Re-narrating Europe in the Face of Populism: An Analysis of the Anti-immigration Discourse of Populist Party Leaders

SERTAN AKBABA*

ABSTRACT *Populist discourse is gaining more and more ground in Europe. As evidenced by the growing success of radical right wing parties, a ubiquitous right wing populism is haunting Europe. This populist discourse is a counter to the long-standing narratives of Europe. Clearly, with the alarming growth rate of the politics of fear and hatred, Europe is in contradiction with its own core values. It is the consistent and mainstream positioning of populist discourse, establishing itself in the name of protecting European identity. This argument is tested upon a case study of right wing populist party leaders' anti-immigration discourse from the Netherlands, Finland, Italy and Hungary; these narratives, which were once perceived as marginal, are currently occupying and dominating the national and European discourse.*

Introduction

In a recent article, Rogers Brubaker, a well-known scholar of nationalism studies, poses the question, 'why is civilization replacing the nation?' The scope of this study is not to answer this question, but the inquiry remains valuable in an era of 'Europe for Europeans' rhetoric led by the populist parties in Europe. The rising tide of populism brings us to focus on this "civilizationism."[1] In 2011, Anders Breivik killed out people by detonating a van bomb in Oslo, then shot 69 participants to death in a Worker's Youth League summer camp. While defending himself in court, he argued that his intention in carrying out this terrorist attack was to "save Norway and Western Europe from cultural Marxism and a Muslim takeover."[2] The incident was a turning point, not just for Norway but for Europe in exposing how the continent is divided between the nativists and the liberals. It is clear that this incident was a cry out of the already existing crisis of identity re-construction, already declared by Angela Merkel as a 'failure of multiculturalism' back in 2010. Helmut Kohl criticized his successor in 2011, saying, "[Angela Merkel] is destroying my Europe."[3] Although Kohl and Merkel belonged to the same political camp, as a former chancellor and party leader,

* Marmara University, Turkey

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Kohl criticized Merkel for her open-door policy toward refugee immigration. While Merkel saw herself as rescuing Europe from a worker shortage, Kohl viewed her policies as destructive. Today's Europe continues to confront these competing narratives against an unprecedently hostile backdrop of fears of terrorist threats, from both Islamist fundamentalists and far right extremists.

The narrative of the nation remains deficient, leading to more dismantling rather than creating unifying positions, and this is the departing point of populist parties who are all re-writing a story for the sake of defending their homeland, namely Europe. This is a result of the positioning of the nation-state in Europe, which is experiencing a crisis of legitimacy due to the European integration. Post-war Europe is grappling with two important narratives, which are in opposition to each other. The reconciliatory peacetime narrative has started fading, and in the ensuing crisis of identification, "fear has emerged as a framework for developing identities and for engaging in social life."[4] Up to the 1990s, thanks to the prevalence of centrist politics, migration was welcomed, and treated as a necessity rather than a problem. This led to an opportunity for the populist parties to develop the issue of migration upon identity politics. Their main theme evolved into protecting European culture from the aliens. Starting with the mid-1990s, right wing leaders garnered fear among the masses, citing a deep decay in the system alongside warnings of threat and aggression from 'outsiders,' feeding populist concerns across economic, social and cultural realms. Currently, the re-narration of European identity is mostly dominated by the anti-immigration discourse. Consequently, this study discusses the populist narrative through examples of the anti-immigration discourse of selected political party leaders in Europe.

According to Müller "populism is always a form of identity politics;"[5] this study endeavors to understand how this growing populism –for some neo-populism–[6] is constructing a European-wide narrative for the current era. Populist politics are gaining support in a great number of nation-states in Europe. A common language shared by right wing populist parties across Europe is emerging, and, it is this language –with its uniform style, slogans of hatred, anti-plural behavior– that is creating a European narrative, grasping north and south, east and west of Europe. The current study evaluates this language with a case study of the Party for Freedom (the Netherlands), the Northern League (Italy), Fidesz (Hungary), and True Finns (Finland). The discourse is analyzed under three similar features, which these above-mentioned parties

