



Universiteit Utrecht

The Populist Radical Right vs. the European Union?

On Euroscepticism, Framing, and the Discourse of the *Front National* (2011-2017).



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¹ Source: <http://frontnational19-fr.over-blog.com/tag-Militer-7>

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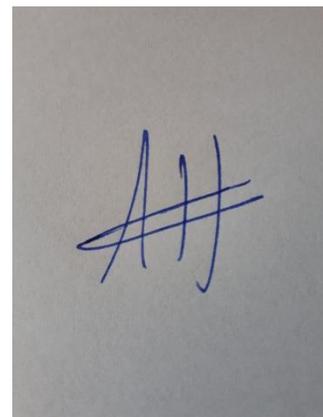
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Abstract

Decreases in popular support for deeper European integration can be traced back to reasons of framing in popular discourse. The presence of populist radical right parties may cause decreases in support for deeper European integration. Firstly, because they have an influence on other political actors and react to the framing surrounding the ideological convergence of mainstream parties and their irresponsiveness vis-à-vis the European Union. Secondly, because populist radical right actors have a considerable influence on people's frame of thought through their discourse. In the first chapter, an overview of the European context in which populist parties were able to establish themselves is presented and the reluctance of nation-states to transfer more sovereignty towards the European Union is analysed against a recent vision surrounding the framing of Germany's role in the EU. In the second chapter, populism and its causes are under scrutiny. A variety of theoretical approaches is presented and criticised, and a proper working definition is deduced. For the phenomenon under study, the ideational approach on populism, most extensively used in the field, proves interesting. Paramount to this chapter is the uncovering of the framing at work at the 'meso-level', crucial in understanding voter mobilisation, although mostly neglected in political analysis. In the light of the populist politicisation of issues (*'issue ownership'*) forcing other political actors to react and thus setting the political agenda, the research focuses on *how* the populist radical right actively constructs fear, essential in understanding why and how these parties are on the rise. The research subsequently identifies and discusses various framing mechanisms that are put against an empirical case in chapter three: the Front National in France. In particular, the discourse of Marine Le Pen with regard to the European Union is analysed during the period 2011–2017 – clustered around two presidential election cycles and coinciding with the Eurocrisis and European migration crisis. A total of 39 speeches are analysed and the interpretation frame Le Pen supplies to her audience is made visual. Although the French experience is unique to the country, framing mechanisms identified and discussed in this study play out broader and in different cases. Ultimately, this research substantiates that the populist radical right *versus* the European Union is in fact a false dichotomy.

Keywords

Populist radical right, discourse, framing, Euroscepticism, European Union, Front National

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Introduction

This study will inquire into the recent wave of European populist movements in the aftermath of the Great Recession (2008). The research will argue that decreases in popular support for deeper European integration in Europe can be traced back to framing mechanisms in popular discourse. Indeed, framing seems to be the answer to the question why, in a Europe in crisis, Euroscepticism – the common denominator of European populist radical right parties – is on the rise, and why deeper European integration cannot be achieved in order to tackle the international crisis at hand. The application of framing theory to this field of study is what makes this research academically relevant and innovative, in as much as semantics influence politics and paradigms.

In the first chapter, an overview of the European context in which populist parties are able to establish themselves will be presented. The research will initiate with the analysis of the relationship between national sovereignty and European integration, with regard to the ensuing form of European policymaking. The theoretical framework proposed by Dani Rodrik, which he calls the “political trilemma of the world economy”, provides appropriate tools for examination. Rodrik states that it is not possible to simultaneously maintain democracy, national sovereignty, and economic integration – pursuing any two of these elements precludes a third.² In light of Rodrik’s Trilemma, it will become clear that the European Union (EU) can be defined as a construction of nation-states economically cooperating with each other, thus overlooking the democratic element. Additionally, while chasing economic integration, it is observed that recently, national authorities struggle to provide answers to the social, economic and cultural shocks that economic integration or globalisation cause. Moreover, socio-economic and cultural ‘shock absorbers’ on a European level are practically non-existent. This poses an existential threat to the project and will be illustrated with an overview of the Eurocrisis (2009) and the European migration crisis (2015).³ Accordingly, the reluctance of nation-states to pool more sovereignty towards the European Union will be analysed against a recent vision surrounding German hegemony of

² Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox: Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist*, pp. 200-205.

³ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, third report, pp. 1-2. The third New Pact for Europe is a publication of a number of leading think-tanks in Europe, such as the King Baudoin Foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, Open Society Initiative for Europe, and the European Policy Centre. Launched in 2013, the report is the result of five years of discussion in more than 120 national and transnational debates on the future of the EU. The report can be found on: <https://www.kbs-frb.be/nl/Search/DocSearchOverview?title=new%20pact%20for%20europe&type=docs>

the EU. In short, why nation-states resist the transfer of more sovereignty to the European stage, which, as the research will elaborate later, is required to develop effective counterweights, will be under scrutiny.⁴

The late political scientist Mair attributes the erosion of mainstream parties' representation to the tension between 'responsibility' (i.e. national governments as responsible to a range of domestic, inter- and supranational stakeholders) and 'representation' (i.e. national governments as representatives for their national citizens, responsive to their concerns).⁵ This results in national governments falling short of the expectations of their electorate in a globalised world. Meanwhile, the failure to have a meaningful debate on the pooling of sovereignty on the European stage leads to the loss of trust in representative democracy, as will become clear in the latter part of the chapter. The Great Recession (2008) and the European migration crisis (2015) proved to be a watershed moment, as the point where European integration and 'contextual' issues such as immigration became highly politicised. After decades of 'permissive elite consensus' in the European integration process, the two distinct crises proved to be a critical juncture. The process (including the EMU and migration trends) became salient and contested issues in the political arena. It will become clear that the ideological convergence of the traditional parties and the framing surrounding their inability or lack of tackling difficult policy issues resulted in a political vacuum.

Populist radical right parties are the only political forces who have effectively positioned themselves vis-à-vis the European Union. Hooghe and Marks argue that a new societal cleavage has emerged along which political support is mobilised: an integration-demarcation or transnational cleavage – beyond the classic left-right cleavage. At the demarcation end, there is the defence of the national culture, national identity, national sovereignty, opposition to immigration and trade scepticism. This is especially important for those who lost from globalisation and sought security in national citizenship – it is this group the populist radical right is able to mobilise.⁶ However, it appears self-evident that the 'losers' of globalisation would support a supranational entity that could mediate their anxieties that stem from global developments. Yet, the opposite is the case: scepticism, suspicion or outright rejection of the European project seems to be a central concern of these citizens. Indeed, in populist radical

⁴ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, third report, pp. 1-2.

⁵ Mair, P., 'Representative vs. Responsible Government' in: I. van Biezen (ed.), *On Parties, Party Systems and Democracy: Selected Writings of Peter Mair*, pp. 586-591.

⁶ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., 'Cleavage Theory Meets European Crises: Lipset, Rokkan and the Transnational Cleavage' in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2018), pp. 1-2.

right discourse, the EU is framed as ‘the enemy’ – Euroscepticism is the common denominator of European populist movements.⁷

The second chapter offers a theoretical account of the populist radical right and Euroscepticism. A variety of theoretical approaches will be presented and criticised. Cas Mudde, a leading scholar on the subject, defines populism as a “thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, which argues that politics should be an expression of the ‘volonté générale’ of the people”.⁸ The fact that in Europe populism manifests itself almost exclusively as populist radical right – with a number of notable exceptions in some regions – will also be under scrutiny. In this geographical case, populism is combined with the radical right ideology: a combination of extreme nationalism or nativism and authoritarianism.⁹ When analysing explanations of the successes of populist radical right parties, a number of scholars, most notably Taggart, Mudde, Eatwell, and Rodrik, propose to think about the populist phenomenon in demand-and supply-factors. Hence, in this research, a distinction will be made between a ‘supply-side’ (i.e. the populist party) and a ‘demand-side’ – the latter signifying the broader context (i.e. macro-level) in which the individual voter (i.e. micro-level) find him/herself or ‘breeding ground’. The macro-level explains why the popular anger (micro-level) is directed at ‘Brussels’ – however, it does not explain the mechanisms at work behind the aversion to the EU (i.e. meso-level).¹⁰ Put differently, the malfunctioning of the EMS, Schengenzone or the European Union as such does not *automatically* result in populist mobilisation, social welfare chauvinism or anti-immigrant attitudes. Rather, citizens live in a world of incomplete information that is difficult to interpret. As a result, many depend on ‘cues’ to make sense of the highly complex world they inhabit.¹¹ The need for these cues is even greater when traditional parties or institutions are unable to mediate the negative socio-economic effects or are responsible for these policy failures.

⁷ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 159.

⁸ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, p. 8.

⁹ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: in: C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ocha Espejo & P. Ostiguy (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 261.

¹⁰ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 97; Rodrik, D., ‘Populism and the Economics of Globalisation’, pp. 22-25; see also: Eatwell, R., ‘Ten Theories of the Extreme Right’ in: P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 45-70.

¹¹ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., ‘A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus’ in: *British Journal of Political Science*, pp. 10-14.

Macro-level theories on the demand-side can explain micro-level attitudes, which create the fertile breeding ground. It is, however, paramount to investigate the dialectic between the demand-side and the supply-side, which is crucial in explaining *why* and *who* actually votes. In particular, it is the meso-level that is crucial in understanding voter mobilisation. The meso-level is concerned with localities to which individuals belong or through which they gain knowledge and norms and is vital to this research. In social psychology, processes of how people come to understand complex situations, activities and mobilise are well-known and are analysed in terms of ‘framing’. Already in 1974, Goffmann defined these frames as the basic elements that organise people’s experiences and helps them process the complexity of the world surrounding them. To Goffmann, frames are an equivalent to schemata and other schemes of interpretation, indicating the importance of existing socially mediated forms that shape people’s perception.¹² Ideology and propaganda, displayed in the discourse of populist radical right parties, offer a frame in which people’s beliefs and anxieties can be articulated and make the complex socio-economic and political reality meaningful.

In this field of research, macro- and micro-level theories are abundant. Many macro-theorists, such as Kitschelt, Rosamond, Kriesi, Swank and Betz, focus on the relation between historical nationalism and a plethora of processes related to modernisation.¹³ These theories remain vague and consider the translation from the macro-level to the micro-level as self-evident. On top of that, macro-level theories are weak with regard to empirical evidence: how exactly does globalisation explain a micro-level action of voting for a populist radical right party? Micro-level theories look at the correlation between individual attitudes and voting behaviour. Scholars such as Van der Brug, Meijerink, De Witte, and Norris mainly focus on populist radical right attitudes, insecurity, and so forth at the micro-level.¹⁴ They provide empirical evidence mainly through electoral studies. However, while they do find correlations, they do not provide causations. Furthermore, these theories *assume* that the ideology of the individual voter is the most important factor in the success of populist radical right parties. In chapter

¹² Goffmann, E., *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, pp. 10-21.

¹³ See: Swank, D. & Betz, H.-G., ‘Globalisation, the Welfare State and Right-Wing Populism in Western-Europe’ in: *Socio-Economic Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 215-245; Kitschelt, H., *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (1995); Rosamond, B., *Globalisation and the European Union* (Basingstoke 2013 256p); Betz, H.-G., *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (1994); H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (2015).

¹⁴ See: Van der Brug, W., ‘Why some anti-immigrant parties fail and others succeed: a two-step model of aggregate electoral support’ in: *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 537-573; Mijerink, F., *et al.*, ‘Right-wing Extremism’ in: *Acta Politica*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 347-359; De Witte, H., Billiet, J. & Scheepers, P., ‘Hoe zwart is Vlaanderen? Een exploratief onderzoek naar uiterst-rechtse denkbelden in Vlaanderen in 1991’ in: *Res Publica*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 85-102; Norris, P., *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (2005).

two, the research explored that populist radical right is not a distinct ideology and should be considered an amalgamation of a number of ideologies (i.e. populist radical right as a ‘thin-centred ideology’).

With an abundance of macro- and micro-level explanations of the success of populist radical right parties and their Euroscepticism, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics behind the meso-level surrounding the European integration debate. These theories provide valuable insights and will be used extensively throughout the research; however, they are insufficient to provide answers to the core of this thesis: the dialectic between the macro-level and the micro-level. Interestingly, only a small number of authors such as Eatwell, Rydgren and Mudde acknowledge the importance of the meso-level¹⁵, yet, research in this field remains scarce, making this research highly relevant. With regard to the framing mechanisms at the meso-level, Mudde states that “the meso-level is the most neglected level of political analysis”.¹⁶

The framing that takes place at the meso-level will be put against an empirical case in chapter three: the Front National in France. According to Mudde, in order to get an understanding of the meso-level, one must look at the supply-side. It is the populist radical right party that discursively frames the macro-level with the micro-level.¹⁷ In particular, the discourse of Marine Le Pen with regard to the European Union will be analysed during the period 2011–2017 – clustered around two presidential election cycles and coinciding with the Eurocrisis and European migration crisis. The choice for the Front National is motivated by the fact that the party is by far the largest populist radical right party in Europe, with estimates of around 83,000 party members in 2014.¹⁸ On top of that, together with Greece, the UK, and the Czech Republic, French citizens view the EU most unfavourably.¹⁹ That makes the Front National the biggest Eurosceptic party and it is thus a relevant subject.

One of the main features of successful populist movements is the emphasis on verbal discourse to supply their audience with a specific narrative.²⁰ That is why the discourse analysis will focus on speeches delivered by Marine Le Pen to FN-militants during the most

¹⁵ See: Rydgren, J., ‘Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden’ in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003), pp. 45-68; Eatwell, R., ‘Ten Theories of the Extreme Right’ in: P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 45-70.

¹⁶ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 217.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁸ Sapin, C. & Galiero, E., ‘Fuite d’adhérents et d’élus au Front national’ in : *Le Figaro*, 28/03/2018, [Online].

¹⁹ Eurobarometer 2018, *Standard Barometer* 89, p. 17.

²⁰ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 259-260.

recent French presidential elections. The decision is motivated by two factors. First and foremost, Le Pen is the ideological kingpin of the party and she has been with FN for more than a decade: Le Pen is president of the party since 2011 and was instrumental in shaping the party's current ideological programme. Second, Marine Le Pen has experience in Brussels and served for a number of years in the European Parliament. That implies that she is well-informed and aware of the policy flaws of the EU, thereby fulfilling the European dimension of this research. As will become clear in chapter two, it is not the actual content of demands that makes up populism, but it is the way they are articulated or framed. Thus, central to the discourse analysis is how Marine Le Pen discursively constructs an interpretative frame where the supranational character of the European Union is the ultimate scapegoat, presented as the root cause of most of France's distresses. The analysis will demonstrate the conscious articulation and construction of an ambiguous narrative of reality, supplied to the masses. Even more so, this research will attempt a visualisation the interpretative frame Le Pen supplies to her audience vis-à-vis the EU. If political agents like the FN are able to bridge the macro-level and the micro level (i.e. what happens at the meso-level), they are able to engage their audience's identity inwards – away from the EU. Preaching Islamophobia is far away from addressing the flaws of the Schengen Accords, for example. The discourse analysis will provide evidence of how the Front National frames these popular concerns. In other words, the evidence will provide a comprehensive assessment of the ways the FN captures popular grievances and how these are eventually framed.

In conclusion, it will become clear that decreases in popular support (i.e. micro-level) for deeper European integration (i.e. macro-level) in Europe can be traced back to reasons of framing in popular discourse (i.e. meso-level). The presence of populist radical right parties may cause decreases in support for deeper European integration because, firstly, they have an influence on other political actors and react to the framing surrounding the ideological convergence of mainstream parties and their irresponsiveness to the European issue. Secondly, because populist radical right actors have a considerable influence on people's frame of thought through their discourse. On the other hand, mainstream political parties from the centre left and right refrain in engaging in the European debate and frame the current status quo as being the only conceivable option. The discourse analysis provides empirical evidence to the question of why Euroscepticism – the common denominator of European populist radical right parties – is on the rise, and why popular support for deeper European integration cannot be achieved in order to tackle the international crisis at hand. Thus,

paramount to this research is the uncovering of the framing at work between the ‘supply-side’ and the ‘demand-side’. Through investigation of the latter – or how populist parties are able to capitalise the grievances of the masses – it will become clear that the populist radical right *versus* the European Union is, in fact, a false dichotomy. The fundamental motives behind popular dissent are ‘hijacked’ or framed by political entrepreneurs, undoing the significance of the criticism of ordinary citizens against the current form of governance of the European Union.

Chapter 1: The European Union in crisis

In this chapter, an overview of the European context in which populist parties are able to establish themselves will be presented. The research will initiate with the analysis of the configuration between national sovereignty and European integration, with regard to the ensuing form of European cooperation. Europe, and perhaps the world at large, is dominated by policy problems that transcend national governance. Hyper-interconnectedness creates a whole new set of challenges such as climate change, international terrorism, mass migration, income inequality, cyberterrorism, unchecked financial liberalisation, uneven distributional effects of globalisation, intensified geopolitical tensions, and more. These pressing issues have become increasingly problematic to be addressed by nation-states – precisely because of their transnational character.²¹ The creation of a truly supranational entity with adequate powers exceeding national sovereignty could provide answers, but potentially render the latter obsolete in the process.²² Instead, the European Union is currently still intergovernmental in nature.

The theoretical framework proposed by Dani Rodrik, which he calls the “political trilemma of the world economy”, provides appropriate tools for examination. Rodrik states that it is not possible to simultaneously maintain democracy, national determination, and economic integration – pursuing any two of these elements precludes a third.²³ In light of Rodrik’s Trilemma, it will become clear that the European Union (EU) can be defined as a construction of nation-states economically cooperating with each other, thus overlooking democratic principles. Additionally, while chasing economic integration, it is observed that recently, national authorities struggle to provide answers to the social, economic and cultural shocks that economic integration or globalisation cause. Moreover, socio-economic and cultural ‘shock absorbers’ on a European level are practically non-existent. This poses an existential threat to the European project as will be illustrated with an overview of the Eurocrisis (2009) and the European migration crisis (2015).²⁴ Accordingly, the reluctance of nation-states to pool more sovereignty towards the European Union will be analysed against a novel vision surrounding German hegemony of the EU. In short, why nation-states resist the transfer of

²¹ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, third report, pp. 1-2.

²² Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox*, pp. 200-205.

²³ *Idem*.

²⁴ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, third report, pp. 1-2.

more sovereignty to the European stage, required to develop effective counterweights, will be under scrutiny.²⁵

He further argues in his book *The Globalisation Paradox* that a ‘global governance’ option (i.e. disregarding the nation-state in the process) could prove a way out.²⁶ On the regional level, the European project has come the closest to a conceptual approach towards achieving such supranationality, but it is still imperfect and not fully integrated. On top of that, calls for deeper European integration are increasingly unpopular, especially in the wake of the Great Recession and the subsequent rise of populism all over the continent. Lastly, the emergence of a new societal cleavage, the transnational cleavage, beyond the classic left-right cleavage, will also be discussed.

1.1 The Political Trilemma of the World Economy

The theoretical framework proposed by Dani Rodrik, which he calls the “political trilemma of the world economy”, provides appropriate tools for examination. Rodrik states that it is not possible to simultaneously maintain democracy, national self-determination, and economic globalisation – pursuing any two of these elements precludes a third.²⁷ The implementation of this framework allows the consideration of the relationship between member states (i.e. national sovereignty), popular trust in democratic entities (i.e. democratic politics) and European integration (i.e. economic globalisation). European integration does not solely centre around globalisation, but economic integration has always been an important catalyst. After all, the initial European Coal and Steel Community was designed to regulate participating nations’ industrial production. The specific alignment between factors mentioned above provides insight into the current state of affairs in the EU in relation to rising populism. This arrangement, whereby nation-states pursue economic integration, can be characterised as the ‘Golden Straitjacket’ – a concept Rodrik borrowed from Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Friedman argues that the ‘Straitjacket’ arrangement results in rapid economic growth and long-term deep economic integration, but while “your economy grows, [...] your politics shrink”²⁸. In a hyper-globalised world, nations are obliged to abide by the rules laid out by international capital: austerity, small government, low taxes,

²⁵ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, third report, pp. 1-2.

