

# EUROPE'S TROUBLEMAKERS

THE POPULIST CHALLENGE TO FOREIGN POLICY



**ROSA BALFOUR (RAPPORTEUR)**

**JANIS A. EMMANOULIDIS**

**HEATHER GRABBE**

**TIMO LOCHOCKI**

**CAS MUDDE**

**JULIANE SCHMIDT**

**CATHERINE FIESCHI**

**CHRISTOPHER HILL**

**MARIE MENDRAS**

**MARI K. NIEMI**

**CORINA STRATULAT**

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Mari K. Niemi  
Corina Stratulat

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## Preface

The growing focus on internal affairs and crisis-related 'navel-gazing' by politicians in various member states is influencing countries' strategies and interactions with their European counterparts and non-EU partners, as well as the Union's voice and leverage abroad. Given the intricacies and complex nature of today's foreign policy challenges, the growing presence of populist politicians in parliaments and governments is also having a significant impact across a range of issues, including mobility and migration, foreign aid, trade, relations with international partners like the United States or Russia, and even on European integration.

Moreover, since domestic and European politics – including in foreign policy – are now so interlinked and entwined, the strategic decisions taken by key actors operating at one or both of these levels can influence the supranational and national context, as well as a member state's room for manoeuvre with third countries.

In light of all this, reflecting on the influence of populist politicians on foreign policy issues at national and EU level is now of utmost importance. It was this which prompted the European Policy Centre (EPC) to set up a Reflection Group to examine and discuss the foreign policy positions of a number of populist parties, the impact of political 'radicalisation' on international policy developments and relations, and the effects of a consolidated block of 'anti' forces in the European Parliament following the 2014 elections.

The Reflection Group consisted of a pan-European network of experts with a proven track record of research and analysis of foreign policy and domestic party politics. They held four meetings in Brussels between March and December 2015 before delivering this report. Dramatic events unfolded during this period, from the revival of the Greek euro crisis in the early summer to the refugee surge from the late summer onwards, adding to the complexity of the challenge.

The issues explored in this report are pertinent to the vast majority of EU member states, but this report concentrates on a sample of countries. The selection reflects considerations on issues such as size; geostrategic location; economic power; the widespread popularity and electoral success of populist ideas among mainstream parties in parliament or government; when countries joined the EU; and specific national interests, sensitivities and traditions in relation to foreign policy.

The report aims to go beyond individual domestic considerations to build a nuanced, inter-disciplinary and general understanding of the populist phenomenon in Europe and its impact on foreign policy formulation and processes.

The EPC would like to thank all the authors and Reflection Group members for contributing their expertise, knowledge and analysis. A special note of appreciation must also go to Francesca Fabbri, Tania Marocchi and Iva Tasheva for their crucial assistance in collecting

supportive data, as well as Andreia Ghimis for providing feedback during the drafting process. For the inspiration, we would like to thank Charlotta Collen, who was Special Advisor for Policy Planning and Research at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs when this project started and is now Senior Adviser for Research at the Finnish Ministry of Defence.

Last but certainly not least, we thank the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Open Society Foundations for the funding they offered to the EPC, which made this project possible.

## Members of the Reflection Group

Rosa Balfour (rapporteur)	Senior Adviser, European Policy Centre, and Senior Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States
Janis A. Emmanouilidis	Director of Studies, European Policy Centre
Catherine Fieschi	Director, Counterpoint
Heather Grabbe	Director, Open Society European Policy Institute
Christopher Hill	Sir Patrick Sheehy Professor of International Relations, University of Cambridge
Timo Lochocki	Transatlantic Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States
Marie Mendras	Professor, Sciences Po, Paris
Cas Mudde	Associate Professor, University of Georgia
Mari K. Niemi	Senior Researcher, University of Turku
Juliane Schmidt	Junior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre
Corina Stratulat	Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre

## About the authors

**Rosa Balfour** was a Director at the European Policy Centre (EPC), where she headed the Europe in the World programme, when this project was launched. In June 2015, she joined The German Marshall Fund of the United States as a Senior Fellow on the Europe Programme, and became Senior Adviser to the EPC. She has researched and published widely on issues relating to European foreign policy and external action, relations with the Mediterranean region, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, EU enlargement, European Neighbourhood Policy, and the role of human rights and democracy in international relations. Her latest work has focused on the EU's new diplomatic service and its implications for European foreign policy, with a volume published in 2015 (co-edited with Caterina Carta and Kristi Raik), *The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries. Convergence or Divergence?*. Her book *Human Rights and Democracy in EU Foreign Policy. The cases of Ukraine and Egypt* was published by Routledge in 2012, the paperback edition in 2014. Dr Balfour holds an MA from Cambridge University, an MSc in European Studies and a PhD in International Relations both from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

**Janis A. Emmanouilidis** is Director of Studies at the EPC in Brussels. He has published widely on the EU's overall political and institutional development, the prospects for differentiated integration in an EU 28+, the Union's foreign, security and defence policy, and on EU enlargement. He has been an advisor for various governments, EU institutions, European parties, and NGOs on a broad range of issues related to European integration, and has commented widely on EU affairs in the media. Between 2007 and 2009, he was a Stavros Costopoulos Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in Athens, Greece. From 1999 to 2007, he was a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) in Munich, Germany. Before that, he worked as a Research Fellow at the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP). Mr Emmanouilidis is member of the Scientific Council and Research Associate at ELIAMEP and EU Institutional Development Advisor of the Polish think tank demosEUROPA – Centre for European Strategy in Warsaw. He has studied economics and international relations in Germany and the UK.

**Catherine Fieschi** is the Director of Counterpoint, a London-based research consultancy that provides governments, NGOs and corporate actors with strategic advice on how cultural and social dynamics affect politics, policy-making and markets. Prior to directing Counterpoint, Dr Fieschi led the London-based think tank Demos (2005-2008) and was Director of the Centre for European Governance at the University of Nottingham (2001-2004). She holds a PhD in Comparative Politics from McGill University. She is the author of *In the Shadow of Democracy* (2008) and of numerous pamphlets and articles on extremism, populism, and identity politics and their impact on policy and business. She has advised governments and businesses around the world on various aspects of populist and extremist forms of mobilisations and serves regularly on government task forces. Dr Fieschi is a Senior Associate in the Department of Government at LSE and was previously a Senior Member of St Antony's College, Oxford. She is a regular contributor to press, radio and television debates and a trustee of European Alternatives.

**Heather Grabbe** is Director of the Open Society European Policy Institute, currently on sabbatical at the European University Institute as a Jean Monnet Fellow. From 2004 to 2009, she was Senior Advisor to then European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, responsible in his cabinet for the Balkans and Turkey. Before joining the Commission, Dr Grabbe was Deputy Director of the Centre for European Reform, the London-based think tank, where she published widely on EU enlargement and other European issues. Her academic career includes teaching at the LSE, and research at Oxford and Birmingham universities, the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House, London), and the European University Institute (Florence). She has a PhD from Birmingham University and a BA and MA from Oxford University.

**Christopher Hill** is Sir Patrick Sheehy Professor of International Relations at the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) of the University of Cambridge, where he is also a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. He has published widely in the areas of foreign policy analysis, European foreign policy and general International Relations. He is particularly interested in the interplay between domestic society and foreign policy. His most recent publications are: *Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); (with Sarah Beadle) *The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World* (British Academy, 2014); and *The National Interest in Question: Foreign Policy in Multicultural Societies* (Oxford University Press, 2013). He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2007.

**Timo Lochocki** is a Transatlantic Fellow in the Europe Programme of The German Marshall Fund for the United States. He studied social psychology and international politics in Germany, Norway and the United States and holds a PhD in comparative politics from the Humboldt University Berlin, where he is a lecturer for European Politics. His doctoral thesis explains varying electoral advances of right-wing populist parties in Europe. He has published work on European integration, migration, and comparative politics with a focus on left- and right-wing populist parties.

**Marie Mendras** teaches Russian politics and foreign policy at the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po University in Paris. She is a Research Fellow with the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and heads the Observatoire de la Russie at CERI – Sciences Po. Dr Mendras is an Associate Fellow of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House, London. In 2015 and 2016, she is also a visiting scholar at Georgetown University and Senior Fellow at the Transatlantic Academy in Washington. From 2008 to 2010, she was a professor in the Government Department of the LSE. In earlier years, she also consulted for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence. Her latest book is *Russian Politics. The Paradox of a Weak State* (Hurst, London, and Oxford University Press, New York, 2012).

**Cas Mudde** is an Associate Professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia (USA) and a researcher in the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo (Norway). Holding an MA and PhD from Leiden University, he was the founding chair of the Department of Political Science at the

University of Antwerp (Belgium) and the co-founder of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy and the *Routledge Studies in Extremism & Democracy*. He is currently co-editor of the *European Journal of Political Research* (EJPR) and a blogger for the *Huffington Post*. He has published widely on topics such as (un)civil society, democratisation, Euroscepticism, extremism and democracy, political parties, and populism. His most recent book publications include the four-volume reader *Political Extremism* (four Volumes, SAGE, 2014), the reader *Youth and the Extreme Right* (IDEbate, 2014), and the co-edited *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). He has three books forthcoming in 2016: *On Extremism and Democracy in Europe* (Routledge), *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader* (Routledge), and *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press).

**Mari K. Niemi** is a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Parliamentary Studies (University of Turku, Finland) and a Visiting Researcher at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, United Kingdom). Her publications include articles, books and book chapters on populism, political communication, political campaigning and science communication. In her doctoral dissertation, Dr Niemi analysed women's breakthrough to party leadership and the rise of populist leadership in Finland. In her post-doctoral research project, she scrutinises Northern European populist parties' racism-related scandals and journalistic choices. In 2015, the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers nominated Dr Niemi as the Academic of the Year for promoting the culture of scientific research and making science familiar in its different forms.

**Juliane Schmidt** is Junior Policy Analyst in the Europe in the World Programme of the EPC. Before joining the EPC as a Programme Assistant in November 2014, she worked as an intern at the European Council on Foreign Relations and in the German Bundestag. She holds an MA in European Studies from the University of Aberdeen and an MA in EU International Relations and Diplomacy from the College of Europe.

**Corina Stratulat** is Senior Policy Analyst at the EPC and works in the European Politics and Institutions Programme, coordinating the Balkans Forum and contributing to the EU Politics and Governance Forum. She researches and writes about EU institutional developments, as well as about various aspects linked to the EU's enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans. She is a frequent speaker at events in Brussels, EU member states and beyond. She holds a BA in Integrated Social Sciences from Jacobs University (Bremen, Germany), a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Contemporary European Studies from Cambridge University (Cambridge, UK) and a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute (Florence, Italy). Her main research interests include comparative Central and East European politics, parties and party systems, elections, democracy, EU institutions, integration and enlargement.



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## List of abbreviations

AfD	Alternative for Germany
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ANEL	Independent Greeks
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSU	Christian Social Union
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
DPP	Danish People's Party
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
FI	Forza Italia
FN	Front National
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
GNI	Gross National Income
GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
Jobbik	Movement for a Better Hungary
LN	Lega Nord
M5S	Five Star Movement
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PiS	Law and Justice
PVV	Party for Freedom
SD	Sweden Democrats
S&D	Socialists and Democrats
SPÖ	Social Democratic Party of Austria
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
TINA	There Is No Alternative
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	UK Independent Party
US	United States
VB	Flemish Interest

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# Europe's troublemakers

## The populist challenge to foreign policy

### 1. Introduction

The relationship between domestic and international politics is evolving and challenging our understanding of both foreign relations and democratically legitimate government. International events intermingle with domestic politics, which in turn influence policy responses; national governments in the European Union (EU) and beyond increasingly struggle to offer answers which are both effective and reflect public preferences. Exposed to – and aware of – growing global complexities, citizens withdraw from politics or seek seemingly simple political answers to their fears and concerns. Mainstream parties, hard-pressed to reconcile their representative and governing functions, find themselves increasingly being 'outbid' by populist challengers.

Against this backdrop, populist parties and movements of widely diverse colours are thriving, challenging the *status quo* and the ruling elite, becoming the new 'troublemakers'.<sup>1</sup> In the past, dissenting troublemakers could usher in progressive change. Today, they are having a significant influence on the public debate, but without the transformational impact of those in the past. Some are right-wing or even on the far right, embracing xenophobic and nationalist narratives which play on citizens' fears that their communities are under threat from multiculturalism and immigration. On the political/ideological left, populists feed on fears of losing out to potent globalising trends and to the 'dictatorship' of international finance and economics, which an allegedly corrupt elite is not countering. This narrative is gaining ground even in the apparently stable and wealthy heartland of capitalism, the United States (US).

Alarm bells have been ringing for some time about the rise of populism. To some, Europe appears to be on the brink of collapse, with its governments unable to manage the influx of refugees, join diplomatic efforts to address Russian aggression and the Syrian crisis, or cope with the United Kingdom's (UK) referendum on leaving the EU. In many European countries and in the US, elections seem dominated by populist candidates. Right-wing populists have soared in opinion polls by exploiting especially the humanitarian plight of refugees; on the left, they have played on widespread anti-austerity and anti-elite sentiments.

But the transformative impact of populism on foreign relations has been little explored. Do populist parties represent a fundamental challenge to the way European countries relate to each other and to the rest of the world? What impact are they having on key issues such as European integration (seen by populists as a foreign, rather than domestic, issue), and

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<sup>1</sup> We loosely borrow the term from A. J. P. Taylor (1957), *The Trouble Makers. Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939*, London: Faber and Faber.

on foreign and security policy, including relations with key global partners, development aid, trade, and migration policy? How should mainstream politicians and other actors respond?

The wide diversity of populist parties, differing national circumstances and the deeper roots of discontent with traditional politics of which populism is merely a manifestation, make it hard to give straight answers to these questions. But the wealth of cases explored in this paper offer some clues. One thing seems certain: populism is here to stay, even if it ebbs and flows. Traditional politics thus needs to address the more deep-rooted malaise which is fuelling discontent, rather than to stigmatise, mock or ignore its symptoms, or worse still, join the chorus of complainers.

Populist parties have so far not succeeded in directly determining key political decisions, even though they now have a seat at the decision-making table in some countries. In the foreign policy arena, they have not yet influenced major decisions on war and peace. Left-wing populists have failed to do more than dent the recipe served up to tackle the Eurozone crisis. Right-wing populism has not led to the unravelling of European integration, nor has it blocked asylum seekers from arriving in Europe – yet.

Where the populists have been very successful is in distorting the debate, simplifying and polarising complex problems, claiming to offer authenticity in a world of 'more of the same', capturing public moods, and influencing mainstream public opinion in the process. Today, some mainstream parties – whether in an attempt to compete with the populists, to follow public opinion, or because of ideological shifts – have endorsed a populist rhetoric. These narratives, until recently taboo, have become part of everyday public debate in Europe, with potential consequences for civil liberties and domestic peace. Both left and right-wing populists are exploiting a crisis of democracy and legitimacy. Right-wing and extreme right-wing populists are fuelling and exploiting xenophobia and anti-immigration attitudes to bring in authoritarian nativist policies based on strong nationalist and/or local identities.

This paper explores whether and how the populists are shaping the debate, and what the consequences might be for foreign policy-making. It does so in different ways. It starts by examining how domestic and international politics are intertwined, with domestic dynamics shaping foreign policy preferences and international events influencing internal politics. The focus is on outlining the nature of the problem, with particular reference to Europe and its system of multilevel governance. This chapter then outlines the methodology adopted for this paper (chapter 2).

Chapter 3 dissects the nature of populism, identifying the core dilemmas that it poses for politics and highlighting the diversity of its manifestations through many political parties and movements across the left-right spectrum and the European continent.

Chapter 4 delves into four key areas: (1) European integration; (2) foreign and security policy, including relations with the US and Russia, interventionism, and development aid; (3) international trade; and (4) migration and the refugee influx.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions about the phenomenon of populism and its real impact on foreign policy, and outlines some general ideas on how to reframe politics to counter its negative effects. Given the diversity of issues concerned, concrete policy recommendations would only be applicable in a limited number of instances. Given the seeming inability of mainstream politics to address populism as a phenomenon, it is more useful to present ideas about how to reframe liberal democratic politics.

## **2. Foreign policy-making in transformation: understanding the relationship between the domestic and the international**

### ***A perpetual loop of interaction between domestic and international politics***

International and domestic politics are interdependent: developments in the international arena affect the phenomenon of populism, and populist forces and arguments influence foreign policy-making. This relationship is not new, but has been heightened by globalisation. What makes contemporary globalisation qualitatively different from the past is the pace, depth and ubiquity of transformation, thanks to higher levels of education and modern technologies, especially in the field of communications. These developments are changing the nature of the relationship between domestic and international politics, and the context in which foreign policy is debated and decided.

The end of the Cold War, European integration and wider patterns of globalisation have substantially increased interdependencies and broken down traditional borders between national and foreign policy. There are more arenas for governments to take decisions together with other states and institutions, especially in the EU, but their autonomy is arguably constrained as the boundaries defining sovereign states have become blurred. Globalisation and Europeanisation have widened the scope of foreign policy and simultaneously led to its domestication, as 'external' issues become more relevant at home. At the same time, nation states continue to be the key actors in international relations even within the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), much to the disappointment of those who had expected the Treaty of Lisbon to have finally led the EU to speak with a more concerted voice. While internal politics and foreign policy each maintain their distinctiveness, the international and domestic realms become ever more closely intertwined and thus harder to define and circumscribe.

In the 1990s, these trends seemed to herald a new era of multiculturalism, enriching diversity and globalisation. But the incursion of external threats into the domestic arena, with the 9/11 attacks at the start of the new century, has challenged cosmopolitan optimism, revealing globalisation's dark sides. Domestic factors are also influencing external events: in advanced democracies, changing societies are shaping and constraining political choices through the emergence of new actors who often contest established norms and practices.

Blurred boundaries between local, national, EU, and international action are evident in many cross-cutting policy fields, such as European integration, migration and international trade, all of which require complex multi-level decision-making. One implication of this is that both or either of the internal and external environments can turn out to be key determinants of political choices.

Domestic developments thus shape a country's foreign policy as much as foreign policy issues affect domestic politics, making policy susceptible to inside-out and outside-in patterns – "a



perpetual loop of interaction".<sup>2</sup> Multicultural societies diversify the domestic backdrop for foreign policy; there can be a domestic backlash against foreign policy choices as a lot of migrant communities can shape international choices, for instance, through diaspora connections. Or, even if cosmopolitan and multiple identities are an irreversible condition of modernity, the pushback can be seen in a return to nationalist or local identities in anti-integrationist and anti-globalist forces.