share. Firstly, the way they institutionalize the rhetoric of good and evil, a process Ruth Wodak terms *mythopoesis*.[7] Secondly, how they mirror one another via cross-referencing as well as discourse borrowing; and, thirdly how they mobilize the masses by bringing a new dimension to body politics, namely a European-wide *policy of hatred*. The focus of the paper is to evaluate to what extent a pan-European narrative is displayed by the populists, across the continent as a whole. For this reason, the parties are selected from different regions of Europe, each carrying the potential to represent the west, east, north and south of Europe. It is clear that populist parties have their own motives and do differ when compared, but apart from their own political goals, they share a common understanding in their storytelling. For Missiroli this is a "scaremongering rhetoric"[8] penetrating directly to the imagination of the masses. They also share a way of telling and selling their stories abroad, in a range not limited to their beloved nation, marking an unlikely intersection of supranational or 'civilizational' interests with parochial protectionism.

The study firstly discusses the concept of populism and the way it is acknowledged in the literature as well as in politics. Then populism is handled via a European context, as it differs greatly from North and South American experiences, in that it is mostly dominated by the migration issue. In the final section, an analysis of selected party leaders' discourse is given, to understand how individual party leaders are successful in rallying this political atmosphere towards a new European narrative.

Understanding Populism

Populism is a concept difficult to define and it varies with depth across the literature on whether it is a "thin centered ideology,"[9] "a form of political mobilization,"[10] or "a discursive style."[11] However, there are common political attitudes on which populism flourishes. Speaking for Europe, it is related with the traditional politics put forth by the right wing when stressing the defense of identity, tradition, culture, etc. For instance Betz argues that populism is "the mobilization of resentment"[12] and that this resentment is directed firstly towards established political parties and, secondly towards immigrants, foreigners and refugees. It is obvious that, in general, populist politics can rely on either left or rightist positions, and concerns itself with the people's welfare and interests. Populism, in Europe today is primarily fed by traditionalist far right parties that articulate cultural concerns about the erosion of their national identities, which brings the issue to migration.

The omnipresence of populism across Europe has received great attention and an academic literature on populism is emerging. The main reason behind this populist wave has to do with the conditions of modern societies which are be-

Participants hold a sign with the slogan "End the day of the open door in Germany. Make the borders tight" during the right wing AfD demonstration titled "Future Germany" on May 27, 2018 in Berlin.

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coming more and more heterogeneous, making it hard to address as well as to absorb diverse social demands. According to Laclau this "non-overlapping between the community as a totality"[13] opens up more room for populist politics. Although very prominent across the political spectrum, the concept of populism still begs a clear understanding. Besides being a contested concept, there are a diversity of populisms emphasized by a vast number of scholars, among them "national populism,"[14] "neo-liberal populism,"[15] "thin populism,"[16] or "right wing populism."[17] In a generally accepted definition, populism refers to "a society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people vs. the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people."[18] This definition focuses mainly on vertical exclusion (i.e. class difference), omitting another debate, which is the horizontal one. In today's European nation-state system, as a result of migration, the populism seen is mostly an antagonism between the people and the dangerous other, i.e. horizontal exclusion.[19] It is important to emphasize that this exclusion clearly exceeds the boundary of the nation in Europe. In the populist view, the people are acknowledged as a corporate body with a continuous existence, having a common interest and will. Any factor affecting this common will, is ascribed to be the 'enemy within.' For Canovan, this is about the three appeals to the people in populist discourse: the "united people" references the nation and is integrative; the appeal of "our people" differentiate our people from the foreigner, which is divisive; and appeals to the "ordinary people" pit them against the privileged and highly educated elite. As the study tackles the anti-migration discourse of the populist parties, the focus

will be on the "our people" appeal, embedded in a European context by the populist discourse. The populist parties embrace this discourse of otherness, which is currently on the rise in Europe. The critiques made by these parties firstly dismantle the socially cohesive society in the nation-state, upon the grounds of who belongs to the nation and who does not via co-nationals, and secondly creating a common sense across Europe, opening up a debate on co-inhabitants, where a creation of a transnational meta-narrative emerges. The understanding of 'the people' in right wing populist leaders' discourse mostly includes their fellow Europeans.