²⁶ Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox*, pp. 200-205.

²⁷ *Idem*.

²⁸ Friedman, T.L., *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, pp. 104-106.

flexible labour markets, deregulation, privatisation, the disappearance of social services, and more. If not, international finance loses market confidence, withholds capital and investments, and perhaps leaves that particular nation's economy in disarray.²⁹ Thus, the 'Golden Straitjacket' refers to these 'rules' laid out by international financial markets in order to achieve deep economic integration. Rodrik argues that long-term deep economic integration within the 'Golden Straitjacket' is not sustainable; nor is it tenable that national governments solely pursue economic integration, even if they abide by these rules. Moreover, when times get tough, democracy usually shakes off the straightjacket.³⁰ In other words, there seems to be a fundamental tension between unrestrained globalisation and democracy that precipitates a popular reaction or 'rebellion'; in this case populism.³¹

At first glance, it looks as if the undercurrent of popular dismay can be derived from the unrestricted progression of globalisation.³² The process generated overall higher income gains through a combination of international economic, political, cultural integration, and skill-biased technical progress. However, not everyone has profited from globalisation: there are so-called 'winners' and 'losers' of this profound transformation. The 'losers' had their chances to secure the benefits brought about by globalisation diminished due to poor education, less access to infrastructure, bad health-care, among others. The financial crisis of 2008, hitting the middle class particularly hard, has shown a rise in the number of 'losers'. Median income has stagnated ever since, while the highest income groups saw their share of national income rise.³³ This realisation mobilised many among those affected, and the ensuing disaffection was successfully captured by populist parties.

However, the European story is more nuanced. The macro-context in which populism has been able to flourish can be derived from a particular set of ill-conceived policy areas surrounding the European Single Market (EMS). The Single Market guarantees the free movement of goods, capital, services, and labour, also called the "four freedoms". At its core, it has the aim to drive economic integration and over time to establish a fully integrated EU-wide economy. In the light of Rodrik's trilemma, the Common Market is a clear-cut example

²⁹ Friedman, T.L., *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, pp. 104-106.

³⁰ Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox*, pp. 200-205.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189, Rodrik, D., 'Populism and the Economics of Globalisation', pp. 22-23.

³² See: Swank, D. & Betz, H.-G., 'Globalisation, the Welfare State and Right-Wing Populism in Western-Europe' in: *Socio-Economic Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 215-245; Kitschelt, H., *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (1995); Rosamond, B., *Globalisation and the European Union* (Basingstoke 2013 256p); Betz, H.-G., *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (1994); H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (2015).

³³ Buti, M. & Pichelmann, K., 'European Integration and Populism: Addressing Dahrendorf's Quandary', p. 2.

of the configuration whereby nation-states pursue deep economic integration. Furthermore, Rodrik identifies the European Union as a “halfway house”: a deeply integrated economy with a stagnating governance structure, however, unequipped to moderate socio-economic shocks of deep economic integration.³⁴ Moreover, economist Paul De Grauwe identifies two fundamental flaws of the EMU: Schengen and the monetary union or Eurozone (EMU). “What do [they] have in common?”, he asks. “They’re unfinished business.”³⁵ Accordingly, in public opinion surveys immigration and the economic situation feature in the top three most important issues facing the EU a number of years in a row.³⁶

1.2 ‘Unfinished Business’ I: The European Monetary Union

Initially, the European integration process was conceived as a facilitator for more and better (economic) cooperation and to prevent yet another conflict in Europe. In 1951, Belgium, Italy, West-Germany, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands established the European Coal and Steel Community. Later, in 1957, these six countries also established a free trade zone, the European Economic Community. The prosperity that followed in the 60s and 70s was brought about by horizontal integration of economic complementarities in combination with social democracy.³⁷ A new version of liberalism changed things in the late 1970s. During that time, Europe faced an economic slowdown brought about by a combination of profit squeeze, industrial overcapacity on a global scale, caused by the Oil Shock of 1973. Growth slowed and unemployment rose, resulting in a decline in government revenues while at the same time social spending rose sharply.³⁸

In Europe, as a remedy for the economic slump, neoliberalism was first introduced in the United Kingdom under Thatcher. By raising interest rates and cutting social spending – her now infamous ‘TINA’-politics³⁹ – she created a deep recession with the goal of reducing pressure on prices, wages and demands on import. Thatcher also removed regulations on industry and finance, raising corporate profit rates, and lowered taxes on business and the

³⁴ Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox*, pp. 214-220.

³⁵ De Grauwe, P., ‘The Euro And Schengen: Common Flaws And Common Solutions’ in: *Social Europe*, 12/11/2015 [Online].

³⁶ Eurobarometer 2018, *Standard Barometer* 89, p. 5.

³⁷ Mazower, M., *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, pp. 408-409.

³⁸ Wolf, M., ‘Why So Little Has Changed Since the Financial Crash’ in: *Financial Times*, 04/09/2018. [Online]; Judis, J.B., *The Populist Explosion*, pp. 91-93. See also: Mitchell, W., *Eurozone Dystopia: Groupthink and Denial on a Grand Scale*, (2015).

³⁹ There is no alternative (shortened as TINA) was a slogan often used by the Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. See: Flanders, L., ‘At Thatcher’s Funeral, Bury TINA, Too’ in: *The Nation*, 12/05/2013, [Online].

wealthy in the hope their wealth would ‘trickle-down’ to the society at large. Short-term results were the loss of 250.000 jobs in national industries in the U.K. alone due to massive privatisations, while at the same time cutting social benefits. In other countries, such as France, public spending was increased to keep the economy going. However, with the rest of the world in recession, demand for exports lagged behind, which in turn resulted in large trade deficits. In theory, a competitive devaluation of the national currency could provide solace, but in 1970 the members of the European Economic Community created a European Monetary System that required maintaining the national currency within a fixed rate. With no imaginable alternative available, most European countries went down the neoliberal road of cuts in public spending, capping wages, privatisations and financial deregulation. As a result, economic inequality soared between the top earners and middle-and lower-classes – the latter’s wages stagnated, while the top earners saw their incomes increase, a trend noticeable up to today. This marked the end of the post-war consensus of social democracy and Keynesian economics and was embraced by virtually all mainstream parties. In effect, parties from the left, centre and right all converged ideologically to the mindset that there would be no alternative to free trade, deregulated finance, and globalised capitalism. This left an opening for new parties who were able to pick up the abandoned working-class vote. (see more below).⁴⁰

Around the same time, the European Commission gambled that Europe could enjoy both capital liberalisation and enhanced welfare. With the Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), integration was pursued by intensifying the single market and accelerating trade and financial streams. A common currency was also implemented, for which Member States gave up their discretionary fiscal powers in exchange.⁴¹ Neoliberalism was thereby institutionalised on a European scale: with the Stability and Growth Pact, the members of the Eurozone believed that capping governments’ deficits would limit domestic inflation and would keep the different economies in balance. The Maastricht Treaty also stipulated that the single currency should be implemented from the beginning, without converging the different economies first. Membership was much more advantageous for the export-led Northern economies since the Single Market opened up vast new markets in the Southern periphery. European banks borrowed heavily to the Southern states in order to keep

⁴⁰ Judis, J.B., *The Populist Explosion*, pp. 88-95; Varoufakis, Y., *The Global Minotaur: America, Europe and the Future of Global Finance*, pp. 95-99.

⁴¹ Corbett, R., *The Treaty of Maastricht. From Conception to Ratification: A Comprehensive Reference Guide*, pp. 2-5.

up domestic demand and keep exports from the North going. Unable to devalue their currency, these countries raked up high amounts of debt and lost competitiveness on the world markets.⁴²

Indeed, national budgets and national debts were not centralised in a fiscal union. These elements would prove to be a fatal flaw of the common currency.⁴³ National governments long possessed the means to mediate the negative consequences of globalisation. Within the Eurozone framework, increased public spending (i.e. ‘running a deficit’) was not allowed. At the same time, a competitive devaluation of the national currency is impossible since this would imply leaving the Eurozone. Thus, during a recession, the system gets in trouble: a government’s budget deficit will *automatically* increase, through the automatic stabilisers. Especially countries with weak economies require larger budget deficits and debt increases in order to keep their economies afloat. On the other hand, the financial markets – which, during that time, were fully integrated and deregulated – are able to sell government bonds from one country to another instantly, raising interest rates and pushing countries into even deeper recession and rising unemployment.⁴⁴ On top of that, the EMU did not include mechanisms to support countries who faced a liquidity crisis or who could not access financial markets. In short, when a crisis would strike, no guidelines or rulebook existed for European and national decision-makers to resort to.⁴⁵

In the aftermath of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy late in 2008, all of the weaknesses described above came together in three different dimensions. A first competitiveness crisis slowed down economic growth in most European countries. Later, due to undercapitalisation of banks and their lack of liquidity, many had to be bailed out by governments with public funds. In 2011, a sovereign debt crisis hit countries that could no longer fund their public debt on their own because of rising interest rates on government bonds. These three episodes are what we call the Great Recession, and although not every region in Europe was hit uniformly in causes and manifestations, it had profound economic and political repercussions.⁴⁶ Responses have been slow and the results insufficient to convince the European citizen that

⁴² Hall, P., ‘The Mythology of the European Monetary Union’ in: *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 510-511.

⁴³ Enderlein, H., ‘Why the Euro is a Functional Necessity in the Process of European Integration’ in: *Key Controversies in European Integration*, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁴ De Grauwe, P., ‘The Euro And Schengen: Common Flaws And Common Solutions’ in: *Social Europe*, 12/11/2015 [Online].

⁴⁵ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, pp. 10-11

⁴⁶ Kriesi, H. & Pappas, T., ‘Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction’ in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 1-4.

the EU can meet the fundamental challenges of its time.⁴⁷ Socio-economic inequalities grew larger as austerity, massive layoffs, and the slashing of welfare programmes became the new policy norm (see Rodrik's Golden Straitjacket). Austerity as conditionality for fresh cash in the form of bail-outs has handcuffed national governments and political parties. On the one hand, they badly needed the money from the EU, European Central Bank, and the IMF. Yet, conforming to the neoliberal demands of the 'Troika' means that national governments are unable to provide their citizenry with economic security. The perceived inabilities of the state to limit the socio-economic impacts of the crisis, and by extension of globalisation, have eroded popular trust in governance and democratic institutions.⁴⁸ In other words, the perception of the state's failure to uphold the social contract with their citizenry and the inability of national political parties to respond to new crises opened a window where populist parties are able to offer an alternative vision of representation. Across Europe, old and new populist parties gained traction, 'defending' the weak against the wealthy and powerful and declaring the European integration process a hopeless project.⁴⁹

In short, the European Monetary Union is an unstable, 'halfway house'. Member States lost control over their finances, however without an integrated fiscal union (with a common budget and common debt) or sufficient supranational measures to harmonise Europe's economies.⁵⁰ Additionally, neoliberalism was institutionalised, and the 'minimalist monetary union' was chosen as the path towards integration, pushing back welfare, redistribution and regulating capital, advocated by 'Social Europe'.⁵¹ This undermined Europe's growth and deteriorated popular faith in the Union.⁵² As of today, there are no credible efforts to move towards a working monetary union. If history is set to repeat itself, the Eurozone might very well dissolve, while in the meantime the reluctance to fundamentally reform the EMS keeps fuelling populist parties across Europe.⁵³ Before concluding this section, it is important to add what Jürgen Habermas notes: "in Europe, the overall economic benefits have been reduced, while the welfare state has been dismantled systematically." He warns that: "In the long run, a

⁴⁷ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, W. & Fazi, T., 'Make the Left Great Again' in: *American Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Fall 2017), pp. 75–76; Kriesi, H. & Pappas, T., 'Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction' in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 1-4.

⁴⁹ Kriesi & Pappas, 'Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction' in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 1-4.

⁵⁰ Enderlein, H., 'Why the Euro is a Functional Necessity in the Process of European Integration' in: *Key Controversies in European Integration*, pp. 132 – 133.

⁵¹ Weiler, J.H.H., *The constitution of Europe: "Do the New Clothes Have an Emperor?" and Other Essays on European Integration*, pp. 72, 86-87, 91.

⁵² Tilford, S., 'The Eurozone's Fault Lines' in: *The New York Times*, 14/07/2015 [Online].

⁵³ Wolf, M., 'Why So Little Has Changed Since the Financial Crash' in: *Financial Times*, 04/09/2018. [Online].

loss of solidarity such as this will inevitably destroy a liberal political culture whose universalistic self-understanding democratic societies depend on.”⁵⁴

1.3 Unfinished Business pt. II: The Free Movement of People and the Schengenzone

Already in 1951, when six European countries established what is now the European Union, the free movement of goods, capital, information, and services was envisioned. At that point, the free movement of services supposed free movement of labour, as enshrined in the Treaty of Rome.⁵⁵ Later on, the Treaty on the Single European Act (1992) explicitly defined the concept of free movement as the free movement of persons, i.e. European citizens and all individuals residing legally within Europe’s borders.⁵⁶

This extended definition also implicated a distinction between internal borders and external European Union borders. In 1995, the Schengen Agreement came into force and officially lifted border controls and tariffs, thereby greatly facilitating the free movement of persons, services, and capital. Simultaneously, the treaty also stipulated that the external borders of the union should be reinforced, and should also include common rules on the external border and common rules on visas.⁵⁷ However, this last idea is not always visible in practice: there has been almost no impact in terms of effective border control. At the same time, across contemporary Europe, political discourses have continuously called to curb immigration. Yet, in the aftermath of the Schengen Accords, there has been no negative effect on the numbers of illegal entries and re-entries into the territory: entry checks are rigorously applied in places such as airports and train stations, but along the thousands of kilometres of land and sea borders, these mechanisms are lacking.⁵⁸ Didier Bigo goes further and notes that “it is vital to have a long-term economic and social policy on migration that provides for decent conditions of family unification, equal wages, and pension rights, and cross-border movements facilitated by international agreements.”⁵⁹ There is also an economic argument to be made:

⁵⁴ Habermas, J., ‘Learning from Catastrophe? A Look Back at the Short Twentieth Century’, in: Habermas, J. (ed.) *The Postnational Constellation – Political Essays*, p. 50.

⁵⁵ Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, signed in Rome on 25 March 1957, entered into force on 1 January 1958.

⁵⁶ *Idem*.

⁵⁷ Guild, E., Carrera, S. & Vosyliūtė, L. et al., ‘Internal border controls in the Schengen area: is Schengen crisis-proof?’, Study commissioned by European Parliament, Directorate –General For Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Bigo, D., ‘Immigration controls and free movement in Europe’, in: *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 91, No. 875 (2009), p. 582.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 581.

controlled migration could ease the costs related to Europe's ageing and shrinking population.⁶⁰

However, Member States have no intention to move beyond the conception of an open external border that is 'fully controlled'. This approach allows each State to act more or less as it sees fit. At the same time, migration flows continue unchanged, and the unrealistic technological dream of screening foreigners on an individual basis becomes toxic for the whole of Europe as such. Indeed, Europe looks to align itself more and more with Australian and American practices of extensive surveillance and expulsion; procedures that have been heavily criticised for disregarding basic human rights. Member States have no intention to go beyond the nation-state to meet the broader challenges effectively, with the exception of the institutionalising of police measures. Increasingly, many Member States frame the free movement of people as a loss of control of sovereignty, which supposedly obstructs their national functioning of protecting the state and its citizens.⁶¹

Another crucial element in the story presented above is the Dublin Regulation. The regulation aims to "establish the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national."⁶² In other words, the Dublin Regulation provides mechanisms for rapidly establishing which Member State has the responsibility for an asylum claim and also provides for the transfer of an asylum seeker to that particular Member State. However, in practice the Member State responsible will be the state through which the asylum seeker enters the European Union, resulting in increased pressure on the Schengenzone's external borders. These 'frontline states' such as Greece, Italy, Hungary and so forth, are the main entry points to the EU. According to the Dublin Regulations, they are in charge of processing new arrivals and asylum claims, however, without much compensation. In this story, European solidarity is needed, yet absent: in reality, the responsibilities for bearing the socio-economic and political costs have not been equally shared.⁶³

⁶⁰ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, p. 13. See also: UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) & McKinsey Center for Government, *More Than Numbers: How migration data can deliver real-life benefits for migrants and governments*, 24/01/2018 (Davos).

⁶¹ Guild, E., Carrera, S. & Vosyliūtė, L. et al., 'Internal border controls in the Schengen area: is Schengen crisis-proof?', p. 21.

⁶² Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person.

⁶³ Greenhill, K.M., 'Open Arms Behind Barred Doors: Fear, Hypocrisy and Policy Schizophrenia in the European Migration Crisis' in: *European Law Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2016), p. 319. See also Paoli's account

This research does not have the intention to make proposals on the issue of free movement and immigration but merely wants to point out the repercussions it has for the political and socio-economic cohesion of the continent. The point to be made here is that there is an important tension between a legal system based on openness on one hand, and the unwillingness of Member States to collectively come up with shared, Europe-wide answers. A Fortress Europe within the rule of law would indeed require harmonising criminal law to develop some sort of a European prosecution service in a real European justice system. On top of that, the EU should provide legal avenues for protection seekers to reach Europe and assist them in applying for asylum, as established in a number of international agreements. This would imply transferring more sovereignty to the European level, which Member States simply refuse. Europe presents itself as the bastion of universal liberal norms, the protector of human rights, and the source of an inclusive, cosmopolitan European identity. However, in times of crisis, these commitments look bleak and Member States start playing the blame game – “it’s Brussels fault”, or “it’s the lazy Italians/Greeks’ fault” – while refuting their communitarian duties to liberal norms and humanitarian obligations.⁶⁴

The flaws of this ‘halfway house’ became painfully apparent during 2015, the start of the so-called European migration crisis. About a million of refugees entered Europe during 2015, half of them fleeing the civil war in Syria and about one third from Afghanistan and Iraq seeking political asylum. Because of the malfunctioning of the Schengenzone and the absence of an EU-wide long-term migration policy based on international agreements and human rights, many asylum seekers arrived uncontrolled and under dangerous circumstances. Once they were inside the Schengenzone, refugees were unable to seek rapid asylum in Member States because of the absence of a properly-functioning asylum system. Instead of addressing these flaws, many Member States acted individually and prioritised national interests over European solidarity.⁶⁵ As a result, Member States made themselves more vulnerable to future migration shocks while leaving the underlying structural issues unresolved. Pooled sovereignty means sharing the risk and costs in tough times, as well as sharing the benefits in times of abundance – if these agreements are to work, members must agree to share the costs. On top of that, the prioritisation of the national interest in favour of European solidarity is

on the reluctance of Italy to join the Schengen Agreements, because of the inadequate defence mechanisms of Europe’s external borders. Paoli, S., ‘The Schengen Agreements and their Impact on Euro Mediterranean Relations. The Case of Italy and the Maghreb’ in: ZGEI, Vol. 21 No. 1 (2015), pp. 125-145.

⁶⁴ Ward, M., ‘Why the EU Can’t Outsource Its Migration Crisis’ in: *Politico*, 20/08/2018 [Online].