These phenomena are not confined to Europe but they are particularly acute in the EU, where interdependence is institutionalised first and foremost through the common currency, the Single Market and the Schengen regime in unparalleled ways. Integration between, and cooperation among, EU member states have made the European institutional and political space a hybrid and very complex mix of competences spread over multiple levels of decision-making.

This is not new, but these interconnections and the pace at which they are accelerating are revealing of the weaknesses of governance. Alongside the blurring of boundaries, the relationship between peoples and their governments is also becoming more complex. As a consequence, government is not only being challenged in terms of the internal-external nexus, but also with regard to the legitimate locus of decision-making and democratic scrutiny.

### ***Contested legitimacy and decision-making***

The EU has not evolved into a federal state. European integration sits uneasily at the nexus between internal and external policy; it is simultaneously foreign and domestic. The EU has created both the conditions for the transnationalisation of politics, through the free movement of goods, services, capital and people, and a space for new disaffection, contestation and possibly disruption.

The challenge is not just to deal with transnational phenomena which bypass traditional thematic and national boundaries through multiple levels of competences, but also for decision-makers to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of European citizens to govern in multifaceted and disputed policy areas.

This also applies to foreign policy, which is no longer a *domaine réservé* of an elite; competing concepts of the 'national interest' are challenging the way in which foreign policy is made, traditional diplomatic relations and countries' external priorities.<sup>3</sup> European integration, foreign and security policy, relations with countries with confrontational governments such as Russia, development aid, trade, and migration management are all increasingly subject to public scrutiny as they directly affect the well-being of EU countries and their citizens.

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<sup>2</sup> Hill, Christopher (2013), *The National Interest in Question. Foreign Policy in Multicultural Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

European societies often deal with these challenges by falling back on the nation state and nationalism to combat the perceived threat of globalisation or multiculturalism, and/or by growing support for 'anti-movements' (e.g. anti-systemic, anti-establishment, anti-modernity and anti-EU/euro) highly critical of mainstream political parties and elites. Euroscepticism has been on the rise since the 1990s, to the right and left of the political spectrum. The demonisation of minorities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other forms of racism and discrimination against the 'other' have all been evident, with worrying echoes of the 1930s, especially in the context of the financial, sovereign debt and economic crises of recent years, and the current crisis in managing the migration/refugee influx.<sup>4</sup>

The call from populists (and others) to close borders and build fences to prevent the arrival of refugees fleeing war, episodes of violence and protests against diversity all raise spectres of a dark past. Traditional political parties are struggling to find domestic and European solutions to quell dissatisfaction with multiculturalism and globalisation; their actions on the international scene are influenced by such domestic constraints, leading to external responses which at times cater more to their public's fears than addressing the issue at stake.

### **Today's 'troublemakers'**

'Troublemakers' have historically been agents of change, with positive and negative connotations.<sup>5</sup> Today, the most powerful troublemakers include populist parties and movements on both the ideological right and left which, especially since the 1990s, have moved into the traditional party political arena to destabilise patterns of political interaction at national and European level. These parties – which have profited from and exploited the growing gap between elites and citizens – are challenging the traditional relationship between political representatives and their constituencies, and thus the legitimacy of the decision-making levels in a globalised and EU-governed society, as never before.

In the past, populists were mostly on the margins of politics. They became a liability when they entered government and attacked core democratic institutions like the judiciary or the independence of the media. Populists such as former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in Italy (*Forza Italia* – FI), the Kaczynski brothers in Poland (Law and Justice – PiS) or Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary (Fidesz) have attempted to undermine core principles of liberal democracy. In Denmark, they have been instrumental in driving a political swing to the right since participating in government in the 2000s.

Other populist parties have been kept out of power, for instance in France, where the Front National (FN) has united the centre-right and centre-left to prevent it from getting its hands on the reins of power. When such parties have entered governments, they have often turned out to be "dogs that bark loudly but hardly ever bite".<sup>6</sup> During the 2009-2014 European

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<sup>4</sup> Rachman, Gideon (2015), "Dangerous cracks at Europe's centre", *Financial Times*, 2 February, available at: [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8bee864a-a7ea-11e4-be63-00144feab7de.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8bee864a-a7ea-11e4-be63-00144feab7de.html), last accessed on: 17 November 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor (1957), *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Mudde, Cas (2013), "Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: so what?", *European Journal of Political Research*, Volume 52, Number 1, pp. 1-19, p.14.

Parliamentary term, they seldom worked effectively together or separately to have a significant impact on policy outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Today, there is a risk that the exceptions could become the norm. This is territory that merits closer attention in the context of a growing awareness of the changing relationship between the domestic and international, the expanding scope of foreign policy and the question marks over political legitimacy linked to institutional cooperation in the EU. Failure to understand the spectres haunting Europe and how they affect international relations contributes to a political inability to deal with today's problems. Mainstream politics and governments need to change gear in understanding political developments and offering new proposals to counter the rise of populism.

### ***This paper's approach***

This situation raises several questions: how do domestic political dynamics influence national and EU foreign policy choices and, conversely, how do international developments affect domestic politics? And how do these internal-external dynamics change people's understanding – and the nature – of foreign policy? To what extent does the populist challenge to the legitimacy of current decision-making processes in the EU context affect governments' ability to devise foreign policies fit for today's world?

With few exceptions, the potential consequences of populism for Europe's foreign policy have hardly been examined.<sup>8</sup> One reason for this is that populist parties have generally paid little attention to foreign policy issues beyond European integration and migration. But as they move out of the shadows of marginal politics into the 'respectable' political arena through electoral success and media coverage, most are compelled to address and include some foreign policy issues in their campaigns (see Table 1 in the *Annex*). The positions they adopt, as will be seen, should not always be taken at face value, as they are sometimes sanitised to appeal to a broader public or exacerbated to further polarise and simplify complex debates. Distinguishing between what populists say and what they actually do is the key first step in this analysis.

Whether and how populists influence foreign policy-making is the next step. This can be tracked on a number of levels. Sensationalist and provocative slogans easily find their way into the media, multiplied by viral social media which amplify the sound of populist slogans in the public debate. The space offered to populists by many media outlets can help them not just to contribute to the debate but also to shape it and its vocabulary, influencing voters' preferences and world views, and affecting national, regional and local governments. Tabloids and populist parties often share similar objectives: both see

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the annual reports of *VoteWatch Europe* and Morris, Marley (2013), *Conflicted politicians: the populist radical right in the European Parliament*, London: Counterpoint Report.

<sup>8</sup> Raynova, Denitsa and Kearns, Ian (2014), *The Foreign and Security Policies of Populist Parties in Europe: An ELN Quick-guide*, London: European Leadership Network; Ben-Hur Levy, Yehuda (2015), *The Undiplomats: Right-wing populists and their foreign policies*, London: Centre for European Reform; Schori Lang, Christina (ed.) (2007), *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

themselves standing up for citizens against corrupt and distant elites. Populist arguments have thus been able to influence public opinion in part thanks to the megaphone provided by tabloid newspapers.

The role of populist parties and their relationship with mainstream politics in Europe needs to be explored. Mainstream parties in government, mainly from the centre-right, have moved further to the right on immigration, law and order, austerity, and national security since the 2000s. They may be doing this of their own volition, driven by internal dynamics to change their approaches, ideas and recipes, rather than under pressure from extremists. Alternatively, they may be reflecting shifts in public opinion, influenced by the activities and vociferousness of populist parties. Often, mainstream leaders have themselves exploited the populist challenge to toughen their rhetoric and policies in line with populist themes and solutions. This has benefited the populists, which in turn has pushed the mainstream further to the right.

In this sense, populist views may be a reaction to the changing context rather than a cause of the mainstream's shift to the right. But populists can also act as 'enablers' of decisions taken by mainstream parties or, conversely, paralyse decision-making on key issues where the public holds strong opinions. The presence of populist parties in government can have more direct consequences, either in terms of shaping policies to reflect their views or prompting them to backtrack on some electoral pledges.

In the EU, members of populist parties in government now sit around the Council table. The European Council has Hungary's Viktor Orbán, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and new Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło; Finland is governed by a coalition which includes the populist Finns Party, whose leader Timo Soini, chose to become Foreign Minister; in Greece, the leader of the right-wing populist Independent Greeks party (ANEL) Panos Kammenos also decided to focus on external issues, asking to become defence minister in the coalition government with the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA). The opportunity is there for the populists to have an impact. As Geert Wilders, historic leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands who stepped down from his seat in Brussels/Strasbourg to take up one in The Hague, put it: "Our generation of politicians can for the first time make a difference and get back what belongs to us, which is national sovereignty."<sup>9</sup>

It is somewhat ironic that the anti-European parties have been gaining ground and votes, to some extent thanks to the EU, and that they have joined institutions they have heavily criticised, such as the European Parliament (EP). Given that European elections are seen as "second-order elections"<sup>10</sup> and are often used to punish governments, populist parties are better able to motivate their voters to go to the ballot box. In fact, the EP has proven to be more accessible than many national parliaments, especially those of larger EU countries, and has thus become an important platform for populist Eurosceptic forces, some of which go so

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in The Economist (2014), "Turning right. Europe's populist insurgents", 4 January, available at: [www.economist.com/news/briefing/21592666-parties-nationalist-right-are-changing-terms-european-political-debate-does](http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21592666-parties-nationalist-right-are-changing-terms-european-political-debate-does), last accessed on: 27 November 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Reif, Karlheinz (1984), "National electoral cycles and European elections 1979 and 1984", *Electoral Studies*, Volume 3, Number 3, pp: 245-255.

far as to advocate the dissolution of the parliament and the EU itself.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, none have refused to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the European elections and the benefits of becoming a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), in terms of securing party funds, visibility in the media, forming parliamentary groups and joining pan-European networks.

Since at least the 1990s, populist parties have increased their electoral support and parliamentary presence at national and European level, but so far with little impact on parliamentary activity and policy outcomes.<sup>12</sup> However, their numbers in the EP have grown, with an average of 12.5% of the vote in the May 2014 elections.<sup>13</sup> Most right-wing populists sit under the umbrella of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), or European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) groups, while left-wing populists are mostly in the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL). Others are members of mainstream European political groups, such as Fidesz in the European People's Party (EPP) or Smer in the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) (see Table 2 in the *Annex*). In response to the growing numbers of populists weakening mainstream parties of the right and left, the EPP and S&D negotiated a 'grand coalition' agreement with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) on the key policy choices for the current legislature. However, this tactic of marginalising the populists may backfire, as it resembles precisely the type of politics populists deplore – summed up aptly by the previous Flemish Interest (VB) slogan "All against one, one against all!"<sup>14</sup>

Populist parties are now able to use the EP as a platform to present their positions at EU level and to their national electorates and to access funding; leaders can join the Conference of Presidents and nominate shadow rapporteurs to monitor legislative activities. Their presence and work may thus change in the current parliamentary cycle and their influence may be felt more directly, on matters of parliamentary competence, or indirectly, through debates on international issues and at home.

In this paper, these spheres of influence – national and EU-related, direct and indirect – and the populists' broader impact on how debates about foreign policy issues are framed, will be examined in four major policy fields: European integration (section 4.1); foreign and security policy, including relations with the US and Russia, issues of war and peace and development aid (4.2); trade (4.3); and migration, with a particular emphasis on the recent refugee influx (4.4). In all cases, the key questions are the same: what do the populists say? What do they do? What difference do they make?

<sup>11</sup> It is notable that while being the largest UK party in the European Parliament, UKIP's 12.6% gained in the national elections of 2015 translated into just one seat in the House of Commons.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the annual reports of [VoteWatch Europe](#) and Morris (2013), *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Mudde, Cas (2015), "Populism in Europe: a primer", *Open Democracy*, 12 May, available at: [www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/populism-in-europe-primer](http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/populism-in-europe-primer), last accessed on: 10 February 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Grabbe, Heather, and Groot, Nadja (2014), "Populism in the European Parliament: What Implications for the Open Society?", *The International Spectator*, Volume 49, Number 4, pp. 33-46.

Aware of the breadth of the topics, Europe-wide focus and uniqueness of each of the populist parties examined, this paper focuses on looking for similarities and trends,<sup>15</sup> rather than on an extensive comparison of policies. The many examples highlighted (thanks to the exceptional expertise gathered to draft this paper in the framework of the Reflection Group) are used to suggest broader generalisations. To do this, one must explore the positions and platforms through which populism can influence foreign policy and the potential consequences of such a populist discourse for foreign policy choices. What do the populists say on foreign policy matters? What do they do in practice? How does populism influence the debate on international issues? How does it affect mainstream parties, and does that make a difference in foreign policy decision-making? If so, how does this change European policies and politics? Could populism's influence become pervasive and, if so, what should the response be? The following sections will address these questions. But first, who are the populists?

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<sup>15</sup> Anderson, Benedict (2015), "Frameworks for comparison", *London Review of Books*, Volume 18, Number 2, pp. 15-18.

### 3. Who are the populists?

The way the term 'populism' is used in public and political discourse is wrapped in conceptual haziness. From opportunistic demagoguery to dogmatic extremism, the different meanings attached to populism cover an eclectic mix of policies and actors. The diversity of interpretations of the term can be boiled down to a minimal definition of populism as:

"an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups – 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt' elite – and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people".<sup>16</sup>

*Clichés* like charismatic leadership, tabloid-style communication techniques or the championing of simplistic solutions to complex challenges are features that facilitate populism, which is otherwise best defined in antithesis to elitism, pluralism, liberalism and cosmopolitanism. Populists relentlessly defend 'ordinary people' against what they perceive to be fickle and self-interested holders of power, elite values and institutional structures, or procedures that impede the direct and full expression of the *vox populi* (voice of the people). At the same time, populists reject differences of interests and opinions within the population and thus the possibility of compromise with political opponents.

The distinction between 'the people' and 'the elites' makes populism moralistic rather than programmatic. Populist parties come in many different stripes, and often simplify and radicalise values and views that are already broadly shared by masses and elites. They are traditionally associated with the radical right and a combination of anti-immigration, Euroscepticism and nationalism, as displayed in various mixes by parties such as the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the FN in France, the Flemish VB in Belgium, or the PVV in the Netherlands. Some populist parties are far-right, like the ultranationalist Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), while others are sceptical about the euro, such as the Finns Party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S), and the UK Independent Party (UKIP), which advocates leaving the EU. Contemporary populism is not confined to the ideological right, but reaches right across the political spectrum to left-wing parties such as Podemos in Spain or SYRIZA in Greece, both critical of the EU as it stands.

Populist parties are faring rather well at the polls in most EU countries, although their share of the vote ranges from a remarkable 65% in Hungary (Fidesz and Jobbik combined) to only 5.6% in Belgium (VB).<sup>17</sup> In 2014, the Sweden Democrats (SD) increased their support

<sup>16</sup> Mudde, Cas (2004), "The populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, Volume 39, Number 4, pp. 542-563, p. 543. In the academic literature, this is an accepted definition of populism; its common usage in politics and the media, however, varies across countries and can acquire different meanings in different languages.

<sup>17</sup> Mudde (2015), *op. cit.*

from 5.7% to 12.9% of the vote and their parliamentary seats from 20 to 49. In Greece, Hungary, Italy (until recently)<sup>18</sup>, and Slovakia, a populist party is or has been the biggest political party. Populists are currently in government in Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia.

Greece stands out as its ruling coalition is made up of populist parties on the left (SYRIZA) and right (ANEL), but Hungary is equally distinctive insofar as both its main government party (Fidesz) and its main opposition party (Jobbik) are populist. In France, FN which became the second largest party in the 2015 local elections, will run in the 2017 parliamentary elections and its leader will be a key contender in the 2017 presidential election. Some of the current populist parties are newcomers (like M5S, AfD and Podemos); others are decades-old veterans (such as FN and FPÖ); a few have recently been in the ascendancy (e.g. SYRIZA, UKIP, AfD, and PiS); and several are in decline (e.g. VB or the People's Party Dan Diaconescu in Romania), all of which underscores the electoral volatility of populist parties without masking the general upward trend. Other political parties also seem to be riding the populist wave to strengthen their standing with the public. All this puts a number of populist parties closer to the centre of decision-making at national and European level than ever before.

In the EP, parties which until recently seemed unable to work together have formed the ENF group, but with only 37 members they are not yet as numerous as the Eurosceptic EFDD group with 45 members, or the GUE/NGL with 51 members (see Table 2 in the *Annex*).

### ***Explaining populism***

How can this populist *Zeitgeist* be explained? The received wisdom holds that economic crises – especially when they lead to (very) high levels of unemployment – breed political extremism, with the experience of the Great Depression bringing the Nazi party to power in Germany taken as the main case in point. Yet in the ongoing crisis in Europe, populist radical-right parties have prospered in countries like Finland, Sweden, Greece, Hungary, and the Netherlands; have lost ground in Belgium, Denmark, Bulgaria, and Norway; and continue to be largely absent from about one-third of EU member states, including economically-troubled Portugal and Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, some countries (such as Germany) which have weathered the economic storm quite well have witnessed a strengthening of populist parties such as the AfD, which since the summer of 2015 has also gained from the effects of the migration/refugee influx. Other populist parties, such as the Austrian FPÖ and the French FN, came to prominence long before the economic crisis hit.

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<sup>18</sup> In Italy, two populist parties, Forza Italia and Lega Nord, were in government until 2011. Since then, another populist party has emerged, the Five Star Movement. In the national elections of 2013, these three parties gained respectively 21%, 4% and 25%. In other words, half of the electorate voted for populist platforms.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Mudde, Cas (2013), "The myth of Weimar Europe", *Open Democracy*, 20 August, available at: [www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/myth-of-weimar-europe](http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/myth-of-weimar-europe), last accessed on: 15 August 2015. Mudde also argues that economic crises do not bode well for populist parties at any rate since voters are preoccupied with socio-economic issues during periods of economic uncertainty, while populist parties (especially on the right) generally thrive on socio-cultural issues.



The root causes of the populist phenomenon lie beyond economics, reflecting a crisis of representative government in modern European democracies. It is in the growing tension between the demands of representation and the demands of government – which mainstream political parties now struggle to manage – that populist parties find a fertile niche.<sup>20</sup>

They succeed where political elites are widely perceived to be failing: at politicising issues of great importance to large segments of the electorate, such as immigration on the populist right and austerity on the populist left. In doing so, they channel citizens' frustrations with the establishment, citizens who feel empowered through higher levels of education and new technologies to be critical of and even cynical about their leaders, yet who feel disempowered in terms of influence over internal and external policy choices.

