient at the European level: hypothetically Extreme-Right and Eurosceptic MEPs will represent about 10% of the European Parliament: “With the FN at ca. 24 percent, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) at 15 percent, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) at 10 percent, the total of far-right seats would go up to 50, or 6.5 percent of the European Parliament.” As we will see in this chapter, these three parties do not share the same values and ideologies, and do not want to be part of the same political group following the next European elections, even if the Front National is employing a strategy for creating a coalition with the Dutch Party for Freedom. We will analyse in greater depth in the following chapter.

Despite disastrous prophecies in some media, with the next European elections described as “Europe’s Tea Party moment”, the Extreme Right in Europe will not be able to have enough

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43 –, 2014. Europe’s Tea Parties. op. cit.
45 Newspapers such as The Economist or The New York Times with the different articles quoted in this paper.
importance for transforming the European Union and its institutions. These prophecies are based on this causal explanation: “(1) The far right is gaining (strong) support because of the economic crisis; (2) “Anti-Europeans” are going to win big in the upcoming European elections; and (3) This could lead to a European “shutdown,” similar to the one recently experienced in the United States.” We have already explained that the two first aforementioned reasons are not completely true and we will thus analyse in the last chapter whether or not the third explanation is false.

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Figure 1: Trust towards the European Union and one's own country
4. Political objectives and relative strategies at the European and national level

As we have seen previously, populist political parties may obtain more support and as a consequence, they may gain more seats at the next 2014 European elections. Consequently, they may therefore have a stronger presence at the European Parliament. Nevertheless, these political parties’ objectives are different from each other and their relative strategies will not follow the same paths. These dissimilarities could trouble the final outcome of the 2014 European elections and, as we will observe in this chapter, prevent these populist political parties from playing a greater role at the European level and in the decision-making procedures.

An additional problem, after the lack of common ideologies and opinions on European policies, is the impossibility for Eurosceptic and Extreme-Right political parties to form a political group at the European Parliament. As we have seen previously, European Extreme-Right political groups were formed in the past, but they were not able to last due to internal struggles and ideological conflicts. These same problems will occur when discussing the prospect of forming a political group after the next European elections. The incompatibility between French Front national and the Danish Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People’s Party in English) is a relevant example: “But a whiff of extremism still lingers, and the Danish People’s Party wants nothing to do with Ms. Le Pen and her followers”48 and between other political parties: “Norway’s Progress Party is a world away from Hungary’s thuggish Jobbik. Nigel Farage and the saloon-bar bores of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) look askance at Marine Le Pen and her Front National (FN) across the Channel.”49 Eurosceptic, nationalist and Extreme-Right political parties will face important problems for forming a unique political group: the last announcement indicates a possible group with French Front National, Austrian Freedom Party of Austria, Belgian Vlaams Belang and possibly Dutch Party for Freedom and Italian Lega Nord50 but not with other important populist political parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party or Danish People’s Party.

These problems are not only based on personal issues but also on values and could, consequently, cause problems for creating a common manifesto or policy despite the different announcements made by the media, with the example of French Front National (FN in the following quote) and Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV in the following quote) on societal values and relations with religions: “the PVV is ardent in its support for Israel, while the FN has an anti-Semitic past. The PVV is in favour of gay marriage; the FN marches against it. The PVV sees Islam

48 Higgins, A., 2013. Right Wing’s Surge in Europe Has the Establishment Rattled. op. cit..
49 —, 2014. Europe’s Tea Parties. op. cit..
as a totalitarian danger around the world; the FN frets not over the religion’s basic tenets but only about the “Islamification” of France⁵¹; and even on the concept of the relationship between a nation and the European Union: “Belgium’s Vlaams Belang, Italy’s Northern League—want regional autonomy within the EU while others—UKIP and the Finns Party—reject EU membership outright⁵².” A pre-election agreement is therefore not a proof of an existing group and more especially a European political group, which lasts five years until the next 2019 European elections.

We can therefore observe three different groups of political parties: Eurosceptic political parties with for example with the United Kingdom Independence Party, Extreme-Right political parties with French Front National and Austrian Freedom Party of Austria and neo-fascist political parties with the Greek neo-Nazi Golden Dawn or the Hungarian openly racist Jobbik⁵³. These three ideological groups can cooperate but with strong difficulties, and moreover, they do not want to be perceived as a unique ideological group for electoral reasons, more especially after rebranding operations of the Danish People’s Party under Pia Kjaersgaard’s presidency from 1995 to 2012 in Denmark and of the Front National under Marine Le Pen’s presidency in France. Despite this rebranding, other political parties still analyse the Front National as a nationalist and neo-fascist political party due to historical reasons⁵⁴. Realistically, these three groups of political parties are not able to cooperate and form a unique political group at the European Parliament.

Later, in 2009, MEPs from populist political parties, who are presently in new discussions, were divided into different political groups: “roughly thirty of whom are in the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group and another thirty or so are “Non-Attached Members”, which makes about sixty MEPs for the “far right” and “autonomistic right”⁵⁵. The Front National created, after the 2009 European elections, a European political party with racist or neo-fascist political parties such as the British National Party, Hungarian Jobbik, Swedish Nationaldemokraterna (National Democrats in English), Italian Movimento Sociale Italiano and the Belgian Front National. However, in 2011, Marine Le Pen became president of the Front National and started a rebranding of the party. At the European level, she decided to move from an agreement with neo-fascist and racist political parties to partnerships with more moderate Extreme-Right or Eurosceptic political parties. This strategy will therefore have negative consequences for forming a single Extreme-Right

⁵¹ –, 2014. Turning right. op. cit..
⁵² Idem.
⁵³ Higgins, A., 2013. Right Wing’s Surge in Europe Has the Establishment Rattled. op. cit.
and Eurosceptic political group: the Front National and Marine Le Pen do not want to mix their image with their former allies\textsuperscript{56,57}.

Secondly, studies have shown that Extreme-Right political parties do not work at the European Parliament and are perceived as using vindictive political approaches. They do not have a common policy platform, which shows therefore a direct consequence of the ideological incompatibility analysed previously, because: “As an illuminating study by Marley Morris has shown, anti-Europeans do little real work in the legislature, preferring to grandstand in plenary sessions – Ukip is a champion of this approach\textsuperscript{58}.” The risk of a European shutdown is therefore not possible. The European Union decision-making procedures are different from those of the United-States and more especially, when you are dealing with budget issues\textsuperscript{59}. As some political commentators stress: “almost all Europe’s Tea Parties are likely to reveal themselves as incompetent and factional\textsuperscript{60}.”

Finally, possibilities for populist political parties at the next European elections are not clear; this will depend on compromising between the different types of populist, Eurosceptic, Extreme-Right and nationalist political parties. Even if they are able to form a political group at the European Parliament, there could be a risk of dismantlement like in 2007.

\textsuperscript{58} Mueller, J.-W., 2013. How Europe could face its own shutdown. The Guardian, 09 October
\textsuperscript{59} Mudde, C., 2013. A European shutdown? The 2014 European elections and the great recession. op. cit..
\textsuperscript{60} —, 2014. Europe’s Tea Parties. op. cit.
5. Conclusion

We have seen in the first chapter a historical background of populist political parties in France and within the European Union. In a second and third chapter, we were able to analyse and understand the future developments of populist political parties at the 2014 European elections and if there is a risk of an uprising populism at the European level.

Support for populist political parties is therefore a growing risk at the upcoming 2014 European elections, but this threat is in fact reduced by the uncertainty of possible coalitions and political groups emerging following the European elections. Moreover, in this study, we have focussed on the risk of populism in France and its possible consequences at the European level. Nevertheless, other populist political parties still exist and are not based on Extreme-Right values such as Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Star Movement in English) in Italy or Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany in English) in Germany. These political parties could not form a political group at the European Parliament with the presence of Extreme-Right and Eurosceptic political parties. We have therefore observed that populist political parties will not be able to have an influential role or even be king-makers as the four main political groups at the European Parliament may be able to obtain a majority without a Eurosceptic and Extreme-Right political group.

Nevertheless, there remain risks of populism on the political campaigns during the European elections and of Euroscepticism influencing mainstream political parties. Even with a single political group at the European Parliament, the shutdown threat is not significant and the European Parliament is only one of the two legislators at the European level. Populist parties are not present at the second legislator, the Council of ministers.

To conclude, confronting populist parties can be quite difficult. The simple and most common path used by mainstream political parties – painting these political parties as fascists or racists – is not effective, as: “Attacking the insurgents as fascists worked when Hitler’s memory was fresh, but many of today’s voters rightly see it as mostly a scare tactic.” Having a negative approach is not the best solution. Lessons could be learnt for example from the current situation in the United States with the Tea Party; therefore, mainstream political parties should adopt a more positive

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61 These four political groups are the European People's Party group, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and The Greens–European Free Alliance.

62 –, 2014. Europe’s Tea Parties. op. cit..

63 Idem.
approach and explain the advantages and positive consequences of EU integration, and equally aim at increasing participation in order not to have a small minority of Eurosceptic voters achieving their goals. Besides, even if populist parties gain dozens of seats and become the first political parties in certain EU countries such as France, they will not become the first European political group of parties after the 2009 European elections; and consequently, they will be in minority at the European Parliament\textsuperscript{64}.

\textsuperscript{64} Leparmentier, A., 2013. Le pire n'aura pas lieu. \textit{Le Monde}, 11 December.
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Roma migration in France:
Free movement in Europe Union or a threat for the national security

Radost Zaharieva

The period before the local and the European elections in 2014 in France represents a particular example for the rising of the populist movement. Recently the question of the Roma migrants from Romania and Bulgaria became one of the largely discussed and used by populist parties to mobilize voters. The political games put the Roma question as hot topic. Often Roma migrants are presented in negative lights: unwilling and uncapable to integrate, burden and threat for the French society. Moreover, the image of the Roma migrants embodies the fear of the migrants from Eastern Europe; it often represents a danger for French social security system. The reality and the positive examples lack the attention of the media and as a result people accept the negative image of the Roma created by the certain political parties together with the medias. Despite the existence of parties that position themselves against the migration and the Roma, there are few parties that take pro-Roma approach. Unfortunately, as the research suggests these claims serves only as a tool for gaining power, not for the Roma integration. Hence, either positive or negative, in both cases the Roma questions in France serves certain populist parties only for their political gain.

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Introduction

The populism by definition is a political philosophy that support the rights and the power of the people in their struggle against the privileged elite. Political parties and politicians often use the terms “populist” in its pejorative connotations. This view sees populism as a way to show empathy with people’s view on certain topic or issue and by doing so to increase the political influence of certain political figure or party over certain electoral group. The term “populism” derives from the Latin word “populus”, which means people in its understanding of nation. This term regards the “elitism” and “aristocracy” as opposite.

In France the first manifestation of populism might be described with the French Revolution led by wealthy intellectuals against the elitist excesses and privileges. The term “Poujadism” is another expression used to describe the French populism, but “pujadism” rather describes a later development of the populist movement. “Pujadism” was created in the 1950s to define the populist movement of the traders and craftsmen against high taxation.

Currently in France several parties are known to base their ideology onto the populist idea to present themselves as public interest defenders. Often these are parties which have low representation in the government. Different topics are used by their political leaders as strategy to attract the electorate. One of these topic in France is the immigration flow, and more specifically, the Roma migration from Eastern Europe and their integration in France. In fact the powerlessness of politicians to resolve certain social problems such as the high unemployment rate in France has been masked by proposing measures against the immigration.

This paper aims to analyze how the question of Roma migration become a base for the populism before the European elections. It aims to explain how Roma migration flow from Romania and Bulgaria has been used as a political tool to create a negative image of migrants from Eastern Europe and as a consequence to propose politics to limit the immigration flow from these countries. This research intends to analyze the impact of the politicization of the Roma migration in France and how it affects the life of the Roma migrants. In addition, the research aims to analyze the role of the media as political instrument in the process. The current research is based on

discourse analysis, semi-structured interview with local authorities, Roma activists and Roma communities, and media monitoring. The focus group includes Roma from Romania and Bulgaria situated in municipalities in Ile-de-France because of the concentration of Roma in this region.

In order to describe the how Roma migration in France has been used by populist parties for mobilizing voters and what is the impact on the Roma population I will first present an overview of the historical background of the Roma, their current situation and migration in France, and the social attitude regarding their migration. After, I will present the role of the medias for creating the negative example of the Roma. Third, I will analyze how the political and media discourses Roma have affected the life of the Roma migrants.

I. General presentation of the Roma

Roma population in Europe counts for ten and twelve millions inhabitants, thus forms the biggest ethno-cultural minority in Europe. Roma live mainly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The country with biggest concentration of Roma community is Romania with approximately 2 million people followed by Bulgaria: 1 million inhabitants. Others countries characterized with high concentration of Roma population are Hungary (600 000), Spain (800 000), Slovakia (500 000), Czech Republic (300.000), 200.000 in Greece.  

According to the data of latest Bulgaria's census (2011) Roma population counts for 4.9 percent of the population. This places them as the third largest ethnic group in Bulgaria, after Bulgarians and Turks. However, several sources estimate that the actual number of Roma is higher. The Council of Europe estimate that more than 750 000 Roma live in Bulgaria, United Nations consider that Roma account for as many as 10 percent of the overall population of the country, national NGO’s confirm this statements. Roma population is represented both in urban and rural areas where 3,9% live in urban. Roma represent 8 % of the population in Bulgarian villages. The census data shows that Roma are presented in all regions, where several regions are with high concentration of Roma: Montana, Sliven, Dobrich, and Yambol. Roma living in Bulgaria represent a diversity of religion, dialects and mother tongues. The outcome of the census confirms this statement. The data shows that the biggest part of Roma population in Bulgaria (85 percent) indicate Romani language as their mother tongue, while 7.5 percent speak Bulgarian as their first language, and 6.7 percent speak Turkish. According to the latest census 6.6 percent of Roma are East-Orthodox, 18.3 percent are Muslim, 10.1 percent are Protestant and their number in the last 2 decades generally among

marginalized groups grows considerably. The census of 2011 in Romania shows that Roma people count 3.3% of the total population and represent the second-largest ethnic minority in Romania after Hungarians. According to the 2002-census, 81.9% of Romanian-Romani are Orthodox Christians, 8.1%, are Protestant, 4.9% are Catholics. To highlight, the data collected with the Bulgarian and Romanian census are different than the results of national and international NGO’s (which estimate the number of Roma people in Romania on 2-2.5 million inhabitants such as EU observer and Romani CRISS). This gap in data is due partly because of the fact that often Roma do not identify themselves as Roma to avoid the negative social perception and rejection.

1) Roma migration. Historical Background

In order to understand how populism developed and used their claims against the Roma migration in France I will introduce the historical processes that led to Roma migration and social exclusion. I will first present the historical reasons that produces myths and prejudices used nowadays by political leaders and medias to create the Roma migrant as potential threat for the society.

Roma came from the North-West of India in the end of the tenth century. They migrate to Europe during 13-14th century and they dispersed with the Ottoman invasion in Eastern and Central Europe. After the 15th century, Roma migration in Europe was provoked by the difficult conditions in the Ottoman Empire. Later, after the abolition of slavery of the Roma in Romania gave the opportunity to some Roma to leave Eastern Europe and migrate to Western and Northern Europe, in a quest of better life. Few are the proves for this movement. The development of the Roma language witness this migration from India to Eastern and Western Europe. Roma language (Rromanes or rromani: Rom-man, husband) is an Indo-European language derived from Prakrit. Spoken in multiple variants in different roma groups the Roma language saves the traces of Roma migration: in several dialects there is an influence of Turkish or Greek, but also an influence from Romanian. Even if there are many dialects of Romanes (Roma language), an important common terminology is understood by most of the Roma in Europe.

Linguistic researches estimate that Roma are originating from the North-West of India a region which they were forced to leave around the 1000th year because of the Afghan invasion in North India. It is possible to trace their route from the linguistic footprints⁴. Roma people arrive in the Byzantine empire and settle in the Balkans. The second wave arrive with Ottoman Turks in 14th century. Some Roma groups settled in Romania, where they are enslaved until their liberation on

February 20, 1856. Some arrive in Western Europe in early fifteenth century after crossing the territory of Slovakia. Manush who represent 2-3% of Roma population in Europe settle in the German-speaking countries, Gypsies (10%) in the Iberian Peninsula where they are subject to a policy of assimilation from 1499. Roma are found throughout Europe in 1500, when they begin to settle. In France, the rejection of the Roma began during the ruling of Louis XII and became stronger during the ruling of Louis XIV. During the twentieth century, they have suffered a particularly cruel persecution: under the National Socialist regime, estimations show that more than 500,000 Roma were victims of racial persecution and genocide.

2) Contemporary migration

The contemporary Roma migration has been provoked by socio-economic reasons as well as by discrimination and acts of hostility towards the Roma. The stereotypes associated with Roma have their historical roots, they perpetuate the hostile approach to Roma population. From their arrival onward Roma have been defined as foreigners, they have received hostile or unequal treatment, so they we force to migrate.

The origins of contemporary Roma migrations date back to the 1990s. After the collapse of socialism in Eastern European most of the Roma lost their jobs and their incomes in traditional activities. They plunged into extreme poverty and became the “biggest losers of the transition” to capitalism. In 2009 in Hungary 70 seventy percent of Roma population is out of the labor market. These economic and discrimination related factors led to the migration of Roma to Western European countries and Canada (already in the 1990s). Many applications for asylum were registered; most of them were motivated from racist violence.

At the beginning of 90s, Germany followed by France, Poland, Austria became the main destination for Roma migrants from Romania. For the period 1990-1992, with a total number of 70,000

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10 Soros and Wolfensohn, Sigona / Nidhi 2009, p. 3
Romanian refugees, some estimate that Roma comprised 40% among registered asylum seekers in Germany. Migration to Great Britain has only recently brought into existence a significant Roma population coming from Hungary. Most of the Roma from Bulgaria are seasonal migrants. They often choose Greece, Spain, and Italy as destination.

II Current situation at European and national level: reasons for Roma migration

1) At European level

Many reasons explain the new migration waves from Eastern to Western Europe. As described above they are mainly economic but in some cases, the migration is provoked by discrimination and racial violence. The European Commission in its April’s 2011 Communication states that many Roma face discrimination and social exclusion living in marginalized and very poor socio-economic conditions. In 2009, EU-MIDIS data showed that one out of five of the Roma surveyed face discriminatory experiences when looking for work. In fact, discrimination cases are numerous. For example, a Bulgarian (white skinned individual) is much more likely to be employed than a Roma (dark skinned individual) even if the second corresponds better to the profile. It should be noted, that there are growing number of Roma who have university degree, but face similar attitude. Many of them prefer to go abroad (usually in Western countries) where they hope to meet a society more open to diversity, where they can apply their knowledge and capacities. The current situation of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria explains the reasons which provoke the migration flow to Western Europe. The migration flow from Romania and Bulgaria became higher after 2007 when these two countries joined the European Union. France become one of the main destination.

A) Financial resources and work activities

Members of European Union since 2007, Romania and Bulgaria, experience big economic and political difficulties. Economical instability and lack of financial resources reflect directly the unemployment rate. The financial and economic situation in Bulgaria and Romania reflect particularly the life of the Roma. As described above after the fall of communism Roma were first laid off from the labor market. Most of the Roma in the region experience a long-term unemployment which fact affects their standard of living and make them the most socially and economically disadvantaged and stigmatized population in Europe. Bulgaria and Romania are the poorest countries in the European Union, and Roma communities in these two countries are the most disadvantaged.

during the whole period of transition. The economic crisis of 2008 further complicated the situation of the Roma and increased the competition for jobs and that fact gives even less opportunities to Roma to realize themselves in the labor market. Not only due to their lack of adequate education and skills, but also because of discrimination practices against Roma face a high percentage of the Roma are jobless. Their participation in the formal economy is relatively limited. According to World Bank the risk of poverty in the Roma community in Romania is three times higher than the national average. A World Bank report revealed that approximately 70 percent of the Roma population live on less than US$4.30 a day. According to the 2002 census, only 23 percent of the Roma population in Romania were employed. A survey of European Agency for fundamental rights shows that 70% of Roma don’t have any salary and 40% of Roma families starve. Many Roma are dependent on welfare and other public benefits (pensions and family allowances) to survive. Unemployed Roma have to find an alternative ways to meet the two ends. Often, these alternatives are seasonal working or activities on polluted sites, collecting scrap, gathering of herbs, collecting mushrooms, etc. These are temporary and not sustainable activities which do not allow Roma to provide themselves a stable income. These incomes are generally sufficient to cover only the daily expenses related to food, they are dependent on the weather conditions and limited in time.

B) Housing conditions

The limited financial resources of the Roma lead them to live in extremely poor conditions. The FRA, United Nation Development Program, the World Bank and the European Commission survey show considerable differences between Roma and non-Roma households. In Romania for example more than 2.5 live in the same room. Most of the Roma live generally in isolated areas without sufficient housing space. In addition Roma housing often lacks basic equipment. 88% of Roma in Romania comparing to 58% of non-Roma are living in households without at least one of the following basic amenities: indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower/bath. This gap is even more striking in Bulgaria where 78% of Roma comparing to 34% Bulgarians lack basic equipments.\textsuperscript{13} The provision of electricity, gas and water is not always assured which is in direct correlation with the hygiene in the Roma ghetto. Amnesty International concludes in its rapport of 2010 that 75 percent of Roma in Romania live in poverty, compared to 24 percent of the general Romanian population. In its rapport the organization states also that health and living conditions of Roma are among the worst in Romania.

\textsuperscript{13} European union Agency for fundamental rights survey,\textit{The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States, Survey results at a glance}, 2012
C) Education achievement

The educational level of the Roma population in Europe is lower than any other socio-cultural group. In Europe only 15% of the Roma Youth achieves high school education compared to 70% non-Roma. Schooling of Roma children is difficult because of poverty, exclusion and discrimination of which Roma are subject to. It should be noted that when the percentage of Roma in a the class becomes high often non-Roma parents withdraw their children from school, which lead to creation of segregated schools. The former do provide low quality of education that do not allow students access to secondary and higher education. In 2011 United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues after visiting Bulgaria stated that 50 percent to 70 percent of Roma children are in segregated schools despite the programs of desegregation. The numbers of Roma children dropping out are estimated on 32%, followed by Bulgarians with 8% and Turks, 6%14. Discrimination and rejection by the teacher is also a major cause which leads to low school attendance of the Roma pupils.

D) Political representation

Roma have political representation in Romania but it is not proportional to the percentage of the Roma population. According to Freedom House's rapport of 201015 the political participation by Roma is also low. However, according to the United States Country Reports for 2009, there is one Roma organization represented in parliament, the Roma Party-Pro Europe. In Bulgaria the political representation of Roma is limited to some action of the civil society. There is not any political party to defend the Roma interests in the Parliament. In general, Roma people are badly integrated, they lack representation in the national institutions and continue to facing discrimination according to Human rights committee of United Nations (2008).

2) Free movement in the European Union

Freedom of movement, mobility rights or the right to travel is a part of Universal Declaration for human rights. According the Article 45.1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU citizens and members of their families have the right to move freely and to stay on the territory of the EU. As European citizen Roma from Bulgaria and Romania benefit from the freedom of movement since 2007. They are allowed to travel and stay on the territory of any member state of the European Union. Since the creation of the European Economic Community, the Treaty of Rome from 1957 have included the free movement of the workers. Article 48 of Treaty of Rome became Article 45

15 Freedom House, Freedom in the World report, 2010
since the Treaty of Lisbon stated that the free movement of workers shall be assured within the Community. It entails the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other working conditions. The Treaty of Lisbon permits to European citizens to stay on the territory of the Member States and to be employed in accordance with legislative provisions, regulations and administrative provisions governing the employment of nationals. The Treaty of Maastricht introduces Article 18 which extends the freedom of movement and residence on the territory of the European Union to every citizen of the Union, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the arrangements for its implementation.

3) Roma migrants in France: subject of Populism on national level

Roma migration to France started before 2007 and was accelerated after 1\textsuperscript{st} of January 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union. As European citizens Roma people are beneficiaries of legal right of free movement within European Union. Roma migration become an object to political discussions which creates a negative image of the Roma people and present them as a challenge for the immigration policies. Roma become object of populism especially before elections.

Roma question is used to divide the electorate and to make a distinction between the parties. Raphaël Liogier, a sociologist of religion and professor in sociologist of religions and professor of political science in Aix-en-Provence analyzes the original ingredients of the current populism, fueled by the collective sense of frustration. According to the author the populist speaks on behalf of the people, thus escaping the left / right division, mixing in his speech conservative and liberalist slogans. The sociologist makes a connection between the current populism and the populism in 1930. During this period the populism was based on the idea of ethno-nationalism where traditional enemies were the Jewish race. Later the image of the Mussulman, takes the profile of the enemy of the nation in this ideology. Liogier defines the time when the populist movement gains power as symbolic crises and crises of identity (rejection of the foreigner to defend it proper identity). According to the author the populism is present both in the two political currents: Left and Right. It is based on the notion of a western culture and aims to infuse the entire political class and gradually gnawing the rule of law. The withdrawal of the traditional values in the society such as religion practices, working class motivates politicians to find new ideologies to win larger electoral mass and exceed the traditional political cleavage. The Roma question is suitable to serve the populist idea. The Roma match the profile of the new threat: being Foreigners, coming from Eastern Europe,
from post-communist and poor countries. Refusing integration of Roma is equal to refusing all these components.

III. Future development

1) The populism within the political discourses

The approaching of the European elections, the Roma migration has become a hot topic. Both the Right and the Left consider that this subject can be profitable if they take the side of the citizens who are dissatisfied by the presence of Roma. The local elections which predates the European accelerates more the process. Populism claims against Roma migrants continue to gain support with the approach of the local elections in March 2014 when many of the mayors will present themselves for a second mandate. They use the problem of Roma migration in France because it represent the commonly shared fear of migration flow from Eastern European countries. The image of the Roma people serves the populist parties depict the image of the poor worker from post-communist countries, workers who will compete with French citizens in time when the job competition is particularly high or, the migrants will benefit from certain social benefits such as: free medical insurance, family allowances, dole etc. Thus, Roma are considered as burden of the French working society. This is one of the reason why that the new government did not make any efforts to integrate the Roma migrants despite the national strategy for Roma inclusion (signed in 2011) and the fact that Roma face rejection by local authorities concerning housing, employment and education. On the contrary, the Government takes clear position against them. However, there are new political parties that defend Roma interests because this is a way to create an opposition with the mainstream and mobilize certain social groups that support the idea of Roma inclusion. To be more convincing some of these parties includes Roma in their lists but usually those Roma are not given the chance to be elected for representative. After an interview with a representative of such party it become clear that the purpose is not Roma participation in the political process but to create debates and to make Roma question more visible.

Only few thousand Roma are present in France but this question produces such a debate that shakes the Socialist. In a article of 24th September 2013 the newspaper Liberation explains that Roma issue in France is proof of populism practices before the elections. The newspaper notes left indicates that Roma become media topic for parties from the Right and small part of the Left (generally concentrated around Manuel Valls) few time before the elections to present the image of immigration and insecurity. Roma become easy target because of their vulnerability, lack of lobby and lack of any political representation. This is a strategy for some parties such as UPM (Union for popular
movement) and the National Front for instance to introduce the question of immigration. Its president Jean-François Copé, uses the social security system as an argument against migrants and shares his intention to cut the medical insurance provided from the state for free to migrants. François Fillon, member of the same party proposes to reduce to a minimum the migration flow. Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, member of UPM and candidate for the local elections states that Roma harass the Paris population and his colleague Nadine Morano endorse this statements saying that Roma have to leave the country. Rachida Dati, mayor of the 7th arrondissement in Paris, also claims that Roma harass the French population. His opponent, Anne Hidalgo states: "Paris could not be a giant camp." Thus the position about Roma issue become a tool for distinction between the candidates and the different groups of the French electorate. Luc Jousse, UMP mayor of Roquebrune-sur-Argens and candidate for the local elections, whose remarks, recorded on 12 November 2013, provokes the reaction of the French society and political parties. The mayor was recorded saying that prefer firemen to come later after conflagration in Roma camp. This statement was used by political parties such as National Front and Socialist party as strategy for the elections even if the National Front have a clear anti-Roma position.

2) The impact of populism on the Roma situation

The situation of the Roma migrants in France grabbed the social attention. Often the Roma migrants are misrepresented and defined as beggars, offenders and population unwilling and incapable to integrate, danger and burden of the French society. Their poor condition of livings are often liked to the above mentioned to strengthen the stereotypes regarding the Roma. The negative social attitude towards this community has been recently used by political parties and leaders to increase their popularity and mobilize larger part of the electorate before the election in May.

Roma come in France with the expectation for better life, but face the similar conditions of life and rejection by the society. In spite of the effort of the Roma for integration, the French society do not accept them. In collaboration with the United Nations program for development and The World bank, the European Agency for fundamental rights conduct a survey 2012 in 11 European countries (including France). This study shows that the situation of Roma migrants in France is not better than in their countries of origin. The survey reveals that less than 14% of Roms are employed and 6% of them have a qualification for work. The claims also that 90% of the Roma live in extreme poverty. The results obtained in France are the worst in the whole European union. This statement has been confirmed by the Foreign committee in France in its report for 2012-2013. It study shows

16 Opinion international, Entre populisme, manque de volonté politique et réponse européenne, article, 27th of September 2013
that the situation of Roma does not improve significantly. The author, the French senator BILLOUT Michel, considers that the integration of Roma is possible after fighting the prejudices that Roma are subject to. The Interministerial Delegation for accommodation and access to housing in France also published the results of its second survey on illegal camps in France, conducted in August 2013 and shows that the number of the Roma in France is 40 times less higher than Roma population in Spain. The survey found that 394 camps shelter 16 949 people which more than 4300 are children, a population coming from Bulgaria and Romania. Most of them have lived in France for more than 5 years. These camps are concentrated in a few areas : 39 % of camps installed in Ile -de- France, (which 130 are situated in Seine-Saint-Denis department) the others are situated in Nord-Pas -de-Calais regions , Pays de la Loire , Provence -Alpes- Côte d' Azur, Rhône -Alpes and Languedoc - Roussillon. More than two thirds of the camps are located on public area and more than one third are affected by a judicial decision (decision from the Prefecture which imposed to Roma to leave the area).

Sarcelles, Ile-de-France, The biggest Roma camp

Source of the photo: 20 Minutes

The condition in Roma camps are largely discussed because of the poor and dangerous living conditions that they provide to their inhabitants. More precisely, the camps do not meet the criteria for basic housing, and are the cause of negative consequences for the health.

Recently the Roma camps became an important element of populism in France. The bad living conditions in Roma camps are used to justify the practices of destruction that they are subject to. It is true that Roma accommodation represents sheds constructed with instable materials: lumber,
plastic, nylon, which haver the family with children, at least 4-5 people. These improvised houses lac
space, basic equipment etc. Meeting the hygiene standards is a big challenge in the Roma camp: there
is not running water and electricity, space for taking shower, garbage cans. In most of the camp the
presence of rat and bedbug are easily noticeable. These leaving conditions are unacceptable but it is
the only solution for Roma. After interviews with Roma families that were made for the current
research in Ile-de-France it become clear that Roma want to have a proper accommodation with the
necessary living conditions but it is impossible for them to rent proper housing for their families. The
accommodation is the main issue that Foreigners face in France because of hard conditions to rent it.
Each person who wants to rent a flat has to have a guarantee who works in France and receive salary
the amount of which covers the amount of the rent. Second condition is the deposit (the amount is
equal of the rent for 1 month). Third conditions requires providing a document that to justify that the
resident has sufficient (for the French standard) income to pay the accommodation. These
requirements are achievable only for small group of migrants and practically exclude foreigners from
Eastern Europe. It seems that it is used as a tool to limit the migration flow from poor countries.
Insignificant number of Roma have an accommodation in the city and normally these people are
Roma students, or Roma, integrated in the French society. In these cases Roma often obtain it without
revealing their ethnic identity. Even if Roma are financially able to cover the conditions to rent proper
accommodation they have a low chance to receive such it if they present themselves as Roma (or
their ethnic origin is noticed) because of the prejudices existing in the French society.

Accommodation is the main issue that Roma face in France, but there are many other
important issues related to migrants’ life: schooling, finding a job, access to medical care. Roma
migrate to France with the expectation to find a job and support their families to survive in Romania
and Bulgaria but once arriving they face many barriers which are due partly to the complexity of the
French administrative system but also because of the State position regarding the Roma integration.
To settle down, finding accommodation is a long procedure. In addition, in order to settle down the
migrants needed till 31 December 2013 to have a regular situation: to be employed or student, to have
sufficient incomes, to have permanent address, to have medical insurance. Roma people coming to
France, could not fulfill the state requirements, they do not have access to proper housing and
employment. Without collaboration of the local authorities, and the civil society Roma do not have
any other possibilities than to build barracks and survive by begging and collecting scrap. Several
Town Councils and NGO propose social assistance to Roma for receiving permanent address which is
needed to start all administrative procedures for schooling, learning French, preparing the package of
documents for work permit and finding job, but this goes against the position of France regarding immigration, and especially migration from Eastern Europe. Two municipalities in Ile-de-France have taken measures for the Roma integration: municipalities of Montreuil and Bobigny. The local authorities built villages of integration and proposed assistance to Roma for their integration in the society.

After interviews with representatives of these municipalities (who preferred to stay anonymous) few elements related to Roma integration become clear but also the gap between the position of municipalities and the State position about Roma. The municipality of Montreuil suggests a good example for adopting integration strategies and policies as well as example for cooperation between the local authorities and Roma (particularly for the active participation of Roma in the process). A Roma women L.H, activist from Montreuil who was interviewed proves that the local authorities invited her and other Roma to become part of the project of integration of Roma. Owing to municipality’s project many Roma received work permit and assistance to find a job, several families receive public housing and most of the children go to school. Because of the favor of the population of Montreuil municipality and the successful results on Roma integration the parties-candidate for local elections adopt positions in favor of the Roma integration. Thus, the Roma question in France is articulated in relation to politics and used to reach certain groups that will favor the Roma integration in France. Once again Roma question has been used for the purposes of the French populism. Furthermore, some parties even includes Roma activists in their list of nominated candidates for the elections in June. Two of my interviewees have clearly supported that claim. One of them pass through the whole process of negotiations. It should be noted that Roma are in the last places in the list and thus they don’t have chance to become representatives.

The interviewed person describes the positives outcomes of the local integration policies in Bobigny, particularly in relation to schooling. However, the interviewee also described the conflict between the Town Consul and the Prefecture. According to him the previous Prefect has ordered many times the expulsion of Roma and destruction of their camps. Mister K.B told that the new Prefect continue the evictions and practices the measure to deport them to their countries of origin. The interviewee shared that this action happens every time very fast without the presence of any media and without respecting the law related to deportation of Foreigners. Usually the buses arrive near the camps and Policemen order to Roma to go their and to sign a paper which is completed in advance. Policemen add only the name of the deported person. After a such action a Roma girl (9 years old) stayed alone because the Police deported her parents. It should be noted that Roma who

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17 Till 31st of December Bulgarian and Romanian citizens need a work permit for working in France.
have the needed documentation that allows them to stay in France were also deported. Many times the Town council resolves the conflicts about Roma expulsion with the Prefecture in the Court or by contacting the minister of education. The interviewed person told that the Town Council ensured place for Roma camps and the schooling of children but is not sure that this practice of Roma inclusion will continue after the local elections if a party from the Right for example came in power.

These two examples show that Roma integration is not impossible in France and depend on the willingness of the authorities. France is signed the national strategy for integration of Roma people and have an European funding for it. The French journalist Sylvain Moillard sayd in Liberation newspaper that since 2007 53 integration projects directed to Gens de voyage or people living in camps ( also Roma) were co-financed by the European Social Funds for total 4 million euros. But the practice shows that only many Roma are subject to projects of accommodation (villages of insertion/integration) and the evacuations of Roma camps is made without any alternative for housing. The Bobigny’s example is proving the conflict between the Municipality and State position about Roma migrants in France. Today Roma remains difficult because of the position of the State regarding the integration of the migrants. It should be noticed that officially France should accept immigrants from other countries of the European Union because of conditions which France accept as a member of the European Union.

The low level of education is discussed as one of the reasons for the difficult position of the Roma in France. They don’t have the necessary qualification to work in France and they may be burden of the state because they may benefit from the social security system . On the other hand, France do not take measures, but rather presents obstacles for the education of the Roma. School enrollment of the Roma migrants’ pupils becomes a very difficult to achieve, but the reason is not because Roma families are unwilling to enroll their children at school, but because of the lack of collaboration of the school authorities. A schooling mediator from local NGO states that several schools refuse to enroll Roma children. (The interviewee also preferred to stay anonymous because his statement may reflect of his work with French schools.)

Another important issue that impedes children’s education are the evictions of the Roma. The latest report of the League of Human Rights (LDH) and the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), the number of eviction that the government made in 2013 is two times higher than 2011 and 2012 with 165 camps (19 380 people) compared to 9404 people in 2012. This results shows that most of Roma were evicted in 2013. In this context, the act of 26 August was elaborated to propose a methodology for local authorities to find solutions of the question of the Roma evictees. This document specifies that the eviction and reintegation of the Roma should be executed in
accordance with the principle of access to education and healthcare (including access to immunization and maternal and child healthcare). In regards to childcare and hosting, the act encourage at first, the provision of temporary accommodation then, provision of longterm accommodation by the State and local authorities. In addition this document suggests, in order to promote employability, taxes paid to the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) by the employers for hiring Romanian and Bulgarian nationals to be removed. Despite the lifting of the restriction for Bulgarians and Romanians migrants to work in EU from 1 January 2014, the access to employment remain almost impossible for Roma. The administrative requirements: the language, the permanent address with its proofs, but also the prejudices regarding Roma are the reasons which do not permit them to be legally employed and present obstacles for their integration.