⁶⁵ Guild, E., Carera, S. & Vosyliūtė, L. et al., ‘Internal border controls in the Schengen area: is Schengen crisis-proof?’, Study commissioned by European Parliament, Directorate –General For Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs, p. 13.

grist to the mill of nationalistic and populist radical right parties. Indeed, in that national context across Europe, the refugee crisis and inadequate response were regularly framed as an EU-orchestrated attack on its inhabitants' cultural identity. The influx of migration would presumably 'swamp' labour markets, social services, and even fracture the 'national fabric'.⁶⁶ In short, "the lack of EU solidarity and absence of a collective response to the humanitarian and political challenges imposed by the influx further laid bare the limitations of common border control and migration and refugee burden-sharing systems that have never been wholly and satisfactorily implemented."⁶⁷

1.4A European Germany or a German Europe?

As discussed above, the entity that we now call the European Union is necessary because all European states, left to themselves, are too small and too weak to survive in the harsh competition between the existing superpowers. Additionally, individual states are unequipped to face the plethora of international crises at hand. However, the European Union, seen in the history of political formations, is an unparalleled and perhaps unintelligible body. In classic Western political thought, processes of states forming associations or confederations are well documented, and cooperation is mostly for purposes of defence and foreign policy – leaving states their autonomy in domestic affairs. The logic is that weaker and smaller states can preserve their independence against larger ones while combining forces and maintaining a close distance between rulers and ruled. In short, the result would be a political union, leaving domestic issues domestic but rendering issues such as defence and migration supranational.⁶⁸

On the other hand, there is the European Union. A strictly economic and technical project, where the path of depoliticised supranational institutions reigns supreme, ruled by technocrats without a mandate, vision or spirit. Institutions in Brussels are turned inwards and regulate aspects that are essentially regional or local, weakening national states without replacing or creating a new political entity. The EU still replicates the framework of economic integration of 1958: the core of the system still consists of a customs union and a common market

⁶⁶ Buti, M. & Pichelmann, K., 'European Integration and Populism: Addressing Dahrendorf's Quandary', January 20 2017. [Online].

⁶⁷ Greenhill, K.M., 'Open Arms Behind Barred Doors: Fear, Hypocrisy and Policy Schizophrenia in the European Migration Crisis', p. 317.

⁶⁸ Mações, B., 'The European Union Needs Its Own Charles de Gaulle' in: *Foreign Policy*, 16/08/2018. [Online].

administered by the civil servants of the European Commission and European Central Bank. All other domains of integration are in function of the former.⁶⁹

With the previous sections of this chapter in mind, it becomes clear that technical rule by bureaucrats is unable to satisfy even the basic economic needs of European citizens. These economic issues are intrinsically connected to larger issues of justice and social dignity, which are domains for difficult political choices. As the European migration crisis illustrated, the European Union fails when it tries to solve political questions with technical solutions. It is then hardly surprising that this framework does not enjoy public support and legitimacy. What is worst is that the path of depoliticisation leaves the door open for national ambitions, framed in the language of internationalism or Europeanism – Germany in this case.⁷⁰

Probably the most explosive dilemma of the twentieth century was the so-called German Question. How to deal with the large German empire that aggressively sought to secure its place in Europe? It is this German policy that led to two major catastrophes of the last century: WWI and WWII. After the Second World War, the allied forces partly dismantled the country and tried to cap its sovereignty. Along with five other nations, West-Germany was included in the Coal and Steel Community – a French effort aimed to dampen their preponderance. However, European integration gave the German wish to dominate a new élan: since 1958, economic integration has been central to Germany's foreign policy. During the decades that followed, the country would univocally support deeper economic integration with the goal of becoming economically the most successful state in Europe. After reunification in 1990, fears of German domination were once again all too real. In response to these fears, Helmut Kohl advocated deeper European integration by conceding the Deutsche Mark in favour of a European common currency. However, on *their* terms: all other EU Member States were obliged to closely align their economies to Germany, framed as 'regaining some economic influence' over the country.⁷¹ Additionally, the Maastricht Treaty and the institutionalising of neoliberalism with the Stability and Growth Pact gave rise to two different interpretations on the Euro: the French wanted discretion and flexibility; the

⁶⁹ Mazower, Z., *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, pp. 408-415;

⁷⁰ Germany's ex-minister of foreign affairs claimed that during the negotiations over Greece in 2015, Germany's pursuit of national interest "cracked" something fundamental in the European Union. See: Fischer, J., 'The Return of the Ugly German' in: *Project Syndicate*, 23/07/2015. [Online]. See also: Kirchick, J., 'Germany Puts Germans First: Berlin's Reverence for Multilateralism is a Thin Veil for its Nationalist Foreign Policy' in: *Politico*, 26/12/17. [Online].

⁷¹ Varoufakis, Y., *The Global Minotaur*, pp. 202-203; Zimmermann, H. & Dür, A., 'A New German Hegemony: Does It Exist? Would It be Dangerous?' in: H. Zimmermann & A. Dür (eds.) *Key Controversies in European Integration*, pp. 234-235.

Germans ordo-liberalism and strict rules; the French calling on solidarity; the Germans insisting on responsibility.⁷²

With the weak economic performances of France and Italy, Germany has become less shy to impose its will onto other nations and let its economic interests prevail. Indeed, during the first years of the twenty-first century, Germany “has gently morphed from a ‘civilian power’ to a ‘geo-economic power.’”⁷³ The Euro crisis is an illustrative case of this hegemony in Europe. The conflicting ideas discussed above clashed during the Euro crisis. On the one hand, there was the view that from the beginning the Euro was doomed to fail, lacking a proper institutional design and the non-existence of economic, fiscal, political, financial, debt, and banking unions. Building these unions, coupled with an economic government and a democratic, legitimate political union, could have prevented or dampened a number of crises Europe experienced.⁷⁴ However, Germany’s political elite preferred focussing on national flaws, and for example, framed the Euro crisis as the ‘Northern saints’ versus the ‘Southern sinners’.⁷⁵ Hard work, high savings, wage restraint and fiscal prudence were presented as features of the ‘saints’, while the South was depicted as lazy, resulting in a lack of competitiveness with low savings, high debt, and fiscal indiscretion. Hence, economic policy at that time was effectively framed in terms of ‘moral hazard’. Consequently, the framing in moral terms that Germany was the financial safe heaven and the others had to ‘pay for their sins’ “allowed Germany to dominate the Eurozone.”⁷⁶

Around the same time, when the public debt crisis hit Greece, the Eurogroup⁷⁷ insisted on a heavy dose of ordo-liberalism and neoliberalism as a remedy: austerity and structural reforms created a deep recession that spread to a number of other countries in Europe’s Southern periphery. Simultaneously, Germany continued to export much more than it imported and

⁷² See: Brunnermeier, M.K., James, H. & Landau, J.-P., *The Euro and the Battle of Ideas* (2016); Mitchell, W., *Eurozone Dystopia*, (2015); Briançon, P., ‘Ex-French central banker: ‘We should never have allowed doubt on sovereign debt’, interview with former Deputy Governor of the Banque de France Jean-Pierre Landau in: *Politico*, 13/06/2018. [Online]

⁷³ Matthijs, M., ‘The Failure of German Leadership’ in: H. Zimmermann & A. Dür (eds.) *Key Controversies in European Integration*, p. 236.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238

⁷⁵ See: Varoufakis, Y., *And The Weak must Suffer What They Must? Europe, Austerity and the Threat to Global Stability*, (2016); Fourcade, M., ‘The Economy as a Morality Play, and Implications for the Eurozone Crisis’ in: *Socio-Economic Review*, Vol. 11, No. 13 (2013), pp. 620-627.

⁷⁶ Briançon, P., ‘Ex-French central banker: “We should never have allowed doubt on sovereign debt”’, in: *Politico*, 13/06/2018. [Online].

⁷⁷ The collective term for informal meetings of the finance ministers of the Eurozone, the EU’s Economic and Financial Affairs Commissioner, the President of the ECB and a representative of the International Monetary Fund. The Eurogroup is mostly an informal body with, however, very large discretionary powers. Hence, the criticisms it faces for its lack of accountability and democratic oversight. See: Smith-Meyer, B. & Heath, R., ‘Eurogroup confronts own deficit: governance’ in: *Politico*, 24/04/2017. [Online].

refused to stimulate domestic consumption and investment. Internally, Germany kept wages down in order to ensure their competitiveness. As a result, domestic demand stagnated and Germany now holds a large balance of payments surplus.⁷⁸ Future research could investigate a possible correlation between the former and the recent electoral successes of populist radical right parties in Germany. Furthermore, Germany's banking sector borrowed excessively to the Southern periphery during the boom and cut all capital when the crisis hit, aggregating the public debt crisis. After all, "Today's rent-extracting economy, masquerading as a free market, is [...] hugely rewarding to politically influential insiders."⁷⁹ On top of that, the powerful German financial minister Schäuble⁸⁰ limited the mandate of the European Central Bank as 'lender of last resort' and dictated a policy of 'austerity for all' for the rest of Europe. In other words, Germany's answer to the Euro crisis was to "run away from its partial responsibility as careless lender to the periphery, and push most of the burden onto Europe's periphery."⁸¹ Even former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer observed the German "desire to transform the Eurozone from a European project into a kind of sphere of influence".⁸² Recently, the framing surrounding the Greek bailout was once again clear when, among others, Council President Tusk tweeted "You did it! Congratulations Greece and its people on ending the programme of financial assistance. With huge efforts and European solidarity you seized the day."⁸³

The German urge to impose its view upon Europe has deeply divided North and South – especially when considering the whole point of Europe was to control the 'German Question'. After this breach of trust, it is unsurprisingly that during the European migration crisis, virtually no other country was on board with Merkel's unilateral 'Willkommenskultur', resulting in yet another divide, this time between East and West.⁸⁴ Member States feel increasingly powerless to make difficult decisions and they may sometimes even feel delegitimized to do so. Meanwhile, supranational institutions have not filled this void and the

⁷⁸ Hall, P., 'The Mythology of the European Monetary Union' in: *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4, p. 511. Germany's federal budget surplus hit a record 18.3 billion euros for the first half of 2017. See: Wolff, G., 'Germany's Government Still Has an Allergy to Investing', in: *Bloomberg Economics*, 14/05/2018. [Online].

⁷⁹ Wolf, M., 'Why So Little Has Changed Since the Financial Crash' in: *Financial Times*, 04/09/2018. [Online].

⁸⁰ Schäuble is described by some as the "intellectual mastermind" behind the neoliberal and ordo-liberal EMU. See: Ewing, J. & Kanter, J., 'E.C.B. Move Is Setback to Greece on Debt Relief' in: *The New York Times*, 04/02/2014. [Online].

⁸¹ Matthijs, M., 'The Failure of German Leadership' in: H. Zimmermann & A. Dür (eds.) *Key Controversies in European Integration*, p. 238.

⁸² Fischer, J., 'The Return of the Ugly German' in: *Project Syndicate*, 23/07/2015. [Online].

⁸³ Tusk, Donald, (@EuCoPresident), 19/08/2018, 23:42. Via Twitter. [Online].

⁸⁴ Matthijs, M., 'The Failure of German Leadership' in: H. Zimmermann & A. Dür (eds.) *Key Controversies in European Integration*, pp. 242-243.

evolution towards a German Europe continues. The question arises, where do national governments transfer sovereignty to? To Brussels or to Berlin? In the light of a ‘Germanic TINA European Union’, the reluctance to hand over more sovereignty is understandable. On the other hand, many populist parties across Europe have proposed an alternative: a return to the nation-state. The organising qualities and vitality of the nation-state are put against supranational ‘oppression’. However, nation-states have perhaps projected their own weakness onto a mirror they call the EU. If the European project were to come to an end, Europeans would find out that the reflection is their own – European problems are *their* problems as well.⁸⁵ Yet unsurprisingly, a weak and apathetic European Union does not inspire popular support.

1.5 The Emergence of a Transnational Cleavage

The Eurocrisis and migration crisis described above are critical because they gave rise to a novel societal cleavage: the transnational cleavage or the integration-demarcation cleavage, beyond the classic left-right cleavage. At the demarcation end, there is the defence of the national culture, national identity, national sovereignty, opposition to immigration and trade scepticism. This is especially important for those who lost from globalisation and sought security in national citizenship – the socio-economic insecure, the unskilled, the uneducated, and so forth. As discussed above, mainstream parties have abandoned these groups and populist radical right parties have been successful in picking up these voters who want to protect the nation-state (and themselves) from transnational shocks. To them, the European Union is such a shock: ruled by ‘foreigners’, diminishing national sovereignty, and a facilitator of immigration which produced economic insecurity.⁸⁶ On the other hand, there has been the internationalisation of economic exchange, migration, and political authority. Indeed, the global elite and mainstream parties from the left and right were able to advance European integration without much democratic scrutiny. After decades of ‘permissive elite consensus’, the two distinct crises proved to be a critical juncture. The European integration process (including the Eurozone and migration) became salient and contested issues in the political arena. As the transnational divide became significant, mainstream parties were compelled to compete on these issues that lie far away from their ideological core, however without much

⁸⁵ Mações, B., ‘The European Union Needs Its Own Charles de Gaulle’ in: *Foreign Policy*, 16/08/2018. [Online].

⁸⁶ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., ‘Cleavage Theory Meets European Crises: Lipset, Rokkan and the Transnational Cleavage’ in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2018), pp. 1-2.

success.⁸⁷ A consequence of mainstream parties using the same arguments and rhetoric as their populist radical right counterparts is that the public debate shifts closer to the latter's ideology (*'Verrechtsing'*). Indeed, populist radical right parties' success should not per se be measured electorally, but in the fact that they are able to set the agenda and dominate public discourse. Another consequence is that by imitating the populist radical right, traditional parties legitimise their illiberal agenda.⁸⁸

The Great Recession and the European migration crisis certainly play an important role in creating the fertile breeding ground for populist parties, but it is not a unique product of those crises. The malfunctioning of representative democracy and party systems is a crucial element as well. The late political scientist Mair attributed the erosion of mainstream parties' representation to the tension between 'responsibility' (i.e. national governments as responsible to a range of domestic, inter- and supranational stakeholders) and 'representativeness' (i.e. national governments as representatives for their national citizens). Since the end of the 1970's, mainstream parties have prioritised responsibility over representing or responding, leaving opportunities for new political forces that pick up new demands from society. The lack of representativeness enabled these new challengers to appeal to the socio-economic demands from the 'unrepresented' – especially within the globalisation 'losers'.⁸⁹

In conclusion, as mentioned above, Rodrik states that a transnational governance structure is required for mediating sustainable deep economic integration, able to be responsible *and* responsive. A true European political federation would have to emerge, he claims, provided with the socio-economic tools to deal with the transnational policy issues mentioned above. If the upward transfer of national prerogatives to a union with a vision and adequate tools does not happen, a democratic counteraction poses a serious threat to the configuration.⁹⁰ This research has explored these dangers with two major crises Europe faces/faced: the Eurocrisis and the European migration crisis. Also, a novel vision on the root causes of the reluctance of Member States to pool more sovereignty was presented, where the role of Germany in the European integration process featured centrally. In the next chapter, an analysis of populism

⁸⁷ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., 'Cleavage Theory Meets European Crises' pp. 14-15; de Vries, C. & Hobolt, S.B., 'When dimensions collide: the electoral success of issue entrepreneurs', in: *European Union Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2012), p. 263; Green-Pedersen, C. 'A giant fast asleep? Party incentives and the politicisation of European integration', in: *Political Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2012), pp.126-127.

⁸⁸ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, p. 29.

⁸⁹ Mair, P., 'Representative vs. Responsible Government' in: I. van Biezen (ed.), *On Parties, Party Systems and Democracy: Selected Writings of Peter Mair*, pp. 586-591.

⁹⁰ Rodrik, D., *The Globalisation Paradox*, p. 231

in Europe and the framing mechanisms behind the phenomenon will be presented. Furthermore, populist framing in relation to the European project will also be highlighted. This approach implies that treating populism as a direct result of European integration would be incorrect and insufficient. With the transnational cleavage theory in mind, it would be self-evident that the ‘losers’ of globalisation would support a supranational entity that could mediate their anxieties. However, the opposite is the case: scepticism, suspicion or outright rejection of the European project seems to be a central rallying point of many citizens.⁹¹ Even more surprising is their support for populist parties. The question arises why these movements advocate leaving the Eurozone altogether, on grounds of a foreign invasion force, while in the previous section, this study has explored the potential of reforming the EMS. And why is Islamophobia a persistent feature within those parties, and is a comprehensive European immigration pact not?

⁹¹ Eurobarometer, *Standard Barometer 89*, p. 13.

Chapter 2. Populism in Europe: the Populist Radical Right

In the second chapter, populism and its causes will be under scrutiny. A variety of theoretical approaches will be presented and criticised, as well as a definition. In Europe, populism manifests itself almost exclusively as populist radical right, with notable exceptions in some regions. In this geographical case, populism is combined with radical right; a combination of nativism, authoritarianism.⁹² An abstraction of the populist phenomenon will also be made building on theories that distinguish a ‘supply-side’ (i.e. the populist party and political opportunity structure) and a ‘demand-side’ – the latter signifying the anger of the masses. The argumentation will be founded upon research that traces the origins of the ‘demand-side’ back to the notion of the EU as a vehicle for nation-states pursuing economic integration. The macro-level explains why the popular anger (i.e. micro-level) is directed at Brussels – however, it does not explain the mechanisms at work behind the extreme forms of aversion to the EU (i.e. meso-level). Thus paramount to this chapter is the uncovering of the framing at work between the ‘supply-side’ and the ‘demand-side’.

2.1 Theoretical approaches to populism

The last two decades, the literature on populism has proliferated greatly. However, with regard to defining populism, still, much academic debate exists. Seminal research done by Lawrence Goodwyn in 1976 serves as a good example of the complexity of studying populism. He analysed populism in North America in the late 19th century. However, his research did not define populism accurately, and as a result, the definition is not of much use outside the geographical and historical context.⁹³ This brief anecdote serves as an illustration of the fact that, in the past, the concept of populism has been applied to a wide range of experiences, without accurately defining the concept.⁹⁴ Indeed, academics have defined populism as a particular type of political movement⁹⁵, describing it as a style⁹⁶, while others

⁹² Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 23.

⁹³ See: Goodwyn, L., *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (1976).

⁹⁴ For an early account of the use of populism to wide-ranging phenomena, see: Ionescu, G. & Gellner, E. (eds.), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (1969).

⁹⁵ See: Lipset, S.M., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (1960/1981); Germani, G., *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism* (1978).

consider populism as a positive force for the development of communitarian democracy and the mobilisation of the people.⁹⁷ Cas Mudde, currently one of the leading scholars on the topic, stresses the need for a definition that is “able to accurately capture the core of all major past and present manifestations of populism, while still being precise enough to exclude clearly non-populist phenomena.”⁹⁸ Summarised, there are four influential theoretical approaches to populism with each its own way of defining the phenomenon: the Laclau approach; Kurt Weyland’s organisational approach; Pierre Ostiguy’s cultural approach; and a broad ideational approach. After discussing these approaches, a definition of populism will also be presented.