Across the EU, many political parties in government are caught between a rock and a hard place. The rock is made up of the growing number of binding and intractable mandates they have acquired from the EU, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other external institutions (like courts and central banks) to which national decision-making authority has *de facto* or *de jure* been transferred; a transfer of power which, according to many supporters of populist parties, has limited their country's sovereign ability to master some of the most pressing challenges facing them, such as (youth) unemployment or influxes of asylum seekers and migrants. The hard place is made up of the electorate, now fragmented and volatile – and thus more difficult for politicians to read – but also more distrustful of political parties than of any other democratic institution, disengaged from conventional politics<sup>21</sup> and political actors, who seem in many ways overwhelmed by the challenges they are facing.

This means that even if political parties could understand what voters want, they now increasingly have to choose between being "responsive" to their electorates and "responsible" towards domestic and international stakeholders.<sup>22</sup> This tension between "responsive" and "responsible" government has become ever more acute in our interconnected world, in which the internationalisation and Europeanisation of policy parameters has sharply reduced politicians' capacity to process citizens' demands with any meaningful policy discretion and thus avoid electoral fallout.

This often results in the adoption of a TINA (There Is No Alternative) approach to politics, reinforcing the electorate's suspicion that mainstream politicians are incapable of making a significant difference to people's daily lives and that they are indeed 'all the same'. The challenge faced by governing parties to reconcile campaign promises with the constraints imposed by expert institutions and agencies outside the formal electoral arena has become ever-more acute in the past two decades, and parties' ability to plea for voters'

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<sup>20</sup> Mair, Peter (2009), "Representative versus responsible government", *MPiFG Working Paper 09/8*, Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, available at: [www.mpifg.de/pu/workpap/wp09-8.pdf](http://www.mpifg.de/pu/workpap/wp09-8.pdf), last accessed on: 14 August 2015.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Mair, Peter (2006), "Polity skepticism, party failings and the challenge to European democracy", *Uhlenbeck Lecture 24*, Wassenaar: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

<sup>22</sup> The friction between "responsiveness" and "responsibility" is discussed in Mair, Peter (2013), *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*, London, New York: Verso.

understanding when they cannot fulfil election commitments has been undermined by the erosion of partisan loyalties.<sup>23</sup> In addition, representatives of mainstream parties have very often blamed Brussels (EU) or Washington (IMF) and at times also Berlin (Germany) for unpalatable reform efforts (scapegoating), which has further undermined confidence in the system as a whole.

Enter the populist parties, which challenge the political class and accepted dependencies on foreign powers and pledge to vindicate people's sense of political betrayal with a spoonful of bitterness about European integration, immigration, crime, corruption, and other alleged culprits blamed for national decline. The boldness of their message is matched by the originality of their style: almost all successful populist parties (like the FN, SYRIZA, Fidesz or UKIP) have skilful and charismatic people at the top who excel at (visual) propaganda, are (social) media-savvy, and build and manage their party organisation and presence on the ground. By daring to break taboos and fight political correctness, they pride themselves on being 'true democrats' ready to fight and even replace the traditional establishment, which – according to them – has lost touch with 'the people'.

### ***Does populism matter?***

Is populism really dangerous? In a formal sense, it does not challenge the understanding of democracy as popular sovereignty and majority rule. However, by opposing pluralism and the practice of political compromise, the populists are anti-liberal.<sup>24</sup> By defining 'the people' as a homogenous bloc, they reject the notion of democracy as the representation of diverse interests and opinions. In short, populism does not negate democracy but offers "an illiberal democratic answer to [...] undemocratic liberalism".<sup>25</sup>

Populist parties simplify and radicalise values and views that are already broadly shared by masses and elites.<sup>26</sup> They are a chronic symptom of the malaise that is smothering democracy, an expression of profound popular frustration and insecurity which mainstream parties do not seem able to address effectively or (equally worrying) sympathise with. Populists are a reminder that democracy keeps disappointing and thus needs to be continuously adapted to meet changing requirements. Their recurring electoral success is a signal that the democratic dilemma has not been fixed, and it is this lack of effective solutions – not populism *per se* – that could pose a lethal threat to European democracies.

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<sup>23</sup> See Mair (2009), *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> For example, Mudde, Cas (2007), *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Mudde, Cas (2015), "The problem with populism", *The Guardian*, 17 February, available at: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/17/problem-populism-syriza-podemos-dark-side-europe](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/17/problem-populism-syriza-podemos-dark-side-europe), last accessed on: 27 November 2015.

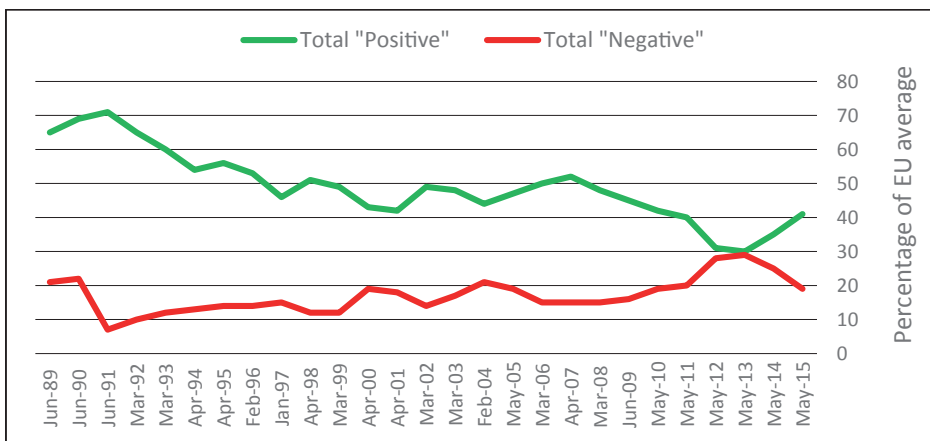
<sup>26</sup> Canovan, Margaret (1981), *Populism*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Canovan, Margaret (1999), "Trust the people: populism and the two faces of democracy", *Political Studies*, Volume 47, Number 1, pp. 2-16; Mudde, Cas (2010), "The populist radical right: a pathological normalcy", *West European Politics*, Volume 33, Number 6, pp. 1167-1186.

## 4. Populism and foreign policy

### 4.1. European integration: a popular and populist target

Populist parties profit from widespread popular and political discontent with the EU (see Graph 1 below). Sources of citizens' discontent include the frustration that they cannot influence and change policies which have an impact on their daily lives; that the EU's institutional setting is too complex, too distant, too bureaucratic, and insufficiently transparent for people to understand; and perceptions that the EU is not part of the solution but has rather become part of the problem (an argument that has been raised especially in the context of the Eurozone crisis) and that European integration has in more general terms led to an erosion of national identity.<sup>27</sup>

Graph 1: Public perception of the EU between 1989 and 2015



Source: Eurobarometer, 1989-2015 (Spring Waves),

<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD><sup>28</sup>

However, even if populist parties are all critical of the EU - "soulless Europe", in the words of Pim Fortuyn – their positions vary.<sup>29</sup> For some, it is seen as a project which aims to over-run national identities, as an elite-led process which is undermining national

<sup>27</sup> Fieschi, Catherine (2013), "Introduction. The politics of uncertainty and anxiety: the age of populism", in Fieschi, Catherine, Morris, Marley, and Caballero, Lila (eds.), *Populist Fantasies: European revolts in context*, London: Counterpoint.

<sup>28</sup> This is a simplified graphical depiction of the question related to public perceptions of the EU, which has existed in different forms in the Eurobarometer questionnaire. Until 1999, the question was: "Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY'S) membership of the European Union is a good thing or a bad thing?". From 2000 onwards, the question was: "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?"

<sup>29</sup> Fortuyn, Pim (1997), *Zielloos Europa: Tegen een Europa van Technocraten, Bureaucratie, Subsidies en Overmijdelijke Fraude*, Utrecht: A. W. Bruna.

democracies and representation. Fidesz and PiS argue that Brussels is the 'new Moscow', eroding their countries' sovereignty. UKIP, PVV, the Danish People's Party (DPP), VB, and the Finns Party have all demanded referenda on EU membership, the first three with the explicit aim of leaving the Union.

For some, the root of all evil is the euro rather than European integration. For example, one AfD founder stated that the creation of the common currency was "a truly frivolous experiment, designed by people who were either totally illiterate in economic matters (...) or were inspired by a Utopian and dogmatic vision which seemed to give them the right to ignore reality".<sup>30</sup> AfD is joined by M5S in targeting first and foremost the euro or how the Eurozone is governed (similar criticism has also come from SYRIZA and Podemos), but for other parties (such as the SD, FN, FPÖ, PiS, and Lega Nord – LN), the attack on the common currency is part of a broader and deeper ambivalence towards the European project and manifests itself in calls to leave the Eurozone – or not to join it, in the case of Sweden (SD) and Poland (PiS). The Finns Party's official position is to have 'less but better' EU, a stance they describe as critical but constructive. SYRIZA and many others on the left argue against the EU as it stands, dominated, as they see it, by neoliberalism that runs counter to the interests of the working class and 'weaker' EU countries.

In all these cases, the erosion of national sovereignty is a major complaint. Populists claim to represent the 'voice of democracy' when they emphasise the role of national parliaments and other national institutions, and attack EU institutions for undermining national identities and interests or the IMF for challenging democracy and Europe's independence.

In other cases, criticism of the euro is motivated by tactical rather than ideological positions. The LN, an influential political actor in Italy since the early 1990s, has modified its stance over time. As an advocate of independence for Northern Italy (or, in the party's imagination, "Padania"), its position towards European integration is defined in relation to the benefits the EU would give Northern Italy. LN's initial platform was neutral with respect to Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), shifted to euro-critical in the 2000s (including while in coalition government), and then to outright rejection and a call for a return to the old Italian Lira when the party ended its agreement with FI and moved to the opposition.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the coalition dynamic between FI and LN largely played itself out on European issues.

As for the French FN under Marine Le Pen, its stance on the euro has been (much as its overall discourse) developed to target a working class vote that it has been pursuing relentlessly. As such, the euro is held up as the project of an elite that has 'fetishised' currency

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<sup>30</sup> Asch, Ronald G. (2015), "The decline and fall of the European Union: is it time to rip it up and start again?", *Open Democracy*, 17 July, available at: [www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/ronald-g-asch/decline-and-fall-of-european-union-is-it-time-to-rip-it-up-and-start](http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/ronald-g-asch/decline-and-fall-of-european-union-is-it-time-to-rip-it-up-and-start), last accessed on: 27 January 2016. The AfD has since changed leadership and moved towards more xenophobic positions especially since the refugee inflow to Germany in autumn 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Verbeek, Bertjan, and Zalsove, Andrej (2015), "The impact of the populist radical right parties on foreign policy: the Northern League as a junior coalition partner in the Berlusconi Governments", *European Political Science Review*, Volume 7, Number 4, pp. 525-546.

at the expense of people and politics, and is depicted as being entwined with austerity and therefore responsible for ordinary people's 'suffering'.

Supranational jurisdiction and/or regulation are often seen as interference in the sovereign self-determination of nations. What many of these parties argue for is a 'Europe of Fatherlands', in the language of FPÖ, or 'Europe of Nations', in the language of VB; a Europe which promotes national identity through a looser intergovernmental alliance or simply through a free trade agreement (UKIP). Culturally, this means promoting 'Polishness' according to PiS, and not the 'Europeanness' espoused by elites, scientists and journalists (see Table 1 in the *Annex*).

Different reasons motivate criticism of the EU from the left. SYRIZA and Podemos call for a fundamental reform of a neoliberal Union in favour of a more social and democratic Europe which does not follow the 'diktat' of a few (most powerful) states (notably Germany). Podemos also has a strong focus on democratic reform and transparency, which accompanies an open Europe, open borders and pacifist rhetoric.

Populist parties have had a clear impact on the UK's relationship with the EU. Following pressure from its Eurosceptic backbenchers, who advocate similar anti-EU arguments and political rhetoric to those championed by UKIP, the Conservative government vowed to hold a referendum on EU membership before the end of 2017. UKIP itself has been able to build on strands of Euroscepticism which have run through the two largest parties – Labour and Conservative – since the country joined the EU in 1973. Should a majority of the British electorate vote in favour of leaving the EU, 'Brexit' could set a precedent affecting the debates in other member states, giving EU-hostile/sceptic populist parties in other countries fuel to light more fires at home on various EU-related issues.

Elsewhere, such parties have hitherto been less successful in shaping the debate over EU membership. The DPP, PVV, VB, and Jobbik have all included requests for EU membership referenda in their manifestos. The DPP toyed with the idea of tying its support for the new government to a request to hold a British-style referendum on EU membership. Eventually, the liberal Venstre party managed to form a minority government with the external support of other parties, including the DPP, without giving way on the question of membership. But the call for *ad hoc* referenda on single EU-related issues has been growing in recent years, with many emulating UKIP's apparent success in shaping the UK's agenda.

### ***The Greek euro crisis of summer 2015***

The escalation of the 'Greek crisis' in the first half of 2015 provided a good illustration of the interactions between populist and mainstream politics, and the extent to which this has made any difference to the handling of the Eurozone crisis. The Greek SYRIZA-ANEL government was elected in January 2015 on a promise to regain the country's sovereignty after years of fiscal and economic surveillance by the Troika.<sup>32</sup> Tense months of unsuccessful negotiations saw a dramatic escalation of the crisis, ending in a political

<sup>32</sup> The Troika is formed by the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

standoff between Athens and the rest of the Eurozone in June/July 2015, when Tsipras unilaterally called a referendum on the bailout package while German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble proposed that Greece should take a 'time-out' from the euro.

In the end, the Greek government backtracked on its electoral pledges and was obliged to accept, more or less, the conditions attached to a new bailout package. By arguing that its promise of a new economic course was postponed rather than abandoned, the government was re-elected in snap elections in September 2015.

SYRIZA was not the only party to forfeit its anti-austerity commitments – a core element of its mobilisation platform. The Finns Party campaign platform, ahead of the parliamentary elections of April 2015, railed against countries that did not respect budgetary discipline and "cheated" the system at the expense of Finnish taxpayers. Back in 2011, the party did not enter government precisely because of differences with the other parties over the EU. The pledge to stop supporting "these kinds of immoral policies" was thus vital for the party's base as much as for its relations with coalition partners.<sup>33</sup> This created uncertainty during the June/July 2015 negotiations, with speculation that the Finnish Parliament might block a new bailout package and accusations that the Finns Party was playing too big a role in shaping government policy.

The governing alliance eventually supported the bailout agreement and the Finnish prime minister emphasised the unity of the coalition. Under pressure from its electorate, the Finns Party went to great lengths to explain its broken promises. Similarly, under pressure from PVV leader Geert Wilders, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte had promised in the 2012 election campaign that he would not support a third bailout for Greece. Yet, in the end, he did, in the face of even stronger pressure from Wilders.

Populist positions on the Greek crisis also had an impact on governments with no populist coalition partners. When the 'Greek saga' entered a new phase in the spring of 2015, much of the media and public opinion in Germany were strongly against additional financial support for Athens, and the positive polling trends for the AfD showed that right-wing populists were profiting from this general sentiment. In February 2015, the then leader of the AfD Bernd Lucke publicly asked members of the Bundestag from the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) to leave their parties and join the AfD if they intended to vote against the new Greek bailout. His plea was rebuffed and the Bundestag's support for the third Greek bailout package was never really in doubt, with 453 out of 631 parliamentarians voting in favour in August 2015. However, an unprecedented 63 CDU/CSU Members of Parliament voted against the package and Chancellor Merkel's promise of additional support for Athens to fulfil its obligations.<sup>34</sup> Many in the CDU/CSU (especially the CSU) echoed the AfD arguments, with some openly advocating a (temporary) 'Grexit'. In other words, parts of a traditionally mainstream conservative party have embraced arguments which are common to the populist right-wing.

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<sup>33</sup> In the words of its leader, now Foreign Minister, Timo Soini, quoted in Dowling, Siobhán (2015), "Greece's Finnish problem", *Handelsblatt*, Global Edition, 15 April.

<sup>34</sup> Results on the website of the German Bundestag at: [www.bundestag.de/bundestag/plenum/abstimmung/grafik](http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/plenum/abstimmung/grafik), last accessed on: 8 February 2016.

In France, the Socialist government took a different position, disregarding some of the populist rhetoric coming from the FN, which insisted that France should not support another 'Greek rescue'. After Schäuble proposed his euro time-out plan for Athens, Paris took a clear stance in favour of Greece staying in the common currency. Fearing the potential consequences of a Grexit for the EU and for France, French President François Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi supported Tsipras and the quest for a compromise in the decisive negotiations at the European Council in July 2015.

What the euro crisis – and the Greek case in particular – tells us is that populists, whether in power or not, have the ability to influence and the means to shape the debate about European integration, even if this does not affect the eventual outcome. The impact of populism has been to increase tensions, expose existing fractures and legitimise a political diatribe which uses confrontational tones and language. But this was not accomplished by populist parties alone. Many mainstream political leaders used populist rhetoric when engaging in various forms of opponent bashing, backed by media sensationalism. Stigmatising 'others', pandering to prejudices and manipulating historical references are not practices confined to populists outside the political mainstream.

Ultimately, the policy choices made during the latest escalation of the Greek crisis were 'co-shaped' by left-wing populists sitting at the decision-making table (SYRIZA) or 'co-influenced' by right-wing populists, who were either represented in government (Finns Party) or able to strongly affect the attitudes and positions of mainstream parties.

However, ultimately the decisions taken at the European level did not reflect populist preferences; their role was more visible in the debate than in the actual policy outcomes. Greece did not exit from the Eurozone, a scenario favoured by many right-wing populists, nor was there a major shift in orientation towards less austerity and a more social agenda, as advocated by SYRIZA and other left-wing populists, like Podemos.

The crisis showed the importance of the interaction between domestic politics and the European negotiating table, how media coverage of domestic debates influenced the interpretation of events, and how the debates themselves – the political discourse, the language used – influenced negotiating tactics and obscured policy preferences, legitimising a vocabulary which had previously been confined to episodes of extremism and is now used widely.