This act represents some efforts on behalf of French government to facilitate the Roma integration but in reality the practices during and after the eviction show disregarding the claims made in the act. It seems that this document become only a paper without any real application. Saimir Mile, a Roma activist in Ile-de-France, Chairman of the Roma NGO La voix des Rroms (Roma voice) in an interview argues that solutions, measures for integration are proposed for limited number of Roma people. Often, pregnant women or women with young children are provided short term accommodation in isolated area with limit access to common to transportation. These people are hosted in hotels chosen by the State where the living condition do not meet the basic standard of living. Roma receive rooms in hotels situated in municipalities far from the city, and the original location of the Roma camp. Often Roma refuse to go there because of the distance and the lack of source of income that the suggested area provides. For most of the evictees living in the proposed area equals going abroad, in a unknown territory which will hinder their activities for earning their daily bred: collecting scrab. Beside, those Roma lost connections with the local social assistant or NGO which helps them. The Roma camp of Rosny-sous-Bois proves the above mentioned. Once the camp was destroyed the local NGO lost their traces and stop working with the children to facilitate their integration in French school.

Roma, as citizens of Bulgaria and Romania are also beneficiaries of rights of free movement in European Union. In France this procedures requires Roma to fulfill several preconditions such as incomes that meets the French life standard and medical insurance. The provision of medical insurance become topic for political discussions regarding the immigration and the social security system in France. According to the law Roma may demand the free medical insurance and medical cares. This possibility have been often articulated by political leaders and parties to strengthen the negative attitudes toward Roma, to present them as danger for the public order and burden for the
social security system. The insignificant number of few thousand Roma migrants has been used to create a big social issue by political leaders of Left and Right parties.

3) The European election 2014 - a challenge for the cohesion in Europe

European elections of May 2014 already raise concerns related to the risk of low participation of the population and the fact that populist parties are gaining power. Indeed, it seems that the results of the European elections could give "most Eurosceptic or anti-European Parliament in the history of European institutions"\(^1\). Christophe Bouillaud, a professor of political science at the Institute of political studies in Grenoble identifies the level of populism: national and European. At European level, the populism may show one direction to all the political parties that do not belong to three major trans-European parties that dominated Europe since 1970s. These three major parties are the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. In this context the political parties that do not have significant representation in the Parliament may show an important success during the elections. It seems that to be the logical consequence of the economic, social and political crises across the European Union. However, it is doubtful that those populist parties will gain significant power in the European Parliament, in which the influence of political forces depend on the of number of seats, but also of ability to build coalitions with other parties. The populist parties are structurally weak in terms of these two criteria. Hence the quantitative increase of populist parties should not affect the functioning and decision-making of the European Parliament.

On the other hand, populism is not new phenomenon. At the end of the nineteenth Boulangism (named after General Boulanger), populist movements between the two wars had attempted to exploit the financial scandals of the representatives of the French Republic. Populism was developed in 1929 because of the financial crises; xenophobia was developed after the reception of immigrants, Jews. After the war, Pierre Poujade, called for revolt against taxes and against the state. Poujadism seems to be the product of economic change in the years of modernization in the transition from a very rural economy to an economy of mass consumption that destroyed the use of small traders and small farmers.

The recent economic crisis of 2008 in Europe has serious consequences on the European economic, the unemployment rate has increased, especially in countries in transition such as those from Eastern Europe. This leads to an increase of the migration flow from Eastern to Western Europe. Western countries are more preferable destinations because of their relative economic stability. But

\(^1\) Enriko Letta, Italian minister, Le Monde, 2th of November 2013
the migration flow contribute for raising the unemployment rate in those countries, and the increase of the populist movements against the migrants from Eastern Europe. France is one of the countries where the share of those political movements is higher, and the measures taken against the migration flow from Eastern countries are more strict. The French political class made the fight against unemployment a priority whereas limiting the migration flow is part of those politics. Thus, the politics in France takes more ethno-centric approach. The sociologist Rogier compares this phase of populism with 1930 when the raising up of populism based on ethno-nationalism was observed. However, today the European Union adopts and enforces policies to react adequately to economic crises and assures the respect of citizens rights and meantime to ensure the multiculturalism in Europe. Thus, EU acts as organ that ensures the free movements in Europe and the right of the citizens to work on the territory of the European Union.

European elections could will be the event which will bring opponents from the left of and the right, populist parties, parties that increase their influence and those that traditionally represent the EU citizens. There, the citizens are invited to reflect upon the plans for the future of Europe such of those that traditionally represent the three major European streams: the Christian Democrats, Socialists and Social Democrats, the Liberals.

In France this phenomenon is also observed. According to a survey IFOP made for the newspaper Nouvel Observateur (New observer) the National Front is has higher chances to win the the European Elections in France. This survey shows the raise of rating of the populist parties in the Elections because of the lack of concrete vision regarding EU of their opponents. Only the National Front has a clear position about the European Union and its issue such as the economic crises, the euro, the migration. National Front and the UPM suggest the government to oppose to opening of Schengen for Bulgaria and Romania. Thus, from 2014, according to those parties, the migration flow from those two countries will be limited. In addition, National Front will also resolve the Roma question by simply banning their migration flow to France. Instead of endorsing the government’s commitment to the strategy for Roma inclusion, the Government will be able to limit or evict the illegal Roma migrants from Bulgaria and Romania.

The question about introducing proper border control to reduce the migration flow is also discussed by the National Front. It uses Roma issue to better illustrate migration flow and in the same time uses it as a strategy to attract new members. It has a membership form dedicated to position

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19 Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland (not a European Union Member State), Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein (not a European Union Member State), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway (not a European Union Member State), Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss
against Roma migrants which aims to attract those against the Roma presence in France. To consolidate more this idea Roma are often presented as a treat for the French society because of their different life standard (and life style) as claimed by the minister of interior Manuel Valls during his speech on 17 September 2013 presented by the national media. According to the minister Roma are determined to return in their home country when they may practice their lifestyle which is different than the French society and thus Valls strengthen the stereotypes related to Roma, especially those related to begging and stealing. Insecurity is often evoked by the same minister during his interview in the Media. Thus, that makes an impression that Roma are danger for the security of the French society. This the Roma question has been overwhelmingly discussed in the Media in relation to criminality, homelessness, and to represent the negative impact of the migration for France. Nicolas Sarkozy also uses this question for his political interest to justify the practices of destruction of Roma camps. In an interview in France inter the actual minister of interior Manuel Valls clams that Roma don’t have any vocation to integrate the country. In fact the situation is different than the political discourse.

The French journalist Charlotte Chaffanjon explains the factors behind Valls arguments against Roma migrants are his own political interests. According to a survey published in Figaro magazine 33% of French design Valls as a favorite candidate for the Presidential election in 2017 comparing to only 9% who will support Holland, the actual president. The minister uses the question of Roma migration because according to a survey 70% of French are in favor Roma to return in their home countries and say what the population want to hear: less migrants in France for protecting French employment. In reality the unemployment rate is higher, especially among youth (till 25 years old). The measures adopted by the government are not sufficient and the unemployment remains an important issue in France. In this context Foreigners are perceived as rivals for limited number of jobs. The minister’s discourse is widely supported by political leaders and politicians from the same party: the Socialist, such as mayor of Evry Francis Chouat. His statement about Roma "in many camps engaged in illegal trade, child begging, prostitution ..." creates the idea that Roma are offenders and their activities represent danger for the public order. In the same article another politician from the same party, Michel Destot, mayor of Grenoble clams that "the construction anarchic of Roma camps provokes situations of terrible tension that we can not solve on local level...." and adds that “the European Union have to find solutions for these population flow” which give the feeling that the European Union are responsible for this situation because its migration

20 Harris interactive for current values study
21 France inter, 2 October 2013
22 Monde, 26 September 2013
policies. This message is addressed to those social groups dissatisfied with the European Union and the Euro zone.

Tension between Roma and non-Roma has never been discussed but might be created by those political discourses. The Media underline in its reports the fact that each eviction and distraction of Roma camp happens without any violence, but also suggest that Roma may be violent. The Media are often invited when the authorities proceed with eviction of Roma thus creating the illusion that the French society are subject to huge migration flow of illegal Roma migrants. In fact in 2013 the one particular group of migrants was several time displaced from their camps and the Media has reported it. Many of the reports suggests that first there is large number of Roma migrants, second suggest that these evictions are due to violent behavior of the Roma, and third justify the numerous evictions that the new government, led by the Socialist party, carry out since it is on power (2012).

4) The media as political instrument in the process

The media are the mains tool for dissemination of information to a large number of individuals. Medias represent an impersonal institution or a tool for dissemination of information or opinions. They became indispensable for the modern society. In democratic countries the media forms the "fourth power" because of their direct impact on the society.

The presentation of certain pieces of information to a large number of people tend to create a kind of common thoughts and shared opinions. Taking into account this specificity the Media become a target for politicians especially before elections for disseminating their ideas and influence the public opinion. Freedom of the press in democratic countries permit this process but sometimes it leads to misuse of information. Most of the medias have political preferences (for ex. Le Monde (Left), Le Figaro, Right) which fact presents an obstacle for the objectivity of presenting certain information. In other words, different medias adopt different position in relation to their political orientation so they became a factor in the political life of the country and a could be used as means of control or manipulation of public opinions.

Before the election the interest of the media regarding Roma became particularly high. The Roma question is one of those political issue in France where the medias has plaid a major role. As described above Roma have been used to create the negative image of the migrant from Eastern Europe. Often Roma are depicted in negative light. Medias are not only a tool to disseminate these ideas but also one of the main actors in the process. Owing to numerous and frequent reports concerning Roma evictions, the media has been contributed to representing the Roma from Eastern Europe as danger for the French society. Second, the media become the main channel for

dissimilating the idea that Roma are burden promoted by populist parties. Thus, several candidates for the elections get noticed while before supporting such claims they were not popular. Their position against Roma help them to win the largest parts of the French electorate (that is negative towards migrants in time of post-economic crises).

Owing to the position against immigration several parties (generally from the Right) increase their rating before the election. The National Front become the party that is most likely to win the European elections in France. During the last few months the medias broadcast the evictions of the Roma, while before this period the medias were not interested in this topic. Hence, it seems that certain medias channel the information that certain political figures are willing to transmit to a larger audience and thus to influence the public opinion. The media has become an instrument for the political parties and candidates to disseminate ideas, to spread their political messages against the immigration to France. Often, the medias present Roma as unwilling to and lacking of capacity to integrate.

The positive examples are not popular and rarely presented. During the interview with K.B working at the Town Council in Bobigny (Ile-de-France), K.B confirmed the lack of media interest to present the positive examples for Roma integration. According to the interviewee, the Media has never reported the successes of the Roma integration in this district, the projects of the Town Council, its role to ensure place for Roma camps etc. As K.B argues medias are only interested in presenting the negative events, scandals, criminality particularly when that concerns Roma. Bobingy is a town part of Seine-Saint-Denis departement where are living mostly foreigners from different ethnic background. The largest number of reports about this location are related to criminality which further stigmatize this population. The larger number of report broadcast the negative image of this community - poor, uneducated, burden for the French society, population. The majority of reports concerning Roma are related to evictions or bad living conditions in the Roma camps. These reports influence the public opinion and make an impression that the claims that Roma are using the social security system and are unwilling to integrate are true. Thus, the media contribute to the creation of the negative image of the migrant Roma from Bulgaria and Romania.

The political games put the Roma question as hot topic. Presenting the Roma in negative lights claiming that Roma are burden and threat for the French society, politicians mobilize larger social groups. The reality and the positive examples lack the attention of the media and as a result people accept only the negative image of the Roma created by the certain political parties together with the media. Nevertheless, the political game suggest an opposition as well. Despite the existence of parties that position themselves against the Roma migration, they are parties that take pro-Roma,
pro-migration approach. Unfortunately, as the research suggests these claims serves only as a tool for gaining power, not for the Roma integration. Hence, either positive or negative, in both cases the Roma questions in France serves certain populist parties for their political gain.

IV Conclusion

Recently, the Roma question became essential issue throughout European Union. Several strategies are implemented, which aim to analyze and to tackle problems such as discrimination, social isolation, and segregation that Roma are subject to. The high level of unemployment, the housing and health issues, the bad living conditions, the discrimination, the poor level of education are problems, identical for all Roma across Europe. In addition, the bad economic situation in the Balkan’s countries troubled furthermore the picture of the Roma life and lead to Roma social exclusion. These social and economic conditions press Roma to leave Eastern Europe and migrate to Western countries. Thus, the Roma migration to Western Europe become an issue.

Defined as burden of the state, potentially dangerous group, prone to criminality, Roma migrants are often a pretext for disseminating ideas against the migration from Eastern Europe. These ideas have been used for political purposes especially before the European elections this year. The French context has become a particular example for the abovementioned.

The growing number of populist parties before elections in France have used the Roma questions for their political gain. The dissatisfaction of the French society with the European policies that grant the right of free movement to its citizen and the fear of migration flow from Central and Eastern European countries to France have been discussed at large by different political formations. The negative attitudes towards the Eastern Europeans was adopted by certain populist parties to mobilize voters. Those parties and political leaders suggest policies that aim to stop the migration flow for Eastern Europe, especially the migration from Bulgaria and Romania. In such discourse, Roma migrants embodied the absolute negative image of the migrant from Eastern Europe, this fact partly explains why Roma are rejected by the French society. The fact that Roma socio-economic conditions are the most difficult in the European union despite the European policies for fighting their isolation have been used to define them as people uncapable to integrate. Thus, populist parties define the Roma migrants as danger for the French society.

The impact of these ideas on Roma migrants life is considerable. The growing of the negative representation of the Roma before the European elections led to raising the hostile attitudes towards Roma and the prejudices concerning the migration from Eastern Europe. The Media contribution is particularly important in the process of creating the image of the Roma as threat for the French public order and social security.
Furthermore, these facts may lead to profiling of Roma (similar to Arabian minorities in France), as potential criminals. This situation might be worsened if populist practices against Roma continue to take on national media. The pro-Roma civil society should engage gently with the process and do not oppose openly the government's position about Roma. The national NGO’s work for betterment of the Roma situation without provoking big social debates.
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France info

Others:

Photo: 20 minutes.fr
Which political processes hamper and benefit right populist parties' advances - Lessons from the German case 1982-2012

Timo Lochocki¹

Germany is - aside from Ireland and Spain - the last European country freed of an entrenched right populist party. A QCA-analysis on political claims on multiculturalism in Germany from 1982 to 2012 shows why the niche for a right populist party only opened in the late 1980s. While "Die Republikaner" (REP) gathered remarkable vote shares of up to 10% around 1990, the established German parties kept the electoral niche for right populist parties closed since. This paper illustrates the generalizable political processes obstructing and benefitting right populist advances in Western-European countries. Established political players can indeed severely hamper their advances – the German case shows how.

1. The new rising star in Western European politics: right populist parties

The recent years have been a watershed in Western-European politics: a new party type is about to alter the political competition of Western-European countries fundamentally. Right populist parties are meanwhile gathering similar vote-shares to the two major political forces that dominated post-war Europe – the Social Democrats and the Christian-Democrats/Conservatives. In Switzerland, the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) has taken the pole position of Swiss parties since 1999. According to recent polls, the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) and the Front National (FN) have decent chances to turn out as the strongest political force in the upcoming elections in the Netherlands and France. In Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Norway, right populist parties are competing on the same level as the two major parties and have secured seats in government a number of times. In most other countries, right populist parties are polling around ten percent (Tab. 1.1)

Tab. 1.1: Electoral fortunes of right populist parties in Western Europe; source: various country studies (party family based on Mudde 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Significant right populist party at federal level, crossing the electoral threshold</th>
<th>Votes last election, in %</th>
<th>Polls in 2014, in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (since 1986)</td>
<td>20.5 (2013)</td>
<td>22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5 (2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. Institutionalized anti-diversity movements

How to account for these remarkable advances of this new party family that broke the phalanx of established political players that dominated Western Europe for the preceding 60 years? Part of the success of right populist parties can be explained by the highly stable demand for their agendas by voters: between 10 and 25 percent of European voters constantly support right populist parties’ programs – regardless of time and country (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Van der Brug and Fennema 2007; Fieschi, Morris et al. 2012). Demand remains so constant on substantial levels that one of the most well-read scholars of right populism – Cas Mudde – states:

Widespread demand is a given, rather than the main puzzle, in contemporary western democracies. Provocatively stated, the real research question should be: why have so few [right populist] parties been successful given the generally fertile breeding ground? (Mudde 2010, 1179, own emphasis)
And indeed, given this widespread demand and the substantial advances in most European countries, it is striking to note that the timing of their breakthrough varies fundamentally: while the first major advances occurred in Denmark in the 1970s, it has taken until the 2000s for right populist parties to break through in Finland and Sweden. Even more intriguing, three Western-European countries are still freed of successful right populist parties up to date: Ireland, Germany and Spain (Tab. 1.1, previous page).

But what program are European voters after that right populist parties allegedly cater to so compellingly? According to studies scrutinizing the motivation of their voters (Arzheimer 2009b), as much as campaigns of successful right populist parties (Ivarsflaten 2008), the key factor behind their electoral advances is their firmly conservative position in matters of immigration and integration, primarily indicated by their fierce rejection of any form of multiculturalism. Simon Bornschier summarizes the core of their political program vividly:

First, (...) [right populist parties] challenge the societal changes brought about by the libertarian left, and question the legitimacy of political decisions that enact universalistic values. Second, and more importantly, the populist right has promoted new issues and developed new discourses, for example concerning immigration. This does not involve ethnic racism, but rather what Betz (2004) and Betz and Johnson (2004) have called ‘differentialist nativism’ or ‘cultural differentialism’, which represents a counter-vision to multicultural models of society. (Bornschier 2010, 5)

This departure from ethnic racism – as embraced by right extreme parties – enables right populist parties to appeal to a far larger voter potential than right extreme parties (lingering around two percent on average). Their positions are closest to the conservative/traditional-communitarian pole on the cultural axis of political competition, which is at times embraced by established moderate parties, too. Another crucial difference from extreme parties is that right populist parties clearly adhere to parliamentarian decision-making (Bornschier 2010). Consequently, they hold a firmly conservative position within the democratic spectrum.

But why are right populist parties best understood as reaction to the increase in diversity in West-European Democracies because of immigration? Why, exactly, should this political topic have the largest effect on their electoral fortunes? First, because immigration-issues are the only topics that can be legitimized by established parties, right populist parties can rely on them for enduring mobilization (Alonso and Claro da Fonseca 2011; Green-Pedersen 2012; Muis 2012). Second, since the motivation of right populist parties’ voters is primarily rooted in anti-immigration stances, campaigning against multiculturalism as an alleged threat to the allegedly homogenous core of the society is a necessary condition for right populist parties’ electoral success (Ivarsflaten 2008; Arzheimer 2009b). Third and finally, because immigration and especially multiculturalism works as the prime narrative through which to spark and mobilize grievances over the sense of an alleged
national community, framed by contingent, socially constructed national boundaries that lie at the heart of right populist parties’ agendas (Bornschier 2010; Yilmaz 2012). Rejecting immigration, or, more precisely, multiculturalism, is the key narrative of the aggressive nostalgia of the ‘light’ nationalism of right populist parties. Therefore, contemporary right populist parties are best understood as anti-multiculturalism parties.

Given that the demand for right populist parties’ anti-multiculturalism agendas remains stable, but their advances vary substantially, what seems to vary instead is voters’ demand for a new political player. It appears as if in some countries, in some times, this demand for a new political player remains significantly lower due to the sufficient programmatic supply of established political parties (Rydgren 2007b). Accordingly, the variation in electoral advances of right populist parties could be accounted for in understanding when and why voters’ stable demand for right populist parties’ agendas is not catered substantially to by established political parties: when and why is does an electoral niche for a new right populist party open?

3. How can right populist parties seize their electoral niche?

Understanding this conundrum has brought a ‘minor industry’ (Arzheimer 2009a, 259) to the fore. However, no substantial answer can yet been given because the political mechanisms preceding right populists’ electoral breakthroughs cannot be explained sufficiently: known studies stress less that immigration-related topics are discussed among established political actors to benefit anti-multiculturalism right populist parties, but define the form of this very debate as pivotal: quantitative studies argue that a debate with high salience over immigration must show a void on the conservative position so a right populist anti-multiculturalism party can seize its electoral niche (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Van der Brug and Spanje 2009; Arzheimer 2009a; Arzheimer 2009b). Qualitative studies offer further insights, arguing that there must not only be an opening in the conservative position, but a conservative position must also be offered by an established political actor in the first place—and then dropped over the course of the highly salient debate, before right populist anti-multiculturalism parties can mobilize on that very position (Ellinas 2010; Muis 2012).

Therefore, topics and positions via which right populist anti-multiculturalism parties mobilize must have previously been legitimized by established parties and not catered to. Hence, the immigration issue needs to be the subject of a highly salient political contestation and a position of a right-populist anti-multiculturalism party – a strictly conservative position that rejects multiculturalism – must already have been part of the party discourse among established political players. Given that
10-25 percent of the European electorate constantly demand a rejection of multiculturalism, how does one account for the varying party rationale of the established political parties in immigration-debates? Consequently, two questions need to be addressed: (1) given similar scope conditions in European countries experiencing immigration, why are immigration-related topics turning into the subject of salient political contestation, and (2) why does a void on the conservative position, clearly rejecting multiculturalism, become an opening for a new contender, if filled by a moderate political actor beforehand (Fig. 3.1, next page)?

Hence, the puzzle becomes: how does one account for the striking difference between the stable and substantial demand for strictly conservative positions in matters of immigration, and the rejection of multiculturalism, among 10-25 percent of the European electorate, on the one hand; and established political parties’ varying rationales for (1) increasing its salience in order to politicize the issue and (2) to open the electoral niche for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party in dropping their conservative profile over the course of the respective debates, on the other?²

Fig. 3.1: Explanations for the rise of right populist parties and derived research questions

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² Consequently, this research project is concerned with the exact years of the opening of the electoral niche for right populist parties. When the right populist party is established as an entrenched political player – with substantial representation in the federal parliament – a variety of other factors also account for their electoral fortunes, which is in contrast to the phase of consolidation after first electoral gains (Mudde 2007, Bornschier 2010). Therefore, this research project focuses on the early phase of right populist parties’ electoral advances.

To give an example, this project rather focuses on explaining the early advances of the French Front National in the 1980s, and less its electoral fortunes as an established player in the 1990s and 2000s.
4. Scrutinizing Right Populists’ varying fortunes in Germany: data and methods

The German case offers a perfect possibility to scrutinize the hypothesized political mechanisms accounting for variation with advances of right populist parties. While the right populist Die Republikaner (REP) have gathered remarkable 7.1% at the election for the European Parliament in 1989 and entered various regional parliaments in the early 1990s, they have vanished from the political scenery since. The newly founded Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) is struggling to gather electoral support despite the heated discussions over European politics in recent years, too: the party received 4.7% at the federal election 2013, thereby failed to enter the federal parliament due to the 5% threshold and is lingering around 3-5% of voter appreciation in 2014. These dire results of right populist parties pose the question if the German parties kept the salience of immigration-issues low, respectively the electoral niche for right populist closed since the early 1990s? And if so, why?

Studies trying to assess the salience and positions devoted to political topics have, to date, relied on two data sources: the Comparative Party Manifesto Program (CMP) and data obtained via a media analysis before pivotal federal election campaigns. Both data sources are rather poorly suited to explaining how party-positioning affects the voter, or for assessing reasons for varying party conduct: The CMP-data (used for e.g. by Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008; Alonso and Claro da Fonseca 2011) is based on the evaluation of party programs and allows comparisons over time and across country; in so doing, it is limited by the lack of information regarding party conduct between manifesto publications and the difference between what parties write and the issues around which they actually campaign. Therefore, the validity of the data is rather low, if not absent. This leads Marc Helbling and Anke Tresch to conclude that, instead of relying on CMP-data, ‘party-voter linkages are best studied with media data’ (Helbling and Tresch 2011, 181). Adhering to these remarks, large comparative research projects such as ‘West European Politics in the Age of Globalization’ (Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008) obtain party positions based on political claims reported in quality media before federal elections in order to obtain data with high validity. The prime limitation relevant here is that only snapshots of party-positions are taken (e.g. for Germany the two months before the federal elections of 1974, 1994, 1998 and 2002) – therefore, the validity of the party discourse between electoral campaigns is extremely low, if not almost absent; in so doing, neither a precise development of party positions and their salience over time, nor the reasons for their respective changes, can be assessed. Considering the pros and cons of these two approaches,

3 The raw data as much as the QCA master- and output-files can be requested from the author.
the strengths of both need to be boosted and their shortcomings avoided; this is achieved by obtaining the party position on immigration-related matters via a political claim analysis of political statements as reported in quality media for each separate year.

Studies working with this approach limit themselves to one quality medium because comparative studies have shown that neither the salience, nor the reported party positions (save the evaluation of editors) vary significantly between various quality media sources or even tabloids (Koopmans, Statham et al. 2005, 261/2). Consequently, data derived from one quality newspaper can function as proxy mirroring party positions on immigration-related issues and the salience of the issue in party discourse, as long as only political claims of politicians are listed and coded.

The immigration issue entered Germany’s political discourse with Helmut Kohl’s chancellorship in 1982/83, accompanying the Christian Democrats’ call for a moral turn in German politics, termed the ‘geistig-moralische Wende’ (Thränhardt 1995). Only 1989 saw electoral advances of the right populist Die Republikaner, while no right contender could entrench itself in the political system of Germany. Thus, I rely on the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) to obtain political claims on immigration-related issues in Germany because their online archives cover the entire period under scrutiny (1982 to 2012).

To mirror the discourse as closely as possible, I obtain the salience and position of the two largest parties of the mid-left (SPD and Grüne) and the mid-right spectrum (CDU/CSU and FDP); these together account for 90-95 percent of the entire vote-share. I code every claim in all articles in which any combination of key words and party names or abbreviations occur in the headlines or first paragraph of the politics section of the daily newspaper (see Tab. 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tab. 4.1: Search string</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAZ Archiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(multikult* ODER integr* ODER assimil* ODER einwand* ODER rassis* ODER asyl* ODER zuwander* ODER ausländer* ODER <em>migr</em> ODER staatsbürger*) UND (SPD ODER CDU ODER CSU ODER FDP ODER B90 oder grüne ODER sozialdemo* ODER christ* ODER liberal*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Claims from these articles were coded using the method of ‘core sentences.’ It is an inductive approach that captures the relationship between the political actor and a political issue that appears in the newspaper article (also used by Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008). Each statement is reduced to its core structure, namely the subject (political actor), the object (political issue) and the evaluation. The evaluation uses a five-point scale, ranging from -10 (clearly conservative) to +10 (clearly

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4 In English: (multiculturalism OR integration OR assimilation OR immigration OR racism OR asylum OR migration OR foreigner OR citizenship) AND (SPD OR CDU OR CSU OR FDP OR B90 OR Greens OR Social Democrats OR Christian Democrats OR Liberals)
-5 and +5 are given if an understated evaluation is given, e.g. if she/he considers support, or support under certain circumstances. 0 is set for an ambivalent position – see codebook (tab. 4.2) and examples (tab. 4.3, next page) below; this coding technique is close to approaches used in media analysis (Helbling 2012).

**Tab. 4.2: Code Book**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Clearly conservative (-10)</th>
<th>Nuanced conservative (-5)</th>
<th>Neutral/ambivalent (0)</th>
<th>Nuanced liberal (+5)</th>
<th>Clearly liberal (+10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party rejects immigration and means pertaining to it</td>
<td>Party rejects immigration and means pertaining to it – save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party neither supports nor rejects immigration</td>
<td>Party supports immigration and means pertaining to it – save exception x or under condition y</td>
<td>Party supports immigration and means pertaining to it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Asylum         | Party rejects asylum-seekers and wants to take legal actions to reduce their numbers; party rejects any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society | Party rejects asylum-seekers and wants to take legal actions to reduce their numbers; party rejects any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y | Party neither rejects nor supports asylum-seekers; party neither rejects nor supports means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society | Party calls for low legal barriers for asylum-seekers; party supports any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y | Party calls for low legal barriers for asylum-seekers; party supports any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society |

Integration

Party conceives the host society’s culture as rightfully dominating the integration-process; party supports assimilation; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the migrant

Party conceives the host society’s culture as rightfully dominating the integration-process; party supports assimilation; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the migrant – save exception x or under condition y

Party undecided about integration-process; party neither supporting assimilation nor multicultural integration; party not perceiving the responsibility of integration to lie only with one side

Party conceives a plurality of cultural strains on equal footing in processes of integration; party supports multiculturalism; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y

Party conceives a plurality of cultural strains on equal footing in processes of integration; party supports multiculturalism; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the receiving society

Citizenship

Party rejects (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship)

Party rejects (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship) – save exception x or under condition y

Party neither rejects nor supports (easier) access to citizenship for migrants

Party favors (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship) – save exception x or under condition y

Party favors (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard (FDP) sagte, diese Jahresquote sei ‘ein vernünftiger Kompromiß’ zwischen der Aufrechterhaltung des Anwerbestopps (…) und einer gesteuerten Zuwanderung, wie sie die Regierung in ihrer Gesetzesnovelle vorschlägt.</td>
<td>12.03.2003</td>
<td>FDP (GER)</td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A final question of validity concerns the number of claims that are necessary to validly define the party position each year. The adequate sample size can be determined using the split-half method (Krippendorf 2004, 124). Applying this technique to the period under examination and relying on the coding methods previously outlined, 25-30 claims per year appear necessary (fig. 4.1).

![Fig. 4.1: Assessing the necessary number of claims per year](image-url)

The party position in all years with fewer than 25 observable claims will be coded according to the last year with more than 25 claims. For example, if the year 2007 hypothetically shows only 13 claims of a party, while the year 2006 has 42, the score of the year 2006 will be used for the year 2007 as well. This is for both methodological and logical reasons. First, because a valid assessment of party position is not possible for years with fewer than 25 claims, and second, if a party wants to visibly change its public position, it will consciously make more claims on the issue so that voters will hear and understand the position change. The yearly party position consists of the average of combined individual claims.

If party positions are obtained using qualitative data in order to ensure a high degree of validity, the question of how to ensure that the codebook is used to analyze the data with a high degree of reliability – independent of personal political preferences of the coder – arises. In order to ensure the sufficiency of coding rules and a high level of reliability, the author conducted tests of intercoder-reliability. As the author retrieved claims from the newspapers, as he was in charge of the evaluation, randomly drawn samples were used to identify the reliability of the prime coder’s assessment by comparing his answers to those of two scholars of political science from the three countries under scrutiny.
Reliability measures widely used in media studies call for re-evaluating at least 50 randomly selected units; to do so, I use Cohen’s Kappa – a very conservative index defining values of > 0.8 as extremely reliable and values of > 0.6 as sufficiently reliable, and values of < 0.4 as poor (Lombard, Snyder-Duch et al. 2002, 593). A randomly drawn sample of 10 articles with about 200 possible claims is used to test the agreement of the salience-indicator between two scholars of German politics and the author of the study. The party positioning is checked by re-evaluating 50 randomly drawn claims. Save the precise evaluation of the party position, all indicators score close and above 0.8, and can, therefore, be treated as highly reliable (tab. 4.4).

**Tab. 4.4: Results of inter-coder-reliability-tests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GER 1/2</th>
<th>GER 2/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detection of Claims</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detection of Parties</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detection of Topic</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Position, tri-polar</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Position, precise</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information on salience and party position was recoded for a QCA-analysis in order to assess the causal chain of mechanisms allegedly preceding right populist parties’ advances. I draw on the particular strength of QCA in checking whether a combination of various conditions is necessary and/or sufficient for the occurrence of a certain outcome, e.g. the varying positioning of an established party on immigration-related matters or electoral advances of a right populist party (Ragin 2008; Schneider and Wagemann 2010; Wagemann and Schneider 2010; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). QCA works according a Boolean logic and defines social phenomena in terms of set-theory (Ragin 1987, Ragin 2006). In doing so, its explanatory logic is rather deterministic and must not be confused with the probabilistic reasoning of classic algebra and quantitative research methods. Consequently, instead of measuring the strength of a relation between independent and dependent variables, set-theoretic approaches are concerned with revealing if and to what extent a set of conditions can be seen as a necessary and/or sufficient conditions for an outcome. It is crucial to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions; the differences between the two can be neatly illustrated using Venn diagrams (Fig. 4.2).
According to standard logic, the assumption that condition A is necessary for outcome B to occur is the same as stating that ‘B cannot be true unless A is true’, or ‘if A is false then B is false.’ By contraposition, this is the same as saying that ‘whenever B is true, so is A.’ A good example is the age-constraint in electing the German Bundespräsident: the candidate has to be at least 40 years old in order to become Bundespräsident (Art. 54, Abs. 1, GG). In turn, the person who is Bundespräsident is at least 40 years old. Being at least 40 years old is a necessary condition for being elected German Bundespräsident. Using the Venn-Diagrams, one can say that all Bundespräsidents are part of the group of German citizens above 40. However, this is not a sufficient condition because being 40 years old does not automatically make you German Bundespräsident. The group of above 40 year olds lists ca. 75.000.000 German citizens with different jobs.

To say that C is a sufficient condition for D is to say that whenever D is present, C is also present. In contrast, D being absent does not imply the absence of C as well; D can be present despite the absence of C.

I will stay with the German Bundespräsident to provide an example. Given that the German President must hold German citizenship (Art. 54, Abs. 1, GG) and one acquires German citizenship
by having German parents, having German parents is a sufficient condition for acquiring German citizenship, and thus, in turn, for running for office as Bundespräsident. Therefore, all German Bundespräsidents have German citizenship. To recall the Venn diagrams, the group of all people that can become German Bundespräsident, are part of the group with German citizenship. It is important to note that one can also obtain German citizenship without having German parents, however (Art. 10, Art. 11, Art. 12, StaG). Thus, having German parents is not a necessary condition for becoming Bundespräsident, nor is being Bundespräsident a sufficient condition for having German parents. The group of German Bundespräsidents does not have to be part of the group of people with German parents (even though, that is the case up to know).

The stronger set-relations between (sets of) conditions, because of their more restrictive nature, are those that are both necessary and sufficient conditions for an outcome. This means: if A than B; conversely, if not A, then not B either. Revisiting the example of the German Bundespräsident, it is both a necessary and sufficient condition to be the German Bundespräsident in order to propose a new German Chancellor after a federal election is cast (Art. 63, GG). Only the German Bundespräsident can do so, therefore it is a necessary condition; if the federal election is cast, the Bundespräsident will propose a German chancellor – a sufficient condition. Revisiting the Venn diagrams, the group of people who can and will propose a new German Chancellor after a federal election is cast is (the very small group) of the (one) German Bundespräsident.

This leads to the question of how to assess the ‘usefulness’ of an approximated sufficient or necessary condition. Charles Ragin proposes two central descriptive measures to evaluate set-theoretic relationships in this vein: consistency and coverage. Consistency shows the degree to which a subset-relation has been approximated, coverage indicates the empirical relevance of the subset. To quote Ragin once more,

Set-theoretic consistency assesses the degree to which the cases sharing a given condition or combination of conditions (e.g., democratic dyad) agree in displaying the outcome in question (e.g., nonwarring). That is, consistency indicates how closely the subset relation is approximated. Set-theoretic coverage, by contrast, assesses the degree to which a cause or causal combination “accounts for” instances of an outcome (Ragin 2006, 292).

Highly simplified, consistency could be defined simply as the sum of consistent membership scores in a causal condition divided by the sum of all membership scores in a cause or a causal combination; as the causal conditions in fuzzy sets usually do not embrace a value of 1, the consistency drops accordingly. For example, if three children who like to play football score 100 percent correct answers in a math test – coded as 1 – but a fourth kid who also likes to play football scores 60 percent - coded as 0.6 – the consistency of the set-relation between ‘like to play football’ and ‘good in math’ drops to (3x1+1x0.6)/4= 0.9; to make this term more precise, in order to
ameliorate penalties for causal memberships of *sufficient* conditions that *exceed* their mark – meaning the outcome membership score.

For a detailed discussion of the calculation of scores of consistency and coverage, see Charles Ragin’s detailed article (Ragin 2006). For this project, coverage values are only calculated for *sufficient* conditions scoring close to or above consistency values of => .75; *necessary* conditions are those with consistency values of => .90, as this guarantees a desirable liability of the set-relation examined (Schneider and Wagemann 2010, 406).

QCA analysis calls for recoding the data according to a binary logic. The data must be recoded according to a membership in a fuzzy set; 0 implying no membership, 1 implying full membership in the group or to the concept. For the concepts previously introduced, this requires recoding data, for example, as constituting an economic threat (yes/no), indicating a liberal position of the mid-left (yes/no) or whether the mid-left spectrum is leading in the polls (yes/no). The data is recoded according to an established procedure: extreme outliers are excluded from the recoding, given a 0 or a 1, respectively, while the rest is recoded using the following formula. The data is recoded by excluding extreme outliers. I define extreme outliers as those that score higher or lower than one standard deviation from the mean, and code them accordingly – with the same value as one standard deviation from the mean (as listed and explained in tab. 4.5, next page).