In 1970’s, Argentinian academic Ernesto Laclau wrote his influential book *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, and Populism*. It is one of the first comprehensive efforts in theorising the populist phenomenon. Building on the ideas of Italian Marxist Gramsci, Laclau and his wife Mouffe developed a theory of liberal democracy as the construction of political hegemonies. Put differently, in their discourse-theoretical approach liberal democracy is seen as problematic. On the other hand, radical democracy is considered the solution and populism is essential in achieving it. In other words, the Laclau approach considers populism as the essence of politics; populism is considered to be a radical and emancipatory force with the aim of changing the status quo.⁹⁹ However, Laclau’s theory is abstract and results in a vague and malleable conception of populism, losing much of its analytic utility.¹⁰⁰

The organisational approach defines populism as a particular type of popular mobilisation. In this theoretical framework, developed by Kurt Weyland, populist leaders relate directly to their followers, which is a result of the lack of a formal organisation or the choice to circumvent any type of formal organisation. Charismatic leadership and opportunistic personalism are at the core of the organisational approach. In other words, populism is treated as a political strategy in which weak organisational features create political opportunity.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ See: Mair, P., ‘Populist Democracy vs Party Democracy’ in: Y. Mény & Y. Surel (eds) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge* (2002), pp. 81-98.

⁹⁷ See: Laclau, E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism and Populism* (1977).

⁹⁸ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 5.

⁹⁹ See: Laclau (1977); Laclau, E., *On Populist Reason* (2005); Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C., *Hegemony and Socialist Theory: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985).

¹⁰⁰ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective to Democracy?*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰¹ See: Weyland, K., ‘Neoliberal populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe’ in: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1999), pp. 379-401; Weyland, K., ‘Clarifying a contested concept: populism in the study of Latin American politics’ in: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), pp. 1-22; Weyland, K., ‘Populism: A

The weakness of this approach is that the features described above are not defining features of populism. Empirical research has shown that charismatic leadership and weak party structures are not necessary conditions for electoral breakthrough, although they are featured regularly.¹⁰²

A third theoretical approach of populism is the socio-cultural approach, put forward by Pierre Ostiguy. He looks at populism through the lens of a high-low axis that consists of two sub-dimensions: the socio-cultural dimension and the political-cultural dimension. The former “encompasses manners, demeanours, ways of speaking and dressing, vocabulary, and tastes displayed in public.” The latter dimension refers to “forms of political leadership and modes of decision-making.”¹⁰³ Populism ranks low on both the socio-cultural and the political-cultural axes and is consequently defined as “the flaunting of the low”. Put differently, the approach looks at a socio-cultural component, combined with a sociological dimension that according to Ostiguy has been neglected in the literature on populism. It also tries to give an explanation for the reception of populism in a society – mainly for social-cultural historical reasons.¹⁰⁴

Lastly, there is the ideational approach that looks at populism in terms of discourse and ideology, and stresses the importance of ideas.¹⁰⁵ The pioneer of this approach, British political theorist Margaret Canovan, published her seminal work *Populism* (1981) at the beginning of the 1980s. In her empirically wide-ranging book, she attempted to present a comprehensive overview of all typologies of populism. Canovan also identified a number of key ideological elements of the ideational approach: ideology, the people, the elite, and general will.¹⁰⁶ In the end, however, she denounced identifying a populist ‘gist’; according to Canovan populism is “not reducible to a single core.”¹⁰⁷ In line with Canovan, Mudde defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the ‘volonté générale’ of the people.”¹⁰⁸ This

Political-Strategic Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 48-69; Roberts, K.M., ‘Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organisation in Latin America’, in: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2006), pp. 127-148.

¹⁰² Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Parties in Europe*, pp. 260-273.

¹⁰³ Ostiguy, P. ‘The High and the Low in Politics: A Two-Dimensional Political Space for Comparative Analysis and Electoral Studies’, *Kellogg Institute Working Paper No. 360*, pp. 5-9. [Online].

¹⁰⁴ Ostiguy, P., ‘Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 74-93.

¹⁰⁵ Mudde, C., ‘Populism: An Ideational Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 28-29.

¹⁰⁶ See: Canovan, M., *Populism* (1981).

¹⁰⁷ Canovan, M., *Populism*, p. 298.

¹⁰⁸ Mudde, C., ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’ in: *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2004), p. 543.

approach is valuable, because it enables conceptualisation of the phenomenon and the distinction between populism and non-populism. Furthermore, the definition can also be applied over time and space, or geographically and temporally specific. Lastly, the approach is versatile and can be applied to a variety of conceptual levels within the populist phenomenon – the ‘demand-’ and ‘supply-side’ in particular (see below).¹⁰⁹ That is why the ideational approach of populism is most extensively used in the research today, and as such, this research will build upon this theoretical framework to study the phenomenon.

However, an important critique this research will take into account is that the ideational approach does not explicitly highlight the construction of key concepts as ‘the people’ or ‘the elite’ – these are more or less taken for granted. Moreover, the question of *how* populism is able to discursively construct and represent ‘the people’ is left blank, essential to this research (see more below). This research – in line with scholars as De Cleen, Stavrakakis, and Katsambekis – has suggested the use of the Laclau approach or the discourse-theoretical definition in combination with the ideational approach. The strengths of the ideational approach (see above) are included for its ability to define the content of populism properly. However, it falls short in clarifying *how* the populist demands are formulated. On the other hand, the theoretical framework proposed by Laclau approaches populism very narrowly – politics and populism are synonymous and the question arises how to distinguish between the two concepts. Yet, an important and valuable element of the discourse-theoretical approach is its use of discourse theory. Discourse theory approaches political projects as a discursive struggle for hegemony, whereas hegemony is defined as the fixation of meaning. The essences are the questions of *how* political projects attempt to make their views prevail, and *how* they produce a structure of meaning through the *articulation* of existing discursive elements. Articulation is central since it refers to the way political projects combine existing discursive elements in a particular way and construct these into an original structure of meaning.¹¹⁰

Populism rarely travels alone; when studying populism it is important to identify what it travels with. In line with the above, scholars of the ideational approach such as Stanley,

¹⁰⁹ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective to Democracy?*, pp. 9-10; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 23.

¹¹⁰ De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 343-347; See also: Torfing, J., *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, pp. 36-38; Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C., *Hegemony and Socialist Theory: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, pp. 105, 113-114.

Freeden¹¹¹, Taggart, Mudde, and others, argue that populism should be regarded as a ‘thin ideology’. This ‘thinness’ is a product of the vagueness and plasticity of its core concepts, which allow it to be combined with a variety of ‘thick’ ideologies, such as nationalism or socialism, that *articulate* more specific content to it (see articulation, as described above). Moreover, treating populism this way solves the problem of how to account for the variety of political content associated with manifestations of populism. At the same time, it also illustrates the dependent relationship of populism on ‘fuller’ ideologies that project a more detailed set of answers to key political questions. Just like other ideologies such as socialism and nationalism, populism depends on a divide between the people and the elite. But in contrast to other ideologies that define societal divides in racial, ethnic, or socio-economic terms, the fundamental divide within the populist ideology is based on the concept of morality. In other words, the people are ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’, while the elite is ‘corrupt’. ‘The people’ is interpreted as a homogeneous group which makes the ideological divide possible. It also allows the assumption that ‘the elite’ was once part of the homogenous group, but decided to betray ‘the people’. However, in reality, how ‘the people’ is defined by populists depends on the ‘host’ ideology – the populist ideology hardly defines ‘the people’ as ‘pure’. It is the host ideology that articulates specific meaning to key features, for example, the ‘nation’ in the case of national populism. The same mechanisms are at work when defining ‘the elite’: according to the populist ideology, the elite is defined as ‘corrupt’. In practice, we note once again that the moral division is ideologically translated or articulated depending on the host ideology.¹¹²

Closely linked to the homogeneous notion of the people, is the concept of the ‘general will’. Since the people are homogeneous, their interests and preferences are all the same; policy thus ‘logically’ equals the will of the people. Additionally, populist policies are based on ‘common sense’, and as a consequence, anyone opposing common sense is, by definition, part of the corrupt elite. Furthermore, policies proposed by the elite – which does not per se follow ‘common sense’ – is dismissed by denouncing the elite as serving ‘special interests’.¹¹³ An example of this mechanism is the fact that in Europe xenophobic populists define the people in ethnic terms, excluding immigrants as ‘alien’ or ‘other’, but the elite is not part of another

¹¹¹ In more recent work Freedon (2003) distinguishes between “macro”-and “micro”-ideologies, which broadly relates to his earlier distinction between “thin” and “thick” ideologies. For the clarity of this study, I will continue to use his earlier distinctions made in Freedon, M., *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1998). See also: Heywood, A., *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (2012); Taggart, P., *Populism* (2000).

¹¹² Mudde, C., Populism: an Ideational Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 30-33.

¹¹³ *Idem*.

ethnic group. However, according to the populist logic, the elite's policies favour the interests of immigrants, thus betraying 'the people' or serving 'special interests'.¹¹⁴ In short, populism revolves around the societal antagonism between 'the people' and 'the elite'. In order to connect the range of demands and identities of 'the people', populists mobilise and simultaneously reinforce dissatisfaction with 'the elite' for frustrating and endangering the range of demands and identities, real and/or perceived. The specific way populist political projects articulate those demands depends on the 'host' ideology or the articulation of a diverse range of other discourses. The chameleonic nature of populism also means that its articulation is fundamentally influenced by its political, historical, socio-economic, and geographical context.¹¹⁵

2.2 Populism in the European Union

In Europe, the majority of political parties is older than its electorate; Conservatives, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, or Liberals, and others existed before the Second World War. The post-World War II period sees the emergence of two new party families: the Greens and the populist radical right, of which the latter is by far the most successful of the duo.¹¹⁶ As we have seen before, the post-war period consensus of social democracy, the welfare state, the commitment to a mixed economy, and the rise of mass parties were challenged by those two new political forces. First, in the 1970s and 1980s, the former group of new political movements objected to the post-war consensus by proposing a mix of leftist egalitarianism and environmental policies. It was, however, a new kind of libertarianism, in the form of neoliberalism, against the extension of the state that became dominant in the 1980s. Consequently, neoliberalism was embraced by all established parties, and sold to the public as 'TINA' politics. During this period, the continent experienced old and new transformations, ranging from globalisation, the convergence of mass parties, European integration, mass immigration, and so on. In the political arena, the ideological convergence from (centre-)left and (centre-)right left an opening for populists that manifested themselves more and more

¹¹⁴ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁵ De Cleen, B., 'Populism and Nationalism' in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 342-347. See also: Stanley, B., 'The thin ideology of populism' in: *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2008), pp. 95-110; Stavrakakis, Y. & Katsambekis, G., 'Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of Syriza' in: *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2014), pp. 119-142.

¹¹⁶ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 1-2.

openly during the 1990s.¹¹⁷ This new wave of political movements combined radical right ideology with populism and reacted against the alleged corruption and collusion of the established political parties while focussing on issues of immigration, nationalism and law and order. Although the populist radical right is not a new phenomenon – already in the 1970s a number of these parties were established – only as recent as the late 1980s and 1990s populist movements become truly pertinent in European politics.¹¹⁸ Empirical evidence illustrates the recent and sudden rise of populist radical right parties – from below 5 percent of the vote in the late 1980s to more than 20 percent by 2011-2015.¹¹⁹ Some populist radical right parties have even been included in governments in countries such as Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and so on.¹²⁰ Although the populist radical right is by far the most common and most relevant populist movement in Europe, it is important to note that in the aftermath of the Great Depression a small number of populist radical left parties have been established, with SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain as main examples.¹²¹

As mentioned above, populism in Europe manifests itself predominantly in the radical right form (with some notable exceptions). In contrast, populism in Latin America is generally of the left-wing variant. What explains this discrepancy? In short, in Latin-America immigration or cultural matters are not salient issues. On the other hand, a number of economic crises going back to the 1970s brought severe income inequality and austerity to the region. As a result, economic equality and the strengthening of the political participation of the poor, lower classes are hot topics. That is why in that geographical region populist movements can mobilise more easily along the income/socio-economic cleavage, which results in left-wing populism – the result of populism combined with other discourses or ideologies. Europe has experienced a great amount of immigration since the importation of labour forces in the 1960s and the post-colonial period. This made it easy for populist radical right parties to mobilise along the ethnonational divide, and support rose even more once socio-economic issues became more salient. In that regard, the Great Depression and the immigration crisis created the perfect storm for successful mobilisation for populist radical right parties in contemporary Europe (see transnational cleavage discussed above, and see

¹¹⁷ Even though each country has its idiosyncrasies, roughly the same socio-economic, ideological and political factors explain the rise of populist radical right parties across Europe, see: Betz, H.-G., *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (1994); Kitschelt, H., *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (1995); Carter, E., *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* (2005); Norris, P., *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (2005).

¹¹⁸ Taggart, P., *Populism*, pp. 73-82; Judis, J.B., *The Populist Explosion*, pp. 89-91.

¹¹⁹ Rodrik, D., 'Populism and the Economics of Globalisation', figure 5, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Mudde, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 34-35.

¹²¹ Taggart, P., 'Populism in Western Europe' in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 254-256.

section 2.4). A counter-example is the prevalence of populist left parties in Greece and Spain. Both countries were severely hit by the sovereign debt crisis of 2011 and were put under strict austerity by the 'Troika'. During that time, immigration has not gained salience in the national and political context. However, in a later stage when the European migrant crisis erupted, factions such as Golden Dawn have instrumentalised the issue.¹²² As a result, in that particular region, the socio-economic divide prevails, which results in the predominance of populist left-wing parties.¹²³

2.3 Defining populist radical right parties in Europe

First and foremost it is important to define populist radical right parties. To eliminate confusion surrounding the term, Mudde proposes that "the term *radical* is defined as opposition to the values of liberal democracy, while *right* is defined as the belief in a natural order with inequalities."¹²⁴ As mentioned above, a populist movement gets its substance from a 'host' ideology, in this case, radical right, which consists of a combination of authoritarianism and nativism.¹²⁵ Central to the radical right is a core of exclusionary ethnic-cultural nationalism or nativism. Authoritarianism is based on a notion of a strictly ordered society and is translated by populist radical right parties into the importance of 'law and order' issues.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the populist radical right signifies a populist form of the radical right, which is why *populist radical right* is preferred over *radical right populism*.¹²⁷ Henceforth, this research will use the term populist radical right, indicating political parties with a core ideology that consists of a combination of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. On top of that, it is important to add three more elements for clarification. Firstly, as mentioned above, the populist radical right is a specific form of nationalism. As a result, all populist radical rightists are nationalists, but not all nationalists are populist radical rightists. The timeframe here is post-WWII, meaning that historic (non-xenophobic or liberal) nationalist movements and elitist nationalist movements in Europe are excluded. On top of that, political representation is still predominantly organised on a national level, thus most

¹²² Important to note is that Golden Dawn does not fit the populist radical right label entirely, mainly because of its anti-democratic and neo-Nazi tendencies. See classification scheme in: Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 21, 52.

¹²³ Rodrik, D., 'Populism and the Economics of Globalisation', pp. 22-27.

¹²⁴ Mudde, C. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 26-27.

¹²⁵ Betz, H.-G., 'The Radical Right and Populism' in: *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, pp. 95-99; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, pp. 205-206.

¹²⁶ Altemeyer, B., *Right Wing Authoritarianism*, pp. 151-153; Mudde, C. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 26-27.

¹²⁷ Mudde, C. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 24.

radical right populist actors operate within a national context. As a result, it is not surprising to note that nationalism is the most prominent ‘host’ ideology – including for populist radical right and most Latin American populisms.¹²⁸ Secondly, the radical right differs fundamentally from the extreme right (ex. National Socialism), which is anti-democratic and opposes the fundamental principle of popular sovereignty. The radical right is at least nominally democratic, in spite of the fact that they oppose elements of liberal democracy (‘the will of the people’ is, for example, a democratic principle). Lastly, the populist radical right is a specific form of the broader radical right, which has not always been populist. Populism is not at the core of radical right parties per se; rather they represent a particular and historically specific manifestation of an older manifestation of the radical right in Europe. An example is the Belgian Vlaams Belang, initially a nonpopulist radical right party, although in a later stage the party adopted populism.¹²⁹ Put differently, populism is certainly a defining feature of the radical right in contemporary Europe, but even today nonpopulist or even elitist radical movements exist, albeit not prevalently or relevantly today.¹³⁰ What is interesting is the populist radical right parties’ successful adoption of populist discourse and combining it with an authoritarian and extreme nationalistic or nativist discourse. Hence, the xenophobic nature of European populism can be derived from a specific definition of the nation that relies on an ethnic and chauvinistic conception of the people (see below).¹³¹ Prime examples of populist radical right parties in Europe include the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), Lega in Italy (previously known as Lega Nord), the Belgian Vlaams Belang (VB), and the Front National in France (FN, currently named Rassemblement National). In the following segment, an overview of how the populist radical right articulates its programme will be presented.

¹²⁸ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 11-31; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, pp. 205-206.

¹²⁹ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 49.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-31; Mudde, C., ‘Populism: an Ideational Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 40-41. De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ In: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 342-362.

¹³¹ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 34; Eatwell, R., ‘Introduction: the New Extreme Right Challenge’ in: C. Mudde & R. Eatwell (eds.) *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, pp. 7-9.

2.4 Ideology in relation to issues of mobilisation

Each populist radical right actor emerges because of a particular set of grievances, reflected in its choice of ideology. This, in turn, affects how populist projects define ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’. In contemporary Europe, national political contexts are heavily influenced by regional or global developments, for example, the overarching political structure of the European Union. In fact, the European Union shapes much of national politics, including populist politics, which is why virtually all populist parties in Europe are Eurosceptic (see more below).¹³²

In this section, an overview will be presented on the issues around which populist radical right parties mobilise support. As discussed above, each populist actor emerges because of a particular set of grievances present (i.e. fertile breeding ground), which is reflected in its choice of ideology in order to effectively capture and capitalise these grievances. This, in turn, affects how populist projects define ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’. The definition provided by the ideational approach states that the populist ideology considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, based on morality. In this case, the articulation of the populist radical right worldview depends on three key ideological features: a combination of nativism and populism, and to a lesser extent authoritarianism. The authoritarian element punishes and excludes people that deviate from the norm. However, it only plays a role when the distinction is made between the ‘good people’ and criminals and other deviants from the norm. The populist radical right is first and foremost associated with extreme nationalistic (i.e. nativist) politics that revolve around the identity, interests, and sovereignty of the nation. This particular manifestation of populism also stresses exclusionary nationalist demands in combination with national sovereignty against larger state structures.¹³³ More precisely, two important exclusionary nationalist or nativist demands are articulated with populism. Firstly, the nationalistic articulation of populist demands of exclusion of certain groups from the nation, from the nation-state, and from political decision-making power. Secondly, the nationalist demands articulated through populism with regard to the sovereignty of the nation and its right to its own nation-state, as

¹³² Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 23; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 158-180; Vasilopoulou, S., ‘The Radical Right and Euroscepticism’, in: J. Rydgren (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, pp. 136-137.

¹³³ De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ In: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 342-362.

against for example supra-national bodies such as the European Union.¹³⁴ Before going deeper into the issues that populist radical right parties capitalise on, it is helpful to define the dominant host ideology, nationalism, through use of the discourse-theoretical approach. Since the ideational approach takes concepts such as ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ as a given, it is paramount to highlight the construction of these key concepts.