## **4.2. Foreign and security policy**

Traditional foreign and security policy issues have attracted little attention from populist parties. But the crises engulfing Europe since the summer of 2015 (the influx of refugees and terrorism) have conflated internal and external politics, making the populists more vocal on these matters. Participation in national and European elections has also obliged some to expand their political agendas to provide answers to some foreign policy issues. This section explores populist parties' positions on more specific issues related to international relations, security policy and development aid (see

Table 1 in the *Annex*), examining whether and what kind of influence they have had on debates and policies.

### ***Global friends and foes: the US and Russia***

Anti-Americanism has been a rallying platform for many populist parties. FN is perhaps one of the most evident critics of the US, but so are others to the right, such as Jobbik, and many movements on the left, like Podemos. Attitudes towards the US are, for most parties, tied to their views on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and consequently to perceptions of security, defence and military intervention, and/or connected to anti-globalisation. Anti-Americanism cuts across left and right distinctions: internationalist pacifists such as Podemos and nationalist isolationists such as FN, FPÖ, Ataka and the SD share critical views of the US. Italy's M5S is another case in point: it is sceptical of the US, wants America to leave its military bases in Italy and floats plenty of conspiracy theories about the US. These can be used to stir up controversy when Europe and America disagree, such as in the Snowden case.<sup>35</sup> Others blame the US for recent problems related to the refugee influx: the FPÖ leader, who came close to being elected mayor of Vienna in September 2015, rallied voters by accusing the US and NATO of causing the crisis through their interventions in Iraq and Libya. This is not an isolated opinion.

In France, anti-Americanism and anti-NATO rhetoric is an old blend of sentiments, emotions and calculations, expressed by each political force in its own way. It is used at times by the incumbent president and government, even though they generally steer a moderate, transatlantic course. But standing up to the US is seen as a way of sending a message and reaching out to the *souverainistes* and more reactionary voters on the right, and more revolutionary voters on the left.

FN has a particularly strong nationalist ideology with anti-American and anti-NATO content. Marine Le Pen denounces the logic of Euro-Atlantic integration in favour of an exit from NATO's integrated command structure. As an alternative, she proposes a "Europe of Nations" and wants to offer Russia a strategic alliance based on a military and energy partnership and a Pan-European Union (of sovereign states) with Russia and Switzerland, excluding Turkey.

Indeed, populists' relations with President Vladimir Putin have attracted much media attention since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its aggression in Eastern Ukraine. There are links between Moscow and some European populist parties,<sup>36</sup> and Putin's ideology resonates with some parts of European public opinion. Viktor Orbán has expressed his admiration for Putin's leadership and concept of sovereignty; LN leader Matteo Salvini claimed that "Russia represents the future"; and Marine Le Pen sees Russia as part of the "Christian heritage of European civilisation". Reports of alleged Russian government support for right-wing parties, in the context of the conflict in Ukraine, prompted serious concerns

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<sup>35</sup> Ben-Hur Levy (2015), *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> The Political Capital Institute has been exploring the relationship between Russia and East European right-wing parties since 2009. See, for example, Political Capital Institute (2014), *The Russian Connection: The Spread of Pro-Russian Policies on the European Far Right*, available at: [www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc\\_flash\\_report\\_russian\\_connection.pdf](http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf), last accessed on: 27 November 2015.



about Kremlin interference with political parties in Europe. Indeed, alongside the use of the media (for instance, by boosting *Russia Today's* media outreach) and propaganda, targeting political parties has been part of the Kremlin's tactics in trying to divide Europe.

A number of right-wing political parties, mostly from the far-right, sent 'election observers' to the referendum and elections in Crimea and the elections in Donbass (all of which have not been recognised internationally), including FPÖ, FN, Jobbik, LN, FI, and VB. There have also been many reports in the Western press about alleged Russian financial support for FN, AfD and FPÖ, although only FN admitted to having received a 9 million EUR loan from a Russian bank.<sup>37</sup> In EP votes, these parties have demonstrated their pro-Russian sentiment. For example, in the vote on a joint resolution on the human rights situation in Crimea on 4 February 2016, ENF voted almost unanimously against, including FPÖ, FN, LN, and PVV, as well as almost all M5S MEPs.<sup>38</sup>

Russia-friendly parties are not limited to the right. In June 2015, the EP voted resoundingly in favour of a non-binding report on the state of EU-Russia relations calling on the European Commission to propose legislation to forbid non-EU funding of political parties. The report was approved by over 70% of MEPs, but the minority which voted against included not only a mix of FN, UKIP, LN, FPÖ, Jobbik, and M5S, but also members of GUE/NGL, such as SYRIZA, Podemos and the Dutch Socialist Party.<sup>39</sup>

However, there is little ideological common ground between these parties and Moscow: today's Russia has little to do with nostalgia for the Soviet Union, which may be attractive in some post-Communist pockets of Europe; and the nationalist and isolationist positions of many right-wing parties are hard to combine with a pro-Russian rhetoric. What these events have demonstrated so far is little more than transnational connections between political parties, with international guests attending party conferences.

The relationship between Putin and right-wing parties in Europe has been more of a "marriage of convenience".<sup>40</sup> Putin exploits these relations for their media impact, as they help to undermine the EU, polarise the debate in Europe and may weaken the EU's attractiveness to its neighbours in Eastern Europe. Some populists in Europe find Putin's positions appealing because they share similar enemies: the EU, the US and liberal values. Many also applaud his leadership skills. Even Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, has declared his admiration for Putin, although there are few connections between his party and the Kremlin. Populist parties in Europe use Putin as a polarising issue

<sup>37</sup> Mudde, Cas (2014), "Russia's Trojan Horses", *Open Democracy*, 8 December, available at: [www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/cas-mudde/russia's-trojan-horse](http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/cas-mudde/russia's-trojan-horse), last accessed on: 8 February 2016.

<sup>38</sup> VoteWatch Europe, "Human rights situation in Crimea, in particular of the Crimean Tatars", available at: [www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-human-rights-situation-in-crimea-in-particular-of-the-crimean-tatars-joint-motion-for-resolution-vot.html](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-human-rights-situation-in-crimea-in-particular-of-the-crimean-tatars-joint-motion-for-resolution-vot.html), last accessed on: 16 February 2016.

<sup>39</sup> VoteWatch Europe, "State of EU-Russia relations", available at: [www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-state-of-eu-russia-relations-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution.html###vote-tabs-list-1](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-state-of-eu-russia-relations-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution.html###vote-tabs-list-1), last accessed on: 4 February 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Laruelle, Marlene (2015), "Russia's Bedfellowing Policy and the European Far Right", *Russian Analytical Digest*, 6 May, No. 167.

too: the more confrontational the Russian president is towards the EU, the more useful he is to the populist cause of devaluing Europe. For instance, Marine Le Pen used the Paris attacks to criticise the domestic and foreign policy failures of Hollande and his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, arguing that France should join forces with Russia to solve the Syrian conflict.<sup>41</sup>

In itself, this opportunistic use of polarisation has so far been of little consequence in shaping EU policy towards Russia in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and destabilisation in Eastern Ukraine. The EU's populist governments have not undermined European unity, although Hungary and Greece may represent potential exceptions to the EU's policy towards Russia. Viktor Orbán launched his 'Eastern Opening' foreign policy doctrine and has repeatedly expressed his personal admiration for Putin as well as for his 'sovereign democracy' ideology (see Table 1 in the *Annex*). Soon after becoming prime minister in January 2015, Alexis Tsipras received the Russian ambassador and declared that he and others were critical of EU sanctions against Russia. This overture to Moscow was first and foremost designed to increase Greece's leverage in negotiations with its Eurozone partners and the IMF, and to accommodate some of the more left-wing elements of the SYRIZA party, which believed that Russia might be willing to assist Athens financially. A few months later, Tsipras even visited Moscow amidst speculation about a possible Greek default, a visit which led to a political agreement to cooperate on a gas pipeline which, if it materialised, would entail Russian investment.

Yet beyond showing that Moscow could be used as a bargaining chip, neither Hungary nor Greece have yet breached the unity that the EU has managed to achieve on this issue. Poland's new PiS government has not yet upset the balance in the opposite, anti-Russian direction, despite floating conspiracy theories over the plane crash which killed the former President, PiS co-founder and twin brother of its current leader, Lech Kaczyński.<sup>42</sup> Against strong odds, the Franco-German tandem, the focus on the Minsk process in dealing with the Ukrainian question, the sanctions policy towards Russia and individuals involved in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea are still holding EU countries together, notwithstanding the populist critique and the fact that traditional bilateral relations between many EU member states and Russia have suffered as a consequence.<sup>43</sup>

Disagreements over the EU's relations with Russia cut across the establishment and run deeper than the rise of populism. Russia has long been a divisive factor in European politics, and thus the current agreement over the EU's sanctions policy can be seen as an achievement in itself. This reflects the fact that the thermometer of EU-Russia relations lies in mainstream political parties and traditional bilateral relations rather than in populism. For French President Hollande, for example, one could argue that differentiating himself from Le Pen's constant

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<sup>41</sup> Le Pen, Marine (2015), "How France will conquer the enemies of liberty", *Time*, 17 November, available at: [www.time.com/4117119/paris-attacks-marine-le-pen/](http://www.time.com/4117119/paris-attacks-marine-le-pen/), last accessed on: 19 December 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Krastev, Ivan (2015), "The Plane Crash Conspiracy Theory that Explains Poland", *Foreign Policy*, 21 December, available at: [www.foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/21/when-law-and-justice-wears-a-tinfoil-hat-poland-russia-smolensk-kaczynski/](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/21/when-law-and-justice-wears-a-tinfoil-hat-poland-russia-smolensk-kaczynski/), last accessed on: 17 February 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Mendras, Marie (2016), "The West and Russia: From Acute Conflict to Long-Term Crisis Management", *DGAP/CTR-Johns Hopkins University paper series for the Munich Security Conference*, January, available at: [www.transatlanticrelations.org/sites/default/files/Ostpolitik%20article%209%20mendras%20final%20a.pdf](http://www.transatlanticrelations.org/sites/default/files/Ostpolitik%20article%209%20mendras%20final%20a.pdf), last accessed on: 17 February 2016.

defence of Russia helped the government shift France's stance on Russia closer to that of Germany, despite the French establishment's long-standing ties with its counterparts in Russia. Thus, Hollande played his part in ensuring EU unity over sanctions through the Franco-German axis. In turn, to differentiate himself from the government, presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy made a controversial visit to Moscow at the end of October 2015. In short, relations with Russia are shaped more by such mainstream dynamics than by the Kremlin's relations with populist parties.

### ***Military intervention, and issues of war and peace***

Most populist parties are opposed to military interventions abroad. Those on the left have a strong pacifist ideology, which is shared also by Italy's M5S. For instance, in the wake of the Paris attacks, Podemos proposed a seven-point plan to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) through a combination of restrictive measures to undermine the organisation's sources of financing and support for democracy and civil society in the Arab world.<sup>44</sup>

Conversely, the strong nativist and nationalist ideological bases of right-wing parties lead them to prefer nationalist positions, often with isolationist implications. However, they are in favour of strengthening self-defence. FN has a strong nationalist and anti-imperialist ideology which rejoices at the presumed unravelling of the 'American', 'Islamist' and 'Chinese empires' as an opportunity for nations to regroup in a multipolar world. The DPP too opposes intervention, although it has supported participation in peace-keeping missions only if under the authority of the United Nations.

Most right-wing populist parties decide their position on a case-by-case basis, rather than on the basis of a non-interventionist ideology. Other variables influence their choices, such as anti-Islamism or pro-Russian preferences. Marine Le Pen has repeatedly attacked the French government for its strikes in Syria, arguing in favour of aligning with Russia. LN was in favour of a grand anti-ISIS coalition with Russia, Europe and the US, with the ending of the sanctions against Russia as a corollary of this.<sup>45</sup>

Identity politics also plays a role: the Finnish foreign minister frequently refers to the need to protect Christians abroad, a sensitive issue which was also brought up in the context of the migration/refugee influx. Viktor Orbán has called for the defence of "Christian Europe", arguing that "multiculturalism means the coexistence of Islam, Asian religions and Christianity. We will do everything to spare Hungary from that."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Podemos, "Seven urgent measures to combat the so-called Islamic State", available at: [www.podemos.info/seven-urgent-measures-to-combat-the-so-called-islamic-state/](http://www.podemos.info/seven-urgent-measures-to-combat-the-so-called-islamic-state/), last accessed on: 7 January 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Lega Nord, "Lega, Calderoli: "Siria: Europa accetti la proposta di una grande coalizione anti ISIS fatta dalla Russia e revochi subito sanzioni UE a Mosca" ", available at: [www.leganord.org/notizie/le-news/14889-lega-calderoli-siria-europa-accetti-la-proposta-di-una-grande-coalizione-anti-isis-fatta-dalla-russia-e-revochi-subito-sanzioni-ue-a-mosca](http://www.leganord.org/notizie/le-news/14889-lega-calderoli-siria-europa-accetti-la-proposta-di-una-grande-coalizione-anti-isis-fatta-dalla-russia-e-revochi-subito-sanzioni-ue-a-mosca), last accessed on: 7 January 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Dunai, Marton, and Stonestreet, John (2015), "Multiculturalism does not work, says Orbán", *Reuters*, 3 June, available at: [www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/03/us-hungary-orban-idUSKBN0CJOT920150603](http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/03/us-hungary-orban-idUSKBN0CJOT920150603), last accessed on: 7 January 2016.

When populists are in coalition government, the picture has been mixed. In Italy, LN has not been consistent about military intervention. In 1997, when in opposition, it supported an intervention in Albania to stem the flow of migrants after the collapse of the government there, but in 1999 it opposed NATO military intervention for Kosovo and openly supported the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic against independence for Kosovo. When in government, LN supported Italy's participation in the intervention in Afghanistan but joined the broad camp opposing intervention in Iraq. Its time in government shows that it was more successful when pursuing tough immigration policies than when it took up other issues, where it usually either gave way to the leading coalition partner's preferences or where its position was of little consequence (its position on Libya shifted together with the government's priority of secure access to energy).<sup>47</sup> In other words, LN focused on its core ideological issue – anti-immigration – while using other issues tactically, as a tool of coalition politics or to ride the wave of public opinion.

Populists' stances on international security and defence policy vary, especially between left and right. In principle, most left-wing populist parties would rationalise defence spending and put military expenditure and all military operations under greater public scrutiny by subjecting them to referenda. They argue that a number of military agreements should be revised, such as on anti-ballistic missile defence.<sup>48</sup> SYRIZA's electoral manifesto included a reference to the need to review defence spending (Turkey's proximity has always led to a broad consensus in Greece on high defence budgets), but concrete cuts were proposed only in June 2015.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, some right-wing populist parties are concerned about defence budget cuts or would like to see defence spending increased for territorial defence rather than out-of-area military intervention (see Table 1 in the *Annex*). FN in particular has argued that France should spend at least 2% of its budget on defence, and others have expressed concern at cuts in spending, notwithstanding their views on NATO.<sup>50</sup> FN is particularly adamant that France needs to beef up its territorial defence, nuclear deterrence and military projection capabilities through defence cooperation with other countries, including Russia, and a stronger maritime policy.

### ***Development aid***

Except in Northern Europe, development aid rarely features in the manifestos of populist parties, but makes its way up the populist political agenda when government budgets are discussed. In an overwhelming majority of cases, right-wing populist parties support quite drastic cuts to external assistance, arguing that such funds should be redistributed to support

<sup>47</sup> Verbeek and Zaslove (2015), *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Borque, J. Arias (2015), "Defensa y Fuerzas Armadas, ¿qué proponen PP, PSOE, Ciudadanos y Podemos en sus programas electorales?", *Libertad Digital*, 9 December, available at: [www.libertaddigital.com/espana/2015-12-09/defensa-y-fuerzas-armadas-que-proponen-pp-psoe-ciudadanos-y-podemos-en-sus-programas-electorales-1276563377/](http://www.libertaddigital.com/espana/2015-12-09/defensa-y-fuerzas-armadas-que-proponen-pp-psoe-ciudadanos-y-podemos-en-sus-programas-electorales-1276563377/), last accessed on: 23 January 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Hooper, John (2015), "Why has Greece only now included defence cuts in its Brussels proposals?", *The Guardian*, 23 June, available at: [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/23/why-has-greece-only-now-included-defence-cuts-in-its-brussels-proposals](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/23/why-has-greece-only-now-included-defence-cuts-in-its-brussels-proposals), last accessed on: 23 January 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Ben-Hur Levy (2015), *op. cit.*

those in need at home. In the 2010 negotiations on forming a coalition government in the Netherlands, the PVV pursued a complete end to development aid, while the main government party proposed to halve it. In the end, the minority government decided to abide by its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) commitments.<sup>51</sup> UKIP contests the MDG of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on development aid and advocates cutting it to 0.2%. In contrast with its influence in shaping the debate on British membership to the EU, UKIP's stance did not break the cross-party consensus on the MDG goals: the UK was among the first G7 countries to meet its MDG targets already in 2013 and remains one of the most generous donors, notwithstanding significant budgetary cuts.

Many parties argue that development aid should aim to protect and promote national interests. FN has France's glory in mind when it does not propose cutting the external assistance budget, but it would tie the country's foreign policy to the projection and protection of French interests abroad: to include, among other things, renegotiating agreements with the Maghreb countries to stop immigration flows, launching a pan-African policy aimed at stemming migration towards France and promoting French culture and language abroad.

To the left, SYRIZA and Podemos have not elaborated detailed policies on development aid. Representatives of SYRIZA have advocated supporting developing countries, especially in Europe's direct neighbourhood, but given the severe budget cuts of recent years, the amounts available for development aid have been slashed. Podemos has a strong internationalist and rights-based approach to foreign policy, arguing in favour of free movement of people, strengthening the right to asylum and reinforcing regular migration mechanisms (by, for example, creating a space for circular migration between Spain and Latin America), but no mention is made of the financial resources necessary to pursue these foreign policy positions (whereas on internal matters the financial implications of some proposals are elaborated in more detail) – and foreign affairs occupy a minimal part of a lengthy programme of nearly 400 proposals.<sup>52</sup> Despite its internationalist background, many of Podemos' concrete proposals relate to Spaniards abroad or promoting Spanish culture: cooperation with the US to reduce brain drain, ensuring pension provisions for Spaniards returning from abroad, and promoting Spanish culture and language.