The following formula is used for the data-transforming (Verkuilen 2005, 479-489):

\[
\text{Membership in fuzzy set} = \frac{\text{data point} - \text{goalpost low}}{\text{goalpost high} - \text{goalpost low}}
\]

### Tab. 4.5: Data sources and recoding of variables/conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Condition/Variable</th>
<th>Operationalization, Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real and Perceived Threat Potential</td>
<td>Real cultural threat potential</td>
<td>Inflows of foreign born per year per Capita, OECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real and Perceived Threat Potential</td>
<td>Real economic threat potential</td>
<td>Internationally standardized unemployment rate, International Labour Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived cultural threat potential</td>
<td>Percentage of voters (very) concerned with immigration / integration / asylum seekers (Politbarometer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived economic threat potential</td>
<td>Percentage of voters (very) concerned with economic situation (Politbarometer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The shared assumption of previous studies, namely that right populist anti-multiculturalism parties’ successful polling is dependent on the conduct of established political actors (e.g. Meguid 2005; Ellinas 2010; Muis 2012) is confirmed. They gather electoral support during salient debates on immigration-related matters in which established political actors embrace a liberal discourse, in turn opening the electoral niche for a conservative position that rejects multiculturalism (tab 5.1 and fig. 5.1). This very constellation only occurred in Germany in the late 1980s and led to the electoral advances of Die Republikaner (REP). Since then, either the salience of related issues amongst established parties is extremely low, or the CDU/CSU can keep its conservative profile in salient debates, in turn keeping the electoral niche for a right populist party closed.

Tab. 5.1: Conditions accounting for vote gains of Die Republikaner (REP), 1982-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salience attributed by CDU/CSU</td>
<td>Number of claims each year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience attributed by SPD</td>
<td>Number of claims each year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salience attributed by CDU/CSU and SPD</td>
<td>Number of claims each year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Position of CDU/CSU (yes/no)</td>
<td>Party position based on tab. 4.2 and 4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Position of SPD (yes/no)</td>
<td>Party position based on 4.2 and 4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Discourse (yes/no)</td>
<td>Combined party positions based on 4.2 and 4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling of right populist anti-multiculturalism party Die Republikaner REP</td>
<td>Polling based on Politbarometer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis of conservative agenda setter</td>
<td>Polling based on Politbarometer (given that the CDU/CSU and the SPD compete for chancellorship, a CDU/CSU crisis is calculated based on the polling difference between both parties)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which political camp is leading in the polls? Mid-left (SPD and Gruene) or mid-right (CDU/CSU and FDP)?</td>
<td>Polling based on Politbarometer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Scrutinizing Right Populists’ varying fortunes in Germany: results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary Conditions</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Cover</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Cover</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salience AND Liberal Discourse</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>No Salience AND No Liberal Discourse</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantial Inflow of Migrants</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Conditions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No Salience OR No Liberal Discourse</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5.1: Positions of German parties on matters of immigration and electoral advances of right populist Die Republikaner (REP), 1982-2012

It is important to stress that the salience and the liberal discourse are necessary conditions for the advancement of right populist parties; however, they are not sufficient. This suggests that other factors also come into play – be it at the organizational level (Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen 2011) or the new party’s media access (Ellinas 2007; Muis 2012). Still, right populist parties are dependent on the necessary conditions regarding the conduct of established political actors; this confirms Cas Mudde’s argument that:

during the phase of electoral breakthrough, the populist radical right party does not play a particularly important role as an independent variable. Having a charismatic leader, professional propaganda, and a strong organization will help, but are not necessary to achieve electoral breakthrough (Mudde 2007, 301).
Therefore, the main contribution of this study lies less in the confirmation of these findings. Instead, because this study is the first to rely on highly valid and reliable data, it can consequently reveal reasons behind varying party conduct – i.e. the ‘causes of the causes’ in a two-level theory (Goertz and Mahoney 2006, 241). The high salience of immigration-related debates (1) occurs due to crisis of conservative parties (1.1.) in times of high immigration (1.2) during which the CDU/CSU aims at mobilizing conservative voters to regain support.

Thus, the subsequent question reads how to account for high salience and the liberal discourse? Even though the substantial inflow of migrants is a necessary condition for high salience, the low coverage value and the sufficient conditions indicate that the polling of the CDU/CSU is by far the most decisive factor (Tab 5.2 and Fig. 5.2).

Tab. 5.2: Conditions accounting for high salience of immigration-issues in Germany, 1982-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Salience</th>
<th>No High Salience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary Conditions</td>
<td>Substantial Inflow of Migrants</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Conditions</td>
<td>Crisis CDU/CSU</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5.2: Salience of immigration-issues and polling of CDU/CSU, 1982-2012

But high salience periods alone are not sufficient in order to enable electoral advances of right populist parties, they must be accompanied with a liberal discourse of all major parties. This liberal
discourse, embracing the CDU/CSU dropping its conservative profile for the liberal positions of the Social Democrats, is measurable if the Social Democrats are leading in the polls (2.1.) and if the voters’ perception of the economic outlook is good (2.2) – see tab. 5.3 and fig. 5.3.

**Tab. 5.3: Conditions accounting for a liberal discourse on immigration in Germany, 1982-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessary Conditions</th>
<th>Liberal Discourse</th>
<th>No Liberal Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Cover age</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD+Greens leading in the polls AND positive economic climate</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPF+Greens not leading in the polls AND High Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sufficient Conditions</th>
<th>Liberal Discourse</th>
<th>No Liberal Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Cover age</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD+Greens leading in the polls AND Public concerns over cultural issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 5.3: Party Position SPD and economic concerns of the German electorate, 1982-2012**

Thus, the results of the German case can be summarized: the CDU/CSU politicizes immigration-related topics whenever they are significantly behind in the polls and need a topic to mobilize conservative voters. The CDU/CSU will only moderate its conservative profile in a salient debate, in turn opening an electoral niche on the right by joining the liberal party discourse, if it conceives of it as an incentive to gain votes. This incentive was visible only in 1988 and 1989, when the
German Social Democrats (SPD) polled far ahead of the CDU/CSU while embracing a clearly multicultural agenda regarding matters of integration and immigration. The CDU/CSU adopted substantial parts of this multicultural agenda in 1988 and 1989 and thereby opened the niche on the right; this left the conservative voters, who the CDU/CSU had mobilized over the 1980s, to vote for the sole political party that had clearly rejected multiculturalism during the 1989 election for European Parliament: the right-populist anti-multiculturalism party ‘Die Republikaner’ (REP). The CDU/CSU could regain its conservative voters by leading German reunification and through the total lack of multicultural agendas from 1990 on. Because the SPD also stopped campaigning on multicultural positions after 1990, the CDU/CSU was not in danger of losing centrist voters to the SPD if it reclaimed the conservative position. In doing so, the CDU/CSU (and also the SPD) ousted the right-populist anti-multiculturalism party ‘Die Republikaner’ (REP). This mechanism has still largely characterized salient integration debates in the Berlin Republic since 1990: the German Conservatives can keep the electoral niche on the far right closed whenever they decide to heat up the topic in order to mobilize conservative voters.

The reason for the German Social Democrats to drop their multicultural agenda almost entirely after 1990 can be found in the high economic threat potential to which the German voter conceives of having been exposed to since 1990 and the weakness of the left camp (SPD and Gruene). Unlike in the 1980s, the SPD has therefore refrained from openly campaigning on liberal, multicultural positions in matters of migration and integration.

Whether the political space for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party opens after a mid-right party has politicized the immigration issue thus depends on the economic conditions in which the Conservatives’ crisis occurs and the polling of the left camp; both define the position of their main competitor, the Social Democrats. In cases where the Social Democrats and the mid-left camp steadily poll ahead of the Conservatives and the mid-right camp while the mid-left is embracing a liberal agenda, the Conservatives will eventually level their conservative standpoints in salient debates, trying to capture voters of the political center. At this moment, the electoral niche for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party opens.

6. An attempt to generalize from the German Case: understanding the advances of right populist parties

The concept outlined for the German case can be extended to France and England, as they were exposed to salient immigration topics before a right populist party could gather electoral support.
(Alonso and Fonseca 2011). However, *if the immigration issue is conceived as a proxy for a salient cultural conflict*, speculations about a further extension of the concept to all Western European societies and the respective variation in electoral advances of right populist parties might warrant further attention. Other salient conflicts defining the role of the national community – be it debating the European Union, coming to terms with national history, defining features of national belonging or managing boundary conflicts with neighboring states – could replace immigration as a proxy to account for variation in electoral advances of right populist parties in Western Europe before the late 1980s as the cultural axis of political competition begun to focus on matters of immigration and integration mainly (Bornschier 2010).

The main point worth emphasizing is the expected similarity of the pattern of political processes: the two-level theory portrays conservative parties as (1) relying on mobilizing on the cultural dimension in times of severe crisis and with the possibility of politicizing cultural issues; in turn, they (2) withdraw from their conservative position on the matter – joining the liberal position of the Social Democrats – if the left camp is leading in the polls and the country is facing a benign economic situation.

Focusing on the necessary conditions of the basic level with the highest coverage values and hint on two necessary conditions to further enhance the extension: the advances of right populist parties before the late 1980s seem to been preceded by both (1) a crisis of conservative parties and (2) benign economic conditions, be it in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, or Norway. The breakthroughs of right populist parties in each of these countries followed periods of crisis of the moderate conservative parties in times of economic prosperity, be it Austria in the early 1980s, Belgium in the late 1980s, Denmark in the late 1960s or Norway in the late 1970s. The two-step theory seems to allow extension to most Western European democracies. The necessary conditions for the advances of right populist parties are a (1) successful left camp, and most notably successful Social Democrats, who put the Conservatives in a crisis in the first place and (2) benign economics. This crisis leads to the politicization of cultural topics by established conservative parties, but they soon lose their conservative electorate to a new right populist party, because the Conservatives drop their conservative profile when facing a successful Social Democratic contender with a liberal agenda in a society free of economic concerns (fig. 6.1).
7. On the prospects of the new player in German politics: the Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD)

Given these elaborations, the question of if, and if so, how, the two-level theory can be applied to explain the first initial electoral advances of the most recent new political player in contemporary Germany – the Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) – remains.

In the federal election in September 2013, the AfD gathered 4.7 percent of the votes, just under the 5 percent threshold that is the gateway to representation in the German Bundestag. German political scientists are divided over the question whether the AfD should be understood as a right populist party or its functional equivalent (Haeusler 2013). If the AfD is, however, conceived as the functional equivalent of a right populist party, it is striking that the immigration issue is neither part of their election campaigns, nor has an salience among the established parties preceded its first advances. Instead, the AfD is rallying – so far – solely on opposing the current management of the
German government regarding affairs concerning the European Union, and first and foremost concerning financial transactions with countries of the Euro Zone.

The two-level theory of political mechanisms outlined in the previous chapter functions in a large part here, too: the electoral niche for the AfD was opened by the CDU/CSU, who (briefly) campaigned with nationalist statements – primarily targeting Greece – in recent years in order to mobilize voters for regional elections in Germany and withdrew them shortly after. This was an unprecedented breach of the solidly pro-European stance of the CDU/CSU in the last decades. The CDU/CSU soon dropped these very brief nationalist campaigns primarily targeting Greece, however, as all other German parties stressed their pro-European agendas; a conservative profile on EU matters would most likely have resulted in significant vote losses for a party aiming at the political center. The salience of the EU topics and the nationalist campaigns of the CDU/CSU, were both very brief, but could have proven sufficient to mobilize a conservative electorate to consider a party change; the reasons lies with the increasingly moderate position of the CDU/CSU in the past years, which has disappointed substantial parts of their conservative electorate. These conservative voters, however, stayed with the CDU/CSU since no cultural issue had been passionately discussed in the last years that could have substantially mobilized (and alienated) conservative voters. For them, the topic of the European Union could, therefore, symbolize a policy area laden with enough narratives of alleged German identity to inspire them to aim for a ‘new conservative party’, offering a clearly conservative profile on cultural matters. If the CDU/CSU opened this electoral niche, it can also reclaim conservative voters by successfully campaigning on a conservative position in a symbol-laden policy area – as matters of the European Union and/or matters of immigration/integration. Recalling the two-level theory and given Germany’s bright economic prospects, the crucial determinant in this respect will be the strength of the mid-left political parties: the mid-left camp, and first and foremost the Social Democrats (SPD), will continue to campaign on liberal pro-European agendas if the economic climate remains as benign as in 2013. If the mid-left camp turns out to take over the majority in the polls, the CDU/CSU will have an incentive to drop their conservative agenda to reach centrist voters. This, in turn, would keep the electoral niche for the AfD open. Consequently, if the mid-right camp of German politics polls better than the mid-left, the CDU/CSU will most likely keep its conservative agenda, closing the electoral niche for the AfD.
8. Conclusion: How to stop right populist parties in Western Europe

The lessons from the German case are clear: in order to hamper electoral advances of right populist parties, the salience of topics on the cultural dimension either ought to remain very low or the conservative parties should not be challenged to drop their respective conservative position. Instead, the mid-left parties should refrain from multicultural campaigns in salient debates while attention should be directed to the economic axis of political competition.

Still, three limitations prevent a simple generalization of the German case: at first, external pressures are dominating national debates on European topics largely meanwhile – in fact, the only country that can frame the national discourse on European affairs rather based on domestic considerations is Germany; thus, conservative parties in other European countries have far fewer options at their strategic disposal to downplay debates on the cultural dimension – as debates over the European Union – as the powerful German CDU/CSU does; secondly, given that current European affairs lead to assume a stronger European integration in the future, conservative parties campaigning on national agendas are bound to disappoint their conservative electorate sooner or later; thirdly, the right populist AfD in Germany is still deprived of parliamentary representation – this ensure an advantage in legitimacy and media access of the established German parties concerning their capacities of agenda-setting; only the established parties of Ireland and Spain embrace this strategic advances still, too.

In the light of these limitations, this leaves the following three strategies for established, moderate European political players to hamper the electoral advances of right populist parties:

1) To limit the salience of debates on the cultural dimension as often as possible – it is hereby of equal importance that both the Conservatives and the Social Democrats do so likewise: instead of politicizing theses issues, established parties should aim for a national compromise to keep the salience of cultural issues low.

2) If salience is dependent on external pressure – as with European affairs – conservative parties should refrain from nationalist campaigns: since a deeper European integration seems to be expected and be supported by the moderate parties eventually, voters mobilized by nationalist campaigns are prone to join right populist parties.

3) The best way to hamper right populists’ advances in keeping the salience of cultural issues low and to bind the conservative electorate to established parties, seem to be passionate, polarized debates over economics: this ensures a high salience of economic over cultural issues – the worst that can happen to right populists.
List of References


An Examination of the 'far right' and 'populist politics' in contemporary Ireland

Peter Mcguigan

The recent rise of the radical-right in contemporary Europe has sparked increased interest from the academic world. Where once it was an underdeveloped area, it is now well-researched and offers detailed theoretical approaches to explain the phenomenon, one being the 'populist' style of the radical-right parties. However, the theories have failed to explain the case of Ireland, a country who has amenable conditions for a radical-right party. This paper has tried to explain why the radical-right has not emerged in Ireland by looking at a number of key features. Specifically, focusing on the lack of social cleavages within Irish society, how Sinn Fein occupy the space in which a radical-right party would normally occupy and how radical-right policies are in fact dispersed through different actors in society. Also, this paper has tried to debunk the myth that populism can be equated with the radical right and that it is incompatible with democracy. To demonstrate this, I have borrowed from some authors like Ernesto Laclau to highlight how populism is in fact a constructive style of politics, which articulates social demands for segments of society who lack a voice.

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1. Introduction

For many people around the world, and particularly in Europe, the memory of Fascist and Nazi regimes in Italy and Germany are still quite fresh. They represent a dark past, one which witnessed 'total war', 'the holocaust', 'ethnic cleansing', 'authoritarian governance' and the rise of 'ultranationalism'.2 These horrifying events in the last century have been so often followed by the words “never again”. However, in the final decades of the previous century there has been a reemergence of some of these ideologies of the 'radical right', which have advocated 'ethnic purity', 'nativism', 'authoritarianism', and most notably 'populism'.3 The most obvious examples for these are Jen Marie Le Pen’s Front National Party in France, Jorg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party, as well as the Netherlands List Pim Fortuyn, and most recently the Golden Dawn Party in Greece.4

The re-occurrence of this 'type' of party and their electoral success is quiet worrying, especially considering the upcoming European elections and the prospect of these parties gaining greater control within the European Parliament. As Hans-George Betz argues, this “explosive growth in a number of countries has made them the most significant political challenge to the political establishment and consensus of Western Europe”.5 The crux of this problem is, that there exists a tension within the 'liberal democratic' framework of Europe between competing ideologies on 'how the world ought to be'. This antagonism between the 'radical right' and the center or mainstream parties is often seen as a conflict between the 'elites'-who control the political arena, and the 'virtuous sovereign people', who are repressed at the hands of these elites.6 To address this conflict these parties often use a style of 'populist politics', which aims to return sovereignty to the people through electoral victories. But does this threaten our democratic order and undermine it? And can democracies function with this style of politics or should democracies use a heavy hand against such movements in order to preserve itself? This raises the question, to what extent is 'populism' compatible with democracy? While it also asks the question, why do 'radical-right' parties exist? However, a country where the radical-right has not emerged but where 'populism' can be frequently

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found is Ireland. This dilemma raises the issue of how 'populism' and the 'radical-right' should be viewed?

Bearing this in mind, the aim of this paper is to examine why the 'radical-right' has not emerged in Ireland compared to other European countries and to discuss how 'populism' should be viewed within democracy. I will argue, that the reason there does not exist a 'radical-right' party in Ireland is because of the lack of political space and because all Irish parties were born out of the issue of self-determination and essentially have similar political ideologies. While I will also argue, that Ireland has no significant history of 'radical-right' parties or class cleavages, which might act as a catalyst for the reemergence of a radical-right party. Instead, I suggest that the mainstream Irish parties have tried to be 'vote maximizing' and thus, they already hold policy positions which would be held by 'radical-right' parties. Nonetheless, this examination shows that populism is used by all political parties to 'tell the people what they want to hear' but that it also highlights antagonisms between the 'elites' and the parties on the fringes. Finally, this article will outline what this author believes to be the future for the 'radical-right' and 'populism' in Ireland and the EU.

To begin, this paper will firstly outline the theoretical concept of 'populism' and the 'radical-right', and then it will examine the case of Ireland though these theoretical positions and finally outline the future developments of each.

2. Theoretical Aspects of the Radical Right and Populism

2.1 Definitional Issues

Since the rise of the 'radical-right' in the 1980's there has been an increase in academic research on the topic in Europe. This has led to widespread debate on what exactly is the 'radical-right'? This research has at times been conflictual and has not produced concrete agreement on definitions, rather there has only been cordial acceptance on basic features and structures. This has led to terms such as 'radical-right' and 'populism' taking on the same meaning. As well as that, there seems to be a plethora of different phrases which attach themselves to all of the above parties. These titles vary from 'extreme-right', 'right-wing', 'radical-right', 'right-wing populism', to 'national

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populism'. In sum, there lies much terminological confusion around this political phenomenon, which in-turn causes certain analytical problems. The most obvious of these is trying to achieve a consensus on a definition which fits all cases with relative ease. This is almost impossible considering each case is country specific and no two parties are identical. Nonetheless, to study any phenomenon a working definition is essential in order to guide the research and to draw any conclusions.

2.2 Defining the Radical Right

For this examination I will use the term radical right when referring to parties like the Front National. The definition that I have decided to use draws from some established authors like Mudde and Rydgren, who claim that radical right parties are ethno-nationalist or nativist, authoritarian, and populist.

Firstly, the emphasis on ethno-nationalism and nativism is a desire for the nation to be comprised of a homogenous group which share the same bloodline and inhabit the same territory. For the radical right they associate citizen rights not as a political act between the state and a citizen, rather citizen rights are granted through bloodline, ius sanguinis. In short you have to be born a citizen. This ideology is represented by a 'closed society', who is against pluralism or outside intervention. The case of the Republican Party in Germany is a reminder of the 'radical-rights' fears from immigrants and Muslims. As Betz notes, they promoted slogans such as “save the welfare state: expel false refugees!” and called on German citizens to “meet the Muslim challenge” in order to prevent the Muslim religion from achieving word domination”. From this, the radical-right sees immigration and integration as a threat to the identity of the 'group'. Thus, they tend to be "exclusionary" hoping to hold on to what they have. An example of this type of ideology can be seen in the anti EU policies of the Font National Party during the EU treaty campaign, or under

the terms 'Irish jobs for Irish citizens'. In this sense, the radical right espouses an egalitarian ideology, where only the members of the 'in-group' will benefit. 18

Secondly, these parties are very authoritarian in structure and tend to have a charismatic leader (although this is not a prerequisite). Jen Marie Le Pen in France is an obvious example of this. He is a charismatic leader, who shapes the Front Nationals ideology around his own personal beliefs. Meanwhile O’ Malley notes, that this tight party structure enables the party to respond quickly and effectively to any problem that might arise, 19 in comparison, to 'liberal democracies' that have large inefficient bureaucracies. In this way, the radical right is strong supporters of the rule of law, which can only be policed through effective authority, which Mudde sees as an element that can protect the state from any external threats from immigrants or supranational entities and thus protects the purity of the nation. 20

Finally and most notably, populism is fundamental to the radical-right's structure. This quiet often means that the radical-right dichotomizes things, into black and white, good and evil. 21 This leads to a separation of society into “two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the poor people versus the corrupt elite” 22. In this way, they tend to see the governing parties as a “clique of professional politicians who pretend to represent and serve common citizens, but in reality only serve their own narrow interests”. 23 Thus, all other parties are seen as colluding in order to maintain the power of the “clique” over the majority of the population. 24 By acting in such a way, the radical-right sees themselves as the voice of the “common people” and the champion of “true democracy”. 25 This leads the party to interpret an idealized version of the “people”, who are whatever the party claims them to be. 26 As Ignazi explains, the “people” can mean a sociological interpretation which might be directed at a lower socio-economic group of society or a cultural or representative version, which might focus on the ethnicity or sovereignty of a 'people'. 27 This type of representation has been often used by the radical-right to display their 'oneness' with the 'common people' and to portray the elite as 'corrupt'. By constructing this image, the radical-right invokes a sense of crisis into voters to

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25 ibid.
emphasize the need for action, in order to solve the current dilemma. By acting in this way, the radical right adapt to any situation to further their agenda.\textsuperscript{28} This is seen to give populism the function of creating “narratives, myths and symbols” which relate to its idealized vision of society, or as Taggart calls it, the heartland”.\textsuperscript{29} In short, this aspect of populism allows the radical-right to shape situations in favor of the parties interests at any time without conflicting with any ideological beliefs.

In addition, populism has a strong conviction of seeing the people as sovereign, this makes them very supportive of ‘direct democracy' and very anti-establishment.\textsuperscript{30} This anti-establishment sentiment is achieved for the radical-right by adapting to the system of representative democracy and then differentiating themselves within the system.\textsuperscript{31} In sum, the radical-right parties’ use of populism appeals to “the people against both the established structure of the power and the dominant ideas and values of society”.\textsuperscript{32}

In conclusion, these three characteristics are what most scholars see as being fundamental to the makeup of the radical-right. However, with many of the features of populism one could easily locate them in many of the mainstream parties. Thus as I have stated previous, populism is not exclusive to the radical-right, rather it is a style that radical-right parties adapt, in order to, distinguish themselves from the mainstream parties and resonate with the majority of the citizens. Therefore, the aim now is to analyze the features which make populism common to both the right and the left, and to argue that yes populism is compatible with democracy.

\textbf{2.3 How is populism compatible with democracy?}

Populism, like the term the 'radical-right' has had very little agreement on what exactly is meant by it and it has become cliché to write about its conceptual slipperiness.\textsuperscript{33} Nonetheless, it seems to have an intimate and antagonistic relationship with democracy, Panizza argues, that this relationship is here to stay and will remain so long into the future.\textsuperscript{34} If this is the case, what makes this possible? Moreover, the concept is not solely confined to any space on the left-right continuum

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Hainsworth, P. (2008), \textit{The Extreme Right in Western Europe}, Oxon: Routledge, p22.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Taggart, P. (2000), p4.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Eatwell, R. (2000), p13.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Deze, A. (2004), p20.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Taggart, P. (2000), p1.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Panizza, F. (2005), p1.
\end{itemize}
rather populism has been adopted and regularly used by politicians on the left like Hugo Chavez and from the center like Tony Blair. One could claim that this malleability of the concept is due to the fact that populism is not ideological and holds no core beliefs. Instead it is chameleonic and can be adapted to fit any situation. As Taggart notes, its lack of tangibility makes it “quintessentially mercurial”.  

Nonetheless, populism has a close relationship with many of democracies core elements. If we look at some of Abraham Lincoln's famous quotes we can see a great deal of overlap between populist rhetoric and democratic principle. For example, the “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” could easily be said to contain much of the language of the 'heartland', which Taggart speaks about. But it also draws the two concepts intimately together around the notion of the 'people' and gives the 'people' some identity i.e. a majority of the population or a minority. As Panizza argues, the act of populism does not just remove people from an old identity to a new one; rather it begins a process of representation, to people who might never have been represented before. In this very act, populism is conducive and complementary towards democracy because it is concerned with the way people are represented. As Worsley puts it:

“There is always a tension in our conception of a just society between the rights of minorities and the rights of the majority. Insofar as populism plumps for the rights of majorities to make sure – by 'intervening' - that they are not ignored (as they commonly are) populism is profoundly compatible with democracy”.

Likewise, these actions make populism a very political act, because it involves being submissive to democracy in order to convey tensions and misgivings about a political situation.

As Ernesto Laclau demonstrates, the political practice of populism is a reaction to an 'organic crisis' within society. For him this 'crisis' is between the social demands of one element of society towards another, i.e. between the elites and the common man. In this instance, populism is a political and social action between antagonistic elements in society. This is formed not by an ideology but via a logical articulation of social demands. Thus, populism as an action is ontological

39 Worsley quoted in ibid, p30.  
for Laclau and is used whenever there is a break down in the 'organic' make-up of society. In this way, populism does not define any organization, but instead is a way of “articulating their themes – whatever those themes may be”.  

Similarly, this type of representation has often been constructed by the mainstream parties as well. They generally refer to the 'people' in ambiguous terms similar to the populist parties. One only has to look at the Presidential campaign rhetoric of Barack Obama to understand this method of articulation. His slogans featured the ideas of real 'change' for Americans and more specifically 'middle America'- a socio-economic and geographical location like the 'heartland'. Therefore, Obama tried to portray himself as 'one of the people' and not an 'elite', thus he, like many populists adapted to the system while simultaneously differentiated themselves from the system. This underlines my message that 'populism' is not exclusive to the radical right rather it is open to anyone who wishes to avail of it.

This corresponds to the idea that politicians and political parties must be vote maximizing in order to enter office. This competitive nature which representative democracy encourages can be considered as a catalyst to the 'populist' style, because when voters become disengaged with the mainstream parties an alternative to the status quo seems attractive. This alternative message is mediated through populist rhetoric who on one level tries to disassociate themselves from the mainstream parties, while also trying to appeal to the population. Therefore, populism can be considered a product of democratic politics and must be considered compatible when it articulates antagonisms of the populace. Thus, as Canovan, Worsley and Hayward note, any inquiry into “populism is an inquiry into democracy”. Likewise as Laclau astutely remarked, “if populism consists of postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative”.

These examples demonstrate that democracy cannot exist without populism because of the fact that politics is not impartial and conflict and antagonisms will always exist. Thus, to say that populism is incompatible with democracy because of its antagonistic nature, its appeal to the sovereignty of the people or its uneasiness to compromise with the status quo is a failure to recognize that populism

42 ibid.
45 Laclau quoted in Arditi, (2005), p76.
exists because of the lack of effective debate within society. By populism operating as a critique of the mainstream parties, it begins to play a central role in democracy by offering alternatives. Thus, populism measures to what extent mainstream parties have converged upon similar ideologies.\textsuperscript{46} This is profoundly necessary in democracy because without scrutinizing or questioning beliefs and actions of the governing parties, politics becomes static and the possibility of change becomes redundant. In this instance, politics becomes the ideology of the governing elites and effectively an administration.

In conclusion, both populism and democracy are compatible with one another because populism, although antagonistic, contributes to offering alternative beliefs about how democracy should function, while it also tries to be a voice to 'people' who do not have a voice in society. However, this is not to argue that 'populism' as a concept is free from any destructive features. As it is well documented many parties of the 'radical-right' who advocate anti-immigrant and racist policies use 'populism' to exploit the political space. Thus, populism should be considered as the other-side of the same coin as democracy and as Arditi notes, “populism can be conceived both as a mirror in which democracy can scrutinize its more unsavory traits, and as an experience that can become (or not) its underside”.\textsuperscript{47}

In order to demonstrate this compatibility I will examine the case of Ireland to show how populism has played an instrumental role in recent years, while at the same time a radical-right party had failed to emerge.

\textsuperscript{47} Arditi, B. (2005), P95.
3. The Case of Ireland

3.1 Irelands Political Conditions

Firstly, in order to explain why a ‘radical-right’ party has not emerged in Ireland I will briefly outline what academics claim to be the conditions amenable for their emergence. O’ Malley in his analysis of the ‘radical-right’ in Ireland noted six main conditions, which were, the change from an industrial society to a postindustrial society, high levels of immigration into a country and popular intolerance towards them, increased importance of the cultural cleavage, the convergence of political parties and the de-alignment of party attachments, openness of the political system to new entrants – a proportional electoral system, and partyocracy- where the parties are closely linked with the state. This includes activities such as clientelism, patronage and corruption. Other scholars have also pointed to the historical ties which exist between ‘radical-right’ parties and the previous fascist parties of the inter war period.

Firstly, Ireland cannot be categorized as an industrial country compared to Britain or Germany however, it has witnessed rapid changes since the post-war period. In the early years of the Irish State, the economy was mostly agriculturally based and the economic policies of De Valera and co were protectionist in orientation. This changed with Ireland's succession into the European Economic Community and the government's new polices of outward growth and transnational investment. As Denis O’ Hearn put it, a “country which had virtually clothed and shod itself in 1960 imported more than seventy-one percent of its clothing in 1980”. These figures would seem to suggest that in fact Ireland had undergone an industrial shift away from traditional industry towards new methods of economic growth. These new methods mainly centered on software development, pharmaceutical production, the construction sector, and the financial services sector. During this rapid change of the economy there had been job displacement away from the old industrial sectors, which were much more labor-intensive towards the new individualized economy, which

51 Quoted in ibid.
emphasized autonomy and flexible manufacturing. The data from Ireland suggests that the country was subject to rising unemployment levels and was in a transitional period. In 1967 the unemployment rate was under sixty thousand but by 1987 the figure had rapidly grown to a height of two hundred and fifty thousand. This evidence clearly shows that Ireland was in a poor economic situation which could have been a catalyst for the emergence of a “radical-right” party.

In addition, Ireland could also be categorized under the second criteria- ethnic competition thesis. This suggests that large scale immigration into a country could ferment popular reaction against immigrants in the form of a 'radical-right' party out of the increase competition for resources such as the labor market, social welfare and housing. The data from the Central Statistics Office confirms that large scale immigration into Ireland occurred in the recent past. In 1987, immigration into Ireland was just over seventeen thousand but over the coming decades Ireland seen an enormous influx of immigrants, which peaked at one hundred and fifty thousand in 2007. Also, in 2006 the allocation of PPS numbers to non-nationals working in Ireland jumped to a record high of just under two hundred and four thousand, while a recent study by European Commission has also noted that the percentage of non-nationals living in Ireland rose from 3.9 percent in 2001 to 8.1 percent in 2011. It should also be noted that this trend in immigration has been closely followed by an economic crisis, which occurred in Ireland in 2008, that has further compounded the issues of immigration and resource competition.

The crux of problem for Ireland was the collapse of a housing bubble which caused severe losses for the Irish banking system. Soon after this economic downturn, the government enforced tough austerity measures which focused on raising taxes and cutting expenditure- mainly in the areas of social welfare. During this time period the number of people who became unemployed jumped from an average of 4.5 percent in 2006 to 14.7 percent in 2012. Likewise, a study done by the United

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56 ibid.
Nations found that Ireland was among one of the most unequal countries in the world.\(^{59}\) While O'Malley noted, that Irish people’s perceptions towards immigrants were quiet negative.\(^{60}\) This point was reinforced by Collins' study on populism in Ireland, which examined a series of focus groups on multiculturalism in three economically different Dublin areas, and found that within the poorer economic areas there was a higher negative attitude towards immigrants.\(^{61}\) A reading of these figures would seem to suggest that the possibility of a radical-right party emerging in Ireland is quiet high. However, no such party has emerged and a recent survey done by Eurobarometer found that Ireland ranks among the highest countries that are optimistic about the future of the European Union.\(^{62}\)

It also seems that the high levels of immigration coupled with economic decline have not left any major cultural antagonisms. Historically Ireland has been culturally homogenous and its Gaelic identity has been maintained through the strong structures of the Gaelic Athletic Association. Their localized emphasis and strong historical ties with the Irish nationalist cause and the Catholic Church has been essential to maintaining the traditional culture. Likewise, the identity of the Irish nation has been preserved by the infusion of the Catholic religion with the Irish people. It has become synonymous to refer to the Irish as a Catholic country, although these strong ties are declining and recent CSO figures from the 2011 census found that the percentage of Catholics was at its lowest since records began, they now only account for 84.2 percent of the population.\(^{63}\) This decrease is down to the rise of both atheists and other religions in Ireland.\(^{64}\) However, it must also be noted that the total number of people who claimed to be Catholic was at its highest since records began.\(^{65}\) It must also be stressed, that although Ireland has witnessed an increase of inward migration, the percentage of non-nationals in the country is low compared to many European counterparts. Also, Garner, and Harrington have noted that the Irish Citizen referendum in 2004 ensured the homogeneity of the nation against the threat of a culture cleavage emerging.\(^{66}\)


\(^{60}\) O'Malley, E. (2008), p8.


\(^{64}\) ibid.

\(^{65}\) ibid.

cleavage has been protected against through government policies and the lack of significant immigration.

Looking at the convergence of political parties and the realignment of party attachments, one would have to argue that yes Ireland's political parties have occupied similar locations on the left-right continuum, with the two main parties, Fianna Fail (FF) and Fine Gael (FG) both being center parties with the first being more to the left and the second being more to the right. While the Labor party, Sinn Fein, and many independent candidates drift slightly from the orbit of the mainstream parties. This convergence of political ideology can be explained by analyzing Ireland’s political landscape, which was born out of a colonial past which emphasized nationalism and self-determination. This experience of struggle for self-determination garnered similar political ideals across Ireland and only dispersed when conflict arose concerning the notion of partition. In this regard, all the major Irish parties were born out of old Sinn Fein and have not been subject to social cleavages compared to other European countries. These similarities in ideology and policy of the two main parties and the strength of FF has led to an increase in the need for coalition partners, because of this, all other parties have moved closer to the center. When this occurs, the electorate can get a feeling that all of the parties “are the same” and therefore will look for an alternative. Accordingly, there becomes a space on the political scale which a radical-right party could fill. As Mouffe states, “when democratic politics has lost its capacity to mobilize people around distinct political projects…, the conditions are ripe for political demagogues to articulate popular frustration”. As Mc Donnell recently illustrated, the percentage of first preference votes towards the traditional parties has gradually fallen with the rise in new parties, where once FF and FG held 84.4 per cent of the vote now it has decreased to 64 per cent. The reason for this has been the easy access for new parties which many see as the result of the PR-STV model. This would therefore suggest that Ireland also meets the requirements of easy accessibility.

69 ibid.
70 ibid, p3.
Recently, there has been much more attention paid to charges of corruption within Ireland and partyocracy. O'Malley and Mc Donnell have both highlighted the dominance of FF as displaying a close relationship between party and government, while they also argue that many tribunals set up to look into corruption has given the impression that Irish politics is essentially corrupt. The most recent election results in 2011 would seem to suggest that voters have become dissatisfied with the FF's handling of the economic crash and their perceived hand in creating the housing bubble. However, the charge of corruption has not caused a radical-right party to emerge but it does prove that within Ireland there are fertile conditions for such a party.

3.2 Why is there No Radical-Right Party?

Examining the above conditions we can say that Ireland meets many of these requirements yet a radical-right party has not emerged, why is that? Many scholars offer different explanations for this, some argue like Kitchelt and say that Ireland is a special case and cannot be explained using the normal theories. Whereas, Garner, O' Malley, and Mc Donnell all put forward their own theories to explain this phenomenon. In my opinion there is not one simple answer to explain why a radical-right party has not emerged, rather there are many different chains to this non-event.

To begin, Ireland is a relatively new country and as stated above, the country was born out of a struggle for self-determination over their colonial rulers, Britain. The Irish people were mainly united and in agreement over gaining independence from the British. Generically speaking the struggle was between an Irish, Catholic people and a British, Protestant people. Therefore, there was no social cleavage within the society, which was seen as a main catalyst for the radical-right in other European Countries. It was only later when the state developed that political antagonisms occurred. The most obvious and crucial was the split in old Sinn Fein over partition. This group dispersed into two opposing sides, one supporting the treaty for a twenty six county independent Ireland and one opposing such a move. Out of this split emerged Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, who to this day are the two largest parties in Ireland and who are still seen as opposing over this issue. As Mair noted, the ideological division in Ireland is slight, and both main parties are seen as similar, however everything has been “frozen” over the issue of the treaty. “In this sense it is not the legacy of history per se, but rather the legacy of a particular history-that of the 1920's and 1930's”.  

78 ibid
Therefore, for many observers Ireland's political system is seen as lacking ideological difference, while the politics and voters are seen mainly as both parochial and divided between the two main parties. Although party attachment has been declining the two main parties still gain the most shares of the votes. Likewise, many of the minor parties have been born out conflict within these larger parties. The Progressive Democrats emerged after a dispute between some members of Fianna Fail, while the Labor Party and Democratic Left have had similar histories.