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Populism here is handled as a political strategy and a political style.[20] It is evaluated as a political communication that functions by simplifying the political space with direct and ordinary language. The right wing populist leaders speak very harshly and, at certain times, even become subjects of trials (e.g. leader of Front National Marine Le Pen, leader of Party for Freedom Geert Wilders). Although faced with trials on accusations of hate speech, the populist figures in Europe do not hesitate in repeating their harsh critiques. With the aim of building a public presence, they constantly make use of this strategy of 'weaponizing language.' For Pankowski, this is about how populists make "connection with the culture of the common, ordinariness,"[21] and more importantly, how they sell themselves to the masses in order to appear as one of them. In Weyland's definition, "populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercise government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."[22] The populist's use of this discourse divides both politics and the society. Their discourse is centered around the costs (i.e. social security, unemployment, and housing) of inclusion, having a deep impact on the masses. When this discourse is used by a charismatic personality, with the leitmotif of 'I am suffering just like you,' it directly touches the people and becomes embraced. An emotional attachment forms between the leader and the audience, especially when drawing a horizontal exclusion.

Secondly, the parties compete across the mainstream dimension, posing both soft and hard criticisms towards the migration problem. These parties, which can form around be a single-issue, protest or anti-EU platform, confront a fundamental dilemma of whether they are to shape the main dimension of the party system, or to split from it. According to Sitter, many of these parties

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have chosen the latter, mobilizing voters along cross-cutting cleavages or policy dimensions. The central point of this attitude is that populist discourse, according to the mainstream, is related to the territorial, cultural or economic opposition, not merely cleavages or parties.[23]

That is, the populists make use of certain issues or crisis putting them into simple words and creating stories to build consensus.

Understanding Populism within a European Context

The populist discourse within the European realm differs greatly when compared to North or South American cases. Its departure opens up a narrative exceeding the boundary of the nation-state and its rapid dissemination across Europe. Clearly, this is thanks to the European integration, which is actually one of the reasons of the flourishing of populism in Europe in the first place. Ironically, the populist parties exemplified here are all Eurosceptic parties.

The establishment of European integration starting from the 1950s was centered on a reaction to the devastating Second World War and, as an outcome, has given birth to todays' European Union, 'an elite driven project' determined behind closed doors with a narrative written on a peace between the states not merely the nations. The aim was to build peace among states by pooling resources, namely coal and steel. However, not much attention was paid to the inner peace within the nations themselves. Throughout decades paying less attention to the demands of the masses, and furthering integration, led to a gap between the mainstream politicians and their electorates. As an outcome loading too much Europeanism onto every aspect of social, political and cultural life, in time gave birth to a European backlash owing to its own inclusiveness. This is the most important reason why the integration finds difficulty in touching the grassroots. The mismatch of demands between the people and the elites ran into a deep crisis, and the people started finding it difficult to identify with the mainstream. Simon Shuster emphasizes that the "people gravitate more towards tribal notions of identity than to lofty principles of integration,"[24] summarizing the current division within the European Union. Thanks to the mainstream parties and their compromises on furthering and deepening European integration, this has opened up ground for populist parties to flourish and attack the politics of the mainstream. As Canovan emphasizes, populists make a great use of "distrust mystification, they denounce backroom deals, shady compromises, complicated procedures…"[25] All these methods are used by the centrist parties when making important deals regarding European integration.

Up to the 1990s, the story was different as most of the populist parties were not much present and were treated as marginal having no account in political life. However, with the pace of European integration stepping up with the signing of the Maastricht treaty, European politics started changing direction. Capitalizing on public dissatisfaction with the EU, and leaning on the migration issue resulted in radical right wing populist and Eurosceptic parties all over Europe. Apart from the party discourse detailed in this paper, parties like Alternative for Germany (AfD), Swedish Democrats (SD), the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), Danish Peoples Party (DPP), and Flemish Interest (VB) share similar discourse and contribute to the re-narration of Europe. As witnessed by their electoral success,[26] the political antagonism created by these parties seems to work.