In the past, these positions seemed to be of little consequence, especially in countries with strong development aid traditions. In the wake of electoral successes, populist parties could simply use development aid as a bargaining chip in negotiating minority coalitions. But today, there are signs that their arguments are gaining ground in mainstream politics. In Finland, one of the things the coalition government did in the first few months was to slash the development aid budget by 43% – a Finns Party electoral

<sup>51</sup> Chrysogelos, Angelos-Styliano (2011), *Old Ghosts in New Sheets: European Populist Parties and Foreign Policy*, Brussels: Centre for European Studies.

<sup>52</sup> Podemos manifesto 2015, available at: [www.unpaiscontigo.es/wp-content/plugins/programa/data/programa-es.pdf](http://www.unpaiscontigo.es/wp-content/plugins/programa/data/programa-es.pdf), last accessed on: 19 December 2015.

pledge. This was done in the context of major austerity measures, but the public debate initiated by the Finns Party about the effectiveness of aid helped prepare the ground for such dramatic cuts (although Finland continues to respect the MDG goals). Denmark and the Netherlands too, led by the mainstream right, are cutting back on development aid or refocusing it to reflect perceived security objectives (see Table 1 in the *Annex*).

Populists have long campaigned for development aid to be designed to contain immigration flows, calling for external assistance budgets to be limited to humanitarian aid through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (PVV and SD), or to focus it on migration management and policies for the readmission of migrants (DPP, FPÖ and VB). This is becoming mainstream in the context of the crisis over the migration/refugee influx. In Germany, Social Democrat Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel also recently proposed to tie development aid to readmissions.<sup>53</sup> In Austria, conservative Austrian People's Party Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz called on the EU to stop giving aid to countries refusing to take back people whose asylum claims were rejected, like Morocco, Pakistan and Tunisia.<sup>54</sup> The Swedish centre-left government is exploring how to refocus its development aid budget to respond to the influx of refugees, with possible cuts to external aid of up to 60% of its budget. This would mark a sharp shift away from Sweden's traditional global role as one of the world's most generous donors, as well as the country accepting the highest numbers of asylum seekers *per capita*.<sup>55</sup>

While these changes to development aid need to be understood in the context of overall austerity-led cuts in government spending and the pressure on state budgets resulting from migration/refugee influxes, the populist rhetoric has paved the way for such policy shifts and helped to legitimise political choices which in some contexts would otherwise have been difficult to justify. These arguments, especially about preventing irregular migration, can also play a role in the more general debate about the politicisation of development aid and can potentially influence choices about military intervention in unstable countries, even if the populist influence on the major issues of war and peace has been marginal so far.

### 4.3. International trade and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

The very notion of free trade and the fact that trade policy is an exclusive competence of the EU sit uncomfortably with different actors across the left-right ideological spectrum, and can become an easy target for populist parties on both extremes. The ideological sources of this discomfort differ: to the left, the critique of international trade is part of the anti-neoliberal

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<sup>53</sup> Scheffer, Ulrike, and Monath, Hans (2016), "Minister Gerd Müller contra Minister Sigmar Gabriel", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 January, available at: [www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/entwicklungshilfe-minister-gerd-mueller-contra-minister-sigmar-gabriel/12816246.html](http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/entwicklungshilfe-minister-gerd-mueller-contra-minister-sigmar-gabriel/12816246.html), last accessed on: 5 February 2016.

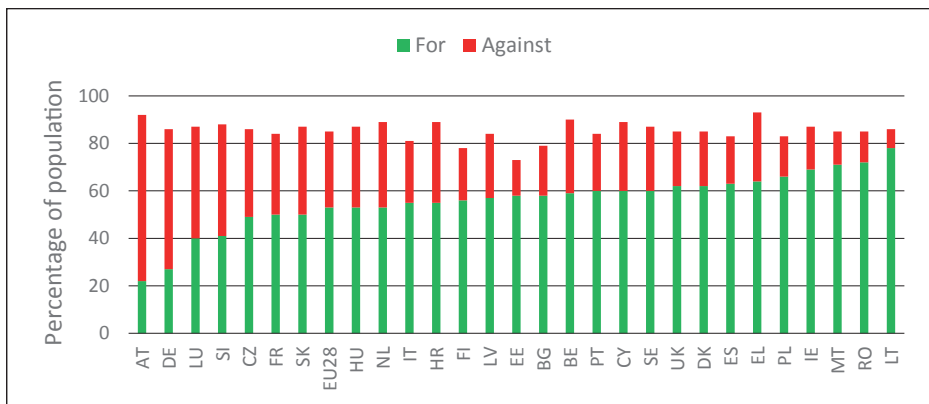
<sup>54</sup> Pöll, Regina (2016), "Kurz: Druck auf Herkunftsländer", *ORF 1*, 4 February, available at: [www.oe1.orf.at/artikel/430308](http://www.oe1.orf.at/artikel/430308), last accessed on: 5 February 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobsen, Henriette (2015), "Sweden considers cutting development aid budget by 60% due to refugee crisis", *Euractiv*, 5 November, available at: [www.euractiv.com/sections/development-policy/sweden-considers-cutting-development-aid-budget-60-due-refugee-crisis](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/development-policy/sweden-considers-cutting-development-aid-budget-60-due-refugee-crisis), last accessed on: 10 February 2016.

and anti-globalisation agenda, often tied up with anti-Americanism; to the right, it is grounded in economic nationalism. But both sides can sometimes find common ground: the ongoing and at times heated debate about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – a bilateral trade agreement intended to standardise legislation and bring down trade barriers between the EU and US – is a case in point.

Mainstream political forces in Europe – including in particular the Greens and some Social Democratic parties as well as opposition parties from countries that champion Europe's trade agenda (such as Germany or the UK) – and much public opinion in a number of member states (see Graph 2 below) rail against some of the perceived risks that the ongoing trade negotiations between Washington and Brussels could pose to health, labour and environmental standards but also to broader national economic and political interests. Their voices are amplified by the loud critique of TTIP from the populist right- and left-wing parties that make up a quarter of the current EP, increasing the potential for the talks to be disrupted.

**Graph 2: Public opinion on TTIP**



Source: Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDAR/surveyKy/2098><sup>56</sup>

As shown in Table 1 in the *Annex*, populist parties are generally either silent on free trade issues in their manifestos or outspoken on the trade partners that Europe should have (which tend to include countries from the East like Russia, China and India, or from Latin America, especially Brazil). In fact, populist leaders like UKIP's Nigel Farage and PVV's Geert Wilders openly praise free trade in their political programmes, yet both are unwilling to hand policy-making authority in this area to Brussels. As Nigel Farage put it: "I do not believe that the EU should be negotiating trade for us under any circumstances."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The original question posed was: "Are you for or against a free trade and investment agreement between the EU and the USA?"

<sup>57</sup> Emmott, Robin (2014), "Populist gains to complicate Europe's trade ambitions", *Reuters*, 13 May, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/05/13/uk-eu-election-trade-idUKKBN0DT12Y20140513>, last accessed on: 23 November 2015.

Marine Le Pen also argues that TTIP threatens the sovereignty of EU member states, particularly when it comes to the proposed Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which – according to many, not only populists – would establish a quasi-judicial trade court that large corporations could (mis)use to sue national governments for enacting policies that harm their operations. From FN on the right to Podemos on the left, populist parties invoke the ISDS to brand TTIP as a frontal attack on democracy and "a corporatist scam, not a real free trade deal" (UKIP MP Douglas Carswell).<sup>58</sup> In a similar vein, on the European election campaign trail, Le Pen warned that "we must resist corporations",<sup>59</sup> and promised to unite with parties on the left to fight and block TTIP.

The catalogue of objections raised by populists on both on the left and right range from an "inadmissible" and "blatant" lack of transparency in the TTIP negotiations, which have involved mostly European Commission bureaucrats and unspecified business and public stakeholders,<sup>60</sup> and the potential negative implications of the deal for jobs, social welfare, the environment, and health. At EU level, they echo widespread concerns, push for amendments and are using Le Pen's presence in the EP committee overseeing the trade deal to try to scupper the talks. Among other things, she put forward a motion for greater transparency in negotiations last year to attack the secrecy in which TTIP is cloaked.<sup>61</sup>

Despite all their criticisms, it is unlikely that the populists will be able to block TTIP outright: they are not a big enough group and continue to be marginalised. It is more likely that the arguments raised by them (and others) will further complicate the already very difficult negotiations, dragging the process out longer than anticipated, most probably beyond the end of US President Barack Obama's second term in 2016, and making it more difficult for the EP to approve trade deals without a grand coalition of centrist parties.

This expectation is borne out by developments to date. For example, while there is consensus across the mainstream parties on the importance of greater transparency in the TTIP negotiations, Le Pen's motion was defeated precisely because MEPs seemed unwilling to bolster her profile by backing the proposal. Still, the trade committee's decision in summer 2015 to postpone an initial parliamentary vote on how and what the Commission should negotiate with the US government is said to have been partly the result of close to 900 proposed amendments to the resolution – a record number to which a strong populist

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<sup>58</sup> Stone, Jon (2015), "TTIP is a corporatist scam not a real free trade deal, says UKIP's Douglas Carswell", *The Independent*, 23 June at: [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ttip-is-a-corporatist-scam-and-not-a-real-free-trade-deal-says-ukip-s-douglas-carswell-10338335.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ttip-is-a-corporatist-scam-and-not-a-real-free-trade-deal-says-ukip-s-douglas-carswell-10338335.html), last accessed on: 23 November 2015.

<sup>59</sup> RT (2014), " 'We must resist corporations': Le Pen targets troubled TTIP deal in new campaign", 19 May, available at: [www.rt.com/news/259805-lepen-ttip-campaign-secrecy/](http://www.rt.com/news/259805-lepen-ttip-campaign-secrecy/), last accessed on: 23 November 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Crisp, James (2014), "Le Pen faces defeat over TTIP transparency resolution", *Euractiv.com*, 2 September, available at: [www.euractiv.com/sections/trade-industry/le-pen-faces-defeat-over-ttip-transparency-resolution-308153](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/trade-industry/le-pen-faces-defeat-over-ttip-transparency-resolution-308153), last accessed on: 23 November 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Crisp, James (2014), "Le Pen won't hijack TTIP committee, vow MEPs", *Euractiv.com*, 16 July, available at: [www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-elections-2014/trade-meps-vow-stop-le-pen-grandstanding-ttip-303504](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-elections-2014/trade-meps-vow-stop-le-pen-grandstanding-ttip-303504), last accessed on: 23 November 2015.



mobilisation undoubtedly contributed.<sup>62</sup> Fear that the sheer volume of amendments would make the session lengthy and difficult for MEPs to follow delayed the vote and illustrates how the populists' interventions can frustrate Europe's trade ambitions.

Eventually, the Parliament adopted the resolution supporting the transatlantic trade deal in July 2015, but asked for a reformed ISDS mechanism. While the main political groups were somewhat more united around the TTIP report, a significant minority in the S&D group opposed it and the debate remains heated, underlining what a hard sell this deal will be and leaving ample scope for populists to continue stirring up controversy in the future.

However, populists could put a nail in the TTIP coffin at the national level. Le Pen has already made it clear that a signed treaty would not survive if she were to win the 2017 presidential elections, arguing that "treaties can be made and [...] unmade",<sup>63</sup> particularly as any final TTIP deal will have to be ratified by the EP and all 28 national parliaments. Some SYRIZA ministers in the Greek government have signalled their intention to veto any deal, although it seems unlikely that Athens would do this when the moment of truth comes.<sup>64</sup>

Another example of where national populism could jeopardise an EU agreement is in the Netherlands, which will put the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) agreement with Ukraine to a consultative referendum on 6 April 2016. The DCFTA has already been approved by the Dutch parliament, but a recent law allows any group able to collect at least 300,000 signatures to ask for a referendum, and the populist right-wing shock internet blog *GeenStijl* (which means 'no style') managed to gather 440,000 names. The referendum is merely consultative, but the government may feel obliged to revise legislation if the turnout is over 30% and a majority votes against the deal. Most parties supported ratification of the treaty in parliament, but the populist PVV and Socialist Party (SP) announced they would vote against it in the referendum. Nigel Farage notes almost with satisfaction that: "Even the Labour Party, after years of having backed this thing, seem to now realise what they've done, what a big, corporatist deal they've been backing."<sup>65</sup> The potential knock-on effect of such cross-party opposition to TTIP is demonstrated by UKIP MEP William Dartmouth's claim that "the only way that citizens can defeat TTIP now is to vote to leave the European Union" because, his argument goes, "while members of the EU, it is virtually impossible to prevent such EU legislation being forced upon us against our will."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Borderlex (2015), "A few take-aways from MEP amendments to planned TTIP resolution", 20 April, available at: [www.borderlex.eu/comment-take-aways-mep-amendments-ttip-resolution/](http://www.borderlex.eu/comment-take-aways-mep-amendments-ttip-resolution/), last accessed on: 10 February 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Robert, Aline (2015), "National Front joins anti-TTIP lobby", *Euractiv.com*, 19 May, available at: [www.euractiv.com/sections/trade-society/national-front-joins-anti-ttip-lobby-314684](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/trade-society/national-front-joins-anti-ttip-lobby-314684), last accessed on: 23 November 2015.

<sup>64</sup> Persson, Mats (2015), "Will the populist wave help EU reform?", *Open Europe*, 2 February, available at: [www.openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/will-populist-wave-help-eu-reform/](http://www.openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/will-populist-wave-help-eu-reform/), last accessed on: 10 February 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Kassam, Raheem (2015), "Exclusive: EU chiefs attempt to stop TTIP debate, 'Crack in corporatist stitch-up' proclaims Farage", *Breitbart London*, 9 June, available at: [www.breitbart.com/london/2015/06/09/exclusive-eu-chiefs-attempt-to-stop-ttip-debate-crack-in-corporatist-stitch-up-proclaims-farage/](http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/06/09/exclusive-eu-chiefs-attempt-to-stop-ttip-debate-crack-in-corporatist-stitch-up-proclaims-farage/), last accessed on: 27 November 2015.

<sup>66</sup> UKIP (2015), "UKIP blast European Parliament for passing TTIP resolution in crucial vote", 8 July, available at: [www.ukip.org/ukip-blasts-european-parliament-for-passing-ttip-resolution-in-crucial-vote](http://www.ukip.org/ukip-blasts-european-parliament-for-passing-ttip-resolution-in-crucial-vote), last accessed on: 27 November 2015.

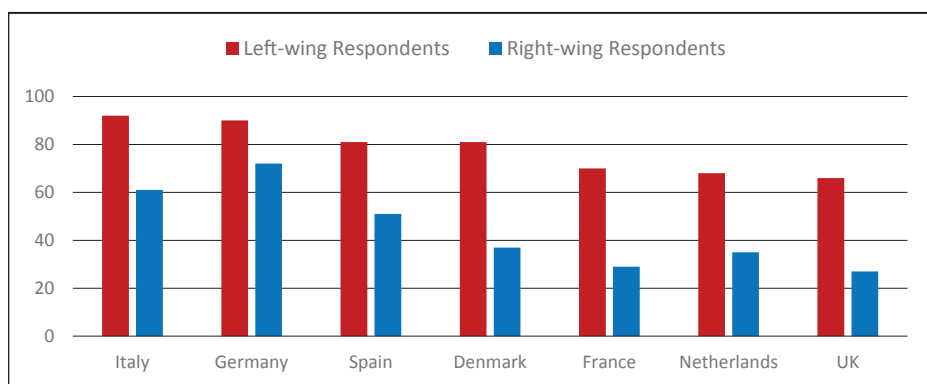
Rhetorically, the populists are as strident as ever, echoing, amplifying and (critics would argue) over-stating the potential problems and dangers related to TTIP which their more mainstream colleagues have already identified. In this sense, far from breaking ground in the TTIP debate, they play the role of 'loudspeakers' both in the European Parliament and in their national contexts.

Although for now the populists remain marginalised and outnumbered, their stalling and distraction tactics could have wider consequences in the future. Mainstream politicians will need to agree on and form a majority to pass TTIP, not only at European but also at national level. And while opposition to TTIP can be linked to populists' anti-Americanism, the current atmosphere could also have negative implications for other trade deals of similar magnitude.

#### 4.4. Migration policy and the 2015 refugee influx

On migration issues there are important differences between the two sides of the political spectrum, with left-wing populist parties expressing solidarity with migrants, a rights-based approach and open borders within the EU (see Graph 3 below), while right-wing populists have long thrived on anti-migration platforms, driven by identity-based fears of multiculturalism, and arguing for restrictive, often openly xenophobic, approaches to migration, which overlap with their approach to other issues (such as anti-Islamism or the abolition of Schengen). The anti-migration platform has proved electorally successful both at national and European levels: Heather Grabbe counted 114 xenophobic MEPs in the European Parliament (15.2% of MEPs), all of whom are members of anti-migration parties.<sup>67</sup>

**Graph 3: Difference between left- and right-wing respondents in favour of the refugee relocation scheme**

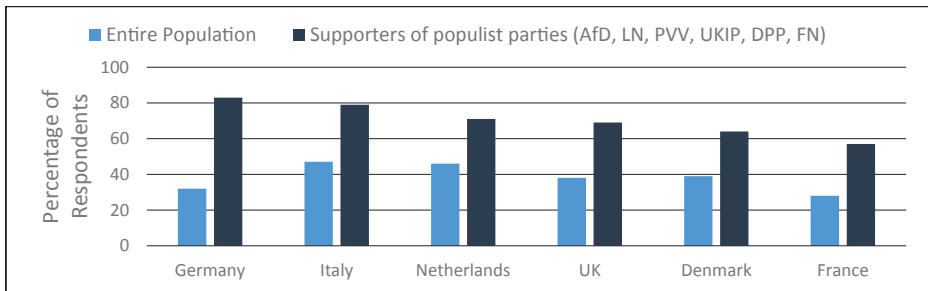


Source: *Ifop*, October 2015, [www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study_file.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Grabbe, Heather (2015), "Feeding on discontent", *Berlin Policy Journal*, 27 April, available at: [www.berlinpolicyjournal.com/feeding-on-discontent/](http://www.berlinpolicyjournal.com/feeding-on-discontent/), last accessed on: 17 January 2016.

UKIP, FN, Fidesz, FPÖ, PVV, VB, and LN all favour draconian measures to halt immigration, curb the free movement of people within the EU, criminalise irregular migration, expel resident migrants if they commit crimes, and abolish family reunification in the name of the 'multicultural demon', presumed 'Trojan horses for Islam' (FPÖ). Viktor Orbán recently claimed that all terrorists were migrants,<sup>68</sup> while many right-wing populists demonise migrants as people who come to 'live off European money' (see Graph 4 below).