The emergence of new parties from the old parties has restrained radical ideology from becoming significant and the electoral dominance of the two main parties has kept voters from seeking radical alternatives. In this sense, the Irish political system has a “pivotal center party”, usually FF, whose ideology and policies influence other parties to become coalitional. When this occurs political parties lose ideological difference and tend to convergence closer to the status quo in order to enter Government. This convergence is said to open up the space for a radical-right party but in Ireland it has led the parties closer together in an attempt for them to become “catch all” parties.

However O'Malley has rightly noted that in addition to the minor parties’ convergence, Sinn Fein has occupied the space which usually a radical-right party would locate. He points to their anti-establishment and populist rhetoric as a way in which they achieve success from the socially disadvantaged areas and from dissatisfied voters who see the main parties as 'all the same'. His analysis has shown that many of the voters who would fall under the “losers of modernization theory” tend to vote for Sinn Fein. This is quite a valid point considering Sinn Fein's similarities with a radical-right party. Firstly they are populist, authoritarian in structure and nativist-concerning the EU expansion and British rule in Northern Ireland. However, they are strongly pro-immigration. This is a slight contradiction considering their nativist appeal but it does exclude them from being labeled a radical-right party. Nonetheless, O'Malley has noted that voters are not too concerned with ideology. He states that many of the votes transferred from Immigration Control Platform's candidate, Áine Ní Chonnaill went to Sinn Fein. Likewise, he demonstrated that many of Sinn Fein voters voted in favor of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum, which Sinn Fein canvassed against.

82 ibid, p13.
It must also be emphasized, that the space for policies of the radical-right is limited within Ireland. In 2004 the Citizenship Referendum, which won by a large majority, ‘racialised’ what it is to be a citizen.\(^{85}\) No longer can citizenship be conferred upon anyone who is born in the country, rather citizenship is now deemed to be given through one's cultural ties with a nation.\(^{86}\) In this way, the notions of citizenship and nationhood have become merged. The reason given for the change was to stop 'citizenship tourists' arriving to Ireland to give birth in order to obtain citizenship for the child and rights for the mother. By changing the laws for citizenship, the state has occupied a position on immigration which a radical-right party might take up. Thus, they have taken the mantle off the voter who might feel under economic threat from immigration. Additionally, the Government has re-drawn the borders of the state, to protect against the internal threat from non-nationals by maintaining the purity and ethnicity of the Irish state.\(^{87}\) By implementing these policies, the state has in fact attempted to securitize what it is to be Irish. Likewise, the state has acted in a bio-political way by enforcing their power over the people with the aim to develop the nation. As Harrington states, the development of a nation has become an assessment of what type of condition the state is in. Therefore, the Government is concerned with the mortality, morbidity and even the ethnicity of the state.\(^{88}\) “Where earlier battles for self-assertion and self-preservation were fought at the frontier, the new struggle is within: a 'race war' against internal threats to national progress.”\(^{89}\) Through these actions the Government have once again redefined the concept of the border, no longer is the north-south division the main concern for the Government but instead it is the threat from those who are not European.

This is not the only way in which extreme policies of the radical-right is mitigated. It must be noted, that throughout Irish society there has been a dispersion of ideologies which in another country would be taken up by the radical-right. The most recent, has been the case of “The Protection of Life during Pregnancy Act”,\(^{90}\) which split many members of the political parties into two opposing camps, one in favor of legalizing abortion in certain circumstances and the other defiantly opposing it. This difference of opinion has forced some members of the main political parties to leave their organizations. In turn, there has been a quasi-political party set up by these dissenting voices, which

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\(^{86}\) ibid, p11.


\(^{88}\) ibid, p429.

\(^{89}\) ibid.

comes under the name of “The Reform Alliance.” This group has organized “A National Conversation on Ireland's Future” and seems to be in the process of forming an alternative party. However it must be noted, that this make shift party does not hold any radical-right views, rather their anti-abortion outlook should be categorized as conservative. Moreover, the formation of this group has enabled political dissent to be shifted away from a radical-right party and into a group which is made up of mainstream dissenters. Like Sinn Fein, The Reform Alliance coalition can attract voters who might otherwise vote for a radical-right party. Also, this confirms what I have argued above, that is, that the emergence of new parties in Ireland are formed out of conflicts within mainstream political parties and the new parties tend not to drift too far from the policies of the major parties, because of the need to present themselves as coalitional. In addition, there are other organizations which are concerned with matters which have historically been occupied by the radical-right. In relation to social matters such as abortion, the Catholic Church has been influential, along with other Catholic organizations such as Youth Defense, while Sinn Fein and for a while the Greens, offered the anti-establishment voters an alternative. Most recently the EU skeptic position was taken up by Libertas who canvassed against both the Nice and Lisbon treaties.

Another point which needs to be stressed is the lack of any historical party attachment to a radical-right or fascist ideology. Although, some claim that FG's ties with the quasi-fascist 'Blue Shirts' qualifies them as having some connection with the radical-right, in my opinion this claim lacks any substance considering FG's centrist position and their very liberal social policies. Also, “The Blue Shirts” were not a typical fascist organization compared to the Italian fascists rather they were more nationalists opposed to FF republican methods. As Garner states, “The majority of its followers were interested in domestic issues; the economic war, freedom of speech and agricultural reforms.” It is also worth mentioning that Ireland's only ever solely anti-immigration party, Immigration Control Platform, failed to achieve any success in 2002 or 2007 when they ran candidates in the general election.

Bearing in mind, the failure of many minor parties to stay in existence we must conclude that the Irish party system does not favor small parties. Although Ireland's two party system and PR-STV voting mechanism allows for easy access to the political arena it does not translate into attaching voters.

We can see from Irish voting data that small parties have done extremely well in some circumstances, most notably, the PD's won 11.8% in the 1987 general election. However, it has been a trend in Irish politics that whenever a minor party does well or goes into Government they soon collapse. The PD's and the Greens are prime examples, these two parties emerged as alternatives to the status quo of FF and FG but after they served in Government the electorate soon lost confidence in their ability to change politics and reverted back to either FF or FG. As O'Malley has noted, small parties are often seen as similar to the main parties and are “all the same” after they fail to radically change politics. It's often the case that these minor parties emerge during times of crisis, like the radical-right but they lose voters’ attention when they fail to deliver on election promises. This reverts back to the problem that radical or minor party’s face, which is, their need to conform to the system but stay differentiated within it. This as we have seen in Ireland, is a tricky act to do and is so often the case that voters become just as dissatisfied with the new parties that they revert back to the old ones. As the Irish saying goes, “it’s better the devil you know than the devil you don't”.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that for a party to “break the mould” they must be well organized, funded and have in their midst a charismatic leader. These three are very difficult to achieve. It has been argued that this was the failure of the PD's and The Greens, who were confined to urban areas and lacked accessibility to rural voters compared to FF and FG who were able to capitalize on this weakness.

To sum up, the radical-right has failed to emerge in Ireland because of a number of different issues. Firstly, Ireland's political parties were all born out of old Sinn Fein after independence and because of this, there was not any social cleavages apparent to create a radical-right. Likewise, the Irish parties had similar ideological views. Whereas in recent years, the emergence of Sinn Fein and their anti-establishment rhetoric have occupied the space in which a radical-right party might operate in. Also, the Government of 2004 has successfully “racialised” Irish citizenship, which has acted as a shield against any radical-right party taking up this issue. Similarly, the absence of any historical

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party link to fascism or the radical-right has helped not to conjure up any nostalgic feelings of Ireland's rebirth. Finally, the difficulties of sustaining and organizing a minor party have led to this non-event.

3.3 Where does “Populism” fit in?

From the analysis thus far, it is evident that Ireland has the necessary conditions for a radical-right party but one has failed to emerge because of numerous different reasons. Although this is the case, it has not stopped populism from flourishing, instead the case of Ireland demonstrates how both populism and democracy are compatible, and while it also confirms that to equate populism with the radical-right is a dangerous error and one which should be avoided. As I have argued throughout this paper, populism is compatible with democracy and can act in a positive way to scrutinize and critique the Government of a nation, while it is also a style that any party or politician can use to articulate a theme.

To begin, I think it is worth restating that populism’s core features is it's anti-establishment rhetoric and it's intrinsic relationship to the 'people' and the 'heartland'. All of these features have been key to all political parties in Ireland in one way or another. Firstly, the anti-establishment political discourse has been vital to all of the parties on the periphery of the mainstream. Sinn Fein has undoubtedly been the strongest proponent of this style. As O'Malley illustrated in his analysis, Sinn Fein occupy the space where normally a radical-right party would be situated. They tend to see themselves as the champions of “true democracy” and a party of the “people”. This corresponds to their grassroots structure which Rydgren noted as a characteristic of a populist party. Also, their use of ideology is quite consistent with Taggarts chameleonic quality, of adapting to any environment. As Mc Donnell argues, they often use ideology to fit any particular situation. In addition, the party is often very skeptical towards the EU and has canvassed against previous EU treaties, seeing them as an erosion of the Irish people’s sovereignty and a “power grab” from the elites in Brussels. Thus, they present “a discourse which conceives of the common and virtuous people as being exploited by the untrustworthy political and economic elites”. However, it is also worth noting that they do scrutinize the ruling parties’ policies and have raised concerns over social and economic issues. They have been very conscientious of Ireland's growing inequality, and the high

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rate of unemployment which they have actively highlighted through their elected officials and their policy papers.\textsuperscript{102} Likewise, they have been extremely critical of the austerity measures which both previous governments have implemented, especially concerning the cuts to social welfare and recent introduction of a property tax and water charges.\textsuperscript{103} Through these actions Sinn Fein are articulating social concerns, albeit through an idealized vision of the Irish peoples best interests, but nonetheless, they are doing it in a manner which presents challenges the status quo politics. Thus, Sinn Fein acts as a representative of the people and fulfill Laclau's concept of the benefits of populism. However, it must be added that other minor parties also contribute to raising key issues in Irish society. The Green Party who was in opposition for most of their political life has orchestrated 'populist' and anti-establishment attacks in the past mainly around environmental issues. After these concerns generated enough publicity the mainstream parties were quick to adopt “green” policies albeit for self-preservation. Nonetheless, the Green's populist style around the issue of the environment did help to critique and alter Irish environmental policies.

On the other hand, the traditional Irish parties have also adopted populist rhetoric in order to be vote maximizing. The recent election victory in 2011 by Fine Gael was deeply populist in tone and very often they dichotomized issues into 'black and white'. An obvious example of this style can be seen within their election manifesto, which attributes the economic collapse solely to the previous FF government who they see as promoting “cronyism” and putting the “interests of citizens behind those of powerful elites”.\textsuperscript{104} In light of this, we can conclude that FG tried to associate themselves with the “common people” and remove any doubt that they themselves are an elite group. Although they did use populism to highlight the structural deficiency in the Irish model, it must be added that they did this in order to win the election. This is what Alexander Deze notes about the competitive nature of democracy and the importance of parties to use strategic differentiation in order to attract voters.\textsuperscript{105} In this way, populism, because of its malleability and lack of ideology, is ideal for democratic politics because it “can tell people what they want to hear”.

A party who has often exemplified this “tell them what they want to hear” attitude has been FF. They often consider their own party as a “nationalist movement” and in the past has invoked images of an idealized Ireland. More recently, their former leader Beartie Ahern was very adept at using

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{102} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Sinn Fein, “Economic Plan for Recovery: There is a Better Way”, Available at: http://www.sinnfein.ie/economy [Accessed on 30/01/2014].
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Deze, A. (2004), p20.
\end{itemize}
common language and considering himself an ordinary man with no great aspirations, in fact he stated that if he had “enough money for a few pints” and if he could look after his family he would be quiet happy, he claimed that “I have no desire to have a big house, no desire to have land. I’d consider it a nuisance, actually”\textsuperscript{106}. Such remarks from Ahern clearly illustrates the depth of populism in Irish politics but it also shows how populism is not a sole element of the radical-right rather it is a style there to be used by any astute political party.

4. Future Developments

It is always hard to predict future political events but I think it is fair to assume from this analysis, that the Irish political system will have at its core a great deal of populism. No doubt this populism will act as a critiquing of Governing parties and as a method to attract voters. I think that with the de-alignment of voters from parties and the emphasis of candidate appeal will ultimately lead to more populist politics. This culture has been fostered by the increased role which the media play in political life.\textsuperscript{107} Likewise, I believe that Ireland will avoid a radical-right party emerging because of the positioning of Sinn Fein, the lack of ideology within the Irish political system and the already present radical-right policies which some governments have already implemented. It is also my opinion from analyzing this topic, that the lack of historical ties with any fascist party and the maintaining of a homogenous nation will protect against any future development. It is worth noting, that Ireland does not have the same social or ethnic cleavages present compared to other European nations. However, I do envisage that further voter de-alignment from the two main parties will occur and that new parties will emerge in the political system. An obvious example is the recent formation of The Reform Alliance which I do see developing into a formal political party. As with previous minor parties, it will not 'radicalize' Irish politics, which needs minor parties to appear coalitional in order for them to enter government. It is on this point, which can comfort our European counterparts, who feel worried about the radical-rights development. They, like Ireland, have witnessed the rise of populism from the mainstream parties, and more prominently from the radical-right, however the radical-right as a movement is very much constrained within liberal democracies because of the competitive nature of politics, and the need for these parties to conform to democracy in order to enter government. As we can see from the Front National, or the Austrian Freedom Party, their ability to win votes was dependent on them conforming to 'liberal democracy'. In this way, the radical-right parties use strategic differentiation like the minor parties in Ireland, but

\textsuperscript{106} Ahern quoted in Mc Donnell, D. (2008), p211.
this leads quiet often to the radical-right reconciling their extreme ideology. This 'adaption dilemma', thus protects 'liberal democracy' while simultaneously allowing alternative parties to scrutinize the prevailing politics of a given time. Therefore, as the Irish case demonstrates party convergence does not only lead to political space opening up but it also leads to radical-right parties converging themselves. Due to this, I believe that 'liberal democracy' within the EU will be protected and secured. Even if radical-right parties do win substantial number of seats their appeal quickly wears off after they fail to deliver on their pre-election promises. Similarly, if the parties do not decide to conform to the principle of compromise, they often walk out of government and retreat to a peripheral position. This will maintain their support from grassroot followers but it will fail to convince the middle and upper class voter that their ideology is beneficial, which is necessary to enter into government. Thus, I feel that the radical-right within the EU has reached their upper limit and that they only have a certain shelf life before voters become dissatisfied with them and return to the mainstream or less radical parties.

However, it must be stressed, that populism as a style of politics will continue to be used in both the EU and Ireland. As I have argued throughout, this essentially questions democracy regarding the policies and actions of the mainstream parties. By acting as judge and jury, populism provides an essential critique of ruling parties and is thus necessary and compatible with democracy. It acts in a very positive way by highlighting the flawed consensus that we now live in a 'post-political' age, where antagonisms are a thing of the past. By stressing certain antagonisms 'populism' brings politics back to debating issues, rather than presenting an illusion that all politics are represented by mainstream parties. However, I am aware that within some European countries this opens up the space for radical-right demagogues, but as I stated above these parties are constrained within the democratic framework. Therefore, both the EU and National governments have a responsibility to protect against the rise of the radical-right and I believe that this can only be done through effective debate within the democratic system. Thus, populism represents a way to articulate problems within society. As Meny and Surel have brilliantly pinpointed, populism does not entail, a priori, anti-democratic standings: it is strictly related to democracy, it is the other side of the same coin, and it should therefore be disentangled from its right wing location".

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Opposition in the EU and opposition to the EU: soft and hard Euroscepticism in Italy in the time of austerity

Pietro Castelli Gattinara¹
Caterina Froio²

In the context of the approaching European Parliament’s elections, this report investigates the extent to which the economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures have contributed to the emergence of a Eurosceptic discourse within a traditionally pro-European polity like Italy. Developing upon previous literature on political opposition and the EU, the main argument is that whilst the crisis has contributed to a substantive Europeanization of the Italian debate, it did so mainly in terms of logics of emergency and technocracy. As a result, very little space was left for the organization of political opposition in the EU, whereas a growing tendency emerged towards hard Euroscepticism and opposition to the EU among parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties and street-based movements. By looking at the actors leading political contestation of the EU, and by identifying the type of arguments that define contemporary opposition to the EU, we develop an extensive assessment of contemporary forms of Euroscepticism in Italy.

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Introduction

In most European countries Euroscepticism started developing in the aftermaths of the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 (Franklin, Marsh and McLaren, 1994), when political entrepreneurs began to mobilize opposition on some of the main issues characterizing the treaty: limits to national

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sovereignty, burdens on national redistributive policies, and fears of loss of national identity. For more than 20 years, Italy has been regarded as a notable exception. Not only it preserved its traditionally pro-European public opinion, but it also displayed a remarkably euro-enthusiast party system, which lasted until the late 2000s. In more recent times, however, many authors have noticed an increasing disillusionment with the European Union (EU) across the Italian public (Comelli, 2011; Dehousse, 2013).

On the one hand, the unfolding of the Eurozone crisis made European issues central to political debates, as their relevance grew impressively for citizens and politicians alike. On the other, the austerity policies which have been implemented to tackle Italy’s economic distress seem to have fuelled anti-European resentment in the political debate and public opinion. As a result, if in 2009 Italy approached the European Parliament’s (EP) electoral campaign on the basis of a strictly national agenda but counting on a renowned public commitment to EU integration, the eve of the 2014 elections turned the situation around: the public debate is characterized by an unprecedented degree of Europeanization, whilst public support for the EU reaches an historical low.

Following Peter Mair’s prediction concerning the development of European party systems (2007), it can be said that the political decisions taken to tackle the crisis boosted the process of integration of the Italian party system, making national and EU policy-making arenas de facto inseparable and not distinguishable from one another. Yet, this process has also reduced substantially the stakes of political competition and opposition, as European integration inevitably limits the available policy space and instruments, delegating decision-making to EU-level regulatory agencies. When this is the case, in line with Mair’s classical analysis, parties would not have incentives to organize a useless opposition in the EU polity and would rather mobilize opposition to the EU polity.

It is our opinion that the progressive Europeanization of the Italian public debate combined with the persisting absence of the space for political opposition – as is the case when politics is led by emergency and technocratic reasoning – are likely to provide breeding grounds for populism and Euroscepticism in Italy. In the context of the upcoming EP elections of May 2014, this paper analyses the multiple forms of contemporary Euroscepticism in Italy. Starting from the definition of Euroscepticism suggested by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008), who distinguish between hard (or principled) opposition and soft (or contingent) opposition, we shall propose an empirical and theoretical understanding of Italian political opposition to Europe in times of crisis.3

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3 The debate around the pertinence of this definition goes beyond the aim of this contribution. Yet, this definition has been widely used by scholars researching in this field, even if it has also been criticized. For an overview of these critics, see: Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008.
The sources used for the empirical assessment of partisan public discourse on the EU are, above all, electoral programmes, manifestos, speeches, and press-releases from members of political parties; in addition, we also analysed Italian media coverage of electoral campaigning; when available, we also performed semi-structured interviews with party members. On this basis, we investigate the extent to which the economic and financial crisis facilitated the emergence of a Eurosceptic discourse within a traditionally pro-European polity. By identifying the type of arguments that define opposition to the EU in the times of austerity and by evaluating the extent to which Eurosceptic populism remains confined to street-movements or permeates the discourse of mainstream parties, we shall develop an extensive assessment of contemporary opposition to Europe in Italy.

The essay is structured as follows. First, we shall describe the development of EU disillusionment across the Italian public opinion, investigating the origins of the phenomenon and its political and ideological connotations. To this goal, we present longitudinal data on the attitudes of Italians towards European integration over time, discussing its specific meaning within the broader European context and with respect to the Italian party system in particular. Subsequently, we focus our attention on the actors that most frequently mobilize anti-European resentment in Italian public debates, discussing in detail the way in which they portray the EU and take position with respect to its most relevant aspects. Hence, the following sections cover the different case-studies, focusing first on parliamentary actors (Forza Italia, Lega Nord and Movimento 5 Stelle) and then on extra-parliamentary movements and parties (Forza Nuova, CasaPound and Movimento dei Forconi). Finally, we discuss the theoretical connotations of contemporary Euroscepticism in Italy, as well as its implications and potential challenges to the functioning of Italian democracy in the years to come.

**Italy and the EU: the end of the honey moon?**

This section discusses the state of the art of attitudes towards the European Union in Italy, outlining the main changes that took place over the past years and the more recent developments in terms of support for European integration. In this sense, we shall first have a look at the broader picture at the EU level, and then discuss the specificities of the Italian context.

The difficulties that the EU is experiencing since the beginning of the sovereign debt crisis have in fact contributed significantly to widening the level of distrust of European citizens towards communitarian institutions. Although the process of progressive loss of popular support for the EU is ongoing since more than 20 years, its pace has changed radically since 2008, all over the
continent. Data from the Eurobarometer surveys shows that, across the last two decades, this trend is incontrovertible: until the beginning of the Eurozone crisis, about half of the European population trusted EU institutions, whereas distrust was expressed by less than one third of the Europeans; since the end of 2008, instead, the ratio has gradually reversed, with levels of trust fluctuating between 35% and 40%, and distrust reaching above 45% (Fig.1).

**Figure 1. Trust in the European Union across EU countries, 1993-2013 (%)**

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Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 39-80*

In a similar fashion, the last decade marked a major change in the public attitudes towards the European Union in Italy. Traditionally, in fact, Italy has been amongst the major Euro-enthusiastic countries, both in terms of popular and government support for European integration. Many authors have underlined the peculiarities of Italians’ “permissive consensus”, often connecting it to a generalized distrust of national political institutions, which made Italian citizens perceive European integration as an alternative to the long-lasting problems of the domestic political élites (Ferrera, 2003; Dehousse, 2013). As a result, over the 1990s and 2000s, levels of trust for the EU in Italy reached consistently above 60%, whereas distrust characterized only a marginal portion of the Italian population (Fig.2).

While the positive feelings of the Italian public opinion towards the EU lasted until 2009, the following years mark a sharp decline in support for the EU. Contrary to the previous decades, with the deepening of the economic crisis, the levels of trust in the EU in Italy turned below the EU average. Moreover, the downward turn in trust for the EU is far more pronounced in Italy than throughout the other EU countries, since the percentage of Italian respondents trusting the EU
dropped by almost 20% between 2010 and 2012. Conversely, the share of Italians holding negative opinions over the EU grew sharply, in line with the European trend.

**Figure 2. Trust in the European Union in Italy, 1993-2013 (%)**

Several items included in the latest Eurobarometer poll (eb80) can prove useful to understand the Italian public opinion vis-à-vis the European Union and the related decline in popular support for the EU. In particular, the Italians became in recent times increasingly pessimistic about the benefits of being part of the EU. Between autumn 2012 (eb78) and autumn 2013 (eb80), the amount of people thinking that Italy would be better off outside the EU increased by 4%, reaching 33%. Conversely, the share of people believing that Italy’s future would be worse without the EU shrank by 6% points, rating sensibly below the EU average (56%).

Similarly, public opinion concerning the protection of Italy’s interests by the EU dropped sensibly, increasing the gap between Italy and the EU average. In late 2013 more than 70% of the Italian respondents felt that their interests were not sufficiently protected by the EU, whereas only 24% considered that the EU took them sufficiently into account (EU average 53% and 40%, respectively). Compared to data from before the outbreak of the crisis in Italy, the change is remarkable: in late 2010 (eb74), those agreeing that Italian interests were sufficiently protected by the EU were 40%, whereas those disagreeing were 43% of the respondents, pretty much in line with the EU average.

At the same time, however, the results of the latest Eurobarometer survey show that Italians continue to believe in the EU as the most effective actor to tackle the crisis (22%). Still, the overtime trend shows a conspicuous decline, as in autumn 2011 (eb76) similar statements were
supported by more than 27% of the interviewees. Likewise, although an overwhelming majority agrees that further cooperation at the EU level is needed to tackle the economic and financial crisis (82%), Italy’s score in autumn 2013 is the second lowest in Europe after the traditionally Eurosceptic Austrian public opinion, and in sharp decline compared to the previous Eurobarometer round (-5%). Moreover, the amount of people believing that coordination is not the best strategy to tackle the crisis is considerably high in Italy (13%), on the rise (+2%) and twice the EU average (6%).

The transformation of the Italian public opinion from largely Euro-enthusiastic to increasingly critical towards the EU undoubtedly represents an important electoral capital for political entrepreneurs aiming to capitalize on Euroscepticism. If, over the 1990s and early 2000s, the widespread support for the EU of the Italian public was largely mirrored by the Italian mainstream political parties (Quaglia, 2008), today’s developments shall also be interpreted in the light of citizens’ electoral preferences. The next section shall focus in detail on these aspects, providing an overview of party-based Euroscepticism in Italy.

**Understanding opposition to the EU in the Italian party system**

The longitudinal and comparative study of party-based Euroscepticism has generated a vivid academic debate concerning party positions over European issues (see for an overview Marks and Steenbergen 2004) and the analysis of the party leaders’ and members’ attitudes towards the EU (see for an overview Marks et al. 2006). In this regard, one of the main findings has been that centre-left parties tend to support the EU consistently more than their centre-right counterparts, across Western European political systems (Marks et al. 1999; Ladrech 2000; Tsebelis and Garret 2000; Hix et al. 2007; Conti and Manca 2008). Other authors have claimed that Euroscepticism characterizes mainly those parties located at the extremes of the political spectrum, whereas mainstream parties are generally not involved in Euroscepticism, if not for some minor internal political trends (Hooghe et al., 2004; Sitter and Batory 2008; Szcerbiack and Taggart 2008). In line with this reasoning, Hix and Lord (1999) argue that the most Eurosceptic parties are those permanently excluded from the responsibility of government.

Recent analyses on party’s and citizens’ attitudes towards the EU in Italy support some but not all of these arguments. Previous contributions have shown that the Italian centre-left is far more euro-enthusiast than any other actor in the party system, which is generally in line with the trend in the rest of Western Europe (Dehousse 2013). Moreover, this appears to be the case in particular when the centre-left is charged with government responsibilities (Conti and De Giorgi 2011). Similarly, a
study from Demos and Pi (2013) shows that trust in the EU is largest among electorates of the Left of the Italian political spectrum, whereas it does not support the idea of a link between incumbency and support for the EU.

Among euro-enthusiast citizens, in fact, we find voters of the mainstream left party which supported the Monti government and the subsequent “stability” government led by Enrico Letta: 54% of the voters of Partito Democratico (PD). At the same time, however, we find also 48% of the voters of Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL), which opposed both the abovementioned executives. Similarly, if one could expect that the electorates of Lega Nord (LN) are sensibly more Eurosceptic (only 23% trusting the EU), the results are more surprising with respect to the voters of the mainstream Popolo della Libertà (PDL): despite the party’s support for the technocratic government, only 26% of its electorate declares to trust the EU. In between the two polls, we can find the electorates of Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S, 34%) and of the centrist parties (UDC, 39%). In this sense, the Demos poll illustrates that public opinion on the EU in Italy has followed a clear partisan division, regardless of government responsibilities (Diamanti, 2012).

Moreover, if leftist voters generally disagree that Italy would be better off without the EU (from 60-70%), the rest of the electorate is more divided: less than half of the supporters of all other party families disagree with the statement, whereas 27% of the voters of PDL and 35% of LN agree that Italy would be actually better off outside the EU, and so does one fourth of the electorate of M5S. A more recent study of the opinion of Italians on the Euro (www.scenaripolitici.com) also confirms a widening left-right divide, with Centre-Left and Centrist voters overwhelmingly supporting the common currency (90% and 83%, respectively), and Centre-Right voters strongly approving the hypothesis of a re-introduction of the Italian national currency (77%), together with the supporters of M5S (74%).

In addition to that, extra-parliamentary groups from the radical right have recently tried to capitalize on the growing popular discontent towards the EU, politicizing European affairs and voicing Euroscepticism in street-movements and protests. Although often related to electorally irrelevant actors, these showcase political events have attracted a variety of different groups and movements from the Italian radical right and neo-Fascist milieu, and managed to achieve wide media coverage at both local and national level. Unlike most institutional parties, extra-parliamentary groups do not hide their opposition to the EU and explicitly claim national autonomy from Brussels as a response to the imposition of the stability pacts.

If distrust in European institutions takes an increasingly partisan connotation, than it makes sense to observe the type of European discourse that is pushed forward by different political actors in order
to fuel anti-European resentment. In her study of the first Berlusconi governments, Quaglia (2008) had already observed the emergence of a Eurosceptic discourse in Italian centre-right coalitions. Still, she concluded that the shift from “soft” to “hard” Euroscepticism was taking place within a fundamentally pro-EU setting, with little chances to break down the consensus. Similarly, Comelli (2011) argues that although a bipartisan consensus exists on devolving more competences to Brussels, left-right differences characterize Italy’s view of Europe, with the right increasingly oriented towards over-emphasizing Italian economic and national interests vis-à-vis communitarian ones (Darnis, 2009; Quaglia, 2012). Yet, he also argues that these differences are not so evident in terms of concrete policies, and pertain mostly to the anti-EU rhetoric of the centre-right coalitions.

It remains to be seen how the phenomena outlined in these studies came to terms with the new circumstances brought forward by the economic crisis. As recently suggested by Renaud Dehousse (2013), in fact, Europeanization of national political debates is on the rise in Italy as well as in most Southern European countries, with important consequences for the functioning of EU’s political system. After introducing our conceptualization of Euroscepticism, the following section analyses how the European affairs are discussed, on the eve of the 2014 EP elections, by the main actors of Italian opposition to the EU.

Varieties of Euroscepticism in Italy: towards the 2014 EP elections

As was previously introduced, we follow the definition strategy of the concept of Euroscepticism developed by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008), who differentiate between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms of Euroscepticism. Hard opposition to the EU, emerging when “there is a principled opposition to the EU and European Integration” (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008, p.7), characterizes parties claiming withdrawal from membership and supporting policies equivalent to a complete opposition to the contemporary project of European integration. Conversely, soft opposition connotes political parties whose concerns on specific policy areas are characterized by “a sense that ‘national interest’ is currently at odds with the EU trajectory” (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008, p.8), which leads them to express a qualified opposition to the EU.

This conceptualization provides not only important advantages in terms of cross-context and over-time comparability, but it also provides a first insight of the patterns of differentiation existing between Europhiles and Eurosceptics and within the milieu of the Eurosceptics. If Europhiles constitute a separate category since they consider the EU a good in itself, the implicit distinction between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ families has to do with the way in which they assess European issues: hard Eurosceptics oppose it because of pre-existing sets of ideas or issues (be that supra-
nationalism, neoliberalism, technocracy and bureaucracy etc.), whereas soft Eurosceptics challenge it because it is at stake with interests and issues that they support.

In his recent account based on the campaign for the 2013 national elections, Dehousse claims that there is no form of radical Euroscepticism in Italy (2013). Rather, he singles out a generalized “negative character” of the Europeanization process in Italy, characterized by the combination of pro-European credentials and critiques of the current orientation of EU policies. Within the field of opposition, however, he admits the presence of a variety of shades, ranging from disagreement with austerity policies, to open targeting of other European leaders.

Although accurate, however, Dehousse’s work represents only a snapshot on Italian Euroscepticism, and is as such unable to account for the parallel developments of Europeanization and increasing opposition to the EU. In what follow, we shall look at these two developments in perspective, in order to see whether – over the past years – moderate opposition to the EU has led to the emergence of hard forms of Euroscepticism. To this goal, we first focus on the political discourse and preferences of the main Eurosceptic actors within the Italian parliamentary arena (Forza Italia, Lega Nord and Movimento 5 Stelle), and then on the emerging extra-parliamentary movements and parties (Forza Nuova, CasaPound and Movimento dei Forconi).

The mainstream right and the EU: from Forza Italia to Forza Italia

As is well known, Berlusconi’s party Forza Italia (FI), and coalition-parties Casa delle Libertà (CDL) and Popolo Della Libertà (PDL) have dominated the Italian political scene since the early 1990s.⁴ Although assessing the role played by the EU in their platforms and discourse is far from straightforward, there is a wide consensus suggesting that the relationship between Italy and the EU has deteriorated over the time of the four Berlusconi governments which ruled Italy between 1994 and 2011 (Quaglia, Radaelli 2007; Dehousse 2013).⁵ Hence, in this section we shall overview the role of the EU in the electoral campaigns of Berlusconi’s parties, as well as in the policy decisions of his governments, across the last twenty years of Italian politics.

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⁴ For a complete overview of Berlusconi’s parties, see D. McDonnell (2013), From Forza Italia to the Popolo Della Libertà, Political Studies Association, Vol. 61, 217-233.

This first phase of the relations between Berlusconi and the EU (1994-2001) is characterized by minimal attention to EU affairs, with sporadic and occasional conflicts over specific issues. Berlusconi’s first electoral campaign in 1994, in fact, dealt only marginally with EU issues, generally focusing on the role of Italy in international affairs. The frame made generic reference to Italy’s leadership “in Europe and in the world” and to the need “to overcome the great technological and productive challenges offered by Europe and by the modern world”. In the electoral manifesto, some mild criticisms towards EU’s policies emerged with respect to the Common Agricultural Policy: “Italy suffers limitations for agricultural production and forced to massive food imports”. Similarly, the manifesto mentions the Maastricht Treaty and the democratic deficit of the EU, which the party proposes to overcome. Despite the little attention provided to European affairs, the EU is generally considered as an opportunity; hence the spirit is that of “improving Italy’s position in Europe” and “make the Union work better”.

Differently, conflict with the EU emerged once Berlusconi got to government for the first time, when Antonio Martino - chief economist of Forza Italia and then Minister of Foreign affairs – explicitly questioned the process of monetary unification, criticizing the Euro convergence criteria (Quaglia 2008). Without fully backing his minister, Berlusconi also mentioned the possibility of renegotiating the Treaty of The European Union (TEU), in order for Italy to join the Monetary Union even if it did not yet fulfil the convergence criteria. Similarly, between 1996 and 1998 Berlusconi (then leader of the main opposition party) openly criticized the measures taken by the government in order to reduce Italy’s budget deficit (Quaglia 2008, p. 64).

The second phase of the relationship between the Italian mainstream right and the EU (2001-2008) is characterized by policy indifference combined with enhanced political tensions, which however never reached the level of open opposition to the EU. The 2001 electoral platform of Berlusconi’s party, as well as the centre-right coalition agenda and the government policies, indeed, deal with the EU in minimal terms. As Quaglia and Radaelli correctly put it, “there was no Europe on the radar of Italian politicians” (2007; 932). Political tensions, however, emerged when Romano Prodi – the former leader of the centre-left coalition – was nominated President of the European Commission (1999-2004). The logics of domestic political competition led to an increased distrust between the Italian centre-right and Brussels, since the Prodi Commission was perceived to be politically supportive of Italy’s opposition parties.


The Contratto con gli Italiani is available at http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/documenti/contratto.pdf, whereas the Documento Programmatico di Governo can be found at http://www.senato.it, Consulted 06/01/2014.
Incidents within the European Parliament contributed to cooling down the relationship between Italy and other member states, whereas a vivid debate opposed Berlusconi’s ministers and the Commission when the government adopted tougher immigration measures avoiding any substantive reference to the EU immigration framework (see Colombo and Sciortino 2008). Similarly, several tensions sparked with European institutions: the European Parliament criticized the Italian law on the freedom of trade in television media (Harcourt and Weatherill 2006) and rejected the Italian nomination of Rocco Buttiglione – an ally of Berlusconi’s government – as Justice Commissioner. As a form of retaliation, the Italian government decided not to participate in the pan-European programme to build the Airbus A400M military transport aircraft, a central element in EU’s defence ambitions.

In addition to that, the Commission sanctioned the government’s attempts to exceed the ceiling on fiscal policy set by Community pacts (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007). As a result, more critical positions on Europe emerged with the 2006 Italian elections, when Berlusconi’s coalition was defeated. The EU monetary policies are criticized for the burdens they put on Italy’s competitiveness and more broadly for the costs of the passage to the Euro currency. Still, the agenda remained fully pro-European, and commitment to Europe and its constraints to budget and legislation were never put into question during the campaigning.

With the subsequent elections, in 2008, the relationship between Berlusconi’s parties and the EU started to change in a radical way, entering a third phase (2008-2014) characterized by increasing levels of scepticism towards EU institutions and policies. Despite the overall positive attitude on EU affairs, in fact, the 2008 electoral platform of PDL restored the concept of Italian-specific interests on a number of policy areas, calling for more resolute pressure on the EU in terms of immigration control and support for Made-in-Italy products.

Moreover, tensions between EU institutions and the Berlusconi government emerged with increasing frequency and on numerous subject areas. In April 2011, a controversy on FIAT industrial strategy involved the EU Commissioner Gunther and the Italian ministers of Economics (Tremonti) and Foreign Affairs (Frattini), both belonging to Berlusconi’s coalition. Three months later, the Council of Europe accused the Italian government of violating the human rights with respect to the dismantlement of Roma camps. In November, several members of the government

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accused the European Court of Justice of “attacking the identity of the country” for its ruling on the presence of crucifixes within Italian schools and classrooms.

Hence, when the financial crisis first hit Italy in late 2009 (the first anti-crisis decree is approved in August), the field was already set for a full clash between PDL and the EU. In January 2010 Berlusconi made a public statement claiming that the promised tax reduction cannot be achieved due to the crisis, whereas his ministers started an aggressive polemic with EU institutions. In the aftermaths of the Arab Spring, the Minister of Foreign Affairs provocatively asked the EU to give money to Tunisian refugees to leave Italy. With respect to the crisis, the Minister of Economy Tremonti declared that Europe “is like the Titanic: no one will be saved, not even the first class”, whereas Berlusconi himself declared – and subsequently rectified – that “the Euro did not convince anyone”.