The re-narration of the right wing is emerging out of the confrontation between the "parochial and cosmopolitan views"[27] of Europe. On the one hand, there is tribalism –in which people adhere to a vision of 'Fortress Europe'– on the other hand are those referring to a broader definition of Europe. In this battle of storytelling, we find the populist parties voicing the story of the untold. The populist parties across Europe represent themselves as the defenders of European values, culture, and way of life more broadly a European civilization with the motto of 'Europe for Europeans,' 'pure Europe,' a 'white bastion of civilization,' etc. against what is called 'unity in diversity.' As a result of these views, there is a re-drawing of (social, political, cultural) boundaries not between the member states of the EU but between the natives (European) and immigrants (Non-European: Muslim, Black, Jews and the Roma). This new mode of politics resembles a cross-national contagion, revealing a kind of hybrid actor –a sum of populist parties– with a unique output, namely a European narrative. This narrative comes out to be a rather unusual one for Europe. To give a few examples what this narrative covers, for instance, we can cite: the Swiss vote for banning the creation of new minarets, the ban on wearing the *hijab* in public places both in Belgium and France, the ongoing debate on banning circumcision in Germany, the humiliating treatment of Syrian migrants passing through Hungary and many more. All these examples are an outcome of the populist wave in Europe. This narrative posits the native Europeans, the co-inhabitants of Europe, not all the people making up today's nations in Europe. That is why this work in progress requires attention as it comprises a meta-narrative for Europe, at the same time dismantles the national ones. In the 'Europe we want' speech in Italy, the leader of the Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders, emphasizes:

> Our European civilization, based on the legacy of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome, is the best civilization on earth. It gave us democracy, freedom, equality before the law, the separation of church and state, and the notion of sovereignty states to protect it all. The remedy to all the misery and terror is clear. We have to reassert what we are. Only then will we be able to ensure a future for our children in a safe, strong and free Europe.[28]

The increasing level of political and socio-economic disappointment and dissatisfaction among voters due to the rapid transformation of the nation-state as well as the process of European integration has pushed these votes towards the radical right

As emphasized in the speech, the narrative put forth by the populists, makes reference to the original European values, which were all obtained for a price through centuries. The populist leaders do not limit their understanding of these values to the recent past or as a lesson to be taken from the Second World War. They do not squeeze their narrative into the narrow framework of the EU. For them, it is Europe, the foundational geography to be saved, even from the EU, which they argue hinders their white supremacism. Political parties are the indispensable as well as necessary organizations of political life and democracy in the current system. A general acceptance has been that parties, like democracy itself, are nation bounded institutions, an assumption which is currently being called into question by scholars.[29] The issue at this point is to focus on the importance of the connection between democracy and the nation which for Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot are born together, in which individuals feel loyalty to the nation which he or she perceives as the reason for his or her liberty through democratization.[30] However, the increasing level of political and socio-economic disappointment and dissatisfaction among voters due to the rapid transformation of the nation-state as well as the process of European integration has pushed these votes towards the radical right. When analyzed, no matter in which European state, what the far right has in common, is the anti-immigration rhetoric aimed at jointly creating otherness, feeding Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, etc. This brings the issue to identification and identity itself, which is a kind of narrative, constantly re-produced or re-constructed. It is clear that within the European context, there are always parallel narratives, counter discourses or re-productions. Currently, the most significant remains the re-dichotomization of the 'us' versus 'them' debate. Starting with the mid-1990s, radical right wing discourse became popular among the masses across Europe. At first what was perceived as temporary and marginal because of the harsh and excessive discourse of the radical right, became mainstream across Europe in just a short while. Right wing populism has now become internalized by the masses, leading to more differentiation, ascription and externalization.[31] The discourse of populism in Europe differentiates the cohesiveness both at national and European levels by ascribing the true owners of the continent, reinforcing a re-boundary drawing of inside and outside via the externalization rhetoric. In the light of these developments, it is important to evaluate the discourse of the Populist Party leaders, who are not only manifesting nationalist rhetoric but also Euro-