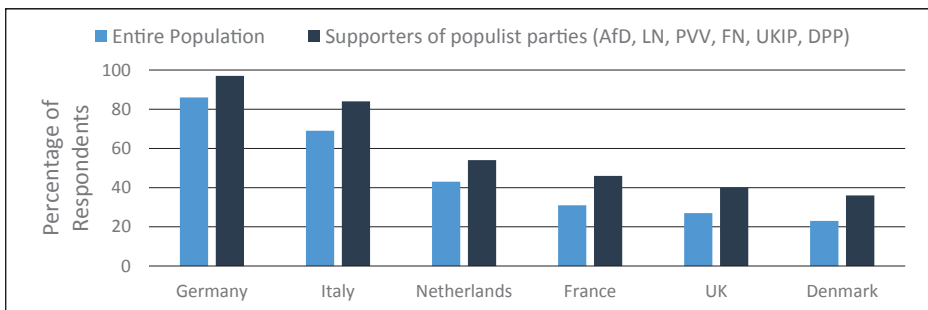
**Graph 4: Difference in public opinion on the reasons for migration to the EU (respondents who think migrants currently arriving to Europe are mainly economic migrants seeking better living conditions in Europe)**



Source: Ifop, October 2015, [www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study_file.pdf)

Migration issues have a potentially more profound effect on EU integration when these parties call for the abolition of the Schengen system, the expulsion of individual countries from Schengen (in this case Greece), measures to substantially limit or even halt the free movement of EU citizens, or fuel a 'blame game' among EU countries over the numbers of refugees taken in by each member state (see Graph 5 below).

**Graph 5: Difference in public opinion on the number of migrants taken in across the EU (respondents who think their country is welcoming more migrants than the other European countries)**

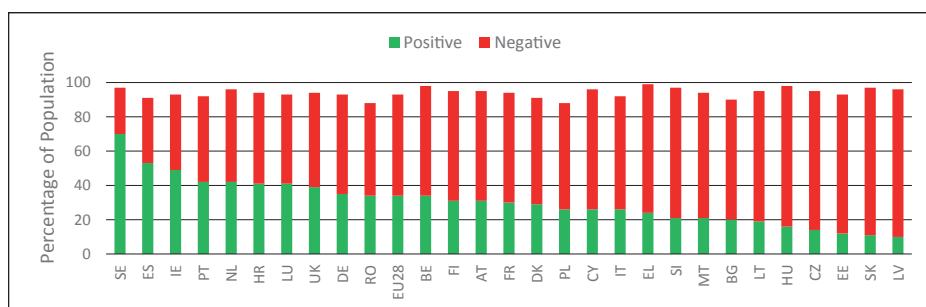


Source: Ifop, October 2015, [www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/3181-1-study_file.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Kaminski, Matthew (2015), " 'All the terrorists are migrants' ", *Politico*, 23 November, available at: [www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-eu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/](http://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-eu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/), last accessed on: 29 January 2016.

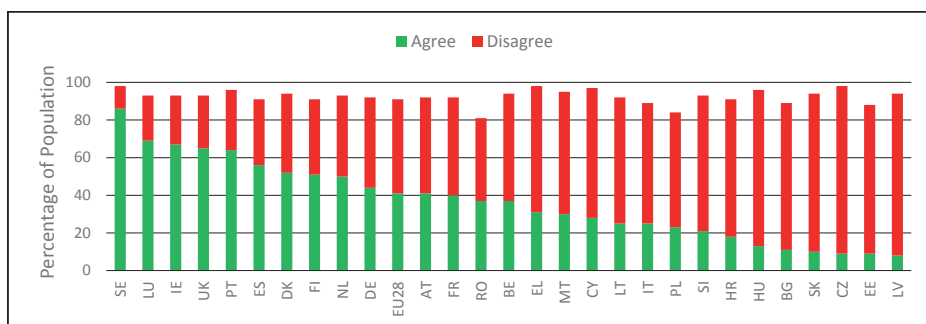
A few right-wing populist parties acknowledge the demographic need for immigration (e.g. the DPP), but all support restrictive immigration policies. Some argue in favour of limiting migration to temporary guest workers (SD) or want to reduce the net number of migrants to the level of the early 1990s (Finns Party). Others campaign for tighter border controls (FPÖ), the ability to reinstate controls within the EU (PiS), strict asylum procedures, restricted access to citizenship rights ('Denmark for the Danes', according to one DPP slogan), or limiting or even excluding immigrants from welfare provisions (Finns Party and AfD). Most are hostile to offering rights to religious practice, with controversies over the building of mosques inflaming public opinion in many countries. Populist parties are tapping into negative public sentiment towards immigration across Europe, as fewer people believe that immigrants contribute something to their country (see Graphs 6 and 7 below).

**Graph 6: Public opinion on immigration from outside the EU across the member states**



Source: Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2098><sup>69</sup>

**Graph 7: Public opinion on whether immigrants contribute to EU countries**



Source: Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2098><sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup>The original question posed was: "Does immigration of people from outside the EU evoke a positive or negative feeling for you?"

<sup>70</sup>The original question posed was: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that immigrants contribute a lot to your country?"

Over recent decades, there has been a visible correlation between the participation of anti-immigration populist parties in government and the introduction of strict immigration policies. In Denmark, the DPP was a junior coalition partner in governments between 2001 and 2011, a decade in which Denmark shifted towards tighter immigration and integration policies and pursued stricter border controls. In 2011, the country unilaterally put up controls on the border with Germany, sparking major diplomatic complaints from EU and Schengen partners.<sup>71</sup> In Italy too, LN teamed up with one of its coalition partners – the right-wing National Alliance – to produce the restrictive Bossi-Fini law of 2002 and, in 2009, LN's Minister of the Interior signed into law a security package which, among other things, criminalised irregular immigration. The strength of right-wing parties also helps to explain why countries are unwilling to liberalise their citizenship regimes.<sup>72</sup>

But the relationship between populist anti-immigration political parties and stricter anti-immigration policies is certainly not always as linear as one might expect. Strict immigration policies should not be ascribed solely to the existence of populist parties – many mainstream parties and politicians, mostly on the right of the political spectrum, advocate a tougher approach with or without pressure from right-wing populists or coalition agreements with them.<sup>73</sup>

One example is the UK's Conservative government, which is implementing a series of measures to reduce not only the free movement of labour within the EU but also immigration to the UK from outside the Union. Unlike the heated debates on freedom of movement (imprecisely framed under the rubric of 'immigration' by mainstream media), where UKIP is highly visible, non-EU immigration was largely absent from UKIP propaganda until the migration/refugee crisis, as its focus is firmly on the EU. According to the party's migration spokesperson, MEP Steven Woolfe, the government's proposals to cut non-EU migration are just a "smokescreen", as they "are failing to tackle work migration from inside the EU. This is because, any government of any colour, cannot control any category of migration from inside the EU".<sup>74</sup> Indeed, this found its way into the government's EU agenda: curbing access to in-work benefits for EU citizens living in the UK became one of the four 'baskets' of issues David Cameron insisted must be addressed in the renegotiation on the UK's EU membership, prompting accusations that the Prime Minister had caved in to the populists.<sup>75</sup> Even the opposition Labour Party felt the need to

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<sup>71</sup> Hill (2013), *op. cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Howard, Marc Morjé (2010), "The impact of the far right on citizenship policy in Europe: explaining continuity and change.", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 36, Number 5, pp. 735-751.

<sup>73</sup> Bale, Tim (2008), "Politics matters: A conclusion.", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 15, Number 3, pp. 453-464; Mudde (2013), "The myth of Weimar Europe", *op. cit.*; Minkenberg, Michael (2013), "From Pariah to Policy-maker? The Radical Right in Europe, West and East: Between Margin and Mainstream", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Volume 21, Number 1, pp. 5-24.

<sup>74</sup> UKIP (2015), "Proposals put to the Migration Advisory Committee are a smoke screen", 10 June, available at: [www.ukip.org/proposals-put-to-the-migration-advisory-committee-are-a-smoke-screen](http://www.ukip.org/proposals-put-to-the-migration-advisory-committee-are-a-smoke-screen), last accessed on: 4 February 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Verhofstadt, Guy (2015), "David Cameron is allowing Nigel Farage to run his asylum policy", *The Guardian*, 4 September, available at: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/04/david-cameron-nigel-farage-asylum-policy](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/04/david-cameron-nigel-farage-asylum-policy), last accessed on: 4 February 2016.

promise a tougher line on so-called "welfare tourism".<sup>76</sup> Since the migration/refugee crisis, UKIP has been tapping into rising anti-foreigner sentiment (together with right-wing populist parties and plenty of mainstream political parties across Europe).

A second important example relates to FN in France, where, in the 2007 presidential race, Nicolas Sarkozy was seen as the best option to block the rise of the far right – which he ultimately did, by being tough on immigration and gaining a reputation for being uncompromising on petty crime and delinquency when he was Minister for Home Affairs. His creation of a Department for National Identity was widely seen as a demagogic response to FN.

### ***The 2015 migration/refugee influx***

The 2015 refugee influx has created a perfect storm for the populist parties of the right, which have been able to unleash their xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric, exploit widespread fears and profit from their long-standing opposition to immigration.

During 2015, Germany's AfD shifted from being a predominantly anti-euro party to an anti-immigration party, also embracing (parts of) the Pegida movement. Opinion poll ratings of around 12% in early 2016 show that the AfD has profited politically from this shift.<sup>77</sup> Austria saw a further turn to the right in the Vienna city elections in October 2015, with the FPÖ getting 30.8% of the vote (5% more than last time) while the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) got 39.6% (4.8% less) – a huge success for FPÖ and the worst result for SPÖ in Vienna since 1945. In the Netherlands, the PVV continues to gain ground, with polls giving Geert Wilders 20-28% support, again making it the largest party in the country. Two rounds of French regional elections towards the end of 2015 saw tactical voting successfully prevent FN taking charge in some regions, but the party nonetheless managed to increase its share of the vote, putting Marine Le Pen in a strategically strong position ahead of the 2017 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Beyond the opinion polls and the results of elections, the 2015 migration/refugee influx has turned extreme anti-immigration right-wing positions into mainstream positions, mobilising right and left-wing governments and political leaders in dramatic fashion. Viktor Orbán and other heads of state and government, including first and foremost the social democratic Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, but also Czech Republic President Milos Zeman, have successfully used the crisis to mobilise anti-immigration sentiment and re-energise their public support. Fico branded the relocation scheme "a complete fiasco" and the EU's migrant policy as "ritual suicide",<sup>78</sup> Zeman labels the influx of refugees an "organised invasion",<sup>79</sup> and

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<sup>76</sup> The Economist (2014), *op. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> Infratest Dimap (2016), "Sonntagsfrage (bundesweit)", 3 February, available at:

[www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/sonntagsfrage/](http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/sonntagsfrage/), last accessed on: 5 February 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Kroet, Cynthia (2016), "Slovak PM: EU migrant policy is 'ritual suicide' ", *Politico*, 26 January, available at: [www.politico.eu/article/slovak-pm-eu-migrant-policy-is-ritual-suicide/](http://www.politico.eu/article/slovak-pm-eu-migrant-policy-is-ritual-suicide/), last accessed on: 10 February 2016.

<sup>79</sup> Jun, Dominik (2015), "Czech president uses Christmas message to warn of migrant "invasion" ", *Radio Praha*, 28 December, available at: [www.radio.cz/en/section/currafrs/czech-president-uses-christmas-message-to-warn-of-migrant-invasion](http://www.radio.cz/en/section/currafrs/czech-president-uses-christmas-message-to-warn-of-migrant-invasion), last accessed on: 13 January 2016.

Orbán calls it "simple mathematics" that Muslims will be "more than us in the end" because of the status of family in their culture.<sup>80</sup> The governments of both Slovakia and Hungary voted against the introduction of the relocation scheme and have launched a legal challenge against the Council's decision to establish such a mechanism.

Erecting barbed wire fences and walls was a powerful physical and visual way of inflaming sentiment and fears of the unknown foreign migrant. The political gamble paid off. Orbán saw his popularity ratings soar to 44% in September 2015 and was able to fend off domestic opposition on his right.<sup>81</sup> More strikingly, outside Hungary, he won supporters in mainstream parties in the governments of other countries (especially in Central Europe but also beyond, as in the case of the Bavarian CSU in Germany), fuelling a deep split in Europe as well as extreme polarisation between and within member states.

In France, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 and devastating terrorist attacks of November 2015 gave Marine Le Pen a rallying platform: she barely had to lift a finger or say anything to capitalise on anti-migrant sentiment in a country that thinks of itself 'at war' with terror. She was not alone, as the traditional right also used the opportunity to criticise the government's handling of the refugee crisis and of Syria. The result has been both a set of record-breaking electoral successes and a hardening of the government's stance on migration and borders, especially by Prime Minister Manuel Valls. The government's proposal to strip dual-national suspected jihadist terrorists of their French citizenship was one made previously by Le Pen.

These cases show how extreme-right populist parties have acted as enablers for mainstream right-wing parties to implement stricter immigration policies, "contaminating the mainstream political discourse".<sup>82</sup> Another example relates to Viktor Orbán who, as a right-wing populist, not only exploited the refugee influx domestically as much as he could, but also gave his supposedly non-populist colleagues ammunition in the European Council. At the emergency EU summits to discuss how to respond to the crisis, other mainstream leaders took on that role, with Robert Fico, a representative of the European mainstream left, embracing Orbán's strategy and making controversial statements which prompted heated discussions in the European Council, and even raised the possibility of his expulsion from the S&D group. In short, European leaders of different colours – including mainstream politicians and parties at the centre of the political system – are legitimising the populists' xenophobic and at times Islamophobic discourse across Europe and setting the tone of the debate. Populists across Europe are able to exploit this as they were the first to call for much more strict immigration policies, well before the migration/refugee influx began.

<sup>80</sup> Kálnoky, Boris (2015), "Am Ende werden die Muslime mehr sein als wir", *Die Welt*, 16 September, available at: [www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article146497225/Am-Ende-werden-die-Muslime-mehr-sein-als-wir.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article146497225/Am-Ende-werden-die-Muslime-mehr-sein-als-wir.html), last accessed on: 26 November 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Medián (2015), "Menekültválság: Fidesz fel, Jobbik le", 30 September, available at: [www.median.hu/object.7ebb5252-0697-4a1d-8494-6019f109655b.ivy](http://www.median.hu/object.7ebb5252-0697-4a1d-8494-6019f109655b.ivy), last accessed on: 4 February 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Mudde (2013), "Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: so what?", *op. cit.*

In Germany too, major differences have been exposed in the largest party, the CDU/CSU, over Chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of the crisis, at all political levels and even in the Chancellor's cabinet. It can be argued that the hardening of right-wing anti-immigration positions within the CDU/CSU was partly a reaction to the rise of populist anti-immigration parties and movements, in light of AfD's success in shifting the debate towards the xenophobic right in September 2015,<sup>83</sup> culminating in its chairwoman Frauke Petry's statement that border guards must prevent illegal border crossings by force of arms if necessary.<sup>84</sup>

The CSU is giving voice – as well as cover – to populism, with campaigns that are bordering on the populist radical right, with their chairman Horst Seehofer consistently talking of an "abuse of the right to asylum on a massive scale" and arguing that Germany is not the "social welfare office of the Balkans".<sup>85</sup> The CSU is also the main protector of Viktor Orbán in the centre-right EPP, giving a new twist to the marriage of the right-wing with the populist right. These blurred distinctions between mainstream and populist parties are not confined to the right of the political spectrum: the anti-immigration mantra is spreading to the centre-left too. In Denmark, even the Social Democrats are supporting draconian new rules which are unprecedented in a country which has long prided itself on its human rights record (see Table 1 in the *Annex*).

The lack of a coordinated EU response to the refugee influx has provided an opportunity for right-wing populist parties to profit from the storm. In this, they have been more successful than during the Eurozone crisis. Benefiting from long-standing anti-immigration rhetoric, they are more credible than the mainstream when blaming refugees for Europe's ills and when advocating extreme deterrence to stop the influx of people.

So long as governments chase or adopt the populists' anti-immigration rhetoric, they will be unable to find appropriate solutions. Populists will continue to be able to exploit the weaknesses of European governments in mastering the influx. Finding a way out of this vicious circle is one of the greatest challenges Europe has ever faced.

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<sup>83</sup> Reible, Cecilia (2015), "AfD rückt nach rechts", *Tagesschau*, 5 July, available at: [www.tagesschau.de/inland/afd-parteitag-117.htm](http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/afd-parteitag-117.htm), last accessed on: 4 February 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Mack, Steffen, and Serif, Walter (2016), "Sie können es nicht lassen!", *morgenweb*, 30 January, available at: [www.morgenweb.de/sie-können-es-nicht-lassen-1.2620328](http://www.morgenweb.de/sie-können-es-nicht-lassen-1.2620328), last accessed on: 5 February 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Tagesschau (2015), "Seehofer-Zitate zur Flüchtlings- und Asylpolitik", available at: [www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/seehofer-zu-asyl-und-fluechtlingen-101.html](http://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/seehofer-zu-asyl-und-fluechtlingen-101.html), last accessed on: 5 February 2016.



## 5. Populism and foreign policy: conclusions and the need to reframe the debate

### *Main conclusions*

Unlike A.J.P. Taylor's troublemakers who pioneered dissent in British foreign policy,<sup>86</sup> on occasion leading to progressive change, contemporary European populists on both the left and right have so far shown limited transformative power in terms of their ability to determine actual policy choices. Today, their main aim seems to be to put spanners into the works of politics, tripping up mainstream politicians and undermining consensus. Most populist parties function more as a blocking force than as a source of viable alternatives.

Today's populists tend to focus on one or two issues, with opposition to European integration and immigration (as a function of their nativist and xenophobic identity) likely to remain two of the strongest drivers of right-wing populist movements, while anti-globalisation and anti-austerity positions have been given the greatest prominence in the left's arguments and political rhetoric.

Right-wing populists are currently clearly benefiting most from the generally critical situation in Europe. All these issues lie at the heart of the complex internal-external nexus, while the parties themselves tend to see them in simple black and white terms. One consequence of this tunnel vision and focus on limited issues is that the way populist parties position themselves on other foreign policy matters is subordinate to their main concerns and may be guided by opportunistic motives.