It is only in autumn 2011, however, when the Italian sovereign debt rating was downgraded by Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s, that the crisis officially entered public debates. On the one hand, reality overcame Berlusconi’s hypocritical denial of the crisis (only two weeks before the downgrade, Prime Minister Berlusconi insisted that Italy was in rude financial health, pointing to full restaurants as proof of economic strength). On the other, the downgrade created the feeling of urgency that was needed in order to substitute Berlusconi’s cabinet with a new government. In public and media discourse a new government composed of ‘highly respected international figures’ was necessary to ‘restore national credibility’ and to push through the ‘painful austerity measures’ required by international markets and the European Union.

In a whirlwind of scandalous events, on 12 November 2012 Berlusconi resigned as head of government, and Mario Monti formed a new technocratic government with the support of all parties in the Parliament, including Berlusconi’s one, except the Lega Nord. The position of PDL among the majority supporting the government initially led Berlusconi to portray his withdrawal as an unavoidable “act of responsibility” towards Italy and the EU, consequent to dramatic economic and financial conjunctures. This rhetoric, however, developed over time towards depicting

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15 See http://www.corriere.it/politica/11_novembre_12/monti-palazzo-giustiniani_044bdea8-0d0c-11e1-a42a-1562b6741916.shtml, consulted 11/01/2014.
16 The origins of Berlusconi’s fault are multiple and not only related to the Eurocrisis and sexual scandals. See for a chronology Chiaromonte and D’alimonte 2012; and Bosco and McDonnell 2012.
Berlusconi’s removal as a *takeover* organized by the EU technocracy in alliance with international financial organizations.  

The ambivalence characterizing Berlusconi’s rhetoric, however, was also the driving logic of PDL’s parliamentary practices, as the party voted in favour of the *stability-pact* proposed by Monti whilst at the same time Berlusconi declared to the news his “deep scepticism” towards the economic measures adopted by the government. In other words, the PDL tried for several months to combine a silent practice of responsibility *within* the parliament with a loud rhetoric of contestation *outside* the institutions. This strategy lasted until the party decided to withdraw its support to the government, which led to the election campaign of 2013. In that occasion, the rationale for the choice to withdraw the support did not point at the government’s policies *per se*, but rather at the sustainability of the EU agenda on the crisis.  

In June 2012, Berlusconi declared that Italians should ask “vigorously” the European Central Bank to start printing money, or alternatively to let member states print their own. The members of PDL split between supporters of Berlusconi – which endorsed strong anti-austerity position and openly opposed the government – and a more moderate fringe which instead supported the idea of large coalitions as a way out of the crisis. Despite these internal tensions, PDL compactly withdrew its endorsement to Monti’s cabinet after the approval of the annual budget. From then on, the anti-EU strategic dimension fully overcame the responsibility one, and several members of the PDL, including Berlusconi, turned to explicitly Eurosceptic arguments in their campaigning. In particular, anti-EU arguments took an increasingly anti-German tone (Dehousse 2013), as a consequence of rumours circulated by the *Wall Street Journal* claiming the involvement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the removal of Berlusconi from cabinet. Two months before the elections Berlusconi affirmed that “the spread is a scam, and Monti’s policies are Germanocentric”, whereas the PDL ran the elections voicing opposition to fiscal austerity policies  

“imposed by a Germanocentric Europe” and to technocratic governments defined as the true disease of Italy. 24

Although the PDL platform for the elections of 2013 does not indulge too much on EU affairs, it also marks a major change in the party’s understanding of the EU, as it is proposed to support “more the Europe of the people, and less the Euro-bureaucracy” (p.9). The idea of a “Europe of the people” reflects the federalist idea of a community made of “macro-regions” proposed – among others – by Lega Nord. 25 In a nutshell, the programme of PDL also mentions the direct election of the Commission’s President, and it proposes to stop fiscal austerity measures, to strengthen the competences of the European Central Bank, and to fight to protect Italian’s agricultural interest within the CAP framework.

Beyond the pledges in the party manifesto, there is little doubt that the EU played a major role in the campaign of the Italian centre right, which openly criticized Brussels for not having prevented the crisis of the Euro and for imposing technocratic governments over insolvent member states. In addition to strictly political reasons, however, it is our opinion that the Eurosceptic mood characterizing Berlusconi’s campaign has to do with the difficult relationship between PDL and the European People’s Party (EPP), before and after the 2013 campaign.

Since the establishment of the Monti government, in fact, the PDL had been increasingly frustrated by the open endorsement provided by the EPP to the new cabinet, which was considered alternative to the centre right in the Italian arena, yet supported by the same European parliament group. Such frustration turned into open opposition on the eve of the 2013 elections, when the EPP leaders welcomed the candidacy of Monti as Prime Minister, defining him “more reliable” than Berlusconi. 26 De facto, the EPP attempted to delegitimize PDL, claiming that more moderate parties and figures were needed in order to avoid “the spread of anti- EU populism” in Italy. 27 As the tone of Berlusconi’s Euroscepticism rose, several members of EPP took explicit positions against him and the PDL. Berlusconi’s violent reaction (“I will not let the EPP judge me”) 28 led to the withdrawal from PDL of several Italian MEPs, including the head of the party’s group in Brussels.

The unintended consequence of the Europeanization of the party politics in the centre right was to set free the electoral campaign of PDL from any duty of responsibility at the community level, or coherence with the rest of its European allies. From that moment onwards, in fact, the campaign of

the centre right was characterized by unprecedented attacks to German interference in Italian internal affairs. In particular, Angela Merkel was repeatedly accused not only to be the main responsible of austerity policies, but also as the symbol of a lack of representation and legitimacy within EU institutions. In this framework, Berlusconi explicitly accused Monti to have turned Italy into “a German colony” by implementing Merkel’s austerity measures.29 The future of Italy in the EU envisaged by PDL can only be defined as “hard” Eurosceptic, since it proposed either to “defeat Germany” within the EU, or to leave the Euro.30

In line with Dehousse (2013), hence, the origins of PDL’s Euroscepticism have to do with a negative politicization of the EU resulting from two main reasons: the political interest to capitalize on the social consequences of austerity measures, and a genuine (yet not necessarily EU-related) opposition to the experience of the technocratic government. Concerning the first element, the strategy of the centre right had been that of criticizing austerity even when the party was supporting the government introducing the measures. Concerning the latter one, the critique must not be understood as an opposition to technocracy per se (Italy already experienced similar governments, which did not attract this type of criticisms). Opposition to the technocratic government, instead, also meant contesting the emerging, alternative political elite within the Italian centre-right. This is why the supranational endorsement of Monti by the EPP exacerbated PDL’s Euroscepticism and transformed Germany into its main political target.

In general, the overview on the relationship between Berlusconi’s parties and the EU shows that Euroscepticism within the Italian centre right has never been inborn within the parties’ ideologies or policy preferences. On the very contrary, it appears to be a frequent habit yet a conjunction-related one, i.e. associated to circumstances perceived as convenient by the party leader. On the one hand, its high volatility makes it difficult to categorize it as “soft” or “hard” Euroscepticism, also because for long periods the Italian centre-right has been simply not interested in EU affairs. On the other, it must be recalled that opposition to the EU has characterized a vast part of Berlusconi’s political trajectory in terms of public discourse and propaganda, yet in terms of policy making and implementation his parties have been characterized – excluding some exceptions – by overwhelmingly pro-EU records.

As a result, it is still unsure whether Berlusconi’s new party Nuova Forza Italia will be affiliated to the EPP for the forthcoming EU Parliament elections. Although lengthily debated, the issue has not

been solved so far. The further split within the Italian centre right does not facilitate the project of a common group, especially since the newly born Nuovo Centro Destra has been supporting the large-coalition government of Enrico Letta, and can count on a clear record vis-à-vis the EU, whereas Berlusconi’s Nuova Forza Italia has sheltered the vast majority of former PDL Eurosceptics. In addition to that, negotiations are stalled since the former Italian Prime Minister cannot join EPP’s meetings due to judiciary restrictions on his international movements. A final decision by the EPP is awaited by the end of January: at this stage it is difficult to predict if the latest opinion polls will convince the European centre right to forgive Berlusconi’s Eurosceptic strays, or whether instead he will choose to join the chairs of more radical Euro-groups in the EP.

The regionalist populism of Lega Nord

The Lega Nord (LN), formally founded in 1991 by the fusion of several movements from Northern Italy, has become over the past two decades one of the most successful regionalist parties in Western Europe. Rather than a temporary protest movement, LN is today the oldest group in the Italian parliament, a recognized actor contributing to the demise of the First Republic (Bartlett, Birdwell and McDonnell, 2012) and a regular member of Centre-Right coalitions of the Second Republic during Berlusconi’s governments between 1994 and 2011 (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005; 2010). Although the party’s character is often contested in scholarly literature, the most appropriate definition for the purposes of this study seems to be that of “regionalist populism” (Biorcio, 1991; McDonnell, 2006). This definition underlines the main political activity of the party since its foundation, i.e. the campaigning for the autonomy of Northern Italy, although LN’s demands in this respect have been subject to severe fluctuations, ranging from campaigns for Padania’s independence to law proposals on federalism and devolution.

Similarly contested has been the definition of LN as a Eurosceptic movement and party. Indeed, until the late 1990s LN was characterized by a substantially pro-European political platform, since at the time the EU arena was perceived as providing greater opportunities to promote its regionalist goals. At the rhetorical level, moreover, LN claimed that the North was the only ‘economically Europeanized’ area of the country, and the main factor for the acceptance of Italy within the

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Monetary Union. On these grounds, LN denounced Northern Italy’s unwillingness to pay for the deficiencies of the rest of the country.

After 1998, however, LN’s position on the EU has changed radically, openly endorsing a Eurosceptic narrative. Although the party has long self-defined as the harshest opponent of community policies and integration, many authors have noticed that its position has been repeatedly nuanced. In the first place, LN does not claim to be ‘against Europe per se’, but against the allegedly undemocratic nature of the ‘continental super-state’. In addition, LN has voted in Parliament both the Nice and Lisbon treaties, under the pressure of its allies. In this sense, LN displays a “Gianus face” vis-à-vis European integration, endorsing Euroscepticism under favourable conditions, but being open to compromise in times of low salience and popular resentment over EU affairs (Bartlett, Birdwell and McDonnell, 2012).

This being said, these are propitious times for LN’s Euroscepticism. With the end of Berlusconi’s government in 2011 and the construction of the grand coalition supporting the technocratic government of Mario Monti, LN became the main opposition party in the Italian parliament. Inevitably, the position of LN was initially schizophrenic: the leader Roberto Maroni simultaneously denounced the “financial powers that destroyed the life of families, companies and public accounts”, it claimed “fierce opposition” to the “technocrat” Mario Monti, but promised the approval of LN on the stability law and the other measures imposed by the ECB.

From that moment onwards, LN’s Eurosceptic stances grew progressively. In the 2013 Political elections, the programme of Lega tackled several EU issues, proposing the development of a “Europe of the peoples”, based on a number of macro-regions (Dehousse, 2013). At the same time, the electoral campaign strongly focused on attacking the policies of austerity, with the proposal of a national referendum to decide whether to stay in, or withdraw from, the Eurozone. All of this, however, was framed without officially self-defining as “anti-EU”. On the contrary, the main frames that were used by LN referred to a different Europe, based on democratic values rather than technocratic ones: “we ask that the peoples of Europe are allowed to express their opinion on the Euro and on the future of Europe. We believe in a different Europe, alternative to the one envisaged by Monti and the ECB”. Similarly, several proposals in LN’s electoral programme suggested integration-oriented reforms of the EU political system: the development of Euro-bonds and project-bonds; the direct election of the President of the European Commission; enhancement of the

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33 Lega Nord, Proposte e Obiettivi.
35 La Stampa, 09/09/2012.
36 La Stampa, 09/09/2012.
powers of the European Parliament; and a vague reference to the acceleration of the political, economic, baking and fiscal unions.\textsuperscript{37}

After the unsatisfactory results of the 2013 elections, when LN lost over 1.5 million votes obtaining only 4.1\% of the votes (in 2008 it reached above 8\%; Corbetta, 2010; Maggini, 2013), the push towards Euroscepticism grew even stronger, mainly in the rush to compete with the new challengers from the\textit{ Movimento 5 Stelle}. As a result, under the leadership of the MEP Matteo Salvini, LN has launched a number of anti-EU campaigns, including the\textit{ No-Euro Day} on 23 November 2013. The European Union is openly defined a “dictatorship” and the party started proposals for the reform of “all EU treaties” including Maastricht and Schengen.\textsuperscript{38}

LN’s electoral campaign for the 2014 EP elections, hence, is strongly grounded on a complete opposition to the Euro. The currency is defined as “a crime against humanity”, on which grounds the “EU-criminals, thieves and murderer bureaucrats” have justified “coup d’état” and “genocides of families and entrepreneurs” across the continent.\textsuperscript{39} Behind opposition to the Euro, as can be seen, lays a more broad critique of the EU political system as a whole. Under the new leadership, the party has restored the rhetoric asking for territorial, monetary and budgetary sovereignty, and suggesting that LN shall undertake the project of “dismantling Brussels”.\textsuperscript{40}

In addition to that, the party has undertaken close talks with the\textit{ Front National} of Marine Le Pen and the Dutch PVV, and it is likely that it will join the recently-formed Eurosceptic coalition\textit{ European Alliance for Freedom}, under a common platform calling for national and regional freedom in opposition to EU supranational controls. During the federal congress of LN, the leader of PVV (who had been invited there together with other representatives of Eurosceptic parties from around Europe) openly spoke of independence from the EU, being acclaimed by LN militants with chants and applauses. Similarly, the leaders of the party claim a “Europe of the peoples and not of bankers” and claim to defend the interests of the lower classes damaged by the social and economic policies of the latest governments, who had been directly inspired by the EU and the ECB.

Together with its new pan-European allies, LN is about to launch a major anti-Euro demonstration in Brussels, in March 2014. The platform of the demonstration illustrates in a straightforward way the logics of the leap of LN towards hard Euroscepticism. Different from the project of reforming the EU monetary and economic system which characterized LN’s electoral campaign until 2013, in

\textsuperscript{38} La Stampa, 14 November 2013
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{No Euro Day} conference, Milan 23/11/2013, available at: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJfimnVvKF1g} (consulted on 07/01/2014).
\textsuperscript{40} Huffington Post, 15/11/2013.
fact, the new platform of LN aims at the abolition of the Euro as the first step towards independence. As explained by Salvini,\(^{41}\) the common currency has been the “criminal instrument” by which the national government has kept Padania subjugated. Hence, the new leadership claims that independence from the national power of Rome would not be sufficient if it is not accompanied by independence from Brussels.

**National grievances, European issues: the Movimento 5 Stelle**

Openly rejecting the label of ‘party’ and based on a strongly anti-establishment rhetoric, the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (5 Stars Movement) was born in 2009 under the leadership of the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo. In little time and despite running as an outsider, it has achieved unprecedented levels of political popularity: with the 2013 elections, it became the first party in the Italian Lower Chamber (with about 25% of the votes). The organization’s name makes reference to the five most important themes in its political programme: public water, transportation, development, internet connection and availability, and the environment.\(^{42}\)

Beyond its anti-corruption and anti-establishment features, it is difficult to define the ideological profile of a “movement” that has organized itself around the online and offline activities of the political blog of a famous comedian. Most commentators define it as the most modern version of Italian populism, a definition that the leader of the movement made his own, declaring that he had gathered the votes that – across Europe – convey on the populist radical right (Natale and Biorcio, 2013). The main traits of populism in his rhetoric characterize his critique of the Italian political system and élites which, in the M5S discourse, have dispossessed citizens of their popular sovereignty. Different from the radical right, however, the M5S claims to offer citizens a “tool” to gain back popular sovereignty in terms of direct and deliberative democracy. Moreover, there is no evidence in the M5S of an ethno-cultural understanding of the national community and there is no intrinsic contraposition to immigrants\(^{43}\) and supranational organization (Natale and Biorcio 2013).


\(^{42}\) For a detailed genesis of the *Movimento 5 Stelle* see Bartlett et al. 2013.

\(^{43}\) Although on the issue of immigration the position of the M5S has been contested (in the past Grillo declared the necessity to “stop immigration”, see [http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/immigrazione_e_tabu.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/immigrazione_e_tabu.html), consulted 06/01/2014). Very recently, in an online referendum on the site of the Movement the sympathizers voted in favour of abolishing the crime of illegal immigration (see [http://www.corriere.it/politica/14_gennaio_13/grillo-lancia-consultazioni-reato-clandestinita-dissidenti-politica-non-sia-videogame-b474ad60-7c49-11e3-bc95-3898e25f75f1.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/politica/14_gennaio_13/grillo-lancia-consultazioni-reato-clandestinita-dissidenti-politica-non-sia-videogame-b474ad60-7c49-11e3-bc95-3898e25f75f1.shtml), consulted 18/01/2014).
Indeed, until the 2013 elections, the M5S’ opposition to the EU had not emerged in a straightforward way. As reported by previous studies (Bartlett et al., 2013; Dehousse, 2013), the electoral programme of M5S made no reference to the EU, focusing on local rather than international issues and policies. Beyond official documents, however, the blog of the leader of M5S provides interesting insights concerning the party’s understanding of European affairs. Over the months preceding the general elections, in fact, Beppe Grillo has repeatedly expressed criticism against the EU bureaucracy, the euro and the technocratic government of Mario Monti.

Overall, Grillo acknowledges the importance of EU cooperation, describing European integration as a noble ideal that has been over time corrupted due to the influence of organized interests. The attempt is that of reconnecting the M5S to the Europeanist ideals of the founding fathers which, in his opinion, have been betrayed by the bureaucrats and technocrats ruling the EU. The corrupted EU élites have led to the annihilation of “politics” within the EU, substituting the political union with a union of banks, which is at odds with the original European dream. In line with this understanding of the EU, on 6 November 2012 the leader of M5S posted his well-known proposal for a referendum on Italy’s participation to the Eurozone: “I believe that Italy cannot afford the luxury of being in the Euro. Yet, this decision must be taken by the Italian citizens, rather than by a restricted group of oligarchs or by Beppe Grillo”.

With the approaching of the 2014 EP elections, however, the official position of M5S vis-à-vis the EU has been further clarified, with the development of a 7-points electoral programme. The main proposal of the programme represents – in our opinion – a perfect real-world example of Peter Mair’s theory of the displacement between Europe’s channels of representation and its dimensions of political conflict (2007). Point 1 of the M5S programme, in fact, consists of a formalization of the previously mentioned national referendum on Italy’s participation to the Eurozone. In line with Mair’s argument, hence, M5S voices opposition regarding the institutionalization of the EU within the European channel of representation, where – de facto – no relevant competence lays as the EP cannot take decisions on the composition of the Eurozone.

In addition to this, the European programme of M5S includes more policy-oriented proposals, such as the abolition of the fiscal compact and the introduction of European bonds, and the development

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44 The only exception being a reference to the European directives on environmental protection. See the document available at: [http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziativemovimentocinquestelle/Programma-Movimento-5-Stelle.pdf](http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziativemovimentocinquestelle/Programma-Movimento-5-Stelle.pdf).
45 See in particular the Comunicati n. 34, 49, and 52 available at [http://www.beppegrillo.it/movimento/comunicati-politici.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/movimento/comunicati-politici.html), consulted 06/01/2014.
48 The document is available at: [https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/materiali-bg/7punti.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/materiali-bg/7punti.pdf), consulted 06/01/2014.
of a strategic alliance between Italy and the rest of the Mediterranean countries. The M5S also developed a number of growth-oriented economic proposals, such as the exclusion of investments in innovation from EU limits on budgetary deficits; the public financing of agricultural and livestock activities in order to increase domestic consumption; and the abolition of the recently introduced ‘balanced budget’ amendment regulating public spending.

As we can see, in its electoral programme the M5S calls for a radical reform of the EU, in particular in terms of the handling of economic affairs. In line with this understanding, Beppe Grillo has recently called for a new *Europa Solidale* (fair Europe) built upon growth and development, rather than governed by the ECB. The rhetoric of M5S’ campaign is built upon a direct-democratic understanding of politics, whilst the reference remains the national rather than the European arena: “who voted for ECB? Its symbol has never appeared in any European election. Yet, it rules on the EU more than any member state […] . Who are these bureaucrats and bankers, and their political puppets, pretending to decide instead of citizens?”

Similarly, references to Italy’s loss of sovereignty emerge from the definition of Italy’s Prime Minister Enrico Letta as the “toy soldier of Brussels”.

Although the M5S has defined the EP elections “a crusade” towards the construction of a better Europe, its view of Community institutions is extremely critical. The group has repeatedly criticized the European Parliament, defining it “a Grand Hotel hosting people waiting for better opportunities in Italy” and a “sumptuous elephant graveyard” for politicians who could not be elected in national parliaments. The EU itself is defined “a Club Med infested lobby”, where all powers rest in the hands of finance and banks that, with the complicity of technocratic and coalition governments, are strangling national economies. The aim of the M5S is therefore to open up “as a can opener” the European parliament to the scrutiny of the citizenry.

In so doing, however, the M5S does not address a European audience. Rather, its reference is always the Italian electorate, Italy’s internal problems in terms of economic performances and quality of democracy, and the malfunctioning of Italy’s representation within the European Union. In other words, despite the attempt to politicize broad European issues concerning the functioning of the EU political system, the project of the M5S does not have the ambition of becoming fully Europeanized, since the frame of reference remains constrained within the borders of the nation state. The fact that EU issues are framed and interpreted exclusively in terms of their repercussions

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49 See [http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html) consulted 06/01/2014.
50 See [http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html) consulted 06/01/2014.
51 See [http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2013/10/il_m5s_alle_elezioni_europee.html) consulted 06/01/2014.
52 See [http://www.beppegrillo.it/2014/01/europa_cosi_vicina_cosi_lontana.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2014/01/europa_cosi_vicina_cosi_lontana.html) consulted 06/01/2014.
and consequences for Italian people, moreover, emerges in the widely used slogan of the group for the EP elections: “in Europe, for Italy, with M5S”.54

In sum, the main features of M5S’ Euroscepticism have to do with socioeconomic utilitarianism, and with the radical rejection of technocracy and economic austerity (Natale and Biorcio 2013). Moreover, its European platform is also strongly connotated by the broader frame concerning the quality of democracy, calling for increased political transparency and efficiency. In both cases, as we have illustrated, the discourse is never fully Europeanized, and remains strongly anchored to the interests, rights and benefits of Italy and Italian people. The explanation for this is that the movement’s critique of the EU is not – and does not aim to be – pivotal within its activities: rather than being elaborated ad hoc for the EP elections, the criticism of the EU democratic deficit seems to represent a transposition at the supra-national level of the M5S’ electorally successful condemnation of the Italian political system.

Pretty much like Italian politicians, EU politicians are unresponsive; similar to Italian institutions, the Communitarian ones lack transparency and accountability; just like in Italy, the inefficiency and corruption of the ruling EU elites leads to the imposition of sacrifices to innocent citizens. Despite calls for “solidarity” within Europe, the M5S’ interest lays almost exclusively on the Italian citizens, or on citizens from other P.I.G.S. countries55 subject to the same conditions as Italy. In this sense, although technocrats and bureaucrats in Italy and Brussels are equally responsible for the sufferance caused by the austerity measures, the M5S is unable to address a truly European public and to develop a fully Europeanized political discourse. The M5S, hence, simply applies to the supranational level the systemic critique it had developed at the national level: reject the system.

This, however, shall not be considered surprising, given that the M5S is rooted on local needs and policies (Ceccarini et. al. 2013). Rather than being a genuinely Eurosceptic movement, the M5S becomes Eurosceptic because it imports European issues within its political platform in a manner that is coherent with its broader understanding of politics. In other words, since the EU is tackled by the M5S mainly in terms of national politics, its position on the EU is inevitably an antagonistic one, where the unrepresented “people” has to fight the corrupted EU elites in order to change the system and the traditional way of doing politics.

The extra-parliamentary arena: from radical right groups to street movements

54 See http://www.beppegrillo.it/2014/01/europa_cosi_vicina_cosi_lontana.html, consulted 06/01/2014.
55 P.I.G.S. is the acronym for Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain.
The extra-parliamentary arena of opposition to the EU is composed by a heterogeneous mix of groupuscular organizations and social movements characterized by a radical rhetoric generally leaning towards hard Euroscepticism. Over the past years, the most visible and influential extra-parliamentary opposition to the EU has clustered around minor groups, parties and social movements mainly (yet not always) pertaining to the extreme right and neo-Fascist traditions. In this section, we shall focus on two main groups within this area: the social movement organization Movimento dei Forconi, and the neo-Fascist parties CasaPound and Forza Nuova.

Within the organizations participating to anti-EU protest movements, many do not have an explicit ideological profile. In recent times, organizations pertaining to this area have received substantial media coverage and national public visibility as they clustered around a number of public events and protests. Although the source and composition of these protests is subject to debate, many recognize the centrality of the Movimento dei Forconi (pitchfork movement) in the organization and planning of the protests. Self-defining as “non partisan”, this group was originally founded by a Sicilian entrepreneur on the basis of a bunch of political demands including national monetary sovereignty, and opposition to austerity and economic globalization. What is important, however, is that the group seem to have offered political visibility to the sections of the Italian society that have lost trust in all other forms of political representation.

Although originally the group’s position on the EU was rather controversial, as it recognized the common market as the place where Italy had to increase its economic competitiveness, today the movement calls for the full rejection of the EU and its policies. The group’s Euroscepticism is grounded on pure utilitarian reasoning, in line with the findings of literature studying the perception of costs and benefits of EU membership (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson 1998; Mahler et al. 2000), and with the study of the new cleavage between winners and losers of EU integration and globalization (Kriesi et al. 2008; Lubbers and Scheepers 2005).

On Facebook, one of the leaders of the movement calls for the immediate withdrawal of Italy from the EU, since “too much austerity imposed by the EU has already killed Italy”. Similar claims reflect utilitarian calculations of socioeconomic nature, mainly concerning expectations about better

57 In addition to these, there are many other minor groups that try to mobilize on EU issues, including left wing social movements. Yet, we decided to focus on these rather than others as these groups have gathered most of the media visibility. Moreover, the vast majority of left-wing protests did not endorse fully Eurosceptic stances, which would have required a more extensive assessment than possible in this report in order to be compared to those expressed by mainstream parties from the political right.
59 Lauren McCauley, ‘Spiral of Rebellion’ Sweeps Italy. Pitchfork movement organizers vow ‘peaceful Invasion’ of Rome until ruling regime steps down, Common Dreams, 14/12/2013.
living conditions. Special attention is in fact devoted to small entrepreneurs, which represent one of the categories which are suffering the crisis the most and the original constituency of the group. In particular, claims describe the negative consequences of austerity and technocracy on people’s wealth and physical health.\textsuperscript{61} The general frame is that living conditions have worsened due to EU integration,\textsuperscript{62} and that the expectations of EU-led redistribution have not been met.

Utilitarian arguments of this nature are not fully absent from the discourse of neo-Fascist organizations such as CasaPound and Forza Nuova. Radical right opposition to the EU, in fact, represents a widely studied field, and many authors have underlined the nationalistic, utilitarian, and socio-demographic logics that could explain the phenomenon (for an overview see Vasilopolou 2009, Vasilopolou et al. 2013). Concerning our case studies, however, it is worth investigating the deeper ideological stances that generally accompany the more common types of argumentations, since the definition of their own idea of Europe is an aspect that has been – until now – largely underestimated by research on this party family.

Pan-Europeanism and transnationalism, in fact, have been one of the prerogatives of the Italian neo-Fascism, both within the Movimento Sociale Italiano and among non-institutional actors like Jeune Europe and Ordine Nuovo (Carioti 2011, Bar On 2011). In this understanding, Fascism is perceived no longer as a form of nationalism, but rather as a European alternative to imperialism. As a result, EU issues are always tackled in a multiple way: on the one hand, the groups stand in opposition to the EU technocracy and its austerity policy which are perceived as challenges to national sovereignty, identity, and prosperity; on the other, they call for European solidarity among people sharing common religious and cultural roots (an Identitarian call to create the Nation Europe, often called Peoples’ Europe).

The 2013 electoral program of CasaPound, for example, makes an exceptional opening with respect to Europeanization. It is stated that “We believe […] in a strong, autarchic Europe, that has its own internal market regulated by politics”.\textsuperscript{63} This goes far beyond the recognition of a feeling of cultural and religious bond – rooted in a common history – among European peoples: CasaPound explicitly supports European economic cooperation, yet in terms of economic and cultural protectionism rather than integration. Despite a different understanding of the religious origins of the ‘Nation-Europe’, the same mix of nation-based Europeanism can be found in the 2013 electoral platform of

\textsuperscript{61} See: \url{http://www.iforconi.it/iforconi/linee-programmatiche.html} consulted 07/01/2014.

\textsuperscript{62} See: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jeY_bsyrdQ} consulted 07/01/2014 and against technocracy and austerity \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vGsc1Ubmlo} consulted 07/01/2014.

Forza Nuova. In this understanding, Europe shall be based on cultural and economic isolationism, in order to protect the traditions and welfare states of peoples that have been historically divided. Hence, the leaders of these groups self-define as pro-European, being against the "Europe of the banks" but in favour of a "Europe of the nations." Although Europe has been a feature of neo-Fascist propaganda since long, in recent times the Italian radical right has reinvigorated its specifically anti-EU rhetoric. In particular, CasaPound has taken rigid positions against the major crisis-related issues such as austerity, and has mobilized and participated to several street protests against technocracy (see Castelli et al. 2013). Remarkably, CasaPound participation contributed in a sensible way in Europeanizing the anti-austerity protests of November and December 2013. Although targeting austerity measures, protesters were originally pointing mainly at the inefficiency of the national political élites, whereas the leaders of the radical right rallied outside the European Commission’s offices in Rome, wearing Italian flag masks. In the course of the protest, CasaPound militants exposed white nooses around the neck symbolizing the effects of austerity, and took down the European flag.

Neo-fascist parties, hence, represent the prototypical case of hard Euroscepticism, since the rejection of integration is strongly related to their ideological vision of the European space as Europa Nazione. Rather than a political institution, this shall be understood as an entity regenerating the “strong, unified, homogeneous, pan-European empire” in opposition to dominant ideologies, from liberalism and conservatism, to social democracy, socialism and communism (Bar On 2008, p. 328). The EU, on the contrary, represents nothing but a modern-day imperialistic project, trying to impose itself globally to the detriment of enrooted European cultures, pretty much like the former Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union and the liberal democratic USA.

In conclusion, it is unquestionable that extra-parliamentary opposition to the EU follows the idea of a “principled opposition to the EU and to the European integration” (Taggart 1998, 364). Yet, as we have illustrated, this form of hard Euroscepticism is structured along different types of arguments,

64 In the 2013 Manifesto Forza Nuova writes: “The Europe that we want has to be founded on the principles of Christianity, the European cultural tradition, Greek philosophy and Roman legal and political concept. - The borders of Europe should follow a logical historical, geographical, religious, ethnic and cultural diversity that includes all peoples from the Atlantic to Russia (included) but that totally excludes all foreign objects such as Turkey and Israel. - These borders must be actual, ie non-European immigration and protect the people from the flood of foreign products. - This European Union should lead to a compact size in ethnic, cultural and religious, but also socio-economic and legal form of the welfare state of Christian inspiration “ (http://www.forzanuova.org/programma, p.7, consulted 07/01/2013). The group strongly criticized the EU as source of austerity and technocracy (see www.forzanuova.org/comunicati/people-europe-rise-forza-nuova-con-il-popolo-greco consulted 07/01/2013) and defines the former Italian technocratic Prime Minister Monti a “Social butcher” (http://www.forzanuova.org/info-comunicati consulted 07/01/2013).
65 Interview n. 3a made on 01/06/2012.
66 Interview n. 3a made on 01/06/2012.
which range from utilitarian calculations to genuinely ideological interpretations. Rather than being mutually exclusive, however, the two seem to be mutually reinforcing, as illustrated by the joint organization of protest by the various movements and organizations, in December 2013. Under these circumstances, it is likely that in the years to come ideological Euroscepticism will become an increasingly characterizing feature of the neo-Fascist identity in Italy.

Conclusions

In his recent account of Italian 2013 elections, Renaud Dehousse identifies the emergence of a new phase in the long process of Europeanization, i.e. the unprecedented emergence of EU issues within national electoral debates. Given that the election campaign unfolded during a severe economic crisis, and after one year of government by technocrats highly sponsored in Brussels, Italian political parties were simply forced to take up European issues. All this “transformed the nature of the election, which became an important moment in European political life”. Yet, he defines this as “negative Europeanization”, since the process is still anchored to national rationales and frames of reference, with the result of fuelling anti-European resentment rather than constructive European debates. In other words, if EU issues are played only to gain support at the national level, then today Euroscepticism represents the most electorally rewarding option.

Developing upon this framework, we have investigated the main traits of contemporary Euroscepticism in Italy in the eve of the 2014 EP elections. In particular, we analysed the electoral platforms, propaganda and policy proposals of the main actors opposing the EU in Italy, differentiating among, on the one hand, extra-parliamentary social movements and extreme right organizations and, on the other, parliamentary actors such as the mainstream right and other populist parties. In so doing, we investigated the different ways of being Eurosceptic from radical street-movements to mainstream and governing parties, from established populist actors to emerging Eurosceptic populists.

Our analysis reveals that there are several aspects by which Italian politics have turned increasingly Europeanized over the past years. First of all, the degree of disenchantment with the EU has grown substantially in terms of popular attitudes, disconfirming Italy’s tradition of Euro-enthusiasm. Secondly, we saw that the process of Europeanization of Italian politics increasingly follows a left-right pattern, with all major right-wing actors endorsing more or less radical forms of

Euroscepticism. Importantly, we also illustrated that there are different ways in which Eurosceptic values are expressed, ranging from ideological opposition (calling for the dismantlement of the Union), to more nuanced forms of protest contesting specific policy choices because of their negative effects on national polities.

At the same time, however, we have shown that there is a general tendency to shift from “soft” to “hard” forms of Euroscepticism, in which the opposition to EU policies reaches levels that are *de facto* equivalent to opposing the process of integration as a whole. Although only the radical right explicitly suggests substituting the current EU with other types of organizations inspired by the doctrine of Italian neo-Fascism, the challenge of ‘moderate’ Eurosceptics has been more and more targeting the essential features of the Community system. In this sense, our analysis not only confirms the idea that the EU has been so far “negatively politicized” (Dehousse 2013), but it also suggests that the lasting process of Europeanization of Italian policy making is likely to further strengthen political opposition to the EU, rather than opposition in the EU.

The financial crisis has produced an institutional arrangement within which it is almost impossible for citizens to separate out what is European and what is domestic, as the two dimensions have become even more closely bound up and intertwined with one another. Above all, this has to do with the culture of consensus characterizing EU affairs, and with the new political context that has emerged in the attempt to respond to the strains of the economic crisis, and it contributed substantially to increasing the level of Europeanization of Italian politics. At the same time however, the perception that national politics lost most of its value due to the progressive delegation of decision-making powers to EU regulatory agencies, transformed party competition in a substantial way. In other words, Europeanization resulted in a reduction of the political value of national polities for all actors involved, since the practices of grand-coalitions and technocracy contributed to the permeation of the depoliticized nature of the EU to the national level.

This is confirmed, among other things, by the fact that most of the actors that we took into consideration frame Euroscepticism in terms of opposition to technocracy, hence restoring a form of opposition to the EU that often pre-existed the current political phase. Since more than twenty years, in fact, the EU has been perceived as a supranational bureaucracy dealing with the technical regulation of policy areas of little – if any – salience in the public agenda. Still, the same form of “interference” of EU institutions in national policy making is perceived as an abuse of power when the socioeconomic circumstances make citizens aware of the direct impact of these decisions on their lives.
Despite unprecedented levels of Europeanization, therefore, the changes of the last years of Italian politics do not indicate the pathway towards a renovated popular control over EU issues, as some have predicted. Indeed, the greater attention provided to European issues by all parties takes place in a context of cartelized politics: the results of the elections determine the composition of the government but do not yield concrete political consequences in terms of economic governance. In line with the prediction of Mair (2007), in a context where the exercise of electoral accountability is so defective, political entrepreneurs will be further incentivized to organize opposition to the EU, rather than in the EU, challenging the polity instead of the policies it promulgates.
List of References


A Five Star Digital Populism

Gentiola Madhi

The Five Star Movement changed the Italian electoral campaign of 2013 through a deep transformation of the national communication system and electoral marketing. This research aims to analyse the advancement of the Movement in the national elections along with its peculiar strategy to communicate to the population, besides the attempt to identify the potential risks for the prospective European elections. Attention is paid to Beppe Grillo’s blog and to his speeches published online in addition to some daily newspapers, where the last ones are essential in denoting an alternative analysis of the reforms advocated by the 5SM.

The Movement’s outbreak is a consequence of the current failure of the Italian political parties’ system and the failed efficiency of the imposed austerity measures. In the contemporary multi-level governance, domestic inadequacies of a member state are emulated like-wisely at the European decision-making level, bringing up common challenges for the whole Europe.

"We invented fascism, the Christian Democrats, Berlusconi, and now we've even invented Grillo".

Roberto D’Alimonte

The Italian comedian Beppe Grillo realized pretty early the great power of internet as a strategic communication instrument in the diffusion of his messages as well as the convenience of using such a constructive tool to promote social change and ‘to wake up’ the citizens against the political elite in power. To some extent, his encountering of the web potential is related to the nature of his satire - characterized by rebellion and incessant attacks against the national political elite - which in turn provoked his exclusion from the television broadcasts.