pean rhetoric. The political discourse shared by the populists is currently penetrating into mainstream politics in a handful of European states. Discourse borrowing is frequently seen across the political spectrum. For instance, Silvio Berlusconi during the recent Italian elections affected by the populist Northern League discourse, talks about "migrants as a social bomb ready to explode."[32] Similarly, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte borrowing a discourse from the Party for Freedom denounces "immigrants who don't want to adapt, attacking our habits and rejecting our values…" warning them "behave normally or go away"[33] in a very harsh statement not seen among the mainstream politicians. These examples and many more reflect how mainstream politics are shaped via populism as well as the way they contribute to this emerging new narrative for Europe. To better understand this, the selected Populist Party discourse on migration is analyzed in the next section under three motivations.

The Case of Populist Party Leadership Discourse on Migration

Post-war Europe is experiencing a battle of narratives. A right wing populist wave is currently challenging the already existing, unifying narrative of Europe. Up to the 1990s, thanks to European integration, the motto of 'unity

in diversity' alongside unifying the continent was unchallenged. However, with the mid-1990s this started to fade, challenged by a completely new story, namely 'Europe for Europeans.' This discourse emerged as an outcry against the dominant discourse put forth by mainstream politics stating that there is no alternative to the current neo-liberal globalism. However, for the populists there are always alternatives, and the anti-status quo discourse promised change. The creators and storytellers of this narrative emerged more rapidly with the deepening of European integration. Populist leaders had something alarming to tell Europe, namely that the continent was collapsing. Important evidence reflecting these concerns was seen firstly back in the 'Vienna Declaration of Patriotic and National Movements and Parties in Europe' announced in 2005. Their joint declaration called for:

> …a stop to immigration in the entire European Union and the defense of Europe against terrorism, aggressive Islamism, superpower imperialism and economic aggression by low-wage countries. The parties also reject the boundless enlargement of European integration to geographically, culturally, religiously and ethnically non-European territories in Asia and Africa such as Turkey…[34]

The Vienna Declaration consists of eight Articles, which mainly underline two important principles: remaining sovereign and opposing immigration. It is important to stress that populist parties usually pick up issues which other parties do not mention, or do not consider much important. They try to influence the voters with these untouched issues by bringing to light untold stories. Another interesting point in the declaration is the reference made to a 'confederation' of European nation-states. This view is based on the model of a 'Europe of Fatherlands' mentioned by Charles de Gaulle in early years of the European Economic Community (EEC). Another important point is the contact of these parties across Europe. They constantly borrow discourses from each other and make reference to one another in their political communications. Furthermore, mainstream politics became deeply affected by the populists as well, and now often borrow the terminology from these parties for electoral success.

One of the prominent figures of populism, the leader of Front National, Marine Le Pen, argues that, "it is because we are Europeans that we are opposed to the EU."[35] One of the driving forces for populists in Europe is their Eurosceptic position. Also and possibly more importantly, is how they configure their performance, making their communication more visible across Europe, using the European integration (e.g. EU institutions) as a carrier to disseminate their discourse. They believe themselves to be the politicians caring for the benefits and needs of (native) Europeans, rather than the whole. Their central position is to defend European values and norms by opening a debate on the

attachments and belongings to Europe, an endeavor in which they view the EU as an obstacle. The EU's obstructive function is articulated by the leader of the Fidesz, Viktor Orban who protests "…it is forbidden to say that immigration brings crime and terrorism to our countries. It is forbidden to say that the masses of people coming from different civilizations pose a threat to our way of life, our culture, our customs, and our Christian traditions."[36]