Fundamentally, nationalism is a discourse structured around the nation or a specific group of people. Here, the nation also refers to ‘the people’, whereas other signifiers such as land, state, and culture acquire meaning in relation to the signifier ‘the nation’.¹³⁵ Nationalism is furthermore structured around in/out groups that ultimately construct a national identity or, as Anderson famously labelled it, “imagined communities”.¹³⁶ The question remains how exactly nationalism divides human species in exclusive groups. First of all, the nation is constructed as limited: the nation can only exist through the distinction between one nation and other nations, and between members of the nation and non-members of the nation (belonging to another nation). Secondly, the nation is constructed as an organic community or at least it feels like one. Members of the nation will never actually meet or know each other, but nevertheless in the discursive construction all members of the nation are considered to be part of that imagined community. Thirdly, the nation is constructed as sovereign – even the state’s legitimacy is dependent on its representation of the nation. As a result, the nation has the right to take decisions independently, based on its self-proclaimed sovereignty.¹³⁷

With the above in mind, we can combine the insights from the discourse-theoretical framework with the definitional strength of the ideational approach. The fundamental societal divide is the antagonism between ‘the good’ and ‘the bad’ and stems first and foremost from exclusionary nationalism or nativism. As such, ‘the people’ is defined as a sub-group of the ethnic-culturally defined nation: ‘the ordinary people’, ‘the people-as-underdog’ or ‘natives’. When populist radical right parties claim to talk in name of ‘the people’, they only speak for

¹³⁴ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 158-180; Vasilopoulou, S., ‘The Radical Right and Euroskepticism’, in: *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, pp. 136-137; De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 349.

¹³⁵ Day, G. & Thompson, A., *Theorising Nationalism: Debates and Issues in Social Theory*, pp. 13-17; Jenkins, B. & Sofos, S.A., ‘Nation and nationalism in contemporary Europe: a theoretical perspective’ in: B. Jenkins and S.A. Sofos (eds.), *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, pp. 9-11.

¹³⁶ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, pp. 6-10.

¹³⁷ Day, G. & Thompson, A., *Theorising Nationalism*, pp. 13-17; Jenkins, B. & Sofos, S.A., ‘Nation and nationalism in contemporary Europe: a theoretical perspective’ in: B. Jenkins and S.A. Sofos (eds.), *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, pp. 9-11; Sutherland, C., ‘Nation-building through discourse theory’ in: *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2005), pp. 185-186; Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, pp. 7-10.

what they consider members of the nation and exclude all others. Even though large parts of outgroups (migrants, descendants from migrants and other national outgroups) have similar socio-economic backgrounds, they are excluded from the sub-group: national citizenship does not imply ethnic-cultural belonging. At the same time, ‘the people-as-underdog’ are pitted against national outgroups. For example, populist radical right parties claim that ‘ordinary people’ are the prime victims of the multicultural society; they live in poor social housing areas with high ‘immigrant crime’, and letting in more asylum seekers will even more deteriorate their social benefits. The socio-economic dimension plays an important role, but is subordinate to exclusionary nationalist demands. In other words, the core of the issue might be socio-economic; however, the populist radical right provide ‘the people’ with an identity as underdog using exclusionary nationalist demands. As a result, ‘the people’ is pitted against migrants and other national outgroups. The articulation of populism and nativism enables the legitimization of exclusionary nationalist demands: populist radical right parties claim to represent the will of ‘the silent majority’ or ‘the people’, allowing them to fend off criticism that their demands are racist or undemocratic.¹³⁸

‘The elite’ also acquires meaning through articulation with exclusionary nationalism. Technically speaking, ‘the elite’ is part of the ethnic-cultural nation – however, they are considered illegitimate because of their stance on immigration and the multicultural society. More precisely, the *political* elite (including intellectuals, artists, journalists, and so forth) supposedly betrayed ‘the people’ (as the nation and as the ordinary people) by advancing rights of foreigners and not representing the ‘volonté générale’. Interestingly, when defining ‘the elite’, we notice that a socio-economic dimension is once again present. Nevertheless, for the populist radical right, nativism is the dominant signifier and as such, socio-economic cleavages are articulated in exclusionary nationalistic terms. For example, ‘the elite’ are supposedly out of touch with ‘the ordinary people’ because of their privileged socio-economic status; ‘the elite’ do not suffer from the multicultural society and they betray the ‘common people’ by advancing migrant rights. The fact that the national economic elite is considered

¹³⁸ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, pp. 16-17; De Cleen, *Populism and Nationalism*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 348-350; see also: De Cleen, B. & Carpentier, N., ‘Contesting Extreme Right Populism Through Popular Culture. The Vlaams Belang and the 0110 Concerts in Belgium’ in: *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2010), pp. 175-196; Rydgren, J., ‘The Sociology of the Radical Right’ in: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 33 (2007), pp. 241-262.

central to national prosperity illustrates the ideological dominance of exclusionary nationalism over socio-economic cleavages.¹³⁹

Summarised, the ‘us/them’ or ‘in/out’ distinction is based on identity politics. To construct a native identity, one must delineate the boundaries with other identities or non-natives. Since the populist radical right divides the world based on morality, the ‘other’ is demonised. On top of that, the construction of the in-group remains vague, and is mostly defined through the description of outgroups. In order to construct the in-group, one must construct the outgroups. ‘Othering’ is “the process whereby a group of people establishing a sense of their own identity creates a hostile image of a second group which embodies all the characteristics and features the first group most dislikes and fears.”¹⁴⁰ Mudde notes that the use of politics of fear by populist radical right parties plays an important role in homogenising the in-group and polarisation against outgroups. This becomes clear when looking at their propaganda, where ‘enemies’ are far more prevalent than friends. Indeed, the majority of the populist radical right discourse is based on politics of fear.¹⁴¹ In that sense, the occurrence of crises (real or perceived) is essential to populist radical right parties. That is why this research will investigate *how* the populist radical right constructs fear, essential in understanding why and how these parties are on the rise.¹⁴²

All populist parties construct their programmes against the societal divides of the context they finds themselves in. Depending on the salience of a given issue for their base, populist parties are able to mobilise political support. Hence, there are two major societal cleavages: an ethno-national or cultural divide and an income/social class cleavage (i.e. the wealthy corrupt elites).¹⁴³ The salience of the issue, together with the national and political context, determines support for political mobilisation. Important to note is that the cleavages can be overlapping, depending on the context, as the research has illustrated with the emergence of the integration-demarcation or transnational divide. Historically, in Europe the range of issues is mainly framed in radical right terms, or political support is more easily mobilised along the ethno-national cleavage. However, after the subsequent crises discussed in chapter one, there seems to be more and more of an overlap between the cleavages. The combination of the political context and the ideological convergence of the traditional parties enables the populist

¹³⁹ De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 350-351.

¹⁴⁰ Tosh, J., *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, p. 244.

¹⁴¹ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴² Wodak, R., *The Politics of Fear: What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴³ Rodrik, D., ‘Populism and the Economics of Globalisation’, p. 26.

politicisation of issues to construct an agenda and to bring issues into wider contestation. This forces other political parties to react: the reaction it engenders in other actors is the real importance of populist parties. In effect, by appropriating issues they are able to set the political agenda. For every populist radical right party, the range of issues differs; however, four issues can be distinguished as cornerstones for this manifestation of populism: immigration, regionalism, corruption, and European integration.¹⁴⁴

2.5 The populist radical right and Euroscepticism

Until the end of the 1980s, Euroscepticism was a relatively marginal phenomenon. Some populist radical right parties were even in favour of European integration, albeit mostly on economic grounds.¹⁴⁵ However, after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty that redefined the European Union not only as an economic but also as a political project, the issue of European integration gained salience. This has roots in the collapse of the ‘permissive consensus’-nature of the process and consequently, European integration became politicised in the domestic arena. The series of crises the continent faced from 2008 onwards only fuelled Eurosceptic feelings – to the point that the United Kingdom even decided to leave the bloc.¹⁴⁶ The reasons behind Euroscepticism are diverse: ranging from the loss of national identity, the expansion of responsibilities of the EU, the imbalance between the EU’s institutions, the perceived ‘democratic deficit’, to the open and unfinished character of the EU in itself.¹⁴⁷ To detect Euroscepticism among the populist radical right family might not sound surprising, since European integration, cultural diversity and supranational decision-making runs counter to their nativist ideology.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, the emerging ‘integration-demarcation’ or transnational cleavage, as discussed above, has a significant role in the mobilisation of support. The European issue is mobilised by the populist radical right with regard to improving their electoral successes. This is especially pertinent in a situation where the

¹⁴⁴ Taggart, P. ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 249; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ For example the Front National was initially in favour of a strong European bloc versus the American and Soviet bloc, see: Le Pen, J.-M., *Pour La France: Programme du Front National*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁶ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁷ de Prat, C.R.A., *Euroscepticism, Europhobia and Eurocriticism: The Radical Parties of the Right and Left "vis-à-vis" the European Union*, pp. 31-33.

¹⁴⁸ Vasilopoulou, S. ‘The Radical Right and Euroscepticism’ in: *Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, p. 122.

mainstream parties from the left and right by and large refrain from politicising the European issue to avoid “potential reputational costs”.¹⁴⁹

The result of the decades long ‘permissive consensus’ is a situation of ‘constraining dissensus’, which gave rise to a vacuum on the supply-side of the political spectrum in the debate on the EU. The populist radical right eagerly fills in this void by demonising the European Union.¹⁵⁰ As discussed above, the ideological convergence of the traditional parties led to copycatting the radical right (*‘Verrechtsing’*). This, in turn, results in the perception among citizens, concerned with the current state of the Union, that these parties are equally incapable as the populist radical right to address issues concerning the EU.

Important to note is that Euroscepticism can take different forms: “All who oppose the EU are, in short, sceptics, but not all sceptics are opponents.”¹⁵¹ This means that there are groups who reject the European Union on grounds of the national sovereignty myth and are unwilling to transfer more power to the EU, thus rejecting it. The other side of the spectrum consists of groups who argue that the integration process is not moving quickly enough (for example federalists) or are concerned about the direction of the integration process.¹⁵² As discussed above, all populist radical right parties are to some degree opposed to European integration, explained by the fact that nativism is almost impossible to integrate within a European framework. Additionally, the EU is seen as a complex, disconnected and corrupt elite-driven project – opposition to ‘the establishment’ is a reoccurring ideological feature of these parties. Indeed, ideologically speaking, anti-EU feelings could be considered the common denominator of this party family.¹⁵³ However, the issue is also used strategically: at times, parties exhibit a strong pro-European stance when defining themselves as a ‘white, Christian Europe’ against the ‘Other’, for example the ‘Muslim threat’.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, the European Union is constructed as an easy ‘punching bag’: the EU as an ‘agent of unfettered globalisation’, the EU as a ‘powerless and inconsequential construction’, the EU as an

¹⁴⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁰ See: Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., ‘A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus’ in: *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-23; Whitefield, S. & Rohrschneider, R. ‘The Salience of European Integration to Party Competition: Western and Eastern Europe Compared’ in: *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015), pp. 12-39.

¹⁵¹ Taggart, P., ‘A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems’ in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1998), p. 366.

¹⁵² de Prat, C.R.A., *Euroscepticism, Europhobia and Eurocriticism*, pp. 42-43 ; Taggart, P & Szczerbiak, A., *Opposing Europe ? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, pp. 7-10.

¹⁵³ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 255-261.

¹⁵⁴ de Prat, C.R.A., *Euroscepticism, Europhobia and Eurocriticism*, pp. 57.

‘undemocratic, distant and elitist project’, and so forth.¹⁵⁵ A part of the radical right also opposes the EU’s supranational economic model (i.e. neoliberalism) and advocates a protected domestic market and welfare chauvinism (i.e. welfare only for national citizens). On top of the ethnic-cultural cleavage, more and more populist radical right parties capitalise support along the socio-economic cleavage, especially in the wake of the Great Recession.¹⁵⁶ However, socio-economic issues will always be framed in nativist/authoritarian terms, since nativism is the dominant ideology. Economic anxieties will, for example, be framed as an immigration issue, ‘facilitated’ by the EU. The contemporary populist radical right fares well electorally when linking issues as globalisation, loss of national sovereignty and immigration to Europeanisation.¹⁵⁷

In Europe, the national political context is so heavily influenced by the European Union that it shapes much of national politics, and as a result also populist politics. Especially after the Great Recession and migration crisis, the European dimension has been enormously politicised by populist actors. Immigration, regionalism, corruption and the legitimacy of the integration process itself frequently intersect and at times mutually reinforce each other.¹⁵⁸ In the wake of these crises, the socio-economic and ethnic-cultural cleavages have been merged, producing a new transnational cleavage. Globalisation ‘losers’ (i.e. the people) are pitted against globalisation ‘winners’ (i.e. the elite) through the defence of the national community.¹⁵⁹ On top of that, the inability or the lack of political will of the mainstream parties to address the controversies surrounding European matters, allowed the populist radical right to appropriate the issue successfully. The sum of these issues and its electoral realisations provides a comprehensive understanding of the state of the Union and how it got to this point. Therefore, “populism [...] may be an important barometer of the health of politics in the context in which it arises.”¹⁶⁰ In that light, we can for example now establish that a phenomenon such as Islamophobia is a populist radical right articulation of the malfunctioning of the Schengenzone. To examine *how* that articulation finds fertile ground and effectively mobilises support, we have to aggregate demand and supply factors within the populist radical right.

¹⁵⁵ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁵⁶ Kriesi, H. & Pappas, T., H. ‘Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction’ in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵⁷ de Prat, C.R.A., *Euro-scepticism, Europhobia and Eurocriticism*, pp. 54.

¹⁵⁸ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 249-261.

¹⁵⁹ Kriesi, H. & Pappas, T., ‘Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction’ in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶⁰ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 261.

2.6 Explanations and causes of European populist radical right parties

A number of scholars, most notably Mudde, Eatwell, and Rodrik, propose to think about the populist phenomenon in demand-and supply factors. On top of that, a macro, micro, and meso (see below) differentiation should be made. In short, in a given society where the demand for populism is high, there is fertile breeding ground. However, it still requires credible populist forces. On the other hand, a strong supply of populist actors will not be able to flourish when there is no demand for populism.¹⁶¹

2.6.1 The demand-side

On the demand-side, the macro-layer consists of the socio-economic and socio-political context. Put differently, on the macro level there are societal cleavages present, created or deepened by globalisation processes, such as economic crises or heightened immigration. These create by-products of economic anxiety, political discontent, loss of legitimacy, and so forth on the micro-level or the level of the individual voter.¹⁶² In other words, the demand-side can roughly be equated with a fertile breeding ground for populist radical right parties. However, people expressing their political resentment at the ballot box alone does not sufficiently explain popular mobilisation – it gives an indication of *potential* political mobilisation. Thus, the question remains why people in countries in crisis would vote for anti-systemic or anti-EU parties? In other words, the demand-side explains the fertile breeding ground for support, and is thus a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* factor for mobilisation.¹⁶³ Like all political parties, populist parties are only able to mobilise a part of the group of people that consider voting for them – the supply-side explains more how the populist party operationalises and how it mobilises support. Macro-level theories on the demand-side can explain micro-level attitudes, but we must look to the supply-side that is crucial in explaining voter mobilisation. In particular, it is the meso-level that is crucial in understanding voter mobilisation. The meso-level is concerned with localities to which individuals belong or through which they gain knowledge and norms and is paramount to this research. Mudde

¹⁶¹ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 97; Rodrik, D., 'Populism and the Economics of Globalisation', pp. 22-25; see also: Eatwell, R., 'Ten Theories of the Extreme Right' in: P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 45-70.

¹⁶² Rodrik, D., 'Populism and the Economics of Globalisation', pp. 22-25.

¹⁶³ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 208-210, 230-231.

states that “the meso-level is the most neglected level of political analysis”. In order to get an understanding of this particular level, we must look at the supply-side.¹⁶⁴

2.6.2 External supply-side

The external supply-side is concerned with the broader context or factors that are not inherent to populist radical right parties. These political opportunity structures are defined as “consistent, but not necessary formal or permanent, dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.”¹⁶⁵ The political opportunity structures encompass a mix of political, cultural, institutional factors, and the role of the media.

In Europe, the ideological convergence of the mainstream left and right parties in the face of new developments (globalisation, immigration,...) and issues (for example the environment and the multicultural society) provided important opportunity structures for populist radical right parties. The established parties did not pick up these issues and as a result were incapable to provide answers. The political context looks at the competitive political arena of party politics. Political parties are the elementary linkage between the electorate and political power – the convergence and perceived incompetence of the ‘old’ parties led to anger and frustration among the electorate of these mainstream parties, who in turn supported the programmes of populist radical right parties. Issue ownership thus plays an important role in the political context. Another element, polarisation in the late 1970s and 1980s, also played an important role in electoral successes of populist radical right parties, especially in combination with the ideological convergence of the 1990s.¹⁶⁶

The institutional context of a country is concerned with political and electoral systems (for example, a pluralist system versus a centralist system) that can lead to success or failure of populist radical right parties. As such, the institutional context can be simultaneously an important hindrance and an electoral opportunity. Political and electoral systems do not much determine success or failure; they should be looked at as providers of opportunities or not. In

¹⁶⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁶⁵ Tarrow, S., *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, p. 85.

¹⁶⁶ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 237-243. For more on the importance of supply-side factors see: Carter, E., *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* (2005); Norris, P., *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (2005); Rydgren, J., ‘Is Extreme Right-wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family’ in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 413-437.

other words, the institutional framework should rather be considered as ‘building blocks’ for the strengths and weaknesses in mobilisation than a determinant for success.¹⁶⁷

The cultural context in which populist radical right parties operate can be summarised by the cultural effects of stigmatisation. The more extreme and stigmatised a party looks, the less inclined people will be to vote for that party. On the other hand, in a context where a broad nativist core is present, the populist radical right party will flourish, since stigmatisation would be limited. It also has an important effect on party organisation: once a given party gains electoral traction, it will try to implement strategies to decrease cultural stigmatisation – at least on the outlook; internally, it becomes clear that the radical right elements stay very much present.¹⁶⁸

Lastly, the media have an important role in creating political opportunities for populist radical right parties. To these parties, the media are at the same time a friend and a foe: commercial media (tabloids in particular) often employ the same discourse as populist radical parties and push their political agenda favourably.¹⁶⁹ In this regard, image building also plays an important role. On the other hand, other media outlets can also refuse to devote much attention to populist radical right parties. Thus, with regard of the role of the media in political opportunity, the advancement or the hindrance of issue ownership is central.¹⁷⁰ In conclusion, political opportunity structures play a major role in explaining electoral breakthrough – they facilitate rather than determine success or failure of populist parties. However, once populist radical right parties become persistent, political opportunity structures play a lesser role. Assessment of the impact of political opportunity structures depends on consideration of demand-side factors and the populist party itself, or the internal supply-side. A favourable breeding ground and political opportunity structures only provide opportunities – it is up to populist radical right parties to profit from them. The internal supply-side helps us understand how they gain advantages from them.

¹⁶⁷ Arzheimer, K. & Carter, E., ‘Political Opportunity Structures and Right-wing Extremist Party Success’ in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2006), pp. 438-440; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 233-236

¹⁶⁸ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 244-248, 253-254.

¹⁶⁹ Norris, P., *A Virtuous Circle? Political Communications in Post-Industrial Democracies*, pp. 3-21, 309-315.

¹⁷⁰ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 249-254. For more on issue ownership see: Walgrave, S. & De Swert, K., ‘The Making of the (issues of) Vlaams Blok’ in: *Political Communication*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2004), pp. 479-500.

2.6.3 Internal supply-side

Populist radical right parties should not be considered as dupes subjected to their political and socio-economic environment, but as active shapers of their own fates. Indeed, the party itself is paramount in explaining electoral success.¹⁷¹ This approach implies that populist radical right parties should be considered an independent variable. An examination of the internal supply-side (i.e. the party itself) will provide answers to how they shape their own destiny. The most important internal elements are party organisation, leadership and party ideology.