The Five Star Movement (hereinafter referred to as 5SM) was founded in September 2009 under Grillo’s charismatic leadership and it is a pioneering mass movement that established of an internet-based headquarter, which goes along with the country-wide grassroots electorate. The 5SM serves as an online mobilization platform aiming at promoting better welfare conditions, whilst eradicating the current political caste and achieving participatory democracy where the citizen is the core of the ‘new system’.

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Acknowledging Grillo’s authenticity and expansive rhetoric, the 5SM’s electoral ‘boom’ was a by-product of the electoral rally called ‘Tsunami tour’ – which crisscrossed the main city squares of Italy in 28 days – and the blog-based national campaign, along with the grassroots volunteering activities. Indisputably, the 5SM experienced a raising trend thanks to the “general crisis of the socialization role of the political parties” in addition to “the difference towards the parties and political class in its complexity”.\(^4\) The stunning debut of this movement achieved around 8 million votes from a disenchanted heterogeneous constituency.

On the one hand, the Italian electoral campaign of February 2013 emphasized the profound makeover of the national communication system and the electoral marketing; the social media carried out the biggest part of the electoral promotion, even if the direct interaction on the web - mostly Facebook or Twitter - between the citizens and the candidates was somehow unmanageable. On the other hand, this election round reflected the citizens’ condemnation towards the degradation and inefficiency of the current Italian political system that had led to non-functioning governing bodies and high rates of corruption. Keeping present the EU austerity measures with which the country had to comply - along with the high unemployment rate and citizens’ disenchantment - these elections were an important prior test for the European Parliament elections due in May 2014.

This research aims at analysing the advancement of the Five Star Movement in the Italian national elections and its peculiar strategy to communicate to the general population, along with the attempt to identify its future agenda progression, considered to be crucial for the forthcoming European elections. Keeping in mind the 5SM’s internal rule that prohibits its members of the parliament to be interviewed by the journalists – where the latter are usually considered by Grillo as “party megaphones” – a wide-range approach will be used. Attention will be paid to Beppe Grillo’s blog and to his speeches published online in addition to some daily newspapers. The last ones are essential for this research as they denote an alternative analysis of the reforms advocated by the Five Star Movement.

The research is organized as follows: firstly, it gives an overview of the peculiar characteristics and political objectives of the Five Star Movement along with its role in the Italian domestic politics. Then, the attention shifts to the forthcoming European elections and the potential expansion of the 5SM within the European boundaries. In brief, the Five Star’s outbreak can be described as a consequence of the current failure of the political parties system in Italy and the failed efficiency of the imposed austerity measures. The traditional political parties totally failed to offer citizens an alternative to this web-populism. Being aware of the potential expansion of populism and the

populist “debilitating effect” on the well-functioning of the European Parliament’s decision-making process, the traditional European political groups should carry on a flexible and cooperative approach in order to provide efficient solutions to the current problems.

From the Blog to the Parliament

On 9 February 2013, the editorial of Corriere della Sera entitled “A monarch in the square” attempted to foresee the probability of substantial advancement of the 5SM at the Italian parliamentarian elections since the traditional parties seemed to be resigned to Grillo’s electoral exploit.\(^5\) The collective anxiety of the daily newspapers concerned primarily the potential non-governability of the country, once this forecast would have turned true. That was reasoned mainly by the distinctive nature of the populist movements, whose leader generally opted for a direct communication to the general population, refused to mediate with other political components and might enhance a belief that almost all problems could be resolved in a plain manner.\(^6\)

According to Guy Hermet, Italy “has transformed itself into the site *par excellence* of populism’s triumph over the classical parties”.\(^7\) Considering the previous populist experiences of the ethno-regionalist Northern League and Berlusconi’s support for the *laissez faire*,\(^8\) why Grillo’s 5SM was perceived as a “risk for the national democracy”?\(^9\)

In order to answer this question this research paper will apply a comprehensive approach because it allows understanding the structure of the 5SM, its ideology, as well as its peculiar strategy to communicate to the mass and to exploit citizens’ disillusionment in order to achieve its predetermined goals.

Quoting Paul Taggart populism is “a serve of many masters”;\(^10\) because it is an instrument used by both, left and right wing constituencies, and to populism is endorsed “an essential chameleonic quality that means it always takes on the hue of the environment it occurs in”.\(^11\) As a result, populism is not an ideology – that is described as a system of ideas and values associated with a

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\(^9\) Romano, “Anatomia del Populismo”, *op.cit.*


political action; reliably populism is “soulless”\textsuperscript{12} or at maximum may be classified as a “lame ideology”.\textsuperscript{13} Referring to the Five Star Movement, it is a real novelty on the Italian and European political arena. It reflects a multiplicity of ideas besides the heterogeneous electorate - coming either from the left or the right wing – and it is classified as an ‘archetypally populist’ movement.\textsuperscript{14} Additionally, the 5SM lacks the presence of the characteristic populist equation – where “populism = anti-modernity” - as the movement appeals directly to the ‘net generation’, the ones who are present periodically on the web and are part of today’s modernism.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, this movement is born as an internet-based platform that does not require any physical space as a meeting point. Evoking the ‘non-statute’, the headquarters consist in the virtual \textit{beppegrillo.it} blog, which was inaugurated in January 2005. Just two years later Forbes classified it as the seventh most influential blog in the world.\textsuperscript{16} The movement evolved further thanks to the creation of the volunteering \textit{Meet-up} groups, whose activity consists of a combination of online and offline processes of political involvement. This digital platform aims to be a kind of catalyst of proposals or suggestions on specific issues; furthermore, the web is meant to be a bidirectional interaction tool.

Analyzing his role within the Movement, Grillo is a self-declared ‘non-politician’ or a mere “political chief of the movement” and ever since the “leader is the movement” itself.\textsuperscript{17} However, Grillo’s undisputed authority and personification of the movement is well-known; in fact, the ‘non-statute’ has been written entirely by Beppe Grillo and the co-founder Gianroberto Casaleggio.\textsuperscript{18} They generated a “political/economic franchise with its own copyright and trademark, a movement rigidly controlled and mobilised from the top”.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, the 5SM’s leader refuses to label the movement as a ‘party’, since it identifies itself as ‘anti-politics’.\textsuperscript{20} Considering that the concept of ‘political party’ is defined as “any political group identified by an official label, that presents at the elections, and is capable of placing through

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{14} “Ungovernability wins”, The Economist, 2 March 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Corbetta & Gualmini, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 203.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Il blog di Beppe Grillo.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Il blog di Beppe Grillo, “Comunicato Politico Numero Cinquantatre”, 29 October 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{18} G. Casaleggio, “La Lettera dell’Esperto di Marketing e Strategie di Rete”, \textit{Corriere della Sera}, 29 May 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{19} “The Five Star Movement is not Radical – Beppe Grillo is one of Them, not Us”, \textit{The Guardian}, 28 February 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Biortico & Natale, \textit{op.cit.}
\end{thebibliography}
elections (free or non-free) candidates to public office”\textsuperscript{21} and that the 5SM occupies 163 seats in the Italian parliament, isn’t it a party then?

According to Casamassima, the 5SM cannot be considered a movement, since it does not satisfy the primary condition, i.e. a share of a definite objective, and its involvement in various issues makes it act like a political organization.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, movements generally tend to act, not against the overall political class, but precisely on the improvement of determined peculiarities of that single issue.\textsuperscript{23} Even if initially the Five Star Movement shared several similarities with protest mass movements like the Indignados in Spain or Occupy Wall Street in the USA, now it has gone through a transformation process and should effectively be considered a political party.\textsuperscript{24}

The non-identification of the 5SM with a specific political fraction, aims at conveying its distinctive resilient nature – a grass-roots protest movement that is radically different from the ‘others’. This differentiation between the Movement and ‘the others’ in the populist discourse turns out to be self-fulfilling as the prevailing political forces often decide to distinguish a ‘cordon sanitaire’ around the populists; and consequently, this approach leads to the simplification of the political debate into “binary oppositions”.\textsuperscript{25} The 5SM’s achievements rely on the charismatic authority of their leader along with the shared disillusionment, frustration and mistrust of the grassroots electorate in the domestic political caste. The movement’s supports - often called grillini (little crickets) - are mostly young people, among 25 and 54 years old, well-educated and mostly unemployed. Stating the esteems, 46% of the supporters come from the left wing, while 39% from the right - in primis from the Northern League.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, Grillo also managed to obtain votes from usual election refrainers. This constituency is characterized by shared scepticism about the future, and the association of the movement with Grillo’s charisma tolerated up to a certain extent the “by-passing many of the difficulties of complex issues and processes. And in this sense populism closes down the iterative functioning of representative politics”.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, this sort of ‘web-populism’\textsuperscript{28} puts a strong emphasis on the wisdom of the ‘ordinary man’ and the people’s role in this “war of generations”,\textsuperscript{29} designed for a new political order. This is further reinforced by the movement’s

\textsuperscript{22} P. Casamassima, \textit{quoted in} N. Dolfo, “Il 5SM è un Partito non un Movimento”, \textit{Corriere della Sera}, 16 April 2013
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{24} Corbetta & Gualmini, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{25} T. Taggart, “Populism has the Potential to damage European Democracy, but Demonizing Populist Parties is Self-Defeating”, LSE European Politics and Policy Blog (EUROPP), 3 January 2013.
\textsuperscript{27} Taggart, “Populism has the potential”, \textit{op.cit.}.
\textsuperscript{28} Corbetta & Gualmini, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 15.
principle that “one is worth one”, as a supreme form of direct democracy.\textsuperscript{30} The political philosophy of the movement promotes the idea that the “enemy of the people is the political caste” and that the “parties are dead” – the continuous attack against the established political order and elites will contribute to rebuilding the ‘new world’ where “the politician should be considered as citizen’s employee”.\textsuperscript{31}

This new political order is delineated in the video ‘Gaia: The future of politics’, and it starts with pessimistic forecasts about the near future of the world, ending up with the establishment of a world government thanks to the digital democracy. By 2047, every citizen “has its own identity in the world social network created by Google, called Earthlink”.\textsuperscript{32} “In Gaia parties, politics, ideologies, religions disappear”.\textsuperscript{33}

Moving to the analysis of the Five Star’s program, it resembles to “a compendium of mostly well-intentioned aspirations”.\textsuperscript{34} The “movement is born with its program; on the contrary it is its program”, resulting consequently in the creation of a ‘common identity’.\textsuperscript{35} As reported on the blog, according to the Nobel Prize Joseph Stiglitz this platform does not aim at offering a different growth strategy to the Italians, but rather “an alternative way to live and produce”.\textsuperscript{36} Supporting the de-growth theory along with the green economy, nothing is said in the program about the Italian foreign or European policy. Symbolized through its logo that includes five stars, the key pillars of the movement are: water, transport, connectivity, development and energy. In reality these macro-themes fall under the public policies sphere - and ensuring a transversal and universal character - the final result is the attainment of a “homogenized and standardized” program both at national and European level.\textsuperscript{37} Somehow, this “transnational” portrayal follows the principle of ‘think globally, act locally’.\textsuperscript{38} The Five Star platform resembles a pool of suggestions and this is the outcome of the assembling method used by a web-based system of submitting proposals, thus lacking a logical thread.\textsuperscript{39} Likewise, there is a lack of coherence besides the unified political line, and this is essentially due to the impossibility to put up with dissimilar social and political profiles of the

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\textsuperscript{31} Il Blog di Beppe Grillo.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{34} “Ungovernability wins”, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{35} Corbetta & Gualmini, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{36} R. Mania, “Decrescita ed Energia Verde le Ricette della Grillonomics”, \textit{La Repubblica}, 4 March 2013.
\textsuperscript{37} Corbetta & Gualmini, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{39} Salvati, “I Rischi di Semplificazione”, \textit{op.cit.}
\end{flushright}
constituency. As a result of this heterogeneity persistence, often it is referred to as a ‘work-in-progress program’, and being essentially a scheme of “policies and not real politics”. Nevertheless, the Five Star Movement opted for a ‘small steps strategy’, that would allow them to achieve the anti-establishment platform through the decline of the national complex issues into potentially concrete locally-based actions.

This simplified platform reflects two crucial political issues: environmental protection or ‘neo-environmentalism’ and the moralization of the political class. Neo-environmentalist issues are shared similarly by other European movements and the ‘No global’ network; additionally, some similarities with the German Green Party were identified. The latter’s focus is embedded in a single issue, meanwhile the 5SM’s determination goes beyond this. The moralization of politics, however, seems much more challenging as it endorsed the concept of anti-politics that is quite a characteristic of to the populist parties. People have to take back the management of the institutions, to cure democracy and to gain their dignity. Therefore, a shift should occur from the state institutions to the civil society, which according to Katz and Mair stimulates the ‘party on the ground’. This new way of doing politics will be achieved - according to the movement - through a class action, which is going to reflect higher rates of transparency of the institutions, an increase of citizens’ participation in reducing privileges as well as in diminishing the distance between people and their representatives. Such ‘participatory democracy’ is perceived as crucial as it will ultimately provide better quality results. Bobbio states that participatory democracy skips the traditional representative mechanisms and concentrates more on all-encompassing forms of citizens’ participation.

Representing Grillo’s political language through a ‘word cloud’ (Fig. 1), a strong prominence can be easily noticed in the usage of the terms: web, internet democracy and information.

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41 Salvati, “I Rischi di Semplificazione”, op.cit.
42 Corbetta & Gualmini, op.cit., p. 150.
44 Biorcio & Natale, op.cit., p. 49.
Indeed, the web is being perceived as the most democratic instrument that allows fulfilling various functions, such as: supervision, management or assessment of activities carried out by a variety of field actors. According to the 5SM’s philosophy, when combined with the opportunities offered by the web participatory democracy turns into an effective ‘hyper-democracy’ where the citizen is converted into the nucleus of the system. Grillo’s speeches often make reference to “a version of the past that celebrates a hypothetical, uncomplicated and non-political territory of the imagination”, and it is because of the illusion of such ‘place’ that the 5SM manages to envisage its values.

Grillo suggests straightforwardly an expansion of social solidarity that is achievable by means of citizenship basic income distribution along with comprehensive measures devoted to small and medium enterprises. Some of the reforms promoted by the 5SM advocate for an effective and constructive change in the current national debate, such as: fight against corruption, a much more efficient tax collection, respect for higher environmental protection standards or the implementation of real measures that aim at expanding Internet access nationally. Despite the fact that these measures in theory would enhance a positive growth trend, the extent to which Grillo propels for them is assessed as “protectionist, anti-growth and anti-capitalist to justify markets’ alarm”.

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48 Taggart, “Populism has the potential”, op.cit.
50 “Ungovernability wins”, op.cit.
In this “new form of politics” internet is used as a pioneering communication instrument to directly consult the constituency.\(^{51}\) According to Demos think-tank, Grillo “has [had the ability to] combine medium and message [in order] to create a genuinely novel type of movement”.\(^{52}\) Indeed, Grillo conducted a pretty determined national campaign in comparison with his adversaries, aiming at offering the usual abstainers a ‘place where to seek refuge’. The online persuasion strategy led to an electoral campaign 2.0, where the prompt bottom-up mobilization drove the collective action.\(^{53}\) This web-based electoral communication consented quicker and cost-effective actions, which reached instantaneously a wide range of the national electorate. On the other hand, according to Casamassima, this perseverance of appealing continuously to the ‘people of the web’ turns into a mystification, since the citizens make use of the web in the same way as they read newspaper or watch television.\(^{54}\) Furthermore, in his blog Grillo never answers his followers comments, thus converting the web into a unidirectional instrument the same as the ‘blamed’ television broadcasters.

In any case, taking into consideration a broadly-shared dissatisfaction - along with the derisory attempts of the political elites to address the economic crisis, the ‘protest votes’ were the only available instrument for the citizens to express their disenchantment whilst somehow being aware of the fact that “the fringe groups are unlikely to govern better”.\(^{55}\) Referring to The Economist, the Italians’ votes for this mass movement manifested their wish to say “Basta!”; a protesting emblem with an intention to stop the “sleaze, complacency and lack of opportunity in an arthritic society” and at that moment in time the Five Star Movement was the only available chance that represented and provided an alternative for the Italians.\(^{56}\)

Nowadays, the overall condemnation for the populism overtaking in the Italian parliament is attained through a general and repeated blame to the Italian political elite – sealed in its own circle of declarations and in the “powerlessness of its fake power” – unable “to realize the momentum when to stand by its own fellow citizens”;\(^{57}\) furthermore, the left-wing missed the opportunity to transform itself and to offer an alternative in the Italian political scene.\(^{58}\) In addition, the overall

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) Dolfo, “Il 5SM è un Partito”, op.cit.
\(^{56}\) “Ungovernability wins”, op.cit.
process took advantage of the citizens’ transference of ‘politics’ with the ‘political parties’. Then again, such performance revealed an insufficient understanding of the political machinery and their inadequate leadership competences.

The current domestic vicious circle mirrored itself implicitly in the inaccurate run of the European politics, leading hence to an underestimation of the “euro crisis rational” along with disfiguration of the Italian foreign policy in simple “running of the daily affairs”. In conclusion, the inadequate foreign policy - under the pressure of an electoral campaign as well as of the “purposelessness of the political elite” – defined once more an “Italian issue” within the European family.

**5SM: In Europe for Italy!**

As an irony of fate, the highly debated 2014 European elections coincide with 1914’s start of the First World War. A hundred years later, Europe still experiences thought-provoking times, dominated by a sort of European fatigue, Euro-scepticism and frustration. Asserting the latest eurobarometer polls, the trust of the European citizens in EU is equal to 42 per cent, whereas the trust in their national governments equals only 28 per cent. When this mistrust is associated to growing unemployment rates, austerity measures and disillusion, a fertile ground sprouts for the upsurge of extremist movements.

19 over 28 EU Member States have been experiencing ultimately an increase of populist movements in their countries. It has been acknowledged that this endemic populism is a consequence of the citizens’ frustration against the continuous inefficiency of the public administration, austerity measures along with incessant squandering. The populist discourse nourishes the anti-politics system, leading to a decline of the policy-making process that turns into “an activity [which] further feeds distrust in the complexity of politics”. As stated by Dominique Reynié, the “European elections have traditionally favoured marginal parties, […] as they are characterized by proportional representation and high level of abstention”.

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60 E. Galli della Loggia, “Cio che il Centro non ha capito”, Corriere della Sera, 24 March 2013.
62 Ibid.
65 Salvati, “I Rischi di Semplificazione”, op.cit.
66 Taggart, “Populism has the potential”, op.cit.
In Italy, the Five Star Movement was initially envisioned as “quite volatile, connected to an exasperation, invective and anger state of mind”; its success was fuelled by the widely shared “spirit of protest” plus the “anti-all mood”.68 One of the cornerstones of the Movement’s electoral campaign was the referendum on the prospect for Italy to exit ‘if necessary’ from the Eurozone, and the re-appropriation of the monetary and fiscal policies. In their perception, the European integration process symbolizes a noble principle, which is currently deformed, due to “the annihilation of European politics, and their replacement by a banking union, [which] is not what the founding fathers wanted”.69 Grillo went even further, by stating that the bonds’ spread was a ‘hallucination’ of the banks speculation activity besides the fact that the financial markets are completely disconnected from the real economy.70 The intention to vote such kind of mass movement is a clear sign of ‘misalignment’ of the Italian electorate versus the current political system.71 Notwithstanding this national malaise, the Italians still consider the Union’s role as quite relevant in generating the expected shift at the domestic level – a “necessary evil”.72 Indeed, the absence of faith in the national elites persuades the Italians to perceive the European integration process as an antidote to the national pathologies.73

Howsoever, in the present multi-layered governance at the European level, the Italian populist eruption is not any longer a merely domestic issue. It becomes a ‘wake-up call’ for all the rest of the Union. Guy Verhofstadt immediately acknowledged that the EU leaders had to pay attention to such Italian experience, since the budgetary discipline is a must, and unfortunately it is not a sufficient remedy to the financial crisis.74

Once in Parliament, Grillo declared that the Five Star Movement’s intention was to expand, as their ultimate objective is the European Parliament, since “there is a similar need there as, in Italy and because if [they] find some support in Europe, the change will be far-reaching”.75 In the 5SM’s covenant ‘Seven Points for Europe’, Grillo compares the current European Parliament to a Grand Hotel, whose members never discuss about Europe, but only about euros.76 He brings forward the

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68 Battista, op.cit.
71 Corbetta & Gualmini, op.cit., p. 11.
76 Il blog di Beppe Grillo, “L’Europa così Vicina, così Lontana”.

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idea of constructing a European Union which “can explain itself to the citizens”. Albeit, in his opinion the Movement “has everyone against”, they will manage to review the Union’s rules, as they “don’t like Europe as it is”. As the 5SM is a “movement of ideas, not of ideologies”, it will fit “neither right nor left, but above (and beyond)”.

To these populist promises, the Italian president Napolitano advised the country against the propagation of “destructive tendencies towards politics and the public debate [which may cause] the break-up of social cohesion and the institutional fabric”. Whereas premier Letta notified the imminent risk of achieving the “most anti-European parliament in history”. The expansion of populist parties like the French National Front or the 5SM would constitute the “most dangerous phenomenon” in Europe. The deputy director of the European People Party’s Center for European Studies Roland Freudenstein reconfirmed the idea that “there is reason to worry” about the escalation of populism in Europe but “no need to panic”. In his opinion, the difference among the populist parties and the traditional ones consists in the inherited characteristics of each, where the “populists are problem-seekers, not problem solvers”, whereas the European left wing – in D’Alema’s words – emphasized the fact that the traditional parties’ duty resides in providing “arguments and technical solutions to the problems raised by the Eurosceptics”.

According to the latest esteems, the overall number of the populist MEPs that are going to gain a seat in the next European elections is around 200. In other words, a potential emergence of a ‘collateral effect’ between the main political parties might take place within the Parliament, thus reducing the internal discourse into a mere confrontation of pro- versus anti-European promoters. This potential scenario certainly would not be beneficial to the European democracy. However, as Taggart argues, “populism can have significant negative effects on representative politics [and] the demonization of populist parties is self-defeating”. The risk that this European electoral campaign develops into a battle among Europhiles and Europhobes undoubtedly would be

77 Sansa & Liuzzi, op.cit.
78 G. Segreti, “Italy’s Beppe Grillo vows to shake up Europe in May Elections”, Financial Times, 1 January 2014.
81 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 “EU Parties vow to tackle Far-Right but see ‘No Reason to Panic’”, Euractiv, 28 November 2013.
85 Ibid.
86 Bertoncini & Kreilinger, op.cit., p. 22.
87 Ibid.
88 Taggart, “Populism has the potential”, op.cit.
beneficial for the latters.\textsuperscript{89} This is strictly link to the circumstance that the Europhobes take advantage both from blaming Brussels bureaucracy and from the inadequate capacity of the Union to have differently addressed the financial crisis.\textsuperscript{90} Anyhow, if the Europhobes achieve a considerable Parliament’s share in the forthcoming elections – being a heterogeneous group which sometimes has internal contrasting positions,\textsuperscript{91} – their incidence in the decision-making process would be somewhat limited and of debilitating nature, not more than that.\textsuperscript{92}

Referring to the latest Demos’ opinion poll in Italy, the Five Star Movement has an overall national support of around 21\%.\textsuperscript{93} As demonstrated in the table above, in almost a year time from the Italian parliamentarian elections, the 5SM has lost around 4\% points, establishing itself to a 21\% share. The latest esteems foresee an overall gain of 15 to 20 members for the Movement, over a total of 73 members of the European Parliament (MEP) that are going to be elected in Italy.\textsuperscript{94} Taking into consideration the \textit{sui generis} nature of the Movement, it is difficult to categorize its association to any political group.

\begin{longtable}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\multicolumn{7}{|c|}{Electoral Survey} \\
\hline
\hline
Democratic Party & 34.2 & 29.1 & 32.2 & 28.5 & 25.4 \\
\hline
Left Ecology Freedom & 3.5 & 4.0 & 3.8 & 4.8 & 3.2 \\
\hline
New Center-Right & 6.2 & 5.3 & 20.0 & 26.2 & 21.6 \\
\hline
Forza Italia & 21.9 & 20.8 & & & \\
\hline
Five Star Movement & 21.2 & 21.4 & 20.9 & 20.9 & 25.6 \\
\hline
Northern League & 3.2 & 4.1 & 4.5 & 3.1 & 4.1 \\
\hline
Others & 9.8 & 15.3 & 18.6 & 16.5 & 20.1 \\
\hline
Total & 100 & 100 & 100 & 100 & 100 \\
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\end{longtable}

\textit{Source:} Survey Demos & Pi, January 2014 (1919 cases)

\textsuperscript{89} Quoted in “EU parties vow” \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{90} Salles, \textit{op.cit.}
It is virtually impossible for Grillo to join the radical positions of the pan-European alliance of far-right parties, since the Movement differs either from the French National Front or the Dutch Freedom Party platform on a crucial issue such like the anti-immigration policy. Moreover, Le Pen declared that Grillo has some difficulties in providing a coherent and global position on European affairs, as his Movement is still lacking a real project on this issue.95 Likewise, as the 5SM promotes the ‘green ideology’, suppositions have been made about the potential cohesion with the Greens as a single political group running for May 2014. Since the forecasts predict for the Greens a loss of 2%, it is estimated a total number of 38 MEPs in the next European Parliament formation.96 If the Movement joins the Greens, rationally there will be a Five Star’s overpower, and for that reason probable leadership conflicts within the political group. Meanwhile, referring the parallelism between the Five Star Movement and the German Pirate Party, similar political demands besides the usage of the social media tools have been engaged as to achieve social impact.97 The primary difference between these two Internet-based movements concerns the absence of a strong leadership and continuous struggling taking place at the internal level of the Pirate Party. Moreover, the achieved domestic support by the Five Star Movement is not expected to be attained by the Pirate Party in the near future.

So far, the Five Star Movement will run to the European elections alone - under the “Non-Attached MEPs” label - and its political connotation may be evaluated in the aftermath of the elections. The Five Star slogan will be: “In Europe for Italy!” and Grillo has already declared that his next electoral comitia tour will be called: “Te la do io l’Europa!”98 Obviously, emphasis will be given to the promotion of the Movement’s “Seven Points for Europe” among which, one issue concerns the agricultural policy and the rest is dedicated to the economic and financial issues. In fact, there exists a rooted contradiction in the covenant and this is easily noticeable while referring to priority one: the referendum on euro, or priority two: the abolition of the fiscal compact against the introduction of the Eurobonds (priority three).

In brief, the next European election round presents several challenges to the well-functioning of the EU institutions. Being aware of the fact that the populist movements are taking advantage of the current economic situation in order to reach the European Parliament, it is on the hands of the traditional political parties to demonstrate once more the benefits of keeping ‘healthy’ the Union along with the provision of potential solutions to the present problems. As Barroso stated lately in

96 Bertoncini & Kreilinger, op.cit., p. 16.
97 J. Bartlett et al., op.cit., p. 11.
98 “I’ll give you Europe!”
Milan, the Union should become once more an “object of desire” and the Erasmus generation has the “duty and privilege to stand up for Europe”.99

**Final Remarks**

The Five Star Movement managed to conquer the Italian political scene with its unconventional way of doing politics, an intertwining of traditional populist comitia and internet-based mass movement. Once the 5SM became the real winner of the national elections of 2013, the attention shifted to the conquest of the European election of May 2014, achievable through the usage of same direct communication to the citizens and identical creation of grassroots cells in other countries like Spain or Romania.100

In fact, this ‘digital populism’ that characterizes the movement relies on the usage of online mobilization platforms aiming at promoting better welfare conditions, whilst eradicating the current political caste and achieving participatory democracy where the citizen is the core of the ‘new system’. Indeed, Grillo conducted a pretty determined national campaign in comparison to his adversaries, aiming at offering to usual abstainers a ‘place where to seek refuge’.

While its outbreak at the domestic level can be described as a consequence of the current failure of the political parties system in Italy and the failed efficiency of the imposed austerity measures, the victory is much more unpredictable at the European level. Obviously, the strategy of the small steps is going to be engaged even in this electoral round. As specified in the covenant “Seven Points for Europe”, the creation of a Mediterranean alliance is the first step towards a potential substantial expansion at the European plane.

On the one hand, the Movement offers a lame national political agenda which in turn consents the participation of a heterogeneous electorate. While on the other, the European agenda is somehow full of contradictions - for instance, the referendum on the permanence in the euro zone versus the introduction of the Eurobonds - and regionalist designs such as the establishment of a Mediterranean alliance versus the European Union.

The non-identification of the movement with a specific political fraction, aims at conveying its distinctive resilient nature – a grass-roots protest movement that is radically different from the ‘others’. The success lies precisely on this distinction along with citizens’ shared disillusionment, frustration and mistrust at the domestic political elite. Moreover, the moralization of politics is

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100 Sansa & Liuzzi, *op.cit.*
accompanied with the typical populist discourse on the right of the citizens to take back the management of the institutions, to cure democracy and to gain their dignity.

Howsoever, in the present multi-layered governance the Italian populist eruption became an additional ‘wake-up call’ for the rest of the Union. The number of populist parties that are going to participate at the European elections this year is rather high. Despite the fact that the 5SM is going to run at the elections under the “Non-Attached MEPs” label, certainly their emphasis will concern the expansion of the movement in other European countries that share the same vision on crucial issues, such as: the referendum on euro, the abolition of the fiscal compact or the introduction of the Eurobonds.

Being aware of the fact that the populist movements are taking advantage of the current economic situation in order to reach the European Parliament - and their presence can hamper the decision-making process - it is on the hands of the traditional European political groups to carry on a flexible and cooperative approach in order to provide efficient solutions to the current problems. The electoral campaign of the traditional parties should highlight the prospective measures that are going to be adopted at the European level, in order to promote growth and employment, rather than blaming the populists. The potential MEPs are advised to spend more time in the social media and try to interact with their electorate, since this is deemed as a further attempt to communicate with the citizens and to ‘hear their voice’.
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A brief overview of the Romanian case

Mihai Sebe¹

The present paper is a part of a broader European debate concerning the rise and risks of populism in the midst of a European Union tormented by an economic, social and intellectual crisis. I would like to present here a brief overview of the Romanian political landscape and the scars that populism left behind, from an historical point of view.

While analyzing the rise of populism in nowadays Romania, we must have in mind its particular set of characteristics, more precisely the fact that we are facing a resurrected political life, after the Communist “ice age,” which put a dramatic end to the debate between democracy and all types of authoritarianism, in terms of the Romanian national project.

The present paper is part of a broader European debate concerning the rise and risks of populism in the midst of a European Union tormented by an economic, social and intellectual crisis. In this paper I intend to present a brief overview of the Romanian political landscape and the scars that populism left behind, from a historical point of view. While analyzing the rise of populism in nowadays Romania, we must have in mind its particular set of characteristics, more precisely the fact that we are facing a resurrected political life – after the Communist “Ice Age,” – which put a dramatic end to the debate between democracy and all types of authoritarianism, in terms of the Romanian national project.

When looking for manifestations of populism in Europe, what is yet little known by the foreign audience is that we can find the roots of populism in interwar Romania as politicians and all walks of life debated, often with unwavering passion, the relation between Romania and the yet in nuce project of a European construction. Having to face continental projects such as Kudenhove-Kalergi PanEuropa and Aristide Briand’s Memorandum, populism started to rise, as some feared the total loss of independence.

The same fears would come back to life after the Revolution of 1989, as the old “demons” of the past would arise once more to confront the European project. Thus, in the context of a difficult political transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime, from centralized economy to free market, the political class would have a recourse to the decades-old arguments of the loss of sovereignty and the need of a “Romanian position,” different from the European integration.

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This research paper is divided into several chapters with an arboreal structure that help create a clear picture, for those unfamiliar with the Romanian political landscape, of the history and present life of populism.

I. What is populism and why do we must take it seriously into consideration? A short review of the term and its meanings in the last decades

Populism can be defined as an antagonistic political doctrine where we have two sides in an apparent irreconcilable conflict between the many, and yet weak, and the few but powerful – the mass versus the elite: “any of various, often anti-establishment or anti-intellectual political movements or philosophies that offer unorthodox solutions or policies and appeal to the common person rather than according with traditional party or partisan ideologies”\(^2\).

We have therefore a first working definition that would help us orientate our research on what this concept might be, as this sub-chapter looks at another difficult approach to today’s democratic politics, an approach that in nowadays troublesome world has become more and more common; populism.

There is an identity issue as the populists do not perceive themselves as such, as duly noted by the scholar Margaret Canovan in her 1981 work called *Populism*\(^3\), as those who can be fitted in this category often dismiss the term as not applying to them. Having a self-perception, and perhaps a self-delusion, of being “true democrats” that defend the interests that are being neglected of the common people, they create and accept a *modus vivendi* with nowadays accepted democratic practices and blend in the political landscape. The society assists to the rapid rise of the so-called “anti-politicians” from all walks of the political spectrum either right- or left-wing or centrists. This populism finds its manifestation for instance in the proposal of new referenda that address the basic feelings of the citizens, on controversial issues, as populists often adopt hard-core stances on seemingly outrageous issues.

Another manifestation that links to the referendum is by criticizing and often leading to the dramatic rejection of referenda initiated by the mainstream politicians that are presented to the people as having nothing to do with their day to day agenda. Today, populism appeals to people from all social classes, not just the poor and the uneducated that are discontent with politics and it often generates short-term bursts of political engagement, but often with no visible continuation

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other than the perturbation of the established order and the lack of viable, long-term solutions. It does not propose a viable and self-sustaining approach to day politics.

**Academic definitions**

While speaking about populism, one must take into consideration its multitude of academic definitions and the problems that this multitude implies. In the words of a classical work, written by the Romanian political scientist Ghiță Ionescu in collaboration with Ernest Gellner:

“There can, at present, be no doubt about the importance of populism. But no-one is quite clear just what it is. As a doctrine or as a movement, it is elusive and protean. It bobs up everywhere, but in many and contradictory shapes. Does it have any underlying unity? Or does one name cover a multitude of unconnected tendencies?”

Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner have provided us in their work *POPULISM. Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, published in 1969 with some of the first working definitions, although yet some imperfect ones in their attempt “to base an assessment of whether populism is a unitary concept, regardless of the variety of its incarnations, or whether it is a simply word wrongly used in completely heterogeneous contexts”.

Having its historical roots in the “imperial Russia and the late-nineteenth-century United States”, populism, according to Donald MacRae, “is not primarily a phenomenon of the main steam of European history. It is, however, compounded from elements of thoughts and modes of apprehending of classical and Western Europe”. We have therefore a dream of the past, based upon “the idea that once was a good, a sacred time […] It was a time of simple, spontaneous order”. This Golden Age is something to be desired upon and is the job of the populists to get the nation back then, when everything was simpler.

The difficulty to identify populism is increased by what Margaret Canovan notices in her 1999 article called *Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy*. She clearly states that populism is inextricably linked to democracy, being perceived “as a shadow cast by democracy itself” as, in Canovan’s own words, the “democracy as we know it has two faces a ‘redemptive’ and a ‘pragmatic’ face and that their coexistence is a constant spur to populist mobilization”.

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5 *Ibidem*, 1969, p. 3.
7 *Ibidem*, p. 155.
For her, democracy requires two types of making politics – one is pragmatic while the other is redemptive. The pragmatic type of making politics is mostly seen as the “management of violence” since “democracy is essentially a way of coping peacefully with conflicting interests and views under conditions of mass mobilization and mass communication”. We have therefore a type of conflict management that provides the necessary environment for ordinary people to live their lives and fulfill their aspirations, with a relative low expectancy regarding the government capabilities and a fair degree of non-confidence in the concentration of powers in a single hand.

The redemptive side implies a more passionate approach, since democracy can lead to a better society; it is “the promise of a better world through action by the sovereign people”. The people can take back the control over their destiny as we are dealing with politics of faith, the faith in a better tomorrow. Yet, those two sides of the democracy must coexist in order to prevent any wrongdoings. It is here that the danger lies, as accordingly to Gerry Stoker “populism feeds off the tensions between these two understandings of democracy”.

It is an idea that can be also be found in the now famous work of William Riker, *Liberalism against Populism*. Riker contradicts “the idea that democracy can find expression through the establishment of the popular will”. He speaks there about the so-called “paradox of voting” meaning “the coexistence of coherent individual valuations and a collectively incoherent choice by majority rule. In an election with three or more alternatives (candidates, motions, etc.) and three or more voters, it may happen that when the alternatives are placed against each other in a series of paired comparisons, no alternative emerges victorious over each of the other: Voting fails to produce a clear-cut winner.”.

Saying that, and taking into consideration Riker’s arguments upon the existence of individualities of voters, that cannot be shaped into a coherent choice, and the risks of manipulation of voters, one can say that “populist democracy is an inferior way of deciding anything” the solution being the promotion of “a limited government and as much protection of people’s interests against government as possible through a liberal constitution that defends the citizens’ freedoms”.

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9 This section draws on Margaret CANOVAN “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy” in *Political Studies* (1999), XLVII, pp. 9-16.
10 Ibidem, p. 10.
The literature on populism is a vast one and for the limited purposes of this paper I have reviewed some just a minor fraction of it in order to offer to a general audience the basic tools for understanding this concept and its importance for the work in case. As we can see, populism is above all about style, a style of making politics orientated toward acquiring and maintaining influence within a society while using the tools of democracy.

II. Populism and its beginnings – how interwar Romania planted the seeds of today populism

Trying to understand nowadays Romania and its politics it is an endeavor that cannot ignore the intense political activity of the interwar period and its peculiarities as its off-chart movements (such as peasantism or extremist moves) are inseparable from the social and civic history of the Romanian society. The communist dictatorship, in some ways, only froze some of the lingering conflicts that re-appears after the 1989 movements.