This has several implications. The formation of populist parties' positions on foreign policy issues will depend on how particular topics relate to their core ideology and to the political calculations of the moment. While they are likely to be more consistent on their core issues, they may use others tactically (UKIP, for example, is not against trade, but opposes TTIP because it is the EU's responsibility to negotiate with the US). On 'second order' issues, populists may be more willing to compromise if need be. On military intervention abroad, experience has shown that right-wing parties tend to interpret their principles more flexibly, whereas on the left there is a strong commitment to pacifism. In general, beyond their core issues, the unpredictability of populist parties' positions on a wide range of international matters will cloak foreign policy-making in increasing uncertainty.

Populists often have a hold over mainstream politicians and governments, especially when they touch on deep cords in societies. UKIP would not have such a prominent role in shaping the debate on 'Brexit' had there not been a deep-rooted ambivalence in British society towards EU membership. Other populist parties' Eurosceptic stances have been

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<sup>86</sup> Taylor (1957), *op. cit.*

less successful in terms of actual policy results, although they have raised the possibility of 'domino' referenda. While populists now have a disproportionate influence on the debate over the refugee influx and migration issues in general, on other issues mainstream parties and governments have managed to push back the populist challenge. The Eurozone crisis was certainly inflamed by populist rhetoric, but neither left- nor right-wing populists, whether in government or not, succeeded in delivering on their declared objectives. The consensus on austerity was not broken by left-wing populists, but rather by the centre-right breaking electoral pledges by agreeing to a third Greek bailout. However, the language used to frame the discussion on these issues adopted some of the populists' inflammatory vocabulary and tone.

EU policy towards Russia is another clear example where, despite long-standing and deep divisions among member states and within European societies (and calculated efforts by the Russian propaganda machine to deepen those divisions), EU governments have managed to maintain unprecedented unity on sanctions in response to the conflict in Ukraine. On issues of war and peace, populists have thus far had little influence, although they could play a role in determining how national resources (defence, development aid) are spent, especially given their prominence in the migration and refugee debate.

The US is a frequent target of the populists, used as a scapegoat on many issues – from blaming Washington for the refugee influx to fuelling fears about unrestricted global trade – but populists are not alone in criticising the US. Trade issues such as the TTIP negotiations are vulnerable to populist influence partly because they are divisive for mainstream political parties too. Here, the latter could choose either to form tactical alliances with the populists or clearly differentiate themselves from populist positions, shunning and outnumbering them.

The seemingly simple solutions to complex international and domestic challenges offered up by populists disrupt politics and hamper policy-making rather than producing viable alternatives. As expected, the examples examined in this paper show there is no clear pattern of influence and impact: this varies across policy areas and national contexts, in light of differences in circumstances and the different weights and roles of populist parties in each country.

At the EU level, the interlinking of the national and European political arenas has become the norm, as has a greater sense of drama in the EU-domestic debate, involving all political actors, not just the populists. The European arena is also providing populists with the opportunity to confront, study or learn from each other, enhancing transnational dynamics of influence, encouraging the use of similar vocabularies (such as references to Christianity in opposition to Islam) and copy-cat campaigns on key issues, such as the potential domino effect of demanding referenda on EU-related issues.

This 'adaptation technique' can play to the populists' advantage, as they can learn from the successes (and failures) of their counterparts in other member states. At the same time, their influence in the European Parliament has been limited by their inability to form effective alliances and their scant interest in shaping policy. Until now, the domestic political arena has been their natural environment, the place where they are best able to stir controversy,

although national debates obviously affect the political discourse and decision-making processes in Brussels.

Despite their successes in opinion polls and in attracting media attention, it remains unlikely that populists will win power in many more governments in the EU in the foreseeable future. And even when they do enter coalition governments, they have in practice generally conformed with mainstream opinion on foreign policy issues rather than catalysing a clear change of direction. The examples examined in this paper show that populists do have influence, but the political choices that are made eventually cannot be attributed simply to this. The interaction between the role of populist parties in shaping public opinion and foreign policy outcomes is usually filtered through the (mostly mainstream) parties in government and the extent to which they perceive the issue to be susceptible to populist sentiment. In other words, the way in which populists frame issues shapes the way in which governments react.

However, even if their impact on concrete policy choices has been marginal, this does not mean that populists are unimportant in the foreign policy debate. On the contrary, populist parties are becoming much more vocal on important international and domestic issues, such as terrorism, dealing with the crises in Syria and Ukraine, the refugee influx or the integration of immigrants in society. European societies are becoming ever-more divided on these issues; divisions which populists are exploiting to the full, at times with a little help from other actors, such as the Kremlin.

The populists have succeeded in shaping the political debate at both national and European level, polarising dialectics, framing politics in antagonistic ways, and simplifying messages and political choices. Most of their proposed solutions are unrealistic, often borrowed from a 'glorious past', advocating a return to national sovereignty and self-determination. In doing so, they have contributed to making it harder to identify and implement adequate policy solutions at a time of increasing interdependencies transcending traditional national boundaries. Simultaneously, they provide a fig leaf behind which governments can hide, claiming that any new proposal for a common solution to a difficult issue would be blocked by the populists.

Mainstream politicians, especially traditional conservatives, seem to be increasingly under the 'whip hand' of right-wing populism. The crisis triggered by the EU's inability to handle the migration/refugee influx has been a prime example of a paralysed policy response, fuelling a vicious circle in which Europe's failure to provide effective governance responses has heightened tensions, in turn further reducing the chances of identifying common solutions. The results are to be seen in policy proposals and international agreements that are doomed to fail, and in soaring polling numbers for right-wing extremists.

Nowadays, the approaches advocated by right-wing populists are increasingly becoming the norm. They have brought political incorrectness out of the closet, in many cases masking ideological differences between populists and the mainstream, with their

arguments often becoming conflated. Mainstream parties can adopt populist arguments for tactical electoral reasons, in response to changes in public opinion, or their ideologies can be contaminated by populist rallying points. Populist parties may be useful to mainstream parties in capturing and reflecting public sentiments which cannot always be translated into mainstream political action, and thus acting as a 'relief valve'. However, if some mainstream parties rely on the belief that when election day comes, the public will vote for the parties they know best, they may be playing with fire. Ultimately, traditional political elites run the risk that citizens might decide to vote for the 'original' rather than the 'copy', as Jean-Marie Le Pen argued already back in the 1980s.

The populists' influence on the language and tone of public debates, and the use of rhetorical devices which foment fear, hate and xenophobia, also have lasting consequences. This language has been legitimised not just by populists, but also by mainstream politicians, and risks changing the way in which Europe and its citizens interact with the world.

In more fundamental terms, populism is a symptom of more deep-rooted challenges facing democracy, which is confronted with a crisis of representative government. The cases examined in this paper show that the current malaise cannot only be ascribed to the existence of the 'new troublemakers'. Populists are exploiting a broken connection between elites and citizens that has been deepening for decades. The dynamics of decision-making on issues that cut across the internal and external nexus pose a very real challenge to democracy in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness (or lack thereof). The "perpetual loop of interaction" between the international and domestic arena is contributing to this gap, and making it harder to close it. Populists are invading the space which mainstream politicians and voters have evacuated.

### ***What might be done? Reframing the debate***

To address the populist phenomenon, the deficiencies in the way our democracies work need to be acknowledged and addressed. The rise of populism is a symptom of a crisis of democracy and the failure of governments to meet citizens' needs and expectations, not the cause.

The diversity of manifestations of populism across Europe makes it impossible to devise a blueprint for action valid in each and every case, and responding to the populist phenomenon is by no means easy or clear-cut. But one thing seems certain: tactical reactions as a way of dealing with populist parties will not do the trick. There is rather a need for a revitalised, positive programme to tackle international and domestic challenges, to seize the offensive rather than remaining on the defensive. Politics is not about fighting your challengers' ideologies; it is about creating a positive and credible alternative. Rather than become the victims of the 'troublemakers', mainstream politicians should shape the debate according to their world views and principles.

#### *Change tactics of interaction with populists*

Superficial attempts to weaken the populists will not suffice. Tactics have been proposed and tried, but it is neither by isolating populists, devising electoral pacts to keep them out of

power, exposing their inability to propose realistic solutions to the problems they highlight, or incorporating them or their arguments into the political mainstream that the phenomenon will be effectively countered.

*'Outpopulising' the populists does not pay off*

Mainstream politicians may survive for a time by mimicking successful populist rallying calls, by shifting their ideologies to reflect opinion polls, or by 'outpopulising' the populists. But if the mainstream simply tries to steal their clothes, disaffection with traditional politics will push populist leaders onto more radical ground. Moreover, by doing this, mainstream politicians risk confirming in the public's mind the very shallowness and attachment to power that the populists accuse them of.

Populist language and rhetoric coming from the mouths of politicians embedded in traditional democratic ideologies are counterproductive: they undermine the social norms their parties have built over the past six decades, further polarising the political debate to the extremes of the left-right spectrum. Such reactions do not reverse but rather foster already existing trends: if mainstream politicians can switch ideological grounds, so can voters.

*Understand the Zeitgeist on international and domestic issues*

Understanding the *Zeitgeist* and voters' preferences has become difficult in a context of fragmented and particularised electorates and volatile alignments. Citizens' fears are real and perceptions matter, even if misplaced or misguided. Political parties need to go back to their constituencies, from which support has been haemorrhaging, and try to recapture the political space. The public's concerns stem from the uncertainties of a globalised world; politics needs to update its ideas and content to address the way international politics affect people's everyday lives.

The message and the messenger should not be confused: troublemakers may ask the right questions, even if they give the wrong answers. Sometimes they may have answers too. Voting these suggestions down simply because they come from the 'wrong' party can have the opposite of the intended effect, strengthening the populists by allowing them to point to evidence of their 'all against one, one against all' logic. Nor will it help mainstream politicians to identify resonant policy responses.

*Bring the international-domestic loop into the debate*

Foreign policy no longer is a matter for an exclusive group of practitioners, yet the stuff of everyday politics continues to focus far more on domestic debates. International issues and the way they affect people's daily lives need to be brought into the public debate more proactively, with explanations of circumstances and issues, and ideas to address them. It is, for example, legitimate to question the impact of free trade on citizens' job prospects or the aims of military intervention abroad. The void left by mainstream politicians who fail to provide answers to these questions opens up spaces for the populists to move into.

### *Content matters, not just communication*

Policy-makers often assume that citizens do not understand policies because they are not communicated effectively enough. While this is true, language is not just about communication; it is the vehicle of ideas. No communication strategy can save an unconvincing and ineffective policy.

### *Seek different forms of engagement with citizens*

The mainstream needs to connect with those groups in society who are not part of their 'old constituencies' and thus can only be reached via novel routes. Internet technology and social media, which transcend old societal and geographical boundaries, can play an important role in providing and stimulating new ways to do this. The only thing mainstream politics should copy from the populists is their online success.

It is not with populist leaders that liberal democratic politics needs to engage; it is with citizens. Those who are ready to counter populism, including new and old political parties and movements, need to recapture the space which the populists have stepped into. Lessons from political activism, social movements and alternative forms of mobilisation can be of relevance for established institutions too. But this will require political parties and those working in public institutions to revise their assumptions about political engagement and to be prepared to open their ranks to new generations and greater diversity, in order to better represent changing societies.

### *Use different language*

Populists are conditioning the vocabulary and rhetoric through which foreign policy problems are framed, with far too many mainstream politicians and journalists simply following their lead and matching their language and tone. Instead, political gains and losses need to be couched in non-technocratic terms, referencing principles, ethics, preferences, and sentiment.

The media often pay more attention to populist actors than to the mainstream and give them disproportionate coverage, with tabloid newspapers amplifying populist messages and other media giving them negative coverage. This disproportionate attention gives the impression that the populists are more important than they really are, and helps rather than hinders them, even when the coverage is negative. While the media has a responsibility to address this challenge, mainstream politicians also need to work harder to recapture the media space by offering alternative narratives couched in comprehensible language.

### *Citizens' mobilisation*

Traditional politics needs to engage with new networks of citizens to find alternative alliances between citizens and politics on international matters. The populists have captured the public's attention through sensationalism, expressions of outrage and constant criticism.

This has obscured the existing engagement and activism in society, which can provide new and different forms of mobilisation that so far have found little space in traditional politics. The migration/refugee influx has prompted an extraordinary mobilisation of citizens, without which local institutions would have not been able to handle the pressure. This has attracted far less attention and recognition in politics and the media than the vociferous xenophobes building walls. Political and institutional leaders need to find new alliances within the electorate that will enable policy-makers to move forward on alternative and persuasive agendas.

Responsibility does not only lie with politicians. It is a virtue that each citizen should demand of him or herself first before expecting it from others. There is thus also a role for citizens to become more engaged and socially responsible, and to claim back the space lost to populist arguments. Civic participation has never been easier or more accessible, even on foreign policy. The 'silent majority' should seize the opportunity to make their voices heard if they disagree with the populists. Although polls show a significant rise in support for populist parties, they do not represent a majority of the population in most countries – yet that majority are not as mobilised and vocal as the populists.

*Break the link between critical positions on the EU and Eurosceptic populism*

It is legitimate to challenge the holy grail of European integration, and this can and should be done first and foremost by pro-European actors and institutional representatives. The slogan that 'more Europe' is the only solution is no longer credible; it has the unintended effect of widening the divisions over European integration. This too offers the populists a space to fill with their antagonistic views. Listening to citizens' concerns and engaging them in analysing the solutions that the EU can provide, or those which are better addressed nationally or locally, can help occupy that space and devise more legitimate and inclusive policies.

*Offer and explain credible solutions, starting by managing the refugee influx*

Mainstream politicians have been trying to win public support through 'There Is No Alternative' (TINA) approaches. This has been a cause of disaffection and has opened the door to populist alternatives, however unrealistic and simplistic they may be.

Political and institutional representatives need to invest more time in exploring how to explain complex policy responses in non-technocratic language, highlighting that solutions exist, however complicated, and that they are underpinned by different world views and principles to those advocated by populists. To do so, policy solutions need to be explained and their practical application needs to be communicated, using fact-based arguments linked to a broader vision that provides a sense of direction.

At the same time, mainstream politicians should avoid making false promises which could come back to haunt them later. Some of the challenges confronting modern societies are highly complex and traditional forces should be brave enough to acknowledge that their

ability to master the magnitude of such challenges is, in many instances, limited. Raising false expectations has already provided fertile ground for the populists, allowing them to argue that the traditional mainstream has failed to deliver on its promises.

The current crisis needs to be the first priority of European governments, if they want to address the populism phenomenon more broadly. Providing more credible proposals to cope with the massive influx of people – both in the foreign and internal policy arena, combined with local support – will be a *sine qua non* to avert the threat of extreme right-wing populism. The refugee influx and the ensuing crisis in Europe are an extreme example of the nexus between internal and external challenges, and the political difficulties in responding to the challenge responsibly, effectively and without renouncing the principles that Europe has always upheld. Credible proposals and solutions are the precondition for any lasting strategy to deal with the troublemakers.



## **Annex**

**Table 1: Foreign policy positions of key populist parties**

Party	(Current) Slogan	European Integration	Migration	Aid
<b>Alternative for Germany (AfD)</b>	"Mut zur Wahrheit"  (Courage to recognise the truth)	Abolish the Euro  For a Union of sovereign states with a single market  More subsidiarity  National parliaments should be the only legislators	Stricter refugee and migration policy to fight illegal immigration and "asylum chaos"  Germany should freeze financial contributions to EU until other member states are ready to share the burden	Development aid with focus on migration management
<b>Ataka</b>	"Nov put za Bulgariya"  (A New Way for Bulgaria)	Nationalist  EU in its present form is not acceptable as it goes against national interest  Against the Eurozone  Much criticism towards EU includes criticism of national political elite	Reduce inflow of low-skilled workers	
<b>Danish People's Party (DPP)</b>	"Tryghed og tillid – det er muligt"  (Security and confidence – that is possible)	Against further integration of the EU  Referendum on all EU questions  EU should only be responsible	Stop immigration, especially from non-Western countries – 'Denmark for the Danes'  Refugees should	Development aid should be tied to readmission of migrants  Aid as conflict prevention to reduce refugee flows

Trade	Russia	Security/NATO	US	Specificities
<p>For free trade, but against TTIP</p> <p>TTIP negotiations are not transparent</p> <p>TTIP aims to reduce consumer and environmental protection</p>	<p>Relations with Russia should be friendly, also on the issue with Ukraine and despite its sometimes aggressive behaviour</p>	<p>Western security architecture with the US as a decisive anchor</p> <p>For a joint EU foreign and security policy but guided by national interests and without a European army</p>	<p>For cooperation with the US in foreign policy</p> <p>NSA spying scandal should have diplomatic and judicial consequences for the US</p>	<p>More moderate parts of the AfD, including co-founder Bernd Lucke, split off in July 2015</p> <p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>
<p>Redirect the economy towards China, Japan, Brazil, India, and Russia</p>	<p>Against sanctions towards Russia</p> <p>Strong ties with Moscow</p> <p>Ataka Members of Parliament went to Crimea referendum</p>	<p>Petitioning to leave NATO</p> <p>Full neutrality, non-participation in military blocs</p> <p>No foreign military bases</p>	<p>Against relations with the US</p>	<p>Focus on social welfare</p> <p>Against Turkey and Macedonia joining the EU</p>
<p>Pro free trade in Europe and elsewhere</p> <p>Trade cooperation with developing countries should be conditional</p>		<p>Strengthen NATO, to ensure Europe's military security</p> <p>For UN reform, but supports Denmark's involvement in UN</p>	<p>For cooperation between EU countries and US in combating terrorism and international crime</p> <p>Cooperation with US is</p>	<p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p> <p>Need for reduction of uncontrolled population growth in developing countries</p>