Firstly, party organisation is important, but not necessary for electoral success. However, it becomes crucial once a party persists or wants to achieve sustainability in the political arena. Compared to traditional political parties, most populist radical right parties have a modest hierarchical structure – a ‘movement’ – built around a single leader. Badly organised populist radical parties can be the victims of their own success – a lot of them implode after electoral success.¹⁷² For example, the Front National nearly won the recent French presidential elections of 2017. However, immediately after the presidential election, the party almost imploded. A number of senior officials split from the party after it lost heavily in the subsequent parliamentary election, prompting Marine Le Pen to rename the party mired in scandals to ‘Rassemblement National’.¹⁷³ This points at organisational weaknesses, for example in leadership (internal splits, incapable personnel, legislative pressure and so forth). Successful parties assemble a variety of sub-organisations in combination with support from traditional strongholds (Antwerp for Vlaams Belang is a good example). On top of that, most of them are grass-roots based and have a successful youth organisation that brings in new members and socialises them ideologically and practically (for example Front National Jeunesse).¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Berman, S., ‘The Life of the Party’ in: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997), p. 102; Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 256; See also: Sartori, G., ‘The Sociology of Parties: a Critical Review’ in: P. Mair (ed.) *The West European Party System*, pp. 150-182.

¹⁷² Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 264-273.

¹⁷³ Vinocur, N., ‘France’s Emmanuel Macron seizes big majority in parliament’ in: *Politico*, 18/06/2017. [Online]; Vinocur, N., ‘Le Pen’s soul-searching: 5 key issues for her party’ in: *Politico*, 21/07/2017. [Online]; Herszenhorn, D.M., ‘Marine Le Pen’s National Front rallies behind new name’ in: *Politico*, 02/06/2018. [Online].

¹⁷⁴ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 264-273.

Secondly, leadership of populist radical right parties can be divided into external and internal leadership. The former signifies the charismatic leader, an important element in the literature on populism, however, at times overestimated.¹⁷⁵ The charismatic leader is almost always a polarising figure, “because the symbolic logic of charisma hangs upon binary coding and salvation narratives.”¹⁷⁶ Put differently, the leader is either loved or hated. The other side of the coin is that some people refrain from voting for a populist radical right party because of the controversies surrounding the charismatic leader. The charismatic leader is indeed important, and especially in the electoral breakthrough phase – this person is the face of the party and gets people in the party. However, the role of the charismatic leader should not be overemphasised: once the party persists in the political arena, the importance of the charismatic leader declines in favour of a strong party organisation. This could also point to a broader process of socialisation where the charismatic leader brings in voters (i.e. the creator and the preacher), while the well-structured party socialises voters into true party supporters.¹⁷⁷

The last element of the internal supply-side is the party ideology. Many authors such as Cole, Taggart, Ignazi, and others have attributed the success of populist radical right parties to their relatively moderate ideological offer.¹⁷⁸ Hainsworth even suggests that the “contemporary populist radical right has been more successful [...] when it has been able to mark its distance from past extremist forms, such as Nazism, antisemitism, and appears as a populist response to current anxieties.”¹⁷⁹ Debate exists if the moderation is real or strategic, but more important is the presentation of the ideology as such through party propaganda. As discussed above, the media plays an important role in creating a party image, but is largely out of the control of the populist radical right party. However, extensive professional party propaganda campaigns are

¹⁷⁵ In the literature in general the importance of charismatic leadership is stressed, see: Weyland, K., ‘Clarifying a contested concept: populism in the study of Latin American politics’ in: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), pp. 1-22; , Taggart, P., *Populism* (2000); Papadopoulos, Y., ‘National-populism in Western Europe: an Ambivalent Phenomenon’, 05/02/2017. [Online].

¹⁷⁶ Smith, P., ‘Culture and Charisma: Outline of a Theory’ in: *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2000), p. 103.

¹⁷⁷ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 261-263. See also: Eatwell, R., ‘Charisma and the Revival of the European Extreme Right’ in: J. Rydgren (ed.) *Movements of Exclusion: Radical Right-Wing Populism in the West*, pp. 101-120; Eatwell, R., ‘The Concept and Theory of Charismatic Leadership’ in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2006), pp. 141-156; and also Weber’s charismatic authority/routinisation; what makes a leader charismatic is the charismatic bond between public and person, has to be *perceived* as such.

¹⁷⁸ See: Cole, A., ‘Old Right or New Right? The Ideological Positioning of Parties of the Far Right’ in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2005), pp. 203-230; Taggart, P., ‘New Populist Parties in Western Europe’ in: *West European Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1995), pp. 34-51; Ignazi, P., ‘The Silent Counter-revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme-right Wing Parties in Europe’ in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1-2 (1992), pp. 3-34.

¹⁷⁹ Hainsworth, P., ‘Introduction: the Extreme Right’, in: P. Hainsworth (ed.) *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, p. 1.

powerful weapons and their use can be very effective to achieve electoral successes. Even after an electoral breakthrough, party propaganda has the potential to reach outsiders with similar views and could even help transform first-time voters into loyal party supporters. In other words, party propaganda contributes to identity creation of the party. The use of social media, well designed websites and blogs also fits into the broader strategy of ideological presentation and image production through party propaganda.¹⁸⁰ Since the presentation of the ideology is more important than the actual moderation, an assumption can be made about the importance of a 'modern image' over a genuine transformation of the ideology and style.

2.7 Connecting demand-side, supply-side, macro-level and micro-level: framing and the meso-level

With an abundance of macro- and micro-level explanations of the success of populist radical right parties and their Euroscepticism, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics behind the meso-level surrounding the European integration debate. These theories provide valuable insights and will be used extensively throughout the research; however, they are insufficient to provide answers to the core of this thesis: the dialectic between the macro-level and the micro-level. Interestingly, only a small number of authors such as Eatwell, Rydgren and Mudde acknowledge the importance of the meso-level¹⁸¹, yet, research in this field remains scarce.

Macro processes of modernisation, globalisation and European integration, to name a few, are extremely complex and policies that provide answers are rarely straightforward or tangible in the short-term, which leads to voters' dissatisfaction (i.e. micro-level). This is where the supply-side comes in: populist parties articulate or supply narratives to their audiences that provide meaning for common concerns, required for mobilisation. Successful populists are able to combine a broad range of grievances and attach it to a particular discourse, depending on the host ideology. By presenting a narrative, populist parties are able to create the fundamental divide between 'the good people' and 'the corrupt elite', or the people responsible for unleashing the forces of globalisation upon 'the people'. Specifically, within

¹⁸⁰ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 259-260.

¹⁸¹ See: Rydgren, J., 'Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden' in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003), pp. 45-68; Eatwell, R., 'Ten Theories of the Extreme Right' in: P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 45-70.

the national and political context, populist parties supply cues that represent the conditions under which people come to see political reality.¹⁸²

As a result, populist radical right parties of considerable size and presence may very well influence people's frame of thought. In social psychology, these kinds of processes are well known and are analysed in terms of 'framing'. Already in 1974, Goffmann defined these frames as the basic elements that organise people's experience and helps them process the complexity of the world surrounding them. To Goffmann, frames are an equivalent to schemata and other schemes of interpretation, denoting the importance of existing socially mediated forms that form people's perception¹⁸³. Ideology and propaganda, displayed in the discourse of populist radical right parties, offer a frame in which people's beliefs and anxieties can be articulated and make the complex socio-economic and political reality meaningful. The articulation of the demand-side is never prior to the offered alternative interpretative frames on the supply-side. At the same time, the interpretation frame supplied has to be sufficiently attuned to people's preconceptions of reality and thus needs to fall on fertile breeding ground.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, as discussed above, the inability of mainstream parties to address and mediate the excesses of economic and financial globalisation offers the populist radical right a dangerous tool. In fact, the vacuum that ensues from the irresponsiveness of traditional parties enables the populist radical right to reframe unsolved political problems – on *their* terms, which, in turn, leads to '*Verrechtsing*' of the political discourse as a whole. In the following section, evidence for these assumptions will be presented through a discourse analysis of the discourse of the Front National.

¹⁸² Mudde, C., 'Populism: an Ideational Approach' in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 40-41; De Cleen, B., 'Populism and Nationalism' in: J. Rydgren (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 352-354; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁸³ Goffmann, E., *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, pp. 10-21.

¹⁸⁴ Rydgren, J., 'Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden' in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003), p. 52 (pp. 45-68)

Chapter 3. Case-study: discourse analysis of Marine Le Pen's Front National (2011 – 2017)

The framing that takes place at the meso-level will be put against an empirical case in this chapter: the Front National in France. In particular, the discourse of Marine Le Pen with regard to the European Union will be analysed during the period 2011–2017 – clustered around two presidential election cycles and coinciding with the Eurocrisis and European migration crisis. One of the main features of successful populist movements is the emphasis on verbal discourse to supply their audience with a specific narrative.¹⁸⁵ That is why the discourse analysis will focus on speeches delivered by Marine Le Pen to FN-militants. The research has collected a total of 39 speeches, about 800 pages, found on the party website and other online sources such as government sites and university archives (see bibliography).

3.1 The Front National

The Front National is one of the oldest populist radical right parties in Europe, founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Later on, in the 1990s, and even more so after 2011, the party became a prominent player in French politics – not per se for its electoral scores (around 10-15% of the vote), but for the capability to set the political agenda, most notably on immigration.¹⁸⁶

Initially, the movement grouped critics of French decolonisation, anti-Semitic negationists, Pétainist ultra-nationalists, neofascists, Catholic traditionalists and other extreme right factions.¹⁸⁷ Some of these anti-democratic elements were quickly ousted; Le Pen wanted the Front National to compete within the democratic framework, however, rallying against liberal democracy as such (i.e. *radical*).¹⁸⁸ Before establishing the Front National, Le Pen himself was involved in an anti-tax movement (Pierre Poujade's Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans), that proclaimed to defend 'the little man' and claimed to speak for 'the ordinary

¹⁸⁵ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 259-260.

¹⁸⁶ Davies, P., *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse and Power*, p. 1; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 108.

¹⁸⁷ Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, p. 435.

¹⁸⁸ Davies, P., *The National Front in France*, pp. 20-21.

people’, based upon ‘*le bon sens*’ (i.e. common sense).¹⁸⁹ Le Pen combined these populist elements with a militantly nationalistic anti-immigrant ideology (i.e. *right/nativist*).¹⁹⁰ The core of the party programme consists of three elements: the defence of the French people, the defence of the nation, and the defence of Western civilisation. The defence of the nation has always been the dominant issue in its ideology – linked to the prevalence of nativism in the populist radical right ideology. In order to define itself, the ‘threats’ to the nation are numerous in the party propaganda and discourse: ‘massive’ immigration, international Jewry, Euro-federalism, cosmopolitanism, Americanisation, and so forth. Examples of these can be found in party literature: when abortion was legalised in France in 1975, FN’s propaganda was littered with ‘anti-French genocide’ and ‘demographic stagnation’, installed by the morally corrupt establishment. Even when Euro Disneyland opened in Paris in 1992, the party spoke of ‘American cultural imperialism’.¹⁹¹

Over the years, FN’s party programme remarkably shifted depending on the context in which it operated. During the first decades of the party’s existence, it was strongly anti-American and anti-Communist on the basis of the defence of a ‘European, Western culture’.¹⁹² Interestingly, Jean-Marie Le Pen was initially in favour of a strong, European bloc. In the 1985 FN party programme, Le Pen proclaimed, “The European Union will remain utopia as long as the Community doesn’t have enough resources, a common currency and a political will, which is inseparable from the ability to defend itself”.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, once it became clear that European cooperation was to supersede its economic nature with the Maastricht Treaty, the party became hostile to the European integration process.¹⁹⁴ Front National opposes European integration, because it supposedly has negative consequences for the French nation. The party resists any deal that limits national sovereignty – clearly against the ‘four pillars’ of the European Union. To the FN, Schengen equals “massive” Muslim migration, while free movement of capital and the EMS undermines national financial interests. In short, the Front National opposes the EU for cultural, political and economic reasons: in the first place, for its rejection of immigration; secondly, because the EU

¹⁸⁹ To scholars such as Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart ‘Poujadism’ marks the first form of European populism. See: Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P., Ocha Espejo, P. & Ostiguy, P., ‘Populism: An Overview of the Concept and the State of the Art’ in: C. Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P., P. Ocha Espejo, & P. Ostiguy (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 1-26; Taggart, P., *Populism* (2000).

¹⁹⁰ Taggart, P., *Populism*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁹¹ Davies, P., *The National Front in France*, p. 20.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹³ Le Pen, J-M, *Pour La France Programme du Front National*, Éditions Albatros, Paris, 1985, p. 191.

¹⁹⁴ Davies, P., *The National Front in France*, pp. 22-23; Perrineau, P., *La France Au Front : essai sur l’avenir du Front national*, pp. 123-124, 129-130.

constitutes a direct attack on the nation-state; and finally, the party criticises the EU for neoliberal practices that limit national sovereignty.¹⁹⁵

In contrast with the above, the anti-immigration message has been prominent ever since FN's conception in the late 1970s. In FN's discourse and party propaganda, immigration has always been linked to economic anxiety and crime. Even though the topic has not changed, the language and discourse surrounding it has gone through a profound transformation. At first, the language FN used was blunt and spoke in terms of 'the survival of white nations'.¹⁹⁶ After 1988, under influence of new party leaders such as Bruno Mégret, the semantics surrounding immigration were reformulated to more acceptable levels (more 'politically correct') and were framed in political, cultural, and economic terms.¹⁹⁷ In the 1990s, support was mobilised around the alleged clash of cultures between the 'Islamic' and 'Western' world and the threat Islamic terrorist groups supposedly posed.¹⁹⁸ After Jean-Marie's daughter Marine took over the helm of the party, she pursued a 'dédiabolisation' (*mainstreaming*) strategy. The strategy rendered the language even more acceptable, in order to achieve more political success. This evolution from extreme racialism to a relatively moderate discourse, however, without altering the core message, is a central evolution of the party (see more below)¹⁹⁹.

For many years, the Front National operated on the fringes of French politics, with Jean-Marie Le Pen as outspoken leader. After Mitterrand's neoliberal 'U-turn', the fall of the USSR, and the Maastricht Treaty, the party became an established force in the political arena. The Front National successfully combined opposition to European integration, immigration, corruption of the ruling parties (defined as "political and moral laxity"), and anti-globalisation (*mondialisation* in FN jargon) – all linked to the well-being and/or defence of the nation and national identity. Indeed, the Front National gained success by redefining French nationhood, on many occasions making anachronistic references to 'national heroes', such as Joan of Arc and Clovis.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ de Prat, C.R.A., *Eurocepticism, Europhobia and Eurocriticism*, pp. 59 ; Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, p. 437; Mudde, C. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁹⁶ Davies, P., *The National Front in France*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁷ Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *The Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, p. 437.

¹⁹⁸ Davies, P., *The National Front in France*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ Taggart, P., 'Populism in Western Europe', in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 251, 258; Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, pp. 440-441.

²⁰⁰ Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *A Very Short Introduction: Populism*, pp. 34-35, 69.

During the 1990s, the Front National secured 15% of the votes on average during presidential elections and won a number of ‘mairies’ in towns in southern France. This tendency would continue until 2007, when Jean-Marie Le Pen lost in the second round of the presidential campaign to Nicolas Sarkozy, who adopted many of FN’s issues on security and immigration.²⁰¹ The 2007 election left the party morally and financially in ruins. To some, the controversial figure of Jean-Marie Le Pen was seen as a handicap for the development of the Front National. The time was ripe for new leadership to break through the ‘electoral glass ceiling’.²⁰² Jean-Marie Le Pen’s daughter, Marine, was elected as the new leader of the party in 2011 and radically pushed the party into a new direction – away from the fringes and into the political mainstream. On top of that, the Great Recession could not have erupted at a better moment for Marine Le Pen.

3.2 The demand-side: France in the wake of the Great Depression

The socio-economic impact of the financial crisis of 2008 was relatively mild in France compared to the United States and Germany. However, France had a much more difficult time recovering from the Great Recession. Even more so, the economic dip painfully exposed the structural weaknesses of the French economy, ranging from high indebtedness, rising socio-economic inequality, high numbers of bankruptcies, a widening competitiveness gap between France and Germany, and so forth.²⁰³ Moreover, the economic slump has had a profound psychological impact on the French population, many worrying about France’s decline and “degradation”. The newspaper *Le Monde* even described the French as being the “champions of pessimism in Europe”, with many French pointing the finger at globalisation as the culprit.²⁰⁴ Simultaneously, polls from 2014 (6 years after the crisis started) show that the trust of the French population in their representatives was seriously fractured: 72% of the French said they did *not* have confidence in their parliament and about 80% of them were in favour of “a strong man” in charge.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Delsanne, S., *Le Front National a-t-il change?*, pp. 26-31.

²⁰² Mudde, C. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 262.

²⁰³ Bellone, F. & Chiappini, R., ‘Le déclin de la compétitivité française: états des lieux’, in: *Cahiers français*, Vol. 180, No. May-June, pp. 2-9; European Commission, ‘Macroeconomic Imbalances – France 2013’, *Occasional Papers* 136, March 2013.

²⁰⁴ Gatinois, C. & Guélaud, ‘Compétitivité : l’Allemagne distance toujours plus la France’ in : *Le Monde*, 04/09/2013.

²⁰⁵ IPSOS, *Nouvelles fractures françaises, résultats et analyse de l’enquête Ipsos / Steria*. January 2013.

In short, the demand-side in France consisted of an explosive cocktail of socio-economic malaise on the one hand, and a political class that was unable to mediate the profound social, economic and psychologic shocks the Great Recession unleashed upon France, resulting in the threatened loss of national identity.²⁰⁶ To be sure, what the party had been preaching for many years now suddenly appeared to become reality, which proved to be fertile breeding ground for the party. Indeed, the political opportunity structure and timing could not be better for the Front's new party leader.

After the disastrous 2007 presidential election, the party's fortunes spectacularly reversed under Marine Le Pen's leadership. The Front National received 6.4 million votes (17.9% of the vote, a personal best for FN back then) during the 2012 presidential election. In the 2014 local elections, for the first time ever, the FN was able to secure a number of 'mairies' in traditional socialist/communist strongholds in the impoverished North (Hénin-Beaumont as prime example). In that same year, the Front National won 25% of the votes in the European elections, outdistancing all other parties.²⁰⁷ An ex-party official dubbed the latter victory as FN winning the "Euromillions", referring to the large grants the party received from Brussels for its seats in the European Parliament²⁰⁸ (as hypocritical as it might sound, the party recently got convicted for corrupting public funds from the European taxpayer – actually one of the central themes of FN's political platform)²⁰⁹. The Front National's latest success was during the presidential elections of 2017, when Marine Le Pen narrowly lost to Emmanuel Macron. The Front National secured 33,9% of the vote (almost 11 million votes), faring especially well in rural and 'peri-urban' areas affected by high levels of unemployment and migration.²¹⁰ Now, how did Marine Le Pen succeeded in the above, whereas her father could not?

²⁰⁶ Perrineau, P., *La France Au Front*, pp. 107-111.

²⁰⁷ Betz, H-G, 'The Revenge of the Ploucs: The Revival of Radical Populism under Marine Le Pen in France' in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction*, in: *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 75-76.

²⁰⁸ Aymeric Chauprade, elected MEP in the 2014 European elections for FN, confessed the corruption within the party after he left the FN in 2015. Quote from Chauprade on 'Envoyé Spécial. Front National : Les hommes de l'ombre' in: *France 2*, 16/03/2017, 15minutes 35seconds, via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfoqb9psZzE>

²⁰⁹ Sauer, N., 'National Front charged over 'fake jobs' scandal' in: *Politico*, 12/12/2017; Galdino, G., 'EU court orders Marine Le Pen to repay European Parliament €300k' in: *Politico*, 19/06/2018.