The political emergence of new actors

The creation of Greater Romania in late 1918 after the end of the First World War brought with it the agrarian reform and the electoral suffrage that brought to “political life” the peasants and the peasant parties of the country. The Great War, through the way it changed the life of the entire society, brought to the stage new social classes previously excluded. The peasants who upheld most of the war effort has decided to gain a more active role in the state politics by demanding radical social and political reforms. The hardships of war, as well as the lack of preparation of the Romanian society for the incoming war, were forgotten in the new political climate dominated by the Bolshevik revolution and the crumbling of Central Europe empires.

The most important aspect was, according to the German historian Armin Heinen, the emergence of the peasants as a distinct political force. Heinen perceives a growing role for the

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victorious soldiers who have found their civic conscience as well as the awareness of their importance – the Primum movens of change in interwar Romania. “The soldiers who took part in the First World War returned with a new self-esteem conscience from the trenches. They were no longer the obedient labor force, ‘political working beasts used for votes’, but independent peasants, who had proved in the war that the welfare and the sufferance’s of the nation depend on them. They demanded freedom, social justice and the elimination of ‘politicking’.”

The 1921 Agrarian reform, as well as the universal suffrage, leads to a new political dynamics orientated toward the contestation of ancient elites. We will have other the “immediate” consequences of the Great War: the creation of Greater Romania, redesigned frontiers and social and political reforms, two “secondary” consequences but with a great impact on later politics.

“We have to add to this, as two distinct consequences, the emergence of a diffuse contestation of traditional elites belonging to the pre-1914 world, as well as the 1918 emergence – for the first time in the Romanian politics – of the ‘myth of the savior’ through the figure of the ‘general of the peace’, Alexandru Averescu – the starting point of a series of ‘saviours’ – either individuals or political parties – that will find its peak in 1940 with the figure of another general, Ion Antonescu.”

The pre-Great War parties, the Conservative Party and the National Liberal Party had a conflicting fate in this new landscape, as the Conservative Party lost its landlords base as a direct consequence of the agrarian reform, and it disappeared in 1925. As for the National Liberal Party, it found new opportunities in the emerging market economy of interwar Romania having reached its peak in the 1920’s and early 1930’s.

Yet one of the most important events on the political arena would be the emergence of one-person political movements. The first of these charismatic “saviors” would be the famous war general, and later on marshal, Alexandru Averescu, who founded the League of People on 3/6 April 1918, which turned into the People’s Party on 17 April 1920, a political movement “which wanted to break the bipolar system liberal-conservative that has dominated the Romanian political stage for

half a century”. It was the centuries-old blame game, as even during the war general Averescu started building his political image by attacking the “others”, the pre-war political class, by blaming them for the ill-prepared war\textsuperscript{21}.

We have to add also the Peasant Party founded by Ion Mihalache in December 1918, who based itself on the peasant class by claiming the importance of the development of agriculture as well as of the small agricultural property, as basis for the economic development. Due to its conflict with the mainstream National Liberal Party, in 1926, the Peasant Party fusioned with the National Party of Iuliu Maniu, a Transylvanian-based party, to form the National Peasant Party.

**Politics at the extremes – far-left and far-right movements**

Yet, the real winners of those changes would be the totalitarian movements that would see a rise in the number of supporters and a rise of their influence in society. In the aftermath of the Russian revolution, in November 1918, the Social Democrat Party would change its name into the Socialist Party only to change it once more in the Romanian Communist Party in May 1921, while adhering to the 3rd International. Its internationalist politics as well as its subordination to Moscow made it a marginal party during the interwar period.

A more powerful treat would be for the Romanian democracy the rise of the far-right parties which used the existing tensions to get to power. Having presented themselves as the “true” opposition to left-wing party, as well as the defenders of the Romanians against the claims of the national minorities, while also taking advantage of the flaws of the democratic system currently in place, and of the generation conflict,\textsuperscript{22} the far-right movement built a strong support base.

For researchers such as Irina Livezeanu, granting civil right to the Jewish minority alongside the agrarian reform led to the replacement of the old social problem, fuelled by the lack of land property for countless peasant family in the rural area, by a so-called “national problem”, an identity issue for the newly expanded state.

“The unification, the land and the electoral reforms, with which it coincided, had unexpected effects on the social and educational structures of all the newly united territories. The Regat leadership formulated policies to unify the educational systems of the four Romanian provinces which combined traditional patterns of the Old Kingdom with changes brought by expansion. Ideologically, the Regat adjusted to becoming the core of a larger and more multi-ethnic state in part by turning to integral nationalism and an anti-Semitism that built on an older anti-

\textsuperscript{21} Ibidem, p. 248, ["qui entend rompre avec le système bipolaire libéraux – conservateurs qui dominait la politique roumaine depuis un demi-siècle"].

\textsuperscript{22} For further references see Ioan SCURTU (coordinator), *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România. Origini, manifestări, evoluție 1919 – 1927*, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 126 – 134.
Jewish tradition, and that was nourished after 1918 by the insecurities of expansion and ethnic dilution.  

In this climate of insecurity the one who will affirm himself as the leader of the far-right would be a Iasi University student, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu who in early 1920’s will start protesting and disrupting the university courses, while starting to attack his Jewish colleagues, seen as “responsible” for the social issues that followed the aftermath of the Great War. In January 1922, together with a University professor, Alexandru C. Cuza, he founded the National Christian Union that revamped itself as the League for the National Christian Defence on 23 March 1923. The internal divergence between the two, forced Corneliu Zelea Codreanu to found his own organization – the Archangel Michael League (1927), just to found its own military arm, the Iron Guard, at a later time (1930).

The great cultural debate – between “integration into Europe” and the dream of “tradition”

The great cultural debates of the 1920s would generate two major cultural camps, each with its own vision regarding Romanian development, a vision that would transcend communism in order to reappear in nowadays political landscape. On the one side where the so-called Europeanists who “treated Romania as a component part of Europe and insisted that it does not have a choice, that it had to follow the path of social and economic development, already taken by the urbanized and industrialized West”. The opposing side consisted of the so-called Traditionalists who “underlined the agrarian traits of Romania and search development models based upon it unique social and cultural heritage.”

For the Europeanists, such as Eugen Lovinescu, the main cause of the development of modern Romania is the exchange of ideas with the West – realizing their delay, when compared to the West, the local political elites try to imitate the western model in a process he called “synchronism”. “Yet,” he insisted, “synchronism is more than mere imitation; it was also integration.” He was convinced that “the entire Europe became more united as a result of the development of modern means of communication, underlining that the most diverse societies became homogenous faster than ever”.

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24 Mihai BĂRBULESCU, Dennis DELETANT, Keith HITCHINS, Serban PAPACOSTEA, Pompiliu TEODOR, Istoria României, Corint, Bucharest, 2005, p. 347, [„tratau România ca parte componentă a Europei și insistau că ea nu avea de ales, că trebuia să urmeze calea dezvoltării economice și sociale, bătută deja de Occidentul urbanizat și industrializat”, „subliniau caracterul agrar al României și căuta modele de dezvoltare bazate pe moștenirea sa socială și cultural unică”].
25 Ibidem, p. 348, [„Dar, insista el, sincronismul nu insemina doar imitare; el era, de asemenea, integrare. Era convins că întreaga Europă devenea tot mai unită ca urmare a dezvoltării mijloacelor moderne de comunicație, subliniind că societățile cele mai diverse deveneau omogene mai repede ca oricând”].
On the opposite side, there are those who opposed this process of transformation. Attached to the rural traditions of the past, they opposed any western political, cultural and institutional imports, which they believed not to be appropriate for the local cultural heritage. Called either “neo-nationalists” or “neo-traditionalists”, they try to find their ideological roots in “tradition”, an idealised version of the past where the peasants held all the wisdom necessary to have a better society, without any modern influence.

As the First World War ended the new world that was born would be influenced by the “14 Points” stated by the American president Woodrow Wilson in January 1918, which stipulated at the 14th point the creation of “A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike”. A new world was desired, a world of laws and principles. And in this new world the European Union projects came to life.

One such project was Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi’s *Pan-Europa*, which appeared in 1923. It was a challenge addressed to the European élites of that time, implicitly the Romanian ones. Having in mind the results of the First World War, Coudenhove-Kalergi spoke about the end of Europe’s domination: “the European world hegemony is irrevocably lost”. The only solution would consist in the union of the European sates into a federation called *Pan-Europa* that would “contain the totality of the democratic and partially democratic states of continental Europe”, a political definition that excluded Russia and Turkey, including, in exchange, Iceland.

In the same line of thought, the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand would elaborate *The Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union* in May 1930 that proposed a federal Europe, a strong federation with a strong political integration. The new European Union would to be governed by a political body, the “European conference” composed of representatives of the national governments, with a rotating presidency. The executive body was

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26 The German historian Armin Heinen uses this denomination as he sees in their critics and in their doctrine “the support of a deeply pessimistic cultural critic”, Armin HEINEN, *Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail”. Mişcare socială şi organizaţie politică. O contribuţie la problema fascismului internaţional*, translated into Romanian by Cornelia and Delia E Gian, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1999, p. 162, [„suportul unei critici culturale profund pesimiste”].

27 The Romanian historian Florin Țurcanu uses this term as he perceives them as being the result of "the redefinition of the Romanian nationalism in the aftermath of the First World War". See Florin ȚURCANU, "Neo-traditionalism et politique dans la Roumanie des années '20", *Studia Politica*, volume I, no. 3, 2001, p. 679, [« rédéfinition du nationalisme roumain des le lendemain de la Grande Guerre »].


30 Ibidem, p. 35, [„cuprinde totalitatea statelor democratice şi parţial democratice ale Europei continentale”].

called the European Committee assisted by a secretarial body. The *Memorandum* then detailed a series of organizational principles that would regulate the day to day activities.

This idea received a mixed appreciation in Romania of then that went from a positive tone to a very critical attitude. From the point of view of our paper of interest reception is the critical, as the anti-European arguments would transgress the years and would appear in the populist speech after 1989.

From the far right point of view, this supranational project was a menace for the newly created Greater Romania, as it sought to put an end to its independence. We were dealing, according to them, with a subversive movement, where the “financial” world would be promoting the European unity for purely mercantile reasons. “The true and only creators of PanEuropa are the bankers and they alone”. The Great Depression is seen as the instrument used by the bankers to expand their global domination. “Throughout the New-York stock exchange crash, the American bankers have succeeded in taking the movable properties out of the hands of the American people in order to have a free hand”\(^{32}\).

We are dealing here with a feeling of abandon and isolation that can be perceived also with nowadays populists. There is the intense fear that once more Romania would be left aside the decision-making process and that the others would decide for us. It is an intense feeling of lack of perspectives, of lack of promises for a better future. Speaking about the executive body envisaged by Aristide Briand, the Romanian critics would say that: “It must be noticed that this government or permanent political committee – as it has been called – because it is made up of a certain number of members, definitely our country will not be represented”\(^{33}\).

We see here the main lines of attack – for instance centralism, then perceived as a “fundamental” value, is affected by the talks on regionalization. The national history and the religion of the country are also under threat as they can represent an obstacle for the new European construction.

There is also the “colonization” theme, where the foreigners would come and take everything from the natives that would become slaves for the foreign capital. “Through the free movement of goods and capitals, and also by abolishing passports, all the rest that we still have, our


\(^{33}\) N. CASIAN, *România și Statele-Unite ale Europei. Ce se pregătește Neamului și Statului nostru național prin înfiptuirea acestei confederații*, Reforma Socială, 1931, p. 30, [„Trebuie de remarcat faptul că acest guvern sau comitet politic permanent – după cum i-se mai zice – nefiind format decât dintr-un anumit număr de membri, cu siguranță că țara noastră nu va fi reprezentată”].
III. The European elections in Romania. Local politics vs. European issues

Re-emergence of multi-party system in contemporary Romania. Brief overview

The 1989 Revolution brought back to Romania the political pluralism as well as the creation of a party system characterized in the early 1990’s by the strong domination of the National Salvation Front (created in the early 1990 and which later on would produce two offspring’s the current Democrat Liberal Party and the Social Democrat Party). Added to this there is the resurgence of the interwar parties such as the National Peasant Party (nowadays without Parliamentarian representation) and the National Liberal Party (currently in power).

As a number of important papers have been dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the Romanian political parties, that doesn’t constitute the subject of this paper, two paradoxes have emerged that partially explain the results and the processes of the European Parliament elections in Romania.

Thus a first paradox “although the parties have played a significative role in the regime’s processes of change and are the actors that control the Romanian political life […] the population trust in them is low”35. Add to this a second paradox that, during the two decades of democracy, “the structure of the Parliament and of the Government have been surprisingly similar”36.

Populism in the region after 1989. General traits

The difficulties to define populism have become evident while we were analyzing the situation in post-communist Romania as well as in the entire Central and Eastern Europe. Having suffered from a “conceptual stretching”37, that has seen the term applied indiscriminately to the political movements of the region we are now faced with the difficulty to correctly identify its recipient. A way to solve this dilemma would be to use Andrew Janos distinction between

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34 Ibidem, p. 44, [„Prin libera circulare a bunurilor şi a capitalurilor, precum şi prin desfiinţarea paşapoartelor, tot ce bruma ne-a mai rămas, întregul nostru patrimoniu naţional, va intra în mâinile străinilor care vor veni să ne civilizeze şi să ne colonizeze”].
36 Ibidem, p. 23, [“structura legislativului şi guvernului a fost surprinzător de similară”].
37 For further information regarding this idea of over expanding a concept please read more in Giovanni SARTORI “Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics”, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 64, No. 4. (December 1970), pp. 1033-1053 available online at http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/people/knicolaidis/sartori.pdf Last visited on January 27th 2014.
“populism” and “neo-populism”, where neo-populism is built as a counter-reaction to globalism and the “Other”, a menacing others. Michael Shafir partially shares this idea while adding an extra-element, namely Giovanni Sartori’s distinction between “systemic politics” and “anti-systemic politics”.

In this context that we should consider Jacques Rupnik’s analysis regarding the rise of Populism in Eastern Central Europe. While analyzing the case of Eastern Central Europe he notices a return of the populism, as an accompanying partner of mainstream politicians. He carefully draws a series of traits of this current, which can be applied to all of the countries of this region, including Romania, as we are to see below.

First of all, Rupnik notices what can be called a “democratic fatigue” driven by the increasingly low confidence in the values and virtues of democracy: “Democracy today has no rivals but is losing supporters. Populist movements, to some extent, express that ambivalence and discontent”.

Secondly, the populist movements tend to be anti-liberal, both regarding the day to day life and the attitude toward economy. “They are not anti-democratic (indeed they claim to be the ‘true voice of the people’ and keep demanding new elections or referenda) but anti-liberal. If democracy means popular legitimacy and constitutionalism (the separation of powers), then the populists accept the former and reject the latter (i.e. the idea that constitutional norms and representative democracy have primacy over values and ‘legitimate’ popular grievances)”. Moreover the populists tend to favor polarization as in we do not have a “debate” but a “conflict” and you are facing enemies and not competitors.

In the third place, we tend to have an open conflict with the established elites and with what can be perceived as a common consensus – the European Union and NATO membership who were pivotal trough the 1990s and 2000s. “The populist challenge to the modernizing political and technocratic elite that has prevailed in the 1990s comes in two guises: as an anti-corruption drive, on the one hand, and as ‘de-communization’ on the other.”

Finally, we can add an increasing anti-European feeling: “reluctance or outright opposition towards European integration” that puts an additional stress upon the European idea. “Tired of being the European pupils, the populist nationalists have been longing to reveal at last the kind of

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38 For further reading please see Andrew C. JANOS, “Continuity and Change in Eastern Europe: Strategies of Post-communist Politics”, East European Politics & Societies, December 1993 8: 1-31
Europe they have in mind: a ‘Europe of sovereign nation-states’, a ‘Christian Europe’ opposed to the materialist, decadent, permissive, supra-national one.”

When “party” becomes a “multitude”

According to Michael Shafir, we have witnessed since 2007 to an inclusive public speech that tends to replace the concept of “party” with another one, something more inclusive “through the syntagms of ‘movement’ or at least ‘union’ of forces of different ideological visions but united by the same social and national goals”.

One such sample of “systemic” speech, that Shafir and anyone paying notice to the press articles of the time can observe, can be found in the articles of, for instance, Traian Ungureanu, a Romanian MEP, PPE and an allied of the current president Traian Băsescu, who in 2007, an European electoral year, spoke about the fight with the system, after the referendum. On an almost biblical tone he spoke about the struggle of the president against the old system in eschatological terms. He clearly states the two opposing sides: the modern ones and the rest (communists, mobsters, etc.) that oppose progress.

“The pro-Băsescu electorate – anti-system – contains sympathizers of all the parties and diverse generations, from the frustrated veteran to the young invaders of the political scene. They have all left the party assignments and have imposed a new objective, civil and difficult: the modernization, meaning the improvement of the governance system”.

And what this new generation requires? He also offers the solution. “The solution: new must be met by new. The society can respond to a fresh project, under the guarantees of Traian Băsescu: an ample political movement, with a distinct name and a credible component.”

This idea will reverberate in the works of other assistants and supporters of the president as they have spoken in their press articles about a democracy without parties and a democracy without opposition. Thus Cătălin Avramescu spoke about the necessity to eliminate the political parties

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42 Ibidem.

43 Michael SHAFIR, “Neopopulismul în zodia postcomunismului” in Sergiu GHERGHINA, Sergiu MIŞCOIU, Sorina SOARE (editors), Populismul contemporan, Institutul European, Iași, 2011, p. 418, [“prin sintagma de “mișcare” sau cel puțin “uniune” a forțelor de diferite viziuni ideologice, dar unificate de aceleași țeluri sociale și naționale”]. Michael Shafir analysis represents an excellent starting point for the analysis of the Romanian post-communism and the effects on populism on it.


from the democratic game: “parties should be completely eliminated as institutions of power”. A “non-party democracy” is in his opinion the best solution for Romania: “because in this country, the parties, practically without any exception have become an impediment to democracy. Because our current system is designed to empower the party oligarchy and not the citizens”\textsuperscript{46}.

And if we do not need parties in order to be a democracy why do we need opposition at all? This is the next logical step the author is doing by suggesting that “modern democracy doesn’t necessary supposes the presence of a parliamentarian opposition”. He states that what Romania would need is not a series of strong opposition parties but only one party government that would apply the principles of good governance not having to take into account other smaller parties’ complaints and demands\textsuperscript{47}.

Moreover he proves also to be reluctant to Romania’s EU accession as he believed that we should follow the Northern Europe model – mainly those countries who are not members of the EU, as the EU membership would sharply affect our competitiveness and economic efficiency. “A rigorous policy of tax reduction and unification at an absolute minimum is effectively impossible in the circumstances of Romania’s membership to a bureaucratic block dominated by socialists”\textsuperscript{48}.

2007 – First European Parliament elections. When local issues overcome European themes

The year of the first European election in Romania was a year of stark contrasts where the internal disputes held the front page of the newspapers whilst the European topics were sidelined at best. Thus a major topic that captured the internal attention was the first suspension of the Romanian President by the Parliament and the impeachment referendum that took place in May 2007. This event generated a public outcry with a series of high-profile Romanian intellectuals signing a common statement for the defense of the rule of law claiming “the tendency of some authorities to avoid or violate the principles and the practices of the state of law and of democracy”\textsuperscript{49}.

\textsuperscript{46} Cătălin AVRAMESCU, “Democrație fără partide”, \textit{Bursa}, November 6th 2007, available online at \url{http://www.bursa.ro/s=editorial&articol=18850.html} Last visited on January 27th 2014 [”partidele ar trebui eliminate complet ca instituții ale puterii. […] : pentru că în această țară, partidele, practic fără excepție, au devenit mai degrabă o piedică în calea democrației. Pentru că sistemul nostru actual e gândit pentru a da puzeri oligarhiei de partid, nu cetățenilor.”].

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Idem}, “Democrație fără opoziție”, \textit{Bursa}, December 12th 2007 available online at \url{http://www.bursa.ro/democratic-fara-opozitie-20566&s=editorial&articol=20566&editie_precedenta=2007-12-17.html} Last visited on January 27th 2014 [”democrația modernă nu presupune neapărat prezența unei opoziții parlamentare.”].

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Idem}, “Pestele nostru”, \textit{9AM News}, January 10\textsuperscript{th} 2007, available online at \url{http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/2007-01-10/pestele-nostru.html} Last visited on January 27th 2014 [”O politică riguroasă de reducere și unificare a impozitelor la un minim absolut e efectiv imposibilă în condițiile apartenenței României la un bloc birocratic, dominat de socialiști.”].

\textsuperscript{49} ”Apel pentru respectarea statului de drept și a democrației”, \textit{Hotnews}, May 7th 2007 available online at \url{http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-archiva-1082205-plesu-liiceanu-apel-pentru-respectarea-statului-drept-}
This political crisis echoed at the European level as the operational capabilities of the Romanian authorities seemed to be affected as regards the reform of the state while also generating a supplementary pressure as regards the European Commission perceptions upon the judicial sector reforms and the fight against corruption.

The officials’ declarations were almost unanimously speaking about the need to progress upon the reforms path. European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso called for the crisis to "be solved by the Romanian institutions in full respect of the democratic and constitutional principles as soon as possible", stating that: "Romania knows it must go on with the reforms needed, namely the judicial reform and fight against corruption that were a commitment of Romania when it joined the European Union."\(^{50}\)

After the Referendum the same European official spoke about the need of progress: “I hope that this outcome will contribute to allow Romania, as a full member of the European Union, to move forward with the reforms that are needed, especially in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption. To achieve these reforms, Romania needs a stable political and legal framework with all political actors working together to achieve the growth and social development of Romania.”\(^{51}\)

The European Commission’s Report regarding Romania’s progress on accompanying measures following Accession issued on 27 June\(^ {52}\) generated a supplementary internal debate which led to the postponement of the first elections for the European Parliament for the second half of 2007\(^ {53}\). The first ever elections would therefore take place on 25 November 2007. Then like

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\(^{53}\) In March 2007 the Romanian government led by the Prime-minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu a former ally of the president Traian Băsescu postponed the elections trough a government emergency ordinance with the pretext that “in the context of the unsetting internal political climate, as this event is one of great importance, measure in accordance are necessary, meaning the postponement of the elections for the European Parliament for the second semester” For further information please read B. BLAGU, "Alegerile
Nowadays the elections took place simultaneously with a referendum called by President Traian Băsescu which regarded the introductions of a uninominal voting system. It was a highly controversial decision that put the internal political issue in the forefront of an historic moment – the first ever European elections held in Romania.

The political polarization led to the confrontation of opposing sides – the president versus the parliament, a confrontation that was a mere continuation of the spring debate. We had a political agenda dominated by internal disputes on issues that never took a European approach, thus the European integration process as well as the European elections had a low level of interest among the public opinion. The information campaign was rather limited with few noticeable results.

The rather elitist approach of this type of elections was also evident through the monitoring of the mass-media articles related to those issues. Thus a study of ActiveWatch Media Monitoring Agency, a human rights organization that militates for free communication for public interest, show that there were mostly the journalists and the experts who were speaking about European issues and less those who would effectively run for MEP seats.

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["în condițiile climatului politic intern necorespunzător, în condițiile în care acest eveniment este unul de maximă importanță, se impun măsuri în consecință, adica amânarea alegerilor pentru Parlamentul European pentru semestrul doi"].

54 In a press statement issued on October 23rd 2007 president Băsescu claimed that the referendum was only enforcing the European side of Romanian politics “in order to be Europeans we must have a reformed political class and I believe that the theme of the political class reformation of Romania is a purely european theme”. Available online at http://www.presidency.ro/index.php?lang=ro Last visited on January 27th 2014 ["pentru a fi europeni trebuie să avem o clasă politică reformată și cred că tema reformării clasei politice din România este o temă pur europeană.”].

55 We should mention the research conducted by the former Agency for Governmental Strategies called the Barometer of the European Integration that indicated for March 2007 the fact that approximately 30% of the Romanian voters never heard about the 2007 European elections while 27% of the voters believed that the MEP were appointed by the Romanian institutions. For further details please see the report Primul pas în Europa. Raport de observare a alegerilor pentru desemnarea reprezentanților din România în Parlamentul European, Asociația Pro Democrația, Bucharest, 2007 available online at http://www.apd.ro/files/publicatii/raport_alegeri_PE.pdf Last visited on January 27th 2014.
Figure 1 Type of actors that have debated European themes during the 2007 European Parliament elections\textsuperscript{56}

The referendum was invalidated as less than 50% plus one of the voters attended the referendum (only 26, 51% of the total voters). However an impressive number of those who attended it voted in favour of the two-round uninominal voting system proposed by the president and his followers (81.36\%)\textsuperscript{57}.

As regards the European Parliament vote, seen by many as a crucial electoral test before the 2008 general elections, of the 35 available seats in 2007: the Democratic Party (PD) (the supporter of President Băsescu) obtained 13 seats, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) – 10 seats, the National Liberal Party (PNL) – 6 seats, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) – 3 seats while the Hungarian Democrats (UDMR) – 2 seats, while the independent candidate, the bishop Laszlo Tokes joined later one the EPP Group.


\textsuperscript{57} See the final results at \url{http://www.becreferendum2007vu.ro/documente/rezultatefinale0001.pdf} (available only in Romanian). Last visited on January 27th 2014.
It was a hard won victory for the Democratic Party (and for the EPP as a matter of fact) since the then leader of the party, Mr. Emil Boc had the opportunity to assess his party strength father being forcedly put into opposition after a bitter row with their former allies, the National Liberal Party.

The 2009 elections. Between European synchronization and yet another local elections

The next European Parliament elections would represent from the Romanian point a view a symbolic event as we have achieved the so-called “synchronism” with the Western world, at least from the political point of view – on 7 June 2009, the Romanians alongside the other Europeans voted for the European Parliament. Unfortunately this symbolic moment would be shadowed by the already existing economic crisis and its impact upon the political and social landscape.

We were already living in a European Union where the pessimism and the concern for the future reached alarming quotas, as the economic issues came to the centre of the public interest. That diverted somehow the attention to the internal issues, to the government the opposition’s solutions to the national difficulties, much like the 2007 elections. These elections also came on the background of an important number of local elections (five elections rounds – parliamentarian, referenda) that induced a feeling of fatigue amongst the Romanian electorate. The voters were tired

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for being called to the polling stations\(^{59}\) whilst the echoes of 2008 parliamentarian elections promises were still present in the public space.

As to the previous 2007 electoral campaign, what is to be noticed is the high degree of absence to vote, a situation that constitutes a trait of nowadays elections. The lack of communication as well as the internal agenda made these elections some of the least interesting from the voters point of view.

“The Romanian democracy sees itself menaced today by the absence of its main actors: the electors. The Romanian political parties satisfy themselves also this time to recruit candidates for the European Parliament elections and have not assumed their second role, that of communication. The electoral campaign was characterized by the absence of a real competitions, and the European themes were absent from the public agenda. On the background of this political abandon, the electors preferred not to present themselves to the polling places\(^{60}\).

Being at the time a coalition government, led by the Prime minister Emil Boc, formed by the Democrat-Liberal Party [PDL, formed by uniting the 2007 parties, Democratic Party (PD) and the Liberal-Democratic Party (PLD)] and the main socialist party Social Democrat Party (PSD) it started to show signs of internal disputes the European Parliaments elections counted from the point of view of the late 2009 presidential elections – “the stars of the electoral campaign were no longer the EP candidates but the candidates to the Romanian Presidency”\(^{61}\).

What was new in relations to the 2007 elections was also the active involvement of civil society figures in the electoral campaign – we have the notorious cases of personalities such as Monica Macovei, Traian Ungureanu or Cristian Preda who after having supported the current president received eligible seats on the PDL electoral lists\(^{62}\). It was then that Ms. Macovei distinguished herself by tackling the “corruption issue” a recurrent theme in the Romanian

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landscape of ideas, as the representatives of this party perceived themselves as anti-corruptions champions.

The main stream electoral topics were thus circumscribed to the upcoming presidential elections every one of the main candidates from the tree main parties trying to better identify themselves in the eyes of their constituency. It is a fact that was recognized even by the parties’ staffs who openly admitted their sole preoccupation for the presidential elections. Thus for PSD the most visible campaign “was that for the preparation of the presidential elections that have as main character Mr Mircea Geoană, seconded by some of the PSD ministers”\textsuperscript{63}.

What should be notice is the “dual” political language of the representatives of the Hungarian Democrats. Having reenlisted in their ranks Mr. Laszlo Tokes, they were divided between the so-called “moderates” and the “radicals”, represented by Mr. Tokes, who spoke about the use of the European Union for their local interests “through the EU they will obtain territorial autonomy on ethничal and cultural criteria”\textsuperscript{64}.

What was of interest was the important electoral score obtained by the Romanian nationalists under the umbrella of the Greater Romania Party. Having allied themselves with another marginal yet radical party, the New Generation Party (PNG), the creation of a controversial Romanian businessman George Becali, known for his open speech and discriminatory stance the PRM succeeded in remerging in the eyes of the public opinion and thus obtaining an important electoral victory. The electoral message was void of any European issues, focusing solely on the image of the two leaders – Corneliu Vadim Tudor and George Becali that, having minimal resources emphasized their Christian attitude and their “resolution” to fight against corruption, but without ever proposing any concrete solution.

As for the independent candidates it was the president’s daughter, Elena Băsescu (EBA) who formally resigned from PDL only to announce that it would re-enter after the end of these elections. A socialite, she tried to appeal to those not interested in politics by attracting those who couldn’t identify with any of the current parties. It was an openly criticized campaign due to its perceived negative effects on the European scale. “For the European and Euro-Atlantic world, through the phenomenon EBA, Romania entered in the hated group of prey dynastical republics”\textsuperscript{65}.

\textsuperscript{63} Raport de analiză politică. Alegerile europene de la 7 iunie – amurgul democrației?, ”Ovidiu Sînca” Institute, Bucharest, June 22nd 2009, p. 10, ["a fost cea pentru pregătirea alegerilor prezidențiale, care l-a avut ca protagonist principal pe Mircea Geoană, secondat de o parte a ministrilor PSD”].

\textsuperscript{64} Ibidem, p. 13, ["prin UE vor obține autonomia teritorială pe criteriul etno-cultural”].

\textsuperscript{65} Raport de analiză politică. Alegerile europene de la 7 iunie – amurgul democrației?, ”Ovidiu Sînca” Institute, Bucharest, June 22nd 2009, p. 10, ["Pentru lumea europeană și euro-atlantică, prin fenomenul EBA România a intrat în grupul odios al republicilor dinastice de pradă.”].

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The two elections cycles can be circumscribed to the dual relationship that the Romanians had with the idea of Europe after the fall of communism, as the Romanian professor Vasile Pușcaș noted the two main camps of those who said “We are in Europe” versus those who claimed “the return to Europe”66, a Europe seen as a space of civilization.

We should add to this the general observations that the researcher Sorin Bocancea identified while analyzing the relations of the Romanian political parties with the European idea in the aftermath of the 1989 revolution:

1) the cleavage between crypto – and anti-communists: the first between located in the social-democrat area and the far right (Greater Romania Party) and associated with an ambiguity as regards Europe while the second (National Liberal Party) had a pro-European approach.
2) nationalism: manifest in the relationship with the Hungarian minority and the issue of Bessarabia (the way we should we react as to it as a European nation toward it).
3) self-preservation tendencies of the communist elite who opposed the opening of the country indirectly67.

What characterised the electoral cycles of 2007 and 2009 and led to the almost total lack of interest for European issues was the conflict between President Traian Băsescu and the members of the main Romanian political parties – the National Liberal Party and the Social Democrat Party which led to serious political battles that destroyed anything in their path. It was a historical obsession that was named by the Romanian political sciences specialist Dan Pavel “personalisation” - “the political conflicts were between a leader (Iliescu or Băsescu) with his own political party, on the one side, and by the other parties, on the other side”68.

That can also be noticed when we take a brief overview over the election slogans of the involved parties: and we analyse the electoral speeches. The main conclusion of the paper of Nicoleta Fotiade is that “European themes have been poorly represented”69. We had mainly internal political issues that ignored the European realities focusing almost exclusively on local issues, such as the incoming presidential elections of the end of 2009.

69 Nicoleta FOTIADE, Alegei europene 2009. Discurs electoral în Campania electorală. Presa scrisă şi TV, Active Watch Agenţia de Monitorizare a Presei, Bucharest, June 2009, [“temele europene au fost slab reprezentate”].
2014 European elections. History repeats itself? “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9)\(^{71}\)

As for the 2014 Parliamentarian elections they are scheduled to take place on 25 May 2014. The latest estimates prove that it is yet difficult to envisage who the winner might be other than the estimate of the PSD taking the poll position as regards the percentage of votes it might receive. Another educated guess would regard the faith of minor parties, below the 5% electoral threshold – what are they going to do? Would they unite before the elections or wait the final results before deciding their future strategy.


\(^{71}\) See http://biblehub.com/wbt/ecclesiastes/1.htm Last visited on January 28\(^{th}\) 2014.
However, one recurring tendency of these elections would be once more the focus upon local and national issues as regards the European themes. We would have once again a referendum on proposal concerning the new Constitutions that raises the risk of focusing the debate on local political partisan positions. Thus in a recent 13 January 2014 news the Romanian electorate was just informed that: “The decision we have taken is to organize a referendum for the modification of the Constitutions at the same time with the European Parliament elections at the end of the month of May,” has stipulated Antonescu [the leader of the National Liberal Party and the official candidate of the governing coalition to the presidential elections, my note] in a press conference.

First of all we have to notice the logistical challenges this juxtaposition proves - two types of voting ballots, risk of electors losing their interest. Add to this the legal complexities that a two day referendum poses. and we have, in the words of the Romanian law professor Simina Tanasescu,

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"an extreme challenge" due to the very short time left until May as this may harm the transparency of the process and the decisional act in itself.\(^74\)

Moreover, other Romanian political scientists such as Ioan Stanomir underlined clearly the meaningless of the European Parliament elections of this year. \(\textbf{"The European Parliament elections shall have no stake!}"\) They shall have a stake derived from the constitutional stake. If the PSD and PNL shall candidate on a common platform, it shall be a vote for the Social Liberal Union (USL) and a political vote for USL at the constitutional referendum. In a practical manner, the European Parliament elections shall be void of the European stake and they shall have entirely a 'domestic stake'\(^75\)

We should add to this constitutional issue the newly reopened themed of the nature of relations that Romania has with the Republic of Moldova. After the decision to facilitate the regaining of the Romanian citizenship for all those Moldovans that had relatives with the Romanian citizenship in the period of Greater Romania, a political move that caused a series of headaches to Bruxelles and other major European capitals as it was perceived as a \textit{de facto} enlargement of the European Union we nowadays are witnessing to the creation of a new national Romanian project.

Thus the Romanian president Traian Băsescu clearly stated that “Romania has the obligation to unite with the Republic of Moldova for the latter to be able to continue its European road”\(^76\). It is a controversial statement that generated a lot of attention yet its impact is still to be defined on the Romanian political scene.

From this brief analysis we can say that the good thing as regards the Romanian attitude toward the European Parliament elections is just the lack of interest for populist themes with an European impact. We are still dealing with a very parochial debate, where the accent is put mainly on domestic and local issues that don’t have a European impact.


The European elections are more seen as a role rehearsing for “greater” internal elections either presidential or parliamentarian or for referendums. The Romanian political class as a whole is less concerned on European scale issues being focused on internal feuds.

Moreover if we analyze all the most recent opinion polls we can see that the far right Greater Romania Party is below the 5% electoral threshold which guarantees that it shall not have any seat into the European Parliament.

If the PSD domination on the left side is assured we have a fierce completion for the right – between the PNL and the PDL as they struggle each other to become the one and only party representing the Romanian right. The time is short before the European Parliament elections and the main actors movement might risk becoming more chaotic as the local issues and the opinion polls tend to favour or to punish this or that electoral stance.
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Populism in Spain: different from the rest of the Europe, but anyway growing

Oier Lobera Ezenarro

Populism is certainly growing in the European Union, and some populist parties are even working together in the eve of the European elections in order to become stronger in the European Parliament. In the case of Spain, however, there are no parties that match with the image there is about populism in the European context, as European populist parties are supposed to be xenophobic and anti-European. In the Spanish case there are new parties that have been accused of being populist, UPyD being the most successful new party that has received this criticism. In this way, this paper aims to understand if UPyD is a populist party by analysing the political campaign and communication strategy followed by the party. Then, a comparison between UPyD and FN and PVV will be drawn in order to understand the main differences between these parties, as well as the direction that these parties may follow in the future and the level of success they may have.

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Introduction

Europe is experiencing the rise of populism in many countries. Populist parties, which swear to give the power back to the “people” once they reach the government, use nowadays in Europe racist and anti-immigration discourse in order to attract a large segment of the European citizenship unhappy with their hard economic situation. It seems that we have not learnt from our history, from the Spanish Inquisition or the holocaust, when there are still so many people who defend racist ideologies exposed by populist politicians. Unfortunately, it seems it is always easier to blame a minority group for the economic malaise of a country, although they are not the main reason for it.

The Spanish political system after Franco’s dictatorship was erected around two main parties, PP (Partido Popular/ People’s Party) and PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español/ Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party), which would represent the two main Spanish political ideologies, the conservative and the socialist. After Franco’s dictatorship UCD\(^2\) (Unión de Centro Democrático/ Union of Democratic Centre) would govern the country, but only until 1982, being PP and PSOE the only parties that have governed in Spain since then. There would also be other parties, but they would not have a great impact at national level, being the only parties with any relevance apart from these two the nationalist parties, and only in their respective regions. However, PP and PSOE have demonstrated to be corrupt and not very capable to cope with the harsh economic situation that Spain is facing at the moment, reason why an important number of Spaniards are now considering voting to different parties rather than to the two main traditional ones.