The narration occupying the European political arena is analyzed via selected Populist Party leadership discourse, namely the Northern League (Italy), Fidesz (Hungary), Party for Freedom (Netherlands), True Finns (Finland). The parties are from different parts of Europe; the aim is to reflect on how this discourse has disseminated across Europe, and how it is creating a hegemonic narrative over Europe. These parties are important to consider, as they have increased their votes over time and have even taken responsibility in office. For instance, the Northern League, Fidesz and True Finns have participated in government via coalitions. The Party for Freedom has supported a coalition government in the Netherlands from outside. Their presence through time has increased. In the literature, these parties are all catching the attention of scholars, but not much focus has been paid to their total sum as a populist wave, gaining a cross-country visibility across Europe and creating what is called a "hegemonic horizon."[37] But their way of practicing politics is similar, as they present every issue (economic redistribution, social inclusion, gender, crime, and housing) from a particular perspective, namely anti-migration. More importantly they frame this discourse within a European context. In 2017 a meeting was held in Koblenz, Germany, including the parties Front National, the Northern League, Alternative for Germany and Party for Freedom (all forming the group Europe of Nations and Freedom in the European Parliament). It was stated to be a counter summit with the motto of 'vision for a Europe of freedom.' Marine Le Pen declared that the purpose of the meeting was to outline the Europe of tomorrow. Together, these parties influence the masses and challenge the dominant discourse, offering a new story and a new direction for Europe.

Clearly, the ownership of this narrative belongs to the populist parties. The populist parties drive the battle of culture which is being fought across Europe today. Gaining more and more momentum, their arguments reflect an ubiquitous story, not localized to certain parts of Europe, but grasping Europe as a whole. Because it cannot be limited to a couple of nation-states, this story is about Europe. Timo Soini, former leader of the True Finns argues, "now this

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Dutch ultra-nationalist Geert Wilders cuts a piece from a European flag displaying a star, supposedly representing his country on May 20, 2014 as he speaks in front of the European Parliament in Brussels.

GEORGES GOBET / AFP / Getty Images

ever closer Union thinking is challenged in any case, from various quarters."[38] Distinctly, each party does have its own priorities within its own nation-state, but together they all supplement and constitute a meta-narrative about Europe and Europeanness. Many divergences may become evident when their individual policies are analyzed, but they also have a common understanding of Europe, which is used as a platform by these parties. They lead protest demonstrations in the streets, hand out leaflets, or send messages via social media; their starting point is Europe. This political platform is the integral part of their politics.

The party leadership discourses are analyzed under three motivations. Firstly, it is important to understand how these parties institutionalize their rhetoric of good and evil, by creating a "rescue narrative"[39] or a "European wide moral panic."[40] The party strategy here rests on firstly on marking their opponents via a derogatory and pejorative label. For instance, the leader of Front National, Le Pen calls immigrants as "invaders" who are "representing only a burden;"[41] the leader of the Northern League, Matteo Salvini, refers to them as "misfits."[42] Some, such as Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders, even go further in calling them "scums" or "Trojan wooden horse of terrorism"[43] according to Viktor Orban leader of Fidesz. The words chosen by these leaders all have one purpose: to dehumanize and demonize the migrants. For

instance, Jussi Halla-aho, leader of True Finns, argues that "society begins to play by the rules of the Muslim minority, rather than expecting the minority to play by the rules of the society."[44] An important part of their institutional strategy rests on this dichotomization, as a *raison d'être* of the party, aiming to rescue the homeland from the alien. Their political rhetoric[45] is all built on exclusion and provocation via this use of language. The aim is firstly to pressure mainstream politics and secondly to influence the masses with a continuous repetition of this

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theme across the continent. Their language selection is important to mention, the words they pick are carefully designed to create sensation with the aim of catching attention from all around Europe; their inflammatory language facilitates the dissemination of their story via the media and press as a catalyzer.

The language chosen by right wing party leaders is the language of the public; they express their views as, an ordinary citizen would to express anger and fear. The language used includes words like 'protection,' 'secure,' 'fight,' 'cope,' 'overcome,' which are all carefully picked and placed within this discourse. For instance, Viktor Orban talks about a siege of Europe, and calls European citizens to a mission of protection. In his words, "the greatest danger we face today is the indifferent, apathetic silence of a Europe which denies its Christian roots."[46] Matteo Salvini, leader of the Northern League, talks about a "culture war" and argues, "the continent is losing its values, it is lacking in security, it is losing its identity and has no pride any more."[47] Right after the Bataclan killings in Paris, leader of Fidesz, Viktor Orban blamed centrist politicians, stating, "those who said yes to immigration, who transported immigrants from war zones, those people did not do everything for the defense of European people."[48] As seen from the above quotes, the populist leaders make frequent use of words concerning security, and how and why Europe needs to pay attention to these matters urgently. The discourse of this 'good versus evil' dichotomy used by these parties, introduces a new ground both in level and scope. The issue of safety is differentiated to a level of European-wide arena requiring an overall struggle to cope with. On the other hand, the scope is extended far beyond politics by placing the migration issue into a question of morality, a call for moral action towards the 'evil' and to the centrist politicians that created this evil in the first place.