²¹⁰ 'Résultats présidentielle 2017' in: *Les Echos.fr*, 18/05/2017.

3.3 The supply-side: Marine Le Pen, présidente

Central to Marine Le Pen's strategy as president of the Front National is to pursue 'dédiabolisation'.²¹¹ Organisationally, she ousted all the remaining extreme right elements from her party. She even committed "political parricide" by banishing her father over his racist and anti-Semitic outbursts. The matter escalated into a public feud after he was awarded only a ceremonial function within the party.²¹² Mainstreaming the party also meant diversifying its issue basis: whereas formerly the issue of immigration was central, Marine Le Pen curtailed the issue (and others) with a 'Republican turn'. This Republican plan of action consisted in the first place of building a more acceptable image for the party – the defence of the nation and its ideals are key, without abandoning core issues such as immigration and national identity. Novel to this approach is not that Marine Le Pen still rallies around immigration and advocates Islamophobia; rather different is that it is legitimised on Republican grounds, presumably incompatible with multiculturalism. In other words, the nativist ideological elements are still very much present, however, framed in 'acceptable' terminology. For example, Islam is rejected on the basis that the French Republic is a laic (*laïcité*) state. In FN's reasoning, this is interpreted as a fundamental disrespect of the French nation and its traditions. Furthermore, the subject of 'laïcité' is also used to define 'the Other', which is consequently incompatible with the French nation. Thus, Marine Le Pen still stigmatises Islam, however, this time in name of democracy and other Republican values – not in the racial terms of the past. At its core, immigration is still being linked to socio-economic issues. Now, however, under a Republican banner instead in the overtly racist terms of the past.²¹³

The Front National's party programme was also enlarged to broader issues of political economy, in order to present a credible socio-economic alternative to the neoliberal market-oriented dogma. Indeed, Marine Le Pen developed a comprehensive socio-economic programme, against the doctrine of "ultraliberal globalisation".²¹⁴ According to the programme, globalisation ("*mondialisation*") is undoubtedly responsible for rising unemployment, declining standards of living, growing inequality and wide-spread injustice. On the other hand, the political establishment ("*la caste*") is blamed for its continued support

²¹¹ Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, pp. 440-441.

²¹² Vinocur, N., 'National Front ousts Jean-Marie Le Pen' in : *Politico*, 20/08/2015.

²¹³ Perrineau, P., *La France Au Front*, pp. 77-78; Betz, H-G, 'The Revenge of the Ploucs: The Revival of Radical Populism under Marine Le Pen in France', pp. 78-79.

²¹⁴ Mayer, N., 'The Radical Right in France', in: *Oxford handbook of the Radical Right*, p. 444.

for neoliberal policies (cf. ideological convergence), while ignoring the will of the “forgotten majority”.²¹⁵ The doctrine of *mondialisation* not only subjugates democratic principles, it is also presented as undermining and weakening the nation-state – unacceptable to the nativist ideology.²¹⁶

The socio-economic programme proposes a wide-ranging series of measures in an effort to restore “the pillars of the republican nation.”²¹⁷ Interestingly, the programme consists of a synthesis of nationalist and traditional left-wing positions. In the case of the former, regaining national sovereignty is central to protect the French population from the socio-economic effects of *mondialisation*. On the other hand, Marine Le Pen redefined the role of the state in leftist terms, i.e. as “*l'état protecteur*” with a strong public sector and extended welfare, however only for French citizens (i.e. welfare chauvinism). In short, socio-economic anxieties are translated in nationalistic terms: regaining full national sovereignty is the solution to all of France’s problems. Economic protectionism, *réindustrialisation* of the country, regaining control over the nation’s borders, abandoning the euro through a referendum, and similar propositions make up the socio-economic programme under Marine Le Pen.²¹⁸ The issue of immigration is also prominent in her socio-economic programme: the welfare state is defended upon the basis of equality, a core republican idea. However, in order to sustain the welfare state, solidarity is needed. To the FN, that national solidarity can only be maintained on the premises of a community of values or common cultural basis. Migration is framed as hollowing out this national solidarity, necessary to maintain the welfare state. On top of that, the welfare state supposedly works as a ‘suction pump’ (“*pompes aspirants*”), attracting more and more migration, while the French citizen has to compete for the already limited resources.²¹⁹

To conclude, Marine Le Pen transformed the Front National into a mainstream, catch-all party, however, without abandoning its populist radical right core. The result is a party that incorporates the defence of the nation and the welfare state, while at the same time appealing to nostalgic pre-globalisation times. In effect, the Front National has become a party that can offer an alternative to the dominant liberal doctrine, pushed by centre left and right. What has

²¹⁵ Le Pen, M., Metz speech, 11/12/2011. [Online].

²¹⁶ Betz, H-G, ‘The Revenge of the Ploucs: The Revival of Radical Populism under Marine Le Pen in France’, p. 82.

²¹⁷ Le Pen, M., ‘Mon Project pour la France et les Français’, 2012, p. 67. [Online]

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

²¹⁹ Betz, H-G, ‘The Revenge of the Ploucs: The Revival of Radical Populism under Marine Le Pen in France’, p. 85.

not changed are their enemies: Islam, immigration, the political elites, globalisation, and so forth are still framed as the ultimate scapegoats. In spite of Marine Le Pen's 'dédiabolisation' strategy, the main thematic motivator for constituents is the outright dismissal of immigrants, rejecting the European Union, accusing it of facilitating immigration.²²⁰ Indeed, according to the Front National, the European Union is the source of all of the above – it represents the nexus of elite collusion against 'the will of the people'. The discourse analysis below will provide insight in the construction of this particular discursive frame of interpretation.

3.4 Discourse Analysis: Marine Le Pen

In chapter two, this research explored a common weakness of theories explaining populist radical right parties' success: their failure to grapple the populist *ideas*. Hence, according to the ideational approach, populist forces are primarily distinguished by their ideas – a discourse based on a cosmic struggle between the presumed 'will of the people' and a conspiring elite. However, the question of *how* populism is able to discursively construct and represent 'the people' is left blank, essential to this research (see more above). That this why this research – in line with scholars as De Cleen, Stavrakakis, and Katsambekis – has suggested the use of the Laclau approach or the discourse-theoretical definition in combination with the ideational approach.

A growing number of scholars agree that populist leaders and populist voters find the message attractive, because of their appreciation of the populist message as such – to them 'it makes sense'. Moreover, they demonstrate that populist ideas and discourse significantly impact behaviour.²²¹ Thus, the populist radical right's message is attractive to the public not because the discourse fulfils a certain social function or because it coincides with other ideologies. In contrast, to many, the populist message offers a special response to the lack of government representation and/or responsibility (see chapter one), associated with the decline of liberal democracy.²²² Taggart goes even further, saying that the rise of the populist radical right is "an indicator of either structural problems or legitimacy issues for a Europe that is socially

²²⁰ Mayer, N., 'From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right' in: *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 66, No. 1, (Jan 2013), pp. 176-177).

²²¹ For examples see: Armory, A.C & Armory, V., 'Indictments, myths, and citizen mobilisation in Argentina: a discourse analysis', in: *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (2005), pp. 24-54; Jagers, J. & Walgrave, S., 'Populism as political communication style: an empirical study of political parties discourse in Belgium', in: *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (2007), pp. 319-345.

²²² See: C. Mudde & C. Rovira Kaltwasser (eds.), *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective to Democracy?* (2012); Mair, P., 'Representative vs. Responsible Government' in: I. van Biezen (ed.), *On Parties, Party Systems and Democracy: Selected Writings of Peter Mair*, pp. 586-591.

and politically pluralist, state-centred, and integrated”. To the previous, he adds that “populist politics of Euroscepticism are a critique of what the European Union has become, but also how it became this way.”²²³

As established in chapter one, a fertile breeding ground (i.e. demand-side) is a pre-condition, but it does not explain the activation of populist attitudes. On the supply-side, populist radical right parties craft their own fate and construct a narrative that advances the fertile breeding ground (internal supply-side). Although the context is suitable and populist radical right actors supply a credible narrative, the interpretation of that context is not automatic. In other words, the broken EMS or Schengenzone does not *automatically* result in populist mobilisation, social welfare chauvinism or anti-immigrant attitudes. Rather, citizens live in a world of incomplete information that is difficult to interpret. As a result, many depend on ‘cues’ to make sense of the highly complex world they inhabit.²²⁴ It might be completely unclear to the average citizen what caused the last economic downturn or why all of a sudden a migrant camp sprouts up in their backyard. The need for these cues is even greater when traditional parties or institutions are unable to mediate the negative socio-economic effects or are responsible for these policy failures. Thus, understanding the context is facilitated by the supply of discursive interpretation frames by populist radical right actors. This, in turn, leads to the activation of populist attitudes among citizens. The populist message has to perform several functions: firstly, problems are ascribed to ‘known agents’ (i.e. scapegoats, in contrast with impersonal forces); and secondly, the message has to refer to an in-group identity, which enables citizens to ‘groupthink’ (i.e. beyond their personal interests).²²⁵ When this (supply-side) falls on fertile breeding ground (i.e. demand-side), the message (i.e. meso-level) catalyses the activation of populist attitudes. Discourse is instrumental in this process, since it is used by populist radical right parties to display their doctrine and ideology. Moreover, “all discourse is aimed at the production of certain effects in their recipients and is launched from some tendentious subject position”.²²⁶ The discourse analysis presented below will investigate the construction of the discursive interpretation scheme supplied by the Front National. How problems are ascribed to a known agent (the EU in this case) and the construction of the in-group identity, will be central.

²²³ Taggart, P., 'Populism in Western Europe', in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 259.

²²⁴ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., 'A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus' in: *British Journal of Political Science*, pp. 10-14.

²²⁵ Hawkins, K.A., Read, M. & Pauwels, P., 'Populism and its Causes' in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 277.

²²⁶ Eagleton, T., *Ideology*, p. 201.

In order to conduct the discourse analysis, the research has collected a total of 39 speeches (in written form; a corpus of roughly 800 pages) of Marine Le Pen during the French presidential campaigns of 2011-2012 and 2016-2017 respectively. These speeches were collected on the party website and French government sites (see bibliography). From the first election cycle, 15 speeches were selected, whereas from the most recent campaign 21 speeches were selected. Additionally, three speeches from the end of 2015 were also added to the data set, because of their contextual importance. Marine Le Pen began her presidential bid earlier than the previous presidential election in December of 2015, almost immediately after the terrorist attacks on the 13th of November in Paris, providing valuable momentum. From that point in time onwards, migration, terrorism and so forth are much more frequently connected to the European Union in her discourse (see annex 1).

For the analysis of the data collection, a computer programme was selected, named MAXQDA (version 18). The programme facilitates the coding and plotting of discourse – crucial when analysing an extensive dataset of 39 speeches. The methodology used to analyse Le Pen’s discourse is threefold. Firstly, determining and coding the paragraphs when she addresses the European Union or the European dimension in her speeches (broader context). Secondly, coding the words that Le Pen most frequently uses in her discourse to identify ‘France’s enemies’ or the pertinent issues the country faces. These words can be categorised into two sets: on the one hand the socio-economic code and on the other migration policy (coded as ethnocultural, see annex 2 for an example). The last step is plotting the code signifying the European dimension with the two socio-economic categories. The result provides an interesting assessment of Le Pen’s framing at work: words to describe negative socio-economic issues are very frequently used to define the European Union.

Concretely, the first step was completed by conducting a number of lexical searches with the words “EUROP”²²⁷, “MONDIALIST”²²⁸ and “BRUXELLES”²²⁹ throughout the data set. The totality of these results was coded and the sentences (not more than one sentence before and after) that spoke of the EU were marked. In total, 551 sections in which Marine Le Pen spoke of the EU were coded and the European context in her speeches was thereby established. Secondly, the research wanted to identify the most pressing issues in Le Pen’s discourse, in order to group certain words under socio-economic and ethnocultural codes. A word

²²⁷ “EUROP” was used to avoid confusion with the common currency, the Euro.

²²⁸ “MONDIALIST” is frequently used in Le Pen’s discourse to signify agents of globalisation, which is used exclusively when addressing the European Union.

²²⁹ “BRUXELLES” is used to refer to the headquarters of the EU, situated in Brussels.

Consequently, the second step in the discourse analysis consisted of coding the themes, clustered around the socio-economic and ethnocultural code. In Le Pen’s discourse, the following words used were selected as to represent the socio-economic context of her narrative: ‘MONDIALISATION’ (coded 102 times), ‘AUSTERITE’ (43 times), ‘CHOMAGE’ (140 times), ‘SOCIAL’ (225 times), and ‘ECONOMIE’ (322 times). According to table 1, the ethnocultural code can be composed of the following words: ‘IMMIGRATION’ (coded 218 times), ‘ISLAM’ (187 times), ‘TERRORISM’ (111 times), ‘ETRANGER’ (*stranger*, coded 123 times), ‘FRONTIERE’ (*border*, 145 times), and ‘MIGRANT’ (41 times). These words were grouped and coded under their thematic code (see table 3 and annex 2 for an example). Important to note is that in the code the context refers to only one sentence *before* and one sentence *after* the word used. This is the case for all three codes and was done not to inflate the results. At this point, in Marine Le Pen’s discourse, the European dimension has been established, as well as the socio-economic and ethnocultural dimensions or threats. The last step is to plot the European codes signifying the EU vis-à-vis the socio-economic and ethnocultural codes, in order to see what words often co-occur. If only negative socio-economic terms are connected to the EU, it will provide evidence of the creation of an (adverse) discursive frame of interpretation with regard to the European Union.

Code	Frequency
Code System	2.208
Ethnocultural code	0
Migrant	41
Terrorism	111
Etranger (strangers)	123
Frontière (border)	145
Islam	187
Immigration	218
European Union	551
Socioeconomic Code	0
Social	225
Mondialisation (globalisation)	102
Austérité	43
Chômage (unemployment)	140
Economie	322

Table 2: Code system.

Code System	European Union
▼ Ethnocultural code	
Migrant	8
Terrorism	13
Etranger (strangers)	6
Frontière (border)	44
Islam	15
Immigration	37
European Union	
▼ Socioeconomic Code	
Social	21
Mondialisation (globalisation)	20
Austérité	20
Chômage (unemployment)	11
Economie	54

Table 3: Results of plotting the ethnocultural and socio-economic code vis-à-vis the code signifying the European Union. Source: MAXQDA.

Table 3 shows that the discursive frame of the European Union is indeed almost always contextualised with negative socio-economic traits, ‘threatening France’. In other words, in her discourse, when Marine Le Pen addresses the European Union, *negative* socio-economic words are frequently used to construct a scapegoat. A number of examples illustrate this claim. In 39 speeches, the term ‘AUSTERITE’ (austerity) is used no less than 20 times in relation to the EU. “CHOMAGE” co-occurs 11 times in a European context. With regard to migration, Le Pen links “TERRORISM” to the EU on 13 occasions and ‘ISLAM’ 15 times. ‘IMMIGRATION’ is even linked 37 times to the EU, on average almost once in every speech.

This research created a model in which the discursive links between all codes are made clear. In the Code Co-occurrence Model, the thickness of the lines between the codes is in relation to the number of co-occurrences. Table 4 makes clear that in Marine Le Pen’s discourse, all words with a negative charge (i.e. codes) are intrinsically linked to the European Union. Interestingly, it is also clear that in her discourse, immigration is linked to unemployment. A strong link also exists between Islam and terrorism.

Code Co-occurrence Model

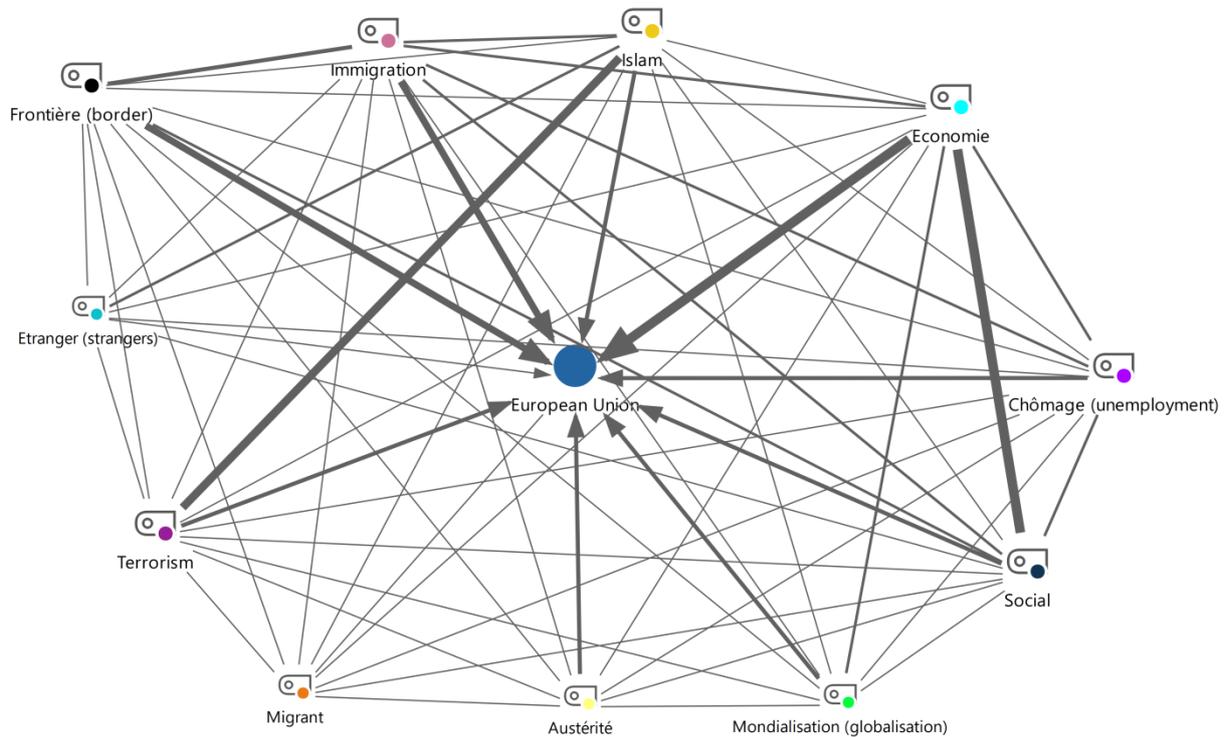


Table 4: Code Co-occurrence Model visualising the co-occurrences of the different components that stand for the socio-economic and ethnocultural code, in relation to the European Union. Conducted with MAXQDA.

Although limited in scope and themes, the discourse analysis and the results presented in table 4 does visualise the frame of interpretation that Marine Le Pen supplies to her audience well. Further research could investigate and elaborate, and conduct a parallel analysis of her discourse in relation to France. It would be expected that mostly positive words would be used and that she hints at her audience that the only conceivable solution to the socio-economic problems would be a retreat back to the nation-state. In any case, the analysis demonstrates a clear discursive correlation between the negative sides of the two socio-economic themes and the European Union. Instead of addressing the flaws of Schengen or the EMU, Le Pen discursively connects the EU with a set of negative issues and propagates Islamophobia and economic protectionism as solutions to socio-economic questions. The resulting frame of interpretation leads to the assumption that there is no alternative to the European Union but a radical retreat to the ethnically defined nation. Indeed, FN's message performs the construction of scapegoats for complex socio-economic issues, and secondly, the discourse enables citizens to 'groupthink', which leads to the activation of their populist

radical right attitudes. When this (i.e. supply-side) falls on fertile breeding ground (i.e. demand-side), Le Pen's message (i.e. meso-level) catalyses the activation of populist attitudes.