As a result of the economic malaise of the country, the corruption of the two main parties and the discontent of the Spanish citizenship with the politicians that aim to represent them, new parties have seen their opportunity to be created in the Spanish political sphere. The appearance of new parties can have a very positive impact for the Spanish political system, as it offers more variety to the citizens to choose among parties, and politicians may want to try harder to ameliorate the economic situation of the country, as they see that the bipartisan system in danger, the system that has ensured the exclusive access to the Spanish government to PP and PSOE since 1982.

Unfortunately, new political parties can use populist tools in order to attract voters and gain presence in the political sphere. They may use sentimentalist language that appeals to the feelings of the citizens, instrument that makes the citizens more vulnerable and manipulative. This discourse could include promises of giving the power back to the citizenship; condemnation of the traditional parties, blaming them for the misfortunes of the citizenship; attack to the European Union, regarded as another political elite responsible of the difficulties that Europeans are living; and blaming a

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\(^2\) UCD was a political party from the centre-right that was erected thanks to the coalition of different Spanish parties in 1977. UCD, under the leadership of Adolfo Suárez (the first Spanish Prime Minister after Franco’s death), would undertake the first necessary steps to build a democracy in Spain after the dictatorship.
segment of the people living in the country, which could be regarded as a threat to the “good working people”, such as the immigrants.

UPyD (Unión, Progreso y Democracia/ Union, Progress and Democracy) is a political party that has been very successful fighting against the Spanish bipartisanship. Since its creation in 2007, it has gained more and more voters each time they run for elections. However, although this party does not match with the general image there is about populism in Europe, criticisms from the right\(^3\) and from the left\(^4\) make us doubt whether it is populist or not.

Considering the relevance that populism is gaining in Europe and the criticisms done against UPyD of being a populist party, this paper aims to understand whether UPyD could be considered populist or not, and in case it could be considered populist, if this populism would be against the main principles of the European Union or if it could be harmful for the Spanish society once they would reach the government. Therefore, we will first establish what we understand by populism and we will try to figure out if UPyD has the characteristics that populist parties are supposed to have. Therefore, electoral programmes of UPyD, some articles written by components of the party and videos of politicians of the party are going to be analysed in order to observe if their discourse uses populism to appeal to the feelings of the citizens and attract voters, understanding this way the current relevance of populism in Spain. Finally, we will try to understand which may be the future developments that populism will follow in Spain and at European level, as well as the impact they will have in the European society and the relevance in the political sphere.

What is populism?

Populism is definitely not an easy word to define. It is used to describe politicians, political movements and political parties of different natures, but which are supposed to share some common features. However, the “term is often used in loose, inconsistent and undefined ways to denote appeals to ‘the people’, ‘demagogy’ and ‘catch-all’ politics or as a receptacle for new types of parties whose classification we are unsure of”\(^5\). Therefore, in order to avoid any kind of ambiguities, what is understood by populism in this essay needs to be explained.

Populism has been defined in many different ways, depending on the framework of the study or the academic background of the scholar who develops the idea. Many studies on populism have been

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focused on the populism of the second half of the XX\textsuperscript{th} century in Latin America, such as Peronism. However, Peronism is very different from the populism that is being developed nowadays in Europe, having Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen as its most remarkable delegates. It is crucial, nevertheless, to note that they have some common features which make it possible to identify Peronism and the new European populist parties as populists. Therefore, before starting to discuss whether UPyD is a populist party or not, it is necessary to identify the characteristics populist parties and politicians are supposed to have.

Following the definition used by Albertazzi and McDonnell, populism is:

\begin{quote}
An ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice.\end{quote}

This same idea is shared by other scholars, such as Francisco Panizza\textsuperscript{7}. In his view, “populists are well aware that politics always consists of the creation of an ‘Us’ versus a ‘Them’”\textsuperscript{8}. Although phrased differently, these scholars refer to the same idea. Populist parties appear when a large part of the citizenship feels disappointed with the status quo of their country. Generally, they appear in moments of economic crisis, when already established parties start to lose their credibility in their ability to rule the country and the political malaise starts to be more visible than ever before. These traditional parties represent the political elite for the populists. In a period of crisis, when the common citizen is the one who suffers the most, populists can easily blame the established parties for not paying attention to the needs of “the people”. Le Pen and Wilders have gone further, not only blaming the political parties of their own countries, but also blaming the EU, the big elitist “other” that has taken the power from the “people” of their own country, to whom it should be given back by the populist party.\textsuperscript{9}

One way of blaming the traditional parties is claiming that they are all corrupt and that the populist party is the only clean one. This is a strategy that populist parties tend to follow during their whole campaign. Taking into account that new parties that have not been successful to reach the government yet have not had the possibility to be as corrupt as those which have, it is easier for the new party to claim that they are the only non-corrupt party running for the elections. Unfortunately, it is true that many traditional parties have been linked to corruption, showing the weaknesses of the current democracy the fact that populist parties can use this card to discredit traditional parties in so many countries.

\textsuperscript{6} Albertazzi, \textit{Twenty-First Century Populism}, 3.
\textsuperscript{8} Idem, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{9} Albertazzi, \textit{Twenty-First Century Populism}, 4-5.
This “otherification” is not only done in an upward direction, blaming the political elites, but also in a downward direction. These “dangerous others”\(^\text{10}\), as described by Albertazzi and McDonnell, deprive the “good people” from their rights and well-being. They are often identified as immigrants, who obtain social welfare in dispense of the good working men and come to the host country in order to steal jobs from the natives of the country.

The creation of an “other” is an instrument used by all populist parties, so we need to be able to find this “other” in order to claim that a party is populist. However, populists share other common features that need to be identified if we want to properly understand what populism is. One of these common features is the appeal to the already mentioned “people”\(^\text{11}\). These “people” represent the good working citizens, whose position is harmed by the incapability and corruption of the government elites, and the threat of the “dangerous other”, who appropriates public money thanks to the “unfair” redistribution system of the status quo and suppose a danger for the security of the “good people” because they increase criminalization\(^\text{12}\). This last blame to the other is made especially when the other is identified as a poor immigrant, who travels to richer countries in order to find a better living, a very common experience all over Europe and especially in the West. In this way, the populist leader appears like the representative of the good “people”, as the defender of their rights, and claims to be the solution of the decadence of the country because of the corruption of the government and the threat of the other.

The leader of a populist party is an emblematic figure that is always present in the image of its party or movement, even after his or her death. The best example would be Peronism, which survived the death of its creator Juan Domingo Perón. His successor would be a person very close to him: his widow. Who could be a better substitute of a populist leader rather than his widowed wife? Better maybe not, but a daughter could also perfectly take the place of a retired populist politician. Marine Le Pen took the place of his father as the leader of the Front National in 2011. The figure of the leader is so important for a populist party that the person substituting him or her needs to be a very close person of the creator of the party. Thus, many populist parties have been identified as “personal parties” because of the great importance of the leader. Knowing this, it is necessary to recognize the characteristics that populist leaders share.

The leader tries to underline his or her “commonness” in order to make himself or herself seem more approachable to the “people”. Bucaram, former president of Ecuador, would narrate about his humble social origins in order to show he was part of the “people”. However, he would also

\(^{10}\) Albertazzi, *Twenty-First Century Populism*, 3.
\(^{11}\) Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 5.
underline the fact that his social origins did not stop him from becoming rich and powerful, despite the opposition of the status quo. In this way, the populist leader represents himself as part of the “people”, but at the same time better than this “people” he or she represents, capable of returning them the political power under his or her leadership.

Last but not least, the language and symbolism used by the populist politicians is another characteristic of populism. The language used tends to be more direct than the one used by traditional politicians. In this way, they manage to approach the common citizens in a more efficient way, making it easier to claim they represent the “good common people”, showing they are part of the group. Moreover, they tend to be more passionate than mainstream politicians, “using sentimentalism in order to manipulate the crowds”.

As it has already been mentioned, many populist parties could also be named “personal parties”. The most remarkable example would be Forza Italia, personal party led by Silvio Berlusconi since 1994, a party that has always been linked to its leader, making it unthinkable to talk about the party without referring to the leader himself. An “ideal” populist party would also be a personal party. However, there are parties that having populist characteristics and charismatic leaders, their existence is not necessarily linked to one particular politician, which could be the case of SVP/UDC (Schweizerische Volkspartei/ Union Démocratique du Centre/Swiss People’s Party). The party shares crucial characteristics with populism (such as the criticism against the elite and the condemnation of immigration) and it does have strong and charismatic leaders, which is the case of Christoph Blocher, who “gained a great reputation within its ranks as leader of the radicalization process.” However, the party’s existence was not linked to this person in particular, and he remained as just one of the different leaders of the party. Thus, a personal party would be a populist party that is so strongly linked to its leader that the sole existence of the party would be unconceivable without the leader or a very close substitute (remember the case of Marine Le Pen or Eva Perón). However, although not all populist parties can be identified as personal parties, the politicians of populist parties need to have the other characteristics of populism, such as the use of sentimentalism in their speech or the connection with the people they represent.

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13 Panizza, Populism and the Mirror of Democracy, 22.
14 Idem.
15 Albertazzi, Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy, 7.
17 Albertazzi, Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy, 53.
18 Albertazzi, Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy, 106.
19 Idem.
UPyD

The leader: Rosa Díez

A populist party is always built around a charismatic leader, the greatest symbol of the party. In the case of UPyD the name of this leader is Rosa Díez. In order to understand the position of her party, it is very important to know about the most important moments of her political trajectory before the creation of UPyD.

Political trajectory before the creation of UPyD

Rosa Díez, born in 1952 in Güeñes, in the Basque Country, started flirting with politics in her mid-twenties, joining the labour union UGT in 1976 and the socialist party PSOE in 1977. Since then, she would undertake different political positions as member of the socialist party, such as Counsellor of Trade and Tourism in the Basque Government and Parliamentary of the EU. Because of her antinationalist attitude, some members of her party wanted to distance her from having political positions in Spain, as the PSOE aims to act like a unifying party between nationalists and non-nationalists in the Basque Country, reason why she was sent to Brussels as Euro-parliamentary. In Spain, it is quite a common procedure to send politicians who have earned enemies in their party or whose statements do not match with the interests of the party to send them to Brussels.

Be it because she found herself discriminated in her own party or because she realized that PSOE did not respond to her political ideology any more, she decided to create her own party, UPyD (Unión, Progreso y Democracia/ Union, Progress and Democracy) in September 2007, the eve of the economic crisis, the perfect moment for the creation of a new political party.

A charismatic leader

The populist leader is recognizable thanks to certain characteristics: the identification of the leader as the main symbol of the party, the connection with the “people”, the direct language used to communicate with this “people”, and the use of sensitive statements that appeal to the feelings of the citizens.

In order to understand the level of popularity of Spanish politicians and parties, the CIS (Centro de Investigación Sociológica/ Centre of Sociological Research) realizes some questionnaires to randomly chosen people. Among other aspects, they ask Spanish citizens about their personal opinion on certain political parties or politicians. In this way, in the last research undertaken in

October 2013, Rosa Díez scored the highest grade on the question about the value the respondents gave to each politician, scoring 4.28/10\(^{21}\). It may not seem a very high score, but it is still the highest grade that any politician got, especially in comparison with the leaders of the two main Spanish parties, PSOE and PP, scoring 3.13 and 2.42 respectively\(^{22}\). These in average low grades demonstrate how discontent the Spanish citizenship is with the politicians that are representing them.

However, this same grade of popularity is not met by the political party itself, as when the interviewed people where asked to which party they would vote if there were elections the following day, only 4.8% replied they would vote for UPyD, while the 11.4% said they would vote for PP and 13% for PSOE. A similar result was obtained when the participants were asked about the party that they thought was closer to their ideologies\(^{23}\). To this question, 14.6% replied that they preferred the ideology of the PP and 19% the ideology of the PSOE, while only 4.7% said that they considered their ideology was the closest to the one of UPyD\(^{24}\).

These results show how dependent the party is on its leader, and that it would not have many chances to survive without her. The case of the two main parties is totally contrary, as although their politicians’ popularity level is very low, most of the Spanish citizens prefer to vote for the “old parties” rather than for UPyD.

In order to observe whether Rosa Díez identifies herself with the “people”, it is suitable to analyse some of her interviews and speeches. Esteban Martin, freelance journalist, interviewed Díez in her own office, and he described her way of approaching him as one of “the mother of a friend”/“la madre de un amigo”\(^{25}\) because of the direct and approachable way in which she treated him. In a speech she gave about the Basque Economic Agreement, which she criticizes, she claimed that she should pay as many taxes as the rest of the Spanish citizens, that she should not be privileged because of being Basque, as we are all equal.\(^{26}\) The aspect of UPyD’s attack to nationalism and the privileges of certain Spanish autonomous communities will be analysed later in this paper. However, this speech also shows her identification with the “people”, with the Spanish citizenship, as she portrays herself as part of the whole group, not wanting to be different from them. These

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\(^{22}\) Idem.

\(^{23}\) CIS, Barómetro de octubre. Distribuciones marginales, 13.

\(^{24}\) CIS, Barómetro de octubre. Distribuciones marginales, 14.


examples, together with the clear and always comprehensible language that she uses demonstrate how she establishes herself as part of the “people” that she wants to represent in the government. Moreover, the direct and often harsh language used by her and other representatives of her political party is very clear both in written documents and speeches. However, this language is not used all the time; it is very carefully chosen when it has to be utilised, especially in written documents. While in official documents the language generally used could be described as neutral, in polemic aspects they decide to use a more direct language. For instance, in the electoral programme of the general elections of 2008, it can be observed that in relation to teaching religion in public schools, they literally say that:

*It is illogic (…) to pay a teacher to explain the children of Muslims that the woman is inferior. It is absurd (…) to pay a teacher to explain children of Jehova’s Witnesses that the donation of organs is immoral. It is crazy to (…) pay a teacher to teach Catholic children that homosexuality is a defect.*

*Es ilógico (…) pagar a un profesor para que explique a los hijos de los musulmanes que la mujer es inferior. Es absurdo (…) pagar a un profesor para que explique a los hijos de testigos de Jehová que las donaciones de órganos son inmorales. Es disparatado (…) pagar a un profesor para que explique a los hijos de los católicos que la homosexualidad es una tara.*

As the UPyD claims to be a laic party, the fact that they defend that public schools should not have as part of their compulsory curricula the subject of religion is completely comprehensible. However, the language used is very harsh and direct comparing to the one used in other articles of the electoral programme which are not so sensitive for the public opinion. As it is a topic that deeply touches the feelings of the citizens, like abortion could be, the language used is harsher than in other issues in spite of being written documents and not speeches. Example of this harshness and directness in written documents on the issue of abortion can be found in the text written by Antonio Lozano Burgos, Local Coordinator of UPyD in Toledo:

*What has been imposed to us by the government in collaboration with the religious hierarchies, more than a law is a Manifest of the Inquisition so unfair and unacceptable as if it was imposed a decree that obliged mothers who are going to give birth to children with the Down syndrome to abort.*

*Lo que nos ha colocado hace unos días el Gobierno en connivencia con las jerarquías religiosas, más que una Ley es un Manifiesto de la Santa Inquisición Tan injusta e

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inaceptable como si se regula por decreto la obligación de practicar aborto en todos los casos de Síndrome de Down.\textsuperscript{28}

A large part of the Spanish citizenship, most of the political parties and even some politicians from PP do not agree with the new law imposed by the party in the government, the PP, and UPyD demonstrates its disagreement as many others do. However, this sentence perfectly exemplifies the use of direct and harsh language that a populist politician would follow, because not only does he condemn the new law, but he also compares it with the Spanish Inquisition, one of the darkest periods of the Spanish history, touching the feelings of the Spanish citizens. This direct language is not only visible in documents, but also in speeches of Rosa Díez and other members of her party. In the parliament, Rosa Díez does not doubt to call the Spanish president corrupt or to tell him to leave office directly\textsuperscript{29}. Her use of sensitive issues is also very smart, because she knows how to use them and in which contexts. In the interview done by the freelance journalist Esteban Martín she was asked to tell him which the hardest moments of her past were. Rosa Díez replied to this question by claiming that the hardest moments of her life were when ETA murdered some of her acquaintances.\textsuperscript{30}

I do not want to claim that those times were not hard for Rosa Díez and the rest of the Spanish and Basque society, since they really were. However, it cannot be forgotten that condemnation of terrorism and hostility to ETA is a crucial aspect of UPyD’s political campaign, a characteristic that makes the party more appealing for a big part of the Spanish citizenship. In this way, answering that way to the question, Rosa Díez gave an emotional response that could also touch the feelings of many Spaniards.

Hence, it can be argued that Rosa Díez, as well as other members of the UPyD, shares some characteristics with populism, namely the crucial presence of the leader for the existence of the party, the connection with “the people”, and the use of a very direct and sometimes harsh language often accompanied with sentimentalisms.

The appearance of UPyD and the economic crisis

The political party UPyD was founded in 2007, before the severe economic crisis hit Spain. They defended the need of the creation of a new political party that did not represent itself as a left wing


\textsuperscript{29} “Rosa Díez UPyD: ‘Sr. Rajoy, tenga un gesto de patriotismo y dimita’”, Youtube, August 1, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5I82KVXHv0.

\textsuperscript{30} Martín, “Rosa Díez: ‘La sociedad tiene un papel de control sobre los partidos políticos’”.
or a right wing party. The party wanted to unify all the Spanish citizens, fight for the progress of Spain and advocate for the rights of all the citizenship, focusing in the need to abolish any regional rights that would treat Spaniards differently. It aimed to catch as many voters as possible, both from the right and from the left.

Soon after its creation, the economic crisis severely hit Spain, dramatically increasing the unemployment level of the country. Under these circumstances, the traditional political parties and their actions were criticized by contrary politicians, journalists and other members of the Spanish society more than ever before. The UPyD, party that has not had the chance to govern yet because of its youth, strengthened its criticisms towards the traditional parties, criticisms that in most of the cases cannot be described as ill-founded. Consequently, these criticisms became a core aspect of its political campaign.

As soon as one enters the website of the political party, we can see the latest news and videos the party wants to show to the visitors of the website in the middle of it. It is not a coincidence that the editorial visible is titled ”The Spanish Reality According to Rajoy” / “La realidad de España según Rajoy”, editorial that strongly criticizes Rajoy’s position that the economic situation of Spain is ameliorating. This example demonstrates how necessary it is for UPyD discrediting the party in the government. Moreover, between the news that are also available in the homepage there is one titled “Rosa Díez rejects the aim of psoe of ‘satisfying’ nationalism for being ‘suicidal’” / “Rosa Díez rechaza por ‘suicida’ la pretensión del psoe de ‘contentar’ al nacionalismo”. In these two examples, three of UPyD’s main political enemies are presented: PP, PSOE and nationalism.

However, not only the economic crisis has acted in favour of the rise of UPyD. Undoubtedly, the cases of corruption have also contributed in the disaccrediting process of PP and PSOE. The Bárcenas case, which has recently been discovered, showed how politicians from the PP and construction companies linked to them received large amounts of money that were not declared in the Treasury. The PSOE has also proved to be a corrupt party, mainly in Andalucía, where 171 socialist mayors have been accused of being corrupt. Thus, the UPyD shows itself as the only non-corrupt political party in Spain, claiming that the rest of the parties mock the democratic system by sharing the pieces of the cake between themselves, like Gorka Maneiro (representative of UPyD in the Basque Government) argued in the Basque Government, by claiming that the PP and

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33 Idem.
PSOE approved the proposition of the PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco/ Basque Nationalist Party) so they could share the benefits of the budget between the different old parties\(^{36}\).

The tendency to consider itself as the only “clean” party is a strategy that populist parties use to discredit the political elites or “old parties” as UPyD calls them. This criticism becomes more legitimate when there is an economic crisis in the country and the political malaise becomes more visible. The citizens’ discontent with their personal economic situation and with corruption cases, makes them look for other possibilities that promise a better future and appear to be less corrupt than the traditional parties.

**Representation of the “people” and condemnation of the “other”**

Populist parties represent themselves as the advocates of the “people”. The UPyD also envisages itself this way, but generally uses a different term rather than people. Their favourite word to design the group they aim to defend is “citizenship”. Thus, they claim that “the political power has to be given back to the citizenship”/”se trata de devolver la política a la ciudadanía”\(^{37}\). This is the word they generally use in order to describe to whom they want to give the power back. The UPyD claims to be a progressist party, so it is very understandable that they use the word citizenship, a word that aims to include all the people living in Spain, no matter their origin or religion. However, they also use the term “Spanish people”/”el pueblo español”\(^{38}\) in their discourse, a more passionate and traditionally populist word.

The fact that UPyD is not a racist party makes it problematic to describe it as populist, as nowadays, and especially in the European context, racism and mainly anti-Islamism are considered crucial characteristics of populism, together with the self-identification of the party as enemy of the European Union\(^{39}\). None of these requirements are met by UPyD. However, including these characteristics within the general definition of populism is quite a recent phenomenon. What is a characteristic that populist parties are supposed to share is having an enemy not only in the established political parties, but also within the society in which they are living. Le Pen and Wilders, among other European populist politicians, identify as the “other” the Muslim immigrants,

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\(^{36}\) “Gorka Maneiro, UPyD, a PP y PSE: ‘Ustedes se han convertido en las comparsas del PNV’”, Youtube, December 20 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl0Aw6jx13k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gl0Aw6jx13k).


despite they often claim not to act against Muslim people, but against Islam itself in the case of Wilders\textsuperscript{40} or against the Islamisation of France in the case of Le Pen\textsuperscript{41}.

On the contrary, UPyD invites immigrants to Spain, as they bring economic benefits to the Spanish economy. However, they have also found their “other” against whom it is necessary to combat: the nationalists. One of the main aspects connected to nationalism that UPyD criticizes is the existence of the Basque Economic Agreement and the Navarre Economic Agreement, thanks to which the Basque Country and Navarre enjoy more liberty in the establishment of their tax system. According to UPyD and their leader Rosa Diez, this right endangers the equality of all the Spanish citizens, as when some regions enjoy a right that others do not have, it stops to be a right to become a privilege\textsuperscript{42}.

Not only do they criticize the economic rights of the Basque Country and Navarre, but also the linguistic policies developed in the Autonomous Communities where they have two official languages, mainly in Cataluña and the in Basque Country. In both regions, education policies are aiming to increase the use of the regional languages both at school and university levels in order to improve the level of Catalan and Euskera among their citizens. Catalan and Basque were severely attacked during Franco’s dictatorship, and therefore, a strong promotion of these languages is necessary for them not to disappear, especially in the Basque Country, where the number of the people who spoke the language had been diminishing not only during Franco’s regime, but in the last centuries.

Focusing in the Basque case, the knowledge of Euskera\textsuperscript{43} is regarded as necessary to be able to undertake many positions of the public sector, mainly public-facing jobs, promoting this way the language and giving the people the opportunity to interact in Basque in the public sector if they wish to do so. This policy has been criticized for being discriminatory against people who do not speak the language or that do not have the certificate that proves they have the sufficient Basque level (EGA: Certificate of Sufficiency in Basque). This policy is heavily criticized by Rosa Diez

\textsuperscript{40} Geert Wilders, “Speech Geert Bilders Berlijn (Engels)”, Partij voor de Vrijheid, \url{http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/component/content/article/36-geert-wilders/3586-speech-geert-wilders-berlijn.html}.

\textsuperscript{41} Russel Shorto, “Marine Le Pen, France’s (Kinder, Gentler) Extremist”, \textit{New York Times}, April 26, 2011, \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01LePen-t.html?pagewanted=all\&_r=0}.


\textsuperscript{43} Euskera or Basque is a non-Indo-European language that has been spoken by the natives of the Basque Autonomous Community, Navarre and the three historic provinces of the Basque Country in Southern France (Labourd, Low Navarre and Soule) for centuries. In Ancient times, the use of the language was spoken throughout a wider territory, and although it resisted the Roman invasion and did not disappear as the rest of the languages of the Iberian Peninsula, the use of the language has been diminishing since then. Franco’s regime would directly repress the use of the language, as it was regarded as a threat for the Spanish unity.
and Gorka Maneiro especially, being from the Basque Country both of them. Thus, Rosa Díez criticizes the fact that having the EGA is compulsory in order to be able to work in the public health-care of the Basque Country\textsuperscript{44}, while Gorka Maneiro claims that some people are not selected to undertake a public position because of not knowing Euskera, while (according to him) the use of the language is not necessary to fulfil their task efficiently\textsuperscript{45}.

Criticism is also done in the field of education, as the possibilities to study in Spanish are disappearing in these regions, development that UPyD considers that does not respect the rights of all the citizens. They want a public education system that respects the equality of linguistic rights\textsuperscript{46} for both Basque or Catalan and Spanish speakers. The case of the Basque Country is more controversial than the case of Cataluña, because the amount of people who speak Basque is much smaller than those who speak Catalan. In the Basque Country there is the possibility to choose if citizens’ children are going to study in Spanish or Basque the main part of their curricula in public schools. However, the Basque Government, following the policies promoted mainly by PNV, has fostered the teaching model that is totally taught in Basque besides the subject of Spanish. The reason for this policy is that the model that teaches all the curricula in Spanish (apart from the subject of Basque) and the one that teaches half of the curricula in Basque and half of it in Spanish are not able to satisfy the need of transmitting Basque children and teenagers the ability to communicate, speak and write in Basque properly.

Taking into account that the EGA is necessary to be able to work in many fields of the public sector, people should start to learn Basque from an early age, so it will be easier for them to find a job in the future. Basque people who prefer to speak Basque when they go to the doctor or need to do some bureaucratic work in the public administration should have the possibility to do so, justifying the requirement to have the EGA in order to be able to have these jobs. UPyD, however, considers that these policies discriminate the people who do not know Basque.

For this paper, it is not so important to discuss about this debate that has been going on in the Basque Country for decades. The fact that UPyD criticizes the level of the promotion of Basque and Spanish as such would not be considered as a populist strategy. Nevertheless, it does work in the creation of an “other” that is restricting the “good Spanish citizenship” from enjoying their rights equally, identifying an enemy that has to be combated, as Basque and Catalan speakers are regarded


\textsuperscript{45}\textit{“Gorka Maneiro, UPyD: se discrimina al que no sabe Euskera”}, Youtube, November 5, 2012, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C73ew9SAs2E}.

as privileged. This “otherification” could be regarded as populist. In this way, UPyD, which claims to be a progressist party, does not attack immigrants, but the nationalist people and regions who do not want to resign to function the same way as the rest of Spain.

Comparison between UPyD and European populism: current situation and future prospective

As it has been explained previously, UPyD does not meet the criteria established in the European context to be described as populist. It is not an anti-Islamist and racist party as PVV or FN. Geert Wilders, for instance, has compared the Koran with the Mein Kampf\(^47\), and claimed that “there is no such thing as ‘moderate Islam’”\(^48\). Marine Le Pen, at the same time, compared the prayer of Muslim people outside mosques with the Nazi occupation:

> For those who speak a lot about World War II, if that was occupation, then we could also talk about this, because it's occupation of territory. There are no armored vehicles, no enemy troops, but it is an occupation all the same and it weighs heavily on people.\(^49\)

Not content with only blaming the religion and its practice in their countries, they also criticize the large amount of immigrants, mainly Muslims, that enter to their countries, strategy that is obvious both in Le Pen’s\(^50\) and in Wilders’ politics, apparent when he says that “more safety, less crime, less immigration and less Islam is what the Netherlands has chosen”\(^51\).

These parties use the anger flourished in their countries because of the economic crisis in order to blame not only the majoritarian political parties, but also the immigrants. Immigrants are regarded as an enemy that is “prospering at the expense of ordinary working people”\(^52\), and these populist parties represent themselves as the advocates of the “people”. UPyD does not use the strategy of blaming immigrants to attract voters, but it does represent the Basque Country and Navarre as regions that are prospering at the expenses of the rest of Spain, as this prosperity is achieved, according to them, thanks to the Economic Agreement that these two autonomous regimes have.

\(^48\) Wilders, “Enough is enough”.
The other characteristic that most European populist parties share is the criticism that is done to the European Union, and the will to regain more national independence from the Union. Populist parties tend to see the EU as “the monster of Brussels”\textsuperscript{53}, a “Leviathan”\textsuperscript{54} that steals political and economic power from their countries. They want to regain the control of the boundaries because “both leaders say Europe’s political elite has been too tolerant of Islam and both want to curb immigration.”\textsuperscript{55} Regarding economy, they both want to get the control of the money back because of the economic malaise that the Eurocrisis has brought to their countries\textsuperscript{56}.

For many European parties, the EU not only represents the unification of European countries into an international organization that aims to improve the situation of all the European citizens and increase their power in the international sphere. Great Britain has been for many years the most Eurosceptic country, but there are many rising populist parties all over Europe that regard the Union as a threat, not only the FN or the PVV, but also “Austria's Freedom Party (FPOe), Italy's Northern League, Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the Sweden Democrats or the Danish People's Party”\textsuperscript{57}.

Many European citizens blame the EU for the economic crisis and their current difficult economic situation. Therefore, these parties represent the EU, together with the traditional parties of their countries, as the political elite guilty of the misfortunes of the “good working people”. UPyD, however, cannot be described as an anti-European party, as it openly promotes the collaboration with the Union\textsuperscript{58}. Nevertheless, it is very important to take into account a specific aspect of the Spanish economy. Although a large part of the Spanish citizenship also blames the EU for their economic malaise, Spain has been receptor of many economic aids from the European Union and the accession to the European Communities helped the transition of Spain from a dictatorship to a democracy, which is not forgotten by Spanish politicians and citizens. In this way, the main opinion that is shared among Spaniards is that although Europe and the Euro may have contributed in making the economic crisis more severe, getting out of the EU would leave Spain alone in the international market and would not get any economic aid to restore itself from the crisis. It would be more harmful to fight against the crisis alone than with the help of the Union, as Spain is

\textsuperscript{55} “Dutch Eurosceptic Wilders and France’s Le Pen unite”.
\textsuperscript{57} “Dutch Eurosceptic Wilders and France’s Le Pen unite”.
economically weak and cannot be recovered without help. Hence, UPyD, as the rest of the main Spanish parties, shows a positive disposition for further collaboration with the Union. It seems very clear that this anti-immigration and anti-European populism will have a lot of relevance at European level at least in the recent future and especially in the next elections of the European Parliament. In the case of FN we can see how the party has been gaining more ground after Marine Le Pen took the leadership of the party\textsuperscript{59}, and it is not the only case in Europe. According to Matthew Feldman, “Europe's far-right parties are definitely seeing a resurgence”\textsuperscript{60}, and Wilders and Le Pen are even working together at European level, aiming to find cohesion, and hence become stronger in the European parliament.

There is one main difference between UPyD and the French and Dutch populist parties: while FN and the PVV follow an anti-European, anti-Immigration and anti-Islamist strategy, the UPyD is pro-European and pro-Immigration. Therefore, the EU does not pay so much attention to it because of not supposing a threat to the main ideologies of the Union. Moreover, while the French and Dutch populist parties are considered far-right wing parties\textsuperscript{61}, the UPyD cannot be identified so clearly as left or right, as they do not want to consider themselves either as a right-wing or a left-wing party\textsuperscript{62}. It is a catch-all political party.

Because of the great ideological differences between UPyD and most of the European populist parties, we should not expect that UPyD will work together with Wilders, Le Pen or other European populist politicians for the European elections. Spain is not prepared at the moment for an anti-European party. It would not be successful at the elections because of the economic need of the Spanish economy to belong to the EU and the Eurogroup. Therefore, the creation of an anti-European populist party should not be expected in Spain at least in the near future. Nevertheless, we should expect that UPyD will be more and more successful in the following elections, as sympathizers of the party are increasing, mainly because of the popularity of their leader.

The fact that UPyD has little to do with the European populist parties does not mean that it is not a populist party. UPyD is following quite a smart strategy. It knows which the main aspects of the Spanish politics that are criticized by the Spanish citizens are: the corruption of the two main parties, the inequality of autonomous rights between different Spanish regions, the new law of abortion and the economic crisis. Therefore, these are the aspects that the party promises to change.

\textsuperscript{59} Michelle Hale Williams, “A new era for French far right politics? Comparing the FN under two Le Pens”, \textit{Análise Social}, vol. XLVI (201), 2011, 679-695, 680.
\textsuperscript{60} Laura Smith Spark, “Is the far right gaining ground in Europe”, Edition CNN, April 25, 2012, \url{http://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/24/world/europe/europe-far-right-austerity/}.
\textsuperscript{62} UPyD, \textit{Manifiesto Fundacional}.
if they reach the power or gain more seats in the Parliament. Regarding the corruption, it is stated in UPyD’s Credo that any person who has been accused of having been corrupt will not be allowed to run for elections in the lists of the UPyD. On the other hand, it promises to abolish the Economic Agreements of the Basque Country and Navarre once they get to the government, and they propose an abortion law that respects the rights of free women to decide about their maternal future, but respecting a deadline. In relation to the economic crisis, it also presents possible solutions to this crisis, such as avoiding “duplications, wastefulness and absurd norms” / “duplicaciones, despilfarro y normas absurdas.” Another reason why Rosa Diez is so popular, and consequently the party is becoming more popular, is their self-representation as the only non-corrupt party and as a party and a leader true to their believes. In the interview the young journalist Esteban Martín did to Rosa Diez, he told her that she has seemed to be more loyal to herself than to the PSOE. Rosa Diez added to this commentary that she was true to her ideas, the reason why she had to create a party more in tune with them than PSOE. Their strategy is working very well, it has to be said, as the party is gaining more and more ground in the Spanish politics and it is very likely that they will also gain presence in the following European elections. Hence, we can expect they will follow the same strategy as now: blaming the regional privileges and linguistic policies and criticizing the gaffes of PP and PSOE.

Conclusions

Is UPyD a populist party? This was one of the main questions that were aimed to be answered in this paper. However, giving an answer is not so easy. As it has been argued throughout the paper, UPyD has some populist characteristics, such as the total dependency of the party on the leader, the identification with the “people” or “citizens”, and the attack to the political elite of the country. However, the meaning of the term has been transformed in the European sphere to denote parties that condemn immigration, the Islam and the European Union, characteristics that are not met by the party. Therefore, we could say that UPyD is not a populist party in the Europeanised and modern sense of the word.

This is quite an easy response, but only a partial one. It does not combat against the immigrant “other”, but it does have another enemy: nationalists and regional rights. The language used by

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66 Martín, “Rosa Diez: ‘La sociedad tiene un papel de control sobre los partidos politicos’”.

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politicians of UPyD is very direct and often uses sentimentalism as a tool to touch the feelings of the citizens, making them more manipulative, instrument attributed to populism. Nevertheless, apart from their attack to the regions with some nationalistic identities or their criticism against the strong protection of the languages of these regions, their political position could not be regarded as a threat for the Union, as they defend further collaboration with the Union and they welcome immigrants to Spain.

Because of not been racist or Eurosceptic, the UPyD is not regarded as a populist party by European journalists, and even less as a threat. It respects the general values of the EU, especially regarding the aspect of equality of the citizens. However, its persistence in the value of equality would harm the well-being of a specific sector of the Spanish citizenship: Basques and Catalans. Moreover, it would suppose a step back of the efforts that have been made to strengthen these minority languages. These languages are protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages\(^{67}\), charter from the Council of Europe, but also embraced by the European Union, as the protection of national minorities and minority languages is also an issue of concern for the Union. We should remember that Basque and Catalan are also spoken in France, but in a much lower extent than in Spain, as French was imposed as the only official language, and minority languages have been marginalized, making them disappear little by little.

UPyD proposes to treat all the citizens equally no matter the language they speak\(^{68}\), what mainly means not to take into consideration if an individual knows Basque or Catalan to be able to work in the public sector, and to stop the wide spreading of the education model that teaches in the regional languages all the curricula. They also aim to satisfy the demands of the Spanish citizenship who regard the Economic Agreements as unfair privileges by saying that they would abolish them if they get to the presidency.

These policies would respect a very crucial democratic principle: the equality of the citizens of a country. However, the protection of minorities and their cultural heritage should also be taken into account, and finding the perfect balance between equality and protection of minorities is not always easy. Spain has a vast cultural and linguistic heritage, having between themselves one the oldest (if not the oldest) languages spoken in Europe: Basque. It has strongly been promoted, but not everybody is content with this promotion. UPyD would be the perfect example, as it criticizes their economic privileges and the linguistic policies that have been developed.

The UPyD is likely to continue gaining ground in the elections of the following years, as their popularity is increasing, especially the popularity of their leader. However, it does not seem very

\(^{67}\) Council of Europe, European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Strasbourg, November 5, 1992).

probable that they will be able to turn the bipartisan system up-side down and to reach the government, at least in the near future, although this system is already showing its problems. However, as the European populist parties, its relevance in national and European politics is becoming stronger. Nevertheless, we should not expect that UPyD will work together with other European populist parties in the campaign of the elections of the European Parliament because of the great ideological differences between the parties.

To sum up, it can be argued that UPyD certainly shares many characteristics with populism, although it demonstrates to be different from the mainstream European populist parties. Besides, it cannot be forgotten that other parties or politicians also use populist tools to attract voters. The most visible populist characteristic they may have is their great dependence on their leader, dependency that is not visible in other Spanish political parties. On the other hand, we should be concerned about their anti-nationalist position, as if they succeeded to reach the government, the nationalists and the regional languages would be those that would suffer the most, supposing a step back of the efforts that have been undertaken to improve the situation of these languages and satisfy regions of Spain which are not so happy belonging to the country. Do we really want to make independentism stronger by abolishing these rights?
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