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Secondly, the populist right wing across Europe shares another characteristic. They frequently borrow discourse from each other and mirror one another in their discourse. This transnational contact is very important in understanding how they create a narrative for Europe as a whole, whether they talk about saving Europe, protecting Europe or bringing it back to its glory. For example, Viktor Orban speaks of 2018 as a year of the 'people of Europe,' not just of Hungarian people. In his words, "2018 will be the year when the people's will is restored in Europe and the European people will force through decisions that reflect their interests."[49] This call includes a rescue mission of Europe, to work together in the name of saving Europe. Populist right parties mostly apply this strategy, often generalizing the issue (e.g. immigration, the economy, legitimacy) to gain support from other parties in other European states. Their aim is to magnify the problem by extending its geography in order to make it more salient to create a European-wide awakening. The aim is to reflect the image of working together or at least to make it look that way. For instance, Geert Wilders talks about "making our countries great again, yesterday a free America, today Koblenz, and tomorrow a new Europe."[50] The greatness he refers to is not limited to the Netherlands, but includes a vision for Europe as a whole. The aim in this discourse is to captivate a European-wide attention via branding and re-branding the situation or problem, shared by all fellow Europeans. Matteo Salvini emphasizes "we are united with the Front Nationale, and other movements from Austria, Sweden, Belgium and Norway in affirming that not only is a different Europe possible but inevitable."[51] The reference to a 'different' Europe by these parties stands for the forgotten Europe.

In a speech given by the leader of the Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders emphasizes "Europe needs a strong Germany, a confident and proud Germany, a Germany that stands for its culture, its identity and civilization. Europe needs Frauke instead of Angela."[52] Here Wilders makes reference to a similar party in Germany, namely Alternative for Germany, against the Christian Democrats led by Angela Merkel. He speaks of 'Germany' as well as 'Europe' with the aim of underlining a problem sharing rhetoric. Similar arguments are made by Marine Le Pen in attacking Chancellor Merkel, calling her multiculturalism a catastrophe, and accusing her of "letting hundreds of thousands of refugees into the country against the will of the German people." Similarly, Viktor Orban accused Merkel of ignoring public opinion; Matteo Salvini, in downgrading Merkel, and supporting Alternative for Germany, defines the party as 'a fresh and unexpected phenomenon.' The aim of the populists is to support one

another by demonizing the elites of Europe, namely the moderate and center based politicians, whom all the populists consider betrayers.

Populists claim "legitimacy on the grounds that they speak for the people: that is to say, they claim to represent the democratic sovereign, not a sectional interest"[53] like a specific class or group. Fennema and Maussen argue that most of these parties aggressively claim to speak in the name of their nation while excluding their opponents. Their parties are established and flourish in a democratic environment; however, they do not embrace democratic traditions like accountable representation, deliberative character, or mutual respect.[54] They establish their very presence on antagonism. It is this hostility deepening among the masses across Europe, which leads to more and more opposition creating a narrative for that matter. According to Kriesi,

> The mobilization of the potential winners and losers of this new structural conflict between 'integration' (into the European or global community) and 'demarcation' (of the national community) by the political parties is expected to have a profound impact on the national party systems'. Here party alignments are shaped by a new structural conflict whereby the winners and losers of globalization compete over its consequences in politics (a supranational authority challenge), economics (a market liberalization challenge) and culture (an immigration challenge).[55]

The point of 'demarcation' referenced here needs focus. The discourse put forth by the populists is not and cannot be limited within the national frame. Their rhetoric well passes the national, exceeding to a European level. The less they find in common within the nation, the more they adhere to Europe. For instance, Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders argues,