In that sense, populist ideas operate like a discursive frame or a set of attitudes, rather than a set of clear issue positions. As demonstrated above, the set of attitudes must be *activated* for popular mobilisation. The operationalisation of these attitudes depends heavily on the context.²³⁰ For example, the FN and its populist radical right message have been around for almost fifty years, but only recently, in a favourable context, it was able to activate a large number of voters. Indeed, discursive frames must coincide with an objective context in order to be activated and repeated by citizens. Populist ideas might be widespread among individuals, but they must be activated through a context of actual material conditions *and* framed by linguistic cues.²³¹ Specifically, looking at the core of populism – a corrupt elite conspiring against the will of the people – it is suspected that populist ideas are activated when policy failures can be traced back to systematic misconduct by traditional politicians and/or parties. In the developed world, this occurs when political elites collude for practical and/or ideological reasons to keep certain issues off the agenda. Although flagrant corruption is relatively exceptional in the West, the advantages of staying in office help shelter elites from popular concerns, especially when globalisation and international commitments constrain the decisions of politicians. All of this produces gaps in democratic representation and consequently plays into the hands of populists (see chapter one).²³² These are the main reasons Marine Le Pen almost exclusively defines the EU in terms with a negative charge and why this resonates with an ever-growing public. On top of that, the inability of established political parties to address certain issues leaves room for populist radical right parties to politicise them, enabling the latter to set the political agenda.²³³

²³⁰ Hawkins, K.A., Read, M. & Pauwels, P., 'Populism and its Causes' in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 275-277.

²³¹ *Idem*.

²³² Katz, R.S. & Mair, P., 'Changing models of party organisation and party democracy: the emergence of the Cartel Party' in: *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 5-28. See also: Mair, P., 'Bini Smaghi vs. the parties: representative government and institutional constraints' EUI Working Papers 2011/22. Robert Shuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European Union Democracy Observatory. [Online].

²³³ Wodak, R., *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourse Means*, p. 71.

Conclusion and discussion

This study inquired into the recent wave of European populist movements in the aftermath of the Great Recession, with the pressing question why in a Europe in crisis, Euroscepticism – the common denominator of European populist radical right parties – is on the rise, and why deeper European integration cannot be achieved in order to tackle the international crisis at hand.

In the first chapter, an overview of the European context in which populist parties were able to establish themselves was presented. The use of Rodrik's trilemma enabled the examination of the nature of the European Union, as a handful of nation-states pursuing deep economic integration. According to Rodrik, this configuration disregards essential democratic components, prompting a popular reaction in the form of populism. In that regard, the Eurocrisis and the European migration crisis were illustrative cases and were discussed in-depth. Additionally, the root causes of the EU as a visionless, paralysed and unintelligent entity were analysed. Presented against a novel vision of framing and German hegemony in Europe, it became clear that Member States feel increasingly powerless to make difficult decisions and they may sometimes even feel delegitimized to do so. Meanwhile, supranational institutions have not substituted the transfer of sovereignty towards Brussels, and the evolution towards a German Europe persists. Socio-economic inequalities continue to grow larger, as austerity, massive layoffs, and the slashing of welfare programmes is the new policy norm, framed and pushed by Germany. The perceived inability of the state to limit socio-economic impacts of the crises, and by extension globalisation, have eroded popular trust in governance and democratic institutions.²³⁴ It is against this backdrop that populist radical right parties have established themselves across Europe.

In chapter two, a variety of theoretical approaches and a definition of the concept of populism was presented. An abstraction of the populist phenomenon was also made, with a distinct 'supply-side' and a 'demand-side'. The argumentation was founded upon research that traces the origins of the 'demand-side' back to the nature of the EU as a vehicle for nation-states pursuing economic integration. In the previous chapter, the research established that the 'losers' of globalisation would benefit from a supranational entity that could mediate their

²³⁴ Mitchell, W. & Fazi, T., 'Make the Left Great Again' in: *American Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Fall 2017), pp. 75–76; Kriesi, H. & Pappas, T., 'Populism in Europe During Crisis: An Introduction' in: H. Kriesi & T. Pappas (eds.) *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, pp. 1-4.

anxieties. However, opposition to supranationalism is the case: scepticism, suspicion or outright rejection of the European project is a central rallying point of these citizens. Even more surprising is their support for populist radical right parties that advocate a return to the nation-state. Paramount to this chapter was the uncovering of the mechanisms at work that cause these attitudes: the meso-level. What connects the ‘supply-side’ and the ‘demand-side’? Framing. Macro processes of modernisation, globalisation and European integration, to name a few, are extremely complex and policies that provide answers are rarely straightforward or tangible in the short-term, which leads to voters’ dissatisfaction (i.e. micro). This is where the supply-side comes in: populist parties articulate or supply narratives (i.e. meso-level or framing) to their audiences that provide meaning for common concerns, required for mobilisation. By constructing a narrative, populist parties are able to create the fundamental divide between ‘the good people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, or the people responsible for unleashing the forces of globalisation upon ‘the people’. Specifically, within the national and political context, populist parties supply cues that represent the conditions under which people come to see political reality.²³⁵ These frames of interpretation help ordinary citizens to process the complexity of the world surrounding them. Hence, ideology and propaganda, displayed in the discourse of populist radical right parties, also offer frames in which people’s beliefs and anxieties are articulated and make the complex socio-economic and political reality meaningful. At the same time, the interpretation frame supplied has to be sufficiently attuned to people’s preconceptions of reality and thus needs to fall on the fertile breeding ground.²³⁶ Moreover, as discussed above, the inability of mainstream parties to address and mediate the excesses of economic and financial globalisation offers the populist radical right a dangerous tool. In fact, the vacuum that ensues from the irresponsiveness of traditional parties enables the populist radical right to reframe unsolved political problems – on *their* terms, which, in turn, leads to ‘*Verrechtsing*’ of the political discourse as a whole. As a result, populist radical right parties of considerable size and presence may very well influence people’s frame of thought.

The framing that takes place at the meso-level was put against an empirical case in chapter three: the Front National in France. In particular, the discourse of Marine Le Pen with regard

²³⁵ Mudde, C., ‘Populism: an Ideational Approach’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 40-41; De Cleen, B., ‘Populism and Nationalism’ in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 352-354; Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C., *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 103-104.

²³⁶ Rydgren, J., ‘Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden’ in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2003), p. 52.

to the European Union was analysed during the period 2011–2017 – clustered around two presidential election cycles and coinciding with the Eurocrisis and European migration crisis. One of the main features of successful populist movements is the emphasis on verbal discourse to supply their audience with a specific narrative.²³⁷ That is why the discourse analysis focused on speeches delivered by Marine Le Pen to FN-militants. Although the French experience is unique to the country, framing mechanisms identified and discussed in this study play out broader and in different cases. The discourse analysis presented explored the construction of the discursive interpretation scheme supplied by the Front National. How problems are ascribed to a known agent (the EU in this case) and the construction of the in-group identity were central issues. The results of the discourse analysis show that the discursive frame used to address the European Union is almost always contextualised with negative socio-economic traits, ‘threatening France’. In other words, in her discourse, when Marine Le Pen debates the European Union, words with a *negative* connotation are almost exclusively used to construct a scapegoat. Instead of addressing the flaws of Schengen or the EMU, Le Pen discursively connects the EU with a set of negative issues and propagates Islamophobia and economic protectionism as solutions to pressing socio-economic questions. The resulting frame of interpretation leads to the assumption that there is no alternative to the European Union but a radical retreat to the ethnically defined nation. Hence, FN’s message performs the construction of scapegoats for complex socio-economic issues, and secondly, the discourse enables citizens to ‘groupthink’, which leads to the activation of their populist radical right attitudes. When this falls on fertile breeding ground, Le Pen’s message (i.e. meso-level) catalyses the activation of populist attitudes.

In conclusion, it has become clear that decreases in popular support for deeper European integration can be traced back to reasons of framing in popular discourse. The presence of populist radical right parties causes decreases in support for deeper European integration because, firstly, they have an influence on other political actors and react to the framing surrounding the ideological convergence of mainstream parties and their irresponsiveness in the European debate. Secondly, because populist radical right actors have a considerable influence on people’s frame of thought through their discourse. The malfunctioning of the EMS, Schengenzone or the European Union as such does not *automatically* result in populist mobilisation, social welfare chauvinism or anti-immigrant attitudes. Rather, citizens live in a world of incomplete information that is difficult to interpret. As a result, many depend on

²³⁷ Mudde, C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 259-260.

‘cues’ to make sense of the highly complex world they inhabit.²³⁸ The need for these cues is even greater when traditional parties or institutions are unable to mediate the negative socio-economic effects or are responsible for these policy failures. After decades of ‘permissive elite consensus’ in the European integration process, the two distinct crises proved to be a critical juncture. The process (including the EMU and migration trends) became salient and contested issues in the political arena. The ideological convergence of the traditional parties and the framing surrounding their inability or lack of tackling difficult policy issues resulted in a political vacuum. Populist radical right parties are the only political forces that have effectively positioned themselves vis-à-vis the European Union. They have developed a common pan-European discourse that resonates well with their electorate. Mainstream parties have not even tried – they are in that sense certainly responsible for the rise of these parties. As the transnational divide (i.e. integration-demarcation cleavage) becomes more and more significant, mainstream parties are compelled to compete on these issues that lie far away from their ideological core, however without much success.²³⁹ A result of mainstream parties using the same arguments and rhetoric as their populist radical right counterparts is that the public debate shifts closer to the latter’s ideology (*‘Verrechtsing’*). Indeed, by imitating the populist radical right, traditional parties legitimise their illiberal programmes and enable them to set the political agenda.²⁴⁰ The mainstream’s self-righteousness, in short, invites extremist rage and demagoguery.

The lack of engagement and consequent framing of mainstream parties surrounding the Europe debate is even more striking when one looks at the politics in Brussels. In the European Parliament, the European People’s Party (EPP) is by far the largest group and presents itself as being ‘pro-European’. However, its composition is in the first place dominated by the CDU/CSU, the conservative party of the Germany Chancellor, with Manfred Weber (CSU) as leader of the group. Secondly, many national parties that are in the EPP are not at all ‘pro-European’ – for example, Fidesz, the party of Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, fits the populist radical right label. Berlusconi’s Forza Italia – a long-time coalition partner with the populist radical right party Lega in national politics – also features in the group. Even Merkel’s CDU/CSU could barely pass as pro-European in

²³⁸ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., ‘A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus’ in: *British Journal of Political Science*, pp. 10-14.

²³⁹ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., ‘Cleavage Theory Meets European Crises’ pp. 14-15; de Vries, C. & Hobolt, S.B., ‘When dimensions collide: the electoral success of issue entrepreneurs’, in: *European Union Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2012), p. 263; Green-Pedersen, C. ‘A giant fast asleep? Party incentives and the politicisation of European integration’, in: *Political Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2012), pp.126-127.

²⁴⁰ New Pact for Europe, *Re-energising Europe*, p. 29.

Germany. Yet, the framing goes that the group is fully “committed to a strong Europe based on a federal model”.²⁴¹ Looking further than the Parliament, almost all the important positions in the European Union are occupied by members of the EPP: the Commission Presidency, the Council Presidency, the Presidency of the Parliament itself, the majority of Commissioners, and so forth. A point can also be made on the ideological convergence and framing surrounding the group of Socialists & Democrats (S&D). In the aftermath of the Great Recession, the moderate Left has already been punished in the polls for going along with the neoliberal and ordoliberal policies – more than the moderate right. Advocating austerity and abandoning the working-class vote lies far away from their ideological core. However, the moderate right might very well be under attack from its right flank.²⁴² Future research could engage in a comparative discourse analysis of the party manifestos of the EPP and S&D to get a better understanding of the similarities in their discourse and its consequences for the European project. More generally, the party discourse of mainstream parties from the left and right could provide valuable insights in their framing.

These traditional parties pretend that they can keep governing and that they possess all the answers to the plethora of crises at hand. They frame these solutions on the national, as opposed to the European, level. As this research has illustrated, this is pure fiction, framed as the current ‘status quo’ being the only alternative. What they fear is the emergence of a truly European political system: European citizens want to hold the European political class accountable transnationally and demand answers to the supranational issues that affect their daily lives. On the other hand, populist radical right parties *do* ask uncomfortable but urgent questions, potentially triggering a public debate on an alternative Europe, however, framed in radical right terms. The reluctance of traditional parties to address concerns that are by definition pan-European leads to their rejection, in favour of populist radical right parties. Yet, there are practically no positive, alternative visions on the political market that are able to redefine the Europe Union and come up with credible answers. To many voters, populist radical right parties look more tempting than the status quo – a dangerous observation that should serve as a wake-up call. As discussed, “populist politics of Euroscepticism are a critique of what the European Union has become, but also how it became this way.”²⁴³ The anti-European sentiment of many voters is a reaction against the current state of the union, captured by the populist radical right. Who do people vote for if they have the desire to

²⁴¹ EPP, ‘About us’, [Online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.epp.eu/about-us/history/>.

²⁴² Taylor, P., ‘Europe’s center right cannot hold’ in: *Politico*, 21/06/2018. [Online].

²⁴³ Taggart, P., ‘Populism in Western Europe’, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 259.

redefine the European Union in positive terms? Currently, the choice is between those who made it the way it is today and those who want to tear it apart, altering the question of the European Union *versus* the populist radical right into nothing but a false dichotomy.

Annexes

Annex 1: Code matrix browser use of codes over time in Marine Le Pen's discourse



Increase in use of ethnocultural code in Le Pen's discourse after Paris attacks (2015).

Annex 2: Coding example in MAXQDA

The screenshot displays the MAXQDA software interface. At the top, the window title is "Document Browser: 2017 03 09 Discours de Marine Le Pen". Below the title bar, there is a toolbar with various icons for document management and search. The main area is divided into two panes. The left pane shows a coding scheme with several categories: "European Union" (blue), "..Frontière (borde)" (blue), "..Immigration" (red), "European Union" (blue), "..Immigration" (red), and "..Islam" (yellow). The right pane shows a text document with line numbers 191 through 205. The text is in French and discusses the European Union, immigration, and women's rights. The coding scheme is applied to the text, with brackets indicating the categories assigned to specific lines or phrases.

Document Browser: 2017 03 09 Discours de Marine Le Pen

European Union

par les représentants du peuple français , quand ce n' est pas vous , peuple de France , directement !

191 Aujourd'hui , nos parlementaires ne décident plus de rien .

192 Ils ne font que transposer des directives qui arrivent par centaines et qui sont imposées tout là haut , à Bruxelles , par la bureaucratie de l' Union européenne .

193 Nous rétablirons le Parlement dans la plénitude de ses fonctions , pour qu' il vote des lois moins nombreuses , mieux pensées et surtout qui répondent à nos intérêts !

194 Mais l' Union européenne ne s' arrête pas là . En nous privant de notre souveraineté territoriale , en nous empêchant d' avoir des frontières , elle nous impose également l' immigration de masse .

195 Cette même immigration de masse qui vient jusqu' à menacer la liberté des femmes et filles de France .

196 La défense des droits des femmes me tient évidemment à cœur , en ce lendemain de journée mondiale de la femme .

197 Je dois le dire , elle est mise à mal par l' immigration de masse !

198 Je sais que c' est un sujet tabou , que n' aiment jamais aborder les pseudo féministes ou mes concurrents dans cette élection .

199 Mais nous sommes obligés d' évoquer les nouvelles menaces qui pèsent , en France même , sur les femmes .

200 Une menace qui est un affront fait directement à notre civilisation .

201 Une menace profonde qui se diffuse et qui attaque notre conception du rapport entre les hommes et les femmes .

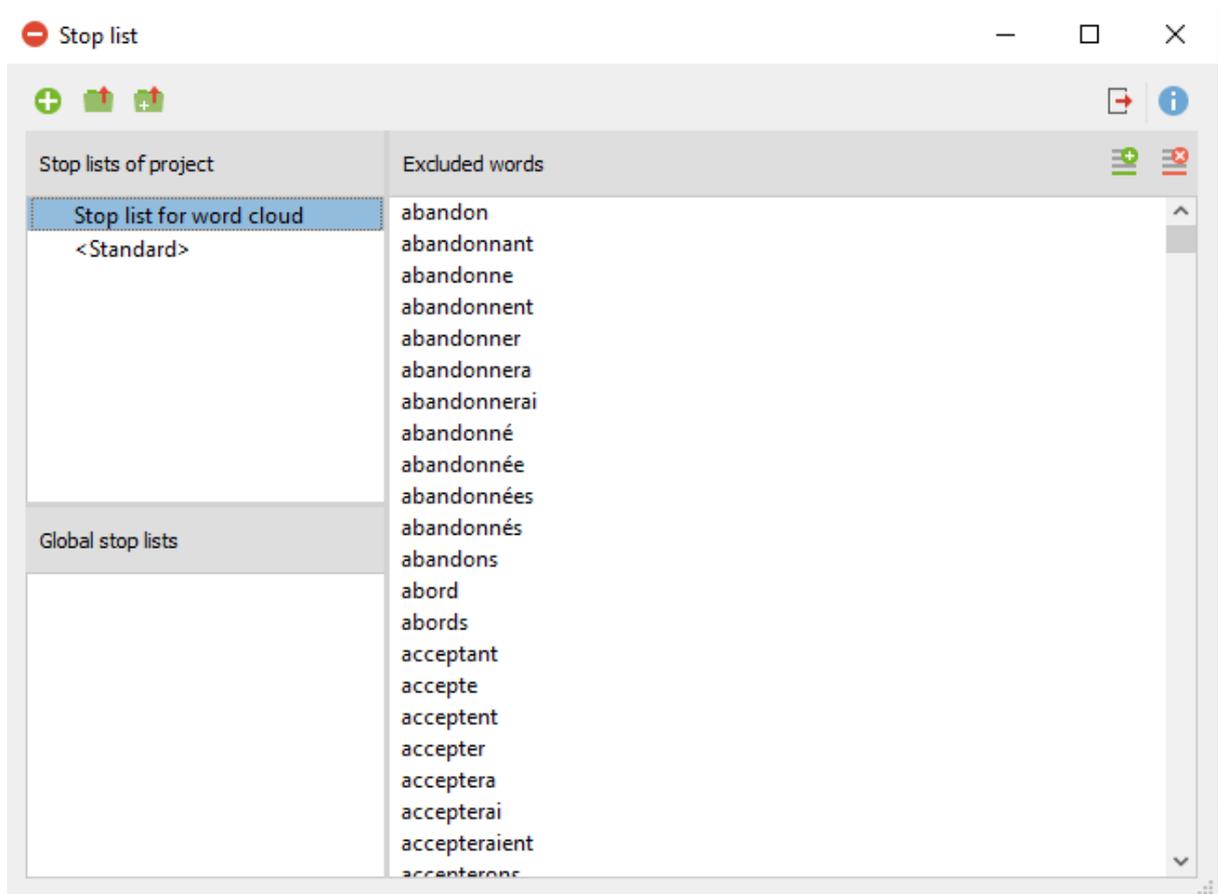
202 Oui , l' islamisme radical fait reculer , dans nos quartiers , dans nos villes des acquis qui semblaient pourtant définitifs .

203 Souvenez -vous en effet du café de Sevran , où des femmes ne pouvaient même pas pénétrer dans l' établissement uniquement parce qu' elles étaient des femmes .

204 pourtant , certains esprits complaisants ont cautionné .

205 Jusqu' à Monsieur Hamon , qui considérait que ces cafés sans femme étaient normaux parce qu' ils faisaient partie de la tradition ouvrière .

Annex 3: Section of 'Stop list'



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