> As the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has said –I quote– "Europe is a community of Christian, free and independent nations. The main danger to Europe's future comes from the fanatics of internationalism in Brussels. We shall not allow them to force upon us the bitter fruit of their cosmopolitan immigration policy," I couldn't agree more.[56]

Viktor Orban argues, "we were organizing border protection at a time when other places [Brussels] in Europe were celebrating chaos and a breakdown of law and order." He further stresses, "as I said two years ago, you can count on me as the captain of your border protection."[57] As seen from this discourse, the leaders perceive themselves as if a holy mission to save Europe has been bestowed upon them, a mission which they must fulfill on behalf of the people of Europe.

Thirdly, the populist right harbors a new dimension of body-politics, bringing a policy of hatred to the center of their strategy. European integration,

A great amount of political party leader discourse focuses on othering, demonizing and fostering hatred, in a radically different counter-narrative to Europe's long-prevailing commitment to liberal values

once created, was intended to compete with certain challenges from outside, to stand stronger together in competing against political and economic challenges. However, starting with the mid-1990s, right wing discourse has argued that the challenge Europe faces comes from inside: the 'enemy within.' For instance, Geert Wilders argues "race riots are not necessarily a bad thing," and, "I want the fascist Koran banned," "no more mosques, no more Islamic schools, no more imams…"[58] In a speech given at the 26th Bálványos summer open university and student camp, Viktor Orbán said:

> What we have at stake today is Europe, the European way of life, the survival or disappearance of European values and nations, or their transformation beyond recognition … We would like Europe to be preserved for the Europeans. But there is something we would not just like but we want because it only depends on us: we want to preserve a Hungarian Hungary.[59]

Matteo Salvini even goes further, arguing that, "if you want to live in peace, you have to prepare for war."[60] This is a very provocative and unusual speech made by a leader of a party calling for a war in order to settle peace in Europe. Europe, known to be a bastion of ideas, progress, freedom, liberty, etc., is currently contradicting with itself. The populist parties here fall into a dilemma. They promise to restore the glory of Europe, defending the ideas of Europe first and foremost with freedom of speech, but give a handful of radical and aggressive demonstrations using 'toxic language.' Their extremist rhetoric has become deeply institutionalized in their political communication. They make great use of the distrust people harbor towards non-Europeans. The policy of hatred holds anti-pluralism in its core and advocates a mono-cultural Europe. The mono-culturalism put forth by these parties has even captured mainstream parties, for instance forcing Angela Merkel to confess that 'multi-culturalism has failed.' For the radical right wing parties, 'diversity' does not have, and never had a real value or richness. The right wing blames the politics of diversity as the main reason for the weakening of European values.

Conclusion

Europe is confronting a new style of political communication. In it, the populist parties present a distinct identification with Europe, and the voices of those who were silenced, for the sake of the well-being of European integration. Clearly the

populist parties are not limited to the ones analyzed in this study; they contribute to a much wider number all over Europe, and, their success prompts other parties as well. There is a rich literature in understanding populism and party discourse, behavior or motivations. However, not much has been written to date on how populist discourse in different European states contributes to a European-wide narrative. As analyzed in the study, the populist parties are re-writing a narrative for Europe. Their aim is to fulfill their responsibility to secure the interests of the 'big family' by protecting European culture and the continent. As outlined in the study, a great amount of political party leader discourse focuses on othering, demonizing and fostering hatred, in a radically different counter-narrative to Europe's long-prevailing commitment to liberal values.

Right wing populist leaders work to institutionalize the dichotomy between European and 'other' produced by the populist discourse. Secondly, they borrow and extend the rhetoric of their counterparts in other European states in order to move their meta-narrative forward through constant repetition, stereotyping and insulting. This political communication is presented as being motivated by an all-for-one ethic, making the story more visible for constant debate. To some degree as an outcome of the first two features, there is a normalizing of the rhetoric and a bringing of a new style to body politics, namely hate speech embedded in a European context. The result is a narration of 'enmity' speaking to the heart of millions. ■

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