		<p>for European Free Trade Area (EFTA), customs union, and minimum technical standards</p> <p>Council of the EU should have all authority on legislation</p>	<p>leave once their country is safe again</p> <p>Limited citizenship for foreigners</p> <p>Asylum: stricter policies</p>	<p>Aid should help refugees in their community and support their return</p>
<b>Fidesz</b>	<p>"Magyarország Jobban Teljesít"</p> <p>(Hungary is Performing Better)</p>	<p>Establishing illiberal democracy</p> <p>Nationalist, want sovereignty back</p>	<p>Stop immigration</p> <p>Stricter rules on irregular migration and asylum</p>	
<b>Five Star Movement (M5S)</b>	<p>"#vinciamonoi"</p> <p>(#we are going to win)</p>	<p>Abolish the Euro</p>		
<b>Forza Italia (FI)</b>	<p>"Forza Italia!"</p> <p>(Go Italy!)</p>	<p>For EU, but quite Eurosceptic at times</p>	<p>Security comes before migration</p> <p>Zero tolerance for irregular migrants (need to be distinguished from refugees)</p> <p>Help refugees in their countries rather than in Europe</p>	<p>Reduced aid in the past</p>

on respect for human rights and spending at least half of their budgets on the welfare state		peacekeeping missions  Worried about defence cuts	needed for defence of the Western world	
Position on TTIP depends on benefits for Hungarian economy	'Eastern Opening' doctrine  Orbán's personal ties with Putin	Committed to NATO  Sovereign foreign policy with strong military	Strained ties with US over corruption and illiberalism	
Focus on national economic interest	Against EU support of Ukraine (concern about impact on Italian economy and energy imports)	US should leave military bases in Italy  Anti-militarist/anti-interventionist  Pacifist	Conspiracy theories involving the US (e.g. Syrian war is part of the US' plan to extend their control in the Middle East)	Actively pro-Palestine
For TTIP, but concerned about "Made in Italy" label	Strengthen relations with Russia  Against EU sanctions on Russia	In favour of interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq in the past, now Syria  Strong commitment to NATO  Increase defence budget	Very good relations with the US	Strong focus on Italian identity  Public registers of mosques and imams

<p><b>Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)</b></p>	<p>"Wir machen Österreich stark"  (We are making Austria strong)</p>	<p>In favour of Europe of 'fatherlands/ homelands'</p> <p>Economic advantages in EU</p> <p>Renationalisation of policies</p> <p>No further enlargement except Balkans eventually</p> <p>Possibly abolish the Euro</p> <p>Decentralisation for stronger ethnic empowerment</p>	<p>Stop immigration</p> <p>Reintroduce border controls</p> <p>Stricter asylum rules</p> <p>Against 'multicultural demon', need for compulsory language courses and conveyance of Austrian values, norms, and laws</p> <p>Migration as Trojan horse for Islamic fundamentalists</p>	<p>Strict position on aid with strings attached (democracy standards, economic governance, efficiency of aid)</p> <p>Tie aid to readmission agreements</p> <p>Priorities: protection of Austrians abroad and Balkans</p>
<p><b>Front National (FN)</b></p>	<p>"La France apaisée"  (An appeased France)</p>	<p>Renegotiate treaties for full French sovereignty, free association of states, and voluntary cooperation on partnerships</p> <p>Abolish the Euro</p>	<p>Cut legal immigration to 10.000 entries per year</p> <p>Abandon <i>ius soli</i> and introduce stricter citizenship conditions</p> <p>No family reunification</p> <p>Zero tolerance of irregular migration</p>	<p>Major cuts to development aid (and tie it to French interests and readmission of migrants)</p>

<p>TTIP ('transatlantic danger') means more Americanisation, liberalisation and privatisation, consumer protection suffers</p> <p>Contain imports from China</p>	<p>Russia as important partner</p> <p>Sent observers to Crimea referendum</p> <p>Russia's spheres of influence should be respected</p>	<p>Remain neutral</p> <p>NATO should only exert military violence in justified cases of defence</p> <p>Concerned about defence cuts</p> <p>Stronger CFSP</p>	<p>Refuse US claim to hegemony</p> <p>Europe must be economically, militarily, and politically autarkic from the US</p>	<p>German language and culture, including in German-speaking areas of former Austro-Hungarian empire</p> <p>Ethno-national self-determination (e.g. in Balkans)</p>
	<p>Russia as partner, strategic alliance</p> <p>Sent observers to Crimea referendum</p> <p>Trilateral alliance Paris-Berlin-Moscow</p>	<p>Against French participation in the integrated military command of NATO</p> <p>Increase defence spending</p>	<p>Against alignment with the US</p> <p>Against "Anglo-Saxon multiculturalism"</p>	<p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p> <p>Wants to use Franco-German motor to abolish the Euro</p>

<p><b>Independent Greeks (ANEL)</b></p>	<p>"Éímaste polloí – Éímaste Anexártitoi – Éímaste Éílines"</p> <p>(We are many – We are independent – We are Greeks)</p>	<p>Cooperation and solidarity among southern EU countries against the 'war' that northern EU countries are waging against them</p> <p>National sovereignty is non-negotiable</p>	<p>Stricter rules for obtaining citizenship</p>	
<p><b>Jobbik</b></p>	<p>"A jövot nem lehet megállítani"</p> <p>(The future can't be stopped)</p>	<p>Referendum on EU – in favour of a Europe of Nations, not a United Europe</p> <p>Renegotiate treaties or leave the EU</p> <p>Create Polish-Hungarian-Croatian axis against Western European states which dominate the EU</p>	<p>Investigate whether any unauthorised individuals may have received Hungarian citizenship</p>	
<p><b>Law and Justice (PiS)</b></p>	<p>"Damy rade"</p> <p>(We can do it)</p>	<p>Nationalist and strongly anti-federalist ('More Europe means less Poland')</p> <p>Poland's EU membership should be for the pursuit of Polish national interest</p>	<p>Right to carry out border controls <u>underlined</u></p>	



		<p>Strengthen cooperation with NATO</p> <p>Against Turkey's NATO membership (threat to Greece)</p> <p>Against cutting defence budget despite economic crisis</p> <p>Strengthen national security and defence</p>		<p>German war reparations</p> <p>Aims for emergence of Greece as strong power in the Balkans</p>
<p>Economic openness towards the East</p> <p>Hungary as a 'bridgehead' for eastern economies towards the markets of the EU</p>	<p>Russia as partner</p> <p>Sent observers to Crimea referendum</p>	<p>Recognise three major regional powers: Germany, Russia, Turkey</p> <p>Reassess Hungary's involvement in NATO (focus on technical development and peace-keeping to the detriment of national defence)</p>	<p>Against cooperation with the US</p> <p>Bilateral relationship with US should promote national interests consistently</p>	<p>Hungarian minorities abroad</p> <p>Notable absence of migration policies in programmes</p>
	<p>Need closer (fair and realistic) relationship with Russia, based on mutual respect, truth and openness (for stability in Europe)</p>	<p>Strong ties with NATO needed, strengthen and enlarge NATO further</p> <p>Autonomous foreign and security policy</p>	<p>Strengthening of bilateral ties with US (important for Poland's security)</p>	<p>'Polishness' vs 'Europeanness' carried out by elites, scientists and publicists with the elites' loss of loyalty to the Polish state as a post-1989 danger</p>

		Poland should not join the Euro		
<b>Legia Nord (LN)</b>	"Più liberi e più forti – un'altra Europa è possibile"  (Freer and stronger – another Europe is possible)	Leave the Euro  Regain national competences  Free cooperation between member states  Reform some policies	Immigration policy should be nationalised	For development aid supporting intervention <i>in loco</i>
<b>Party for Freedom (PVV)</b>	"Grenzen dicht!"  (Close the borders!)	Leave EU and Euro but stay in EFTA (Swiss model)  While still in EU, abolish EP  Nationalist, need sovereignty back	Abolish Schengen  Opt-out on immigration (also intra-EU)  Nationality profiling for crime  Anti-multiculturalism, anti-Islamism  Restricted citizenship and asylum rights	Stop development aid (except for emergency aid)  Help developing countries through free trade
<b>Patriotic Front</b>	"Bulgariya nad vsichko!"  (Bulgaria above all)	Nationalist, Europe of nations	Stricter citizenship requirements  Minorities in Bulgaria (Roma and Turkish) should be responsible for 'integrating' into Bulgarian society (e.g. no	

	<p>Russia as an important partner for EU</p> <p>Against sanctions on Russia</p>	<p>Against interventionism but voted for re-financing Italy's peacekeeping missions abroad</p>	<p>Strengthen transatlantic cooperation</p> <p>US as partner to fight terrorism and Islamic extremism</p>	<p>Kosovo should not be recognised</p> <p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>
<p>For free trade</p> <p>Lift trade barriers for developing countries</p>	<p>Against DCFTA with Ukraine</p>	<p>In favour of NATO but without Turkey</p> <p>Against European army and armed missions</p> <p>Against common EU foreign policy</p>		<p>Get rid of Dutch Antilles and give less citizenship rights to Antilleans</p> <p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>
<p>Develop trade relations with Russia and Middle East</p>	<p>For good relations with Russia</p> <p>Neutral position on Russia</p> <p>"Bulgarophiles" rather than "Russophiles"</p>	<p>Against military interventions of Bulgaria</p> <p>Strengthen Bulgaria's military power</p>	<p>US military bases create risk for terrorist attacks, need to revise agreement with the US</p> <p>For good relations with US</p>	<p>Mostly domestic focus</p> <p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>

			mosques, no veils, birth control for Roma)	
<b>Podemos</b>	"Un País Contigo"  (A country with you)	More democracy, transparency, social Europe  Fundamental treaty reform	Open borders  Improve citizenship and migrants' rights  Free mobility in Europe	Increase development aid budget (to 0.7% of GNI)  Aid needs to be dissociated from any national interests
<b>Smer</b>	"Chránime Slovensko"  (Protecting Slovakia)	EU as means to enhance Slovakia's international position  Bring EU closer to citizens	Legal action against EU relocation scheme	
<b>Socialist Party (SP)</b>	"Menselijke Waardigheid, Gelijkwaardigheid en Solidariteit"  (Human dignity, equality, and solidarity)	Make EU less neoliberal  National referendums on important issues	Limit immigration by helping other EU countries protect external borders  Prefer to keep refugees in their region  Refugees in EU should be treated humanely	Development aid at 0.8% of GNI  More aid through more favourable trade agreements and tax rules

<p>Against TTIP</p> <p>Revise EU trade policy</p>	<p>Need a European security architecture in which Russia participates, on the basis of an OSCE revival</p>	<p>More autonomy for Spain in NATO</p> <p>Deepen European security policy</p> <p>Pacifist</p>	<p>Better cultural and scientific cooperation with the US in order to avoid more brain drain from Spain</p>	<p>For citizens' rights</p> <p>Recognition of Palestine</p>
<p>More active economic policy, especially in Russia, China, India, Latin America, Turkey and Central and Eastern Asia</p> <p>Neutral on TTIP</p>	<p>Against sanctions on Russia</p> <p>Need change of EU policy towards Russia</p>	<p>Critical of NATO (mostly in relation to Russia), but still committed</p> <p>NATO as main guarantor of European security</p>		
<p>Very sceptical about neoliberal free trade</p> <p>Against TTIP (big business taking control of Europe)</p>	<p>Sceptical about Putin, but also sceptical about the EU's position on Russia</p> <p>Against DCFTA with Ukraine</p>	<p>Very sceptical of NATO, but no longer in favour of leaving</p> <p>Nuclear disarmament of Europe</p>	<p>Critical of US</p>	

<p><b>Sweden Democrats (SD)</b></p>	<p>"Ge oss Sverige tillbaka"  (Give Sweden back to us)</p>	<p>Regain sovereignty, nationalist  Fundamental reform  Referendum on EU membership  Against EMU</p>	<p>Restore borders and renegotiate Schengen  Stricter migration and asylum rights  Anti-multiculturalism  Restrict citizenship rights</p>	<p>Use aid to limit refugees arriving in Sweden  Stop aid waste (which finances immigration)  Reduce aid budget</p>
<p><b>SYRIZA</b></p>	<p>"Anoígoume drómo stin elpída"  (We open a way to hope)</p>	<p>Fundamental reform  Anti-neoliberal  Europe of political equality between member states</p>	<p>For proportionate distribution of refugees  Improve asylum and migrants' rights  Against discrimination</p>	
<p><b>The Finns Party</b></p>	<p>"Saat mitä tilaat"  (You get what you ask for)</p>	<p>Reform EU  For economic cooperation  National self-determination  Referendum on EU membership Possibly leave Euro</p>	<p>Reduce net number of immigrants to 1990s level  Nationalise migration and refugee policy Restrict asylum, migrants' and minorities' rights (e.g. "welfare tourism")</p>	<p>Development aid should not be a core function of government  Cut aid</p>

<p>Open to free trade</p>		<p>Leave NATO (PfP instead)</p> <p>Concerned about defence cuts</p>		<p>Swedish identity</p> <p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>
<p>Against TTIP</p>	<p>Russia as EU's strategic partner, against sanctions</p> <p>New framework for European security in the OSCE, together with Russia</p>	<p>Anti-interventionist</p> <p>Pacifist</p> <p>Stop excessive defence spending</p> <p>Very sceptical of NATO</p>	<p>US-sceptic</p>	<p>Anti-austerity</p> <p>Anti-German hegemony</p> <p>Anti-racist</p>
<p>No official position but the general attitude towards TTIP is positive</p>		<p>Non-alignment should remain</p> <p>UN should have main role in security</p> <p>Critical of EU or NATO operations</p>		<p>Against Turkey joining the EU</p>

<p><b>UK Independent Party (UKIP)</b></p>	<p>"Believe in Britain"</p>	<p>Leave on basis of Art. 50 TEU</p> <p>Referendum on EU membership</p> <p>No ECHR jurisdiction</p> <p>Cooperation with EU on selected issues only</p>	<p>Very strict controls of immigrants</p> <p>Stricter border controls</p> <p>Stricter asylum and migrants' rights</p> <p>No amnesty for 'illegal immigrants'</p>	<p>Cut development aid to 0.2% of GNI</p> <p>Focus on humanitarian aid and health</p>
<p><b>Vlaams Belang (VB)</b></p>	<p>"De stem van het volk"</p> <p>(The voice of the people)</p>	<p>Flanders as sovereign state, leave the EU and the Euro</p> <p>Pre-Maastricht European cooperation (EEC/EFTA)</p> <p>Abolish many EU institutions (EEAS, Committee of the Regions, EESC)</p>	<p>Abolish Schengen to stop "illegal immigration" from Eastern and Southern Europe</p> <p>Strict asylum policy and increased use of detention centres</p> <p>Zero tolerance for irregular migrants</p>	<p>Major cuts to aid (democracy promotion seen as jihadists' promotion)</p> <p>Tie development aid to migration cooperation and readmissions</p>

Source: based on official party manifestos



<p>EFTA and WTO membership</p> <p>EU single market</p>	<p>Putin as admirable leader (Farage)</p> <p>EU responsible for deteriorated relations with Russia</p>	<p>In favour of NATO</p> <p>Against European army</p> <p>Critical of foreign intervention</p>		
<p>Against TTIP (undemocratic and threatens sovereignty and culture)</p>		<p>Strong focus on national defence</p> <p>Against European army</p> <p>International cooperation in defence matters</p> <p>Increase defence budget</p>		<p>Against further EU enlargement</p> <p>Religious freedom for all but strict limits on practice of Islam</p>

**Table 2: Selected populist party results in most recent national election and the 2014 European elections, as well as relevant governing experience**

Parliamentary Group	Party	Country	Most recent national election (votes in %, year)	EP elections 2014 (votes in % of total national vote)
<b>EPP</b> (217 seats in total)	Fidesz	HU	44.5 (2014)	51.5
	Smer	SK	44.4 (2012)	24.9
<b>ECR</b> (74 seats in total)	Danish People's Party	DK	21.1 (2015)	26.6
	The Finns Party	FI	17.6 (2015)	12.9
	Alternative for Germany	DE	4.7 (2013)	7.1
	Law and Justice	PL	37,6 (2015)	31.8
	Patriotic Front	BG	7.3 (2014)	(formed after elections)
<b>GUE-NGL</b> (51 seats in total)	Podemos	ES	20,7 (2015)	8.0
	SYRIZA	EL	36.3 (2015)	26.6
	Socialist Party	NL	9.6 (2012)	9.6

Seats in EP (out of total number of available seats for respective country)	Year of foundation	In EP since	Relevant experience in governing on national level
12 (/21)	1988	2004	In government: 1998 – 2002 2010 – now
4 (/13)	1999	2004	In government: 2006 – 2010 2012 – now
4 (/13)	1995	1999	Supporting the government: 2001 – 2011 2015 – now
2 (/13)	1995	2009	In government: 2015 – now
7 (/96)	2013	2014	
19 (/51)	2001	2004	In government: 2005 – 2007 2015 – now
1 (/17)	2014	2014	
5 (/54)	2014	2014	
6 (/21)	2004	2009	In government: 2015 – now
2 (/26)	1971	1999	

<b>EFDD</b> (45 seats in total)	Five Star Movement	IT	25.6 (2013)	21.2
	Sweden Democrats	SE	12.9 (2014)	9.7
	UKIP	UK	12.6 (2015)	26.8
<b>ENF</b> (37 seats in total)	Freedom Party of Austria	AT	20.5 (2013)	19.7
	Vlaams Belang	BE	3.7 (2014)	4.3
	Front National	FR	13.6 (2012)	24.9
	Lega Nord	IT	4.1 (2013)	6.2
	Party for Freedom	NL	10.1 (2012)	13.3
<b>NI</b> (15 seats in total)	Jobbik	HU	20.3 (2014)	14.7

Sources: [www.parties-and-elections.eu/](http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/)  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html) and [www.votewatch.eu/](http://www.votewatch.eu/)

17 (/73)	2009	2014	
2 (/20)	1988	2014	
24 (/73)	1993	1999	
4 (/18)	1956	1996	In government: 1999 – 2005 <sup>87</sup>
1 (/21)	2004 (preceded by Vlaams Blok, since 1979)	1989	
23 (/74)	1972	1984	
5 (/73)	1989	1989	In government: 1994, 2001 – 2006 2008 – 2011
4 (/26)	2006	2009	Supporting the government: 2010 – 2012
3 (/21)	2003	2009	

<sup>87</sup> In 2005, the FPÖ split and left the government, while Haider's new BZÖ took over. The FPÖ also tolerated a minority government (of the SPÖ) from 1970 to 1971 and was in government from 1983 to 1986, but the party only became right-wing populist with the election of Haider as party leader in 1986.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The European Policy Centre (EPC) is an independent, not-for-profit think tank dedicated to fostering European integration through analysis and debate, supporting and challenging European decision-makers at all levels to make informed decisions based on evidence and analysis, and providing a platform for engaging partners, stakeholders and citizens in EU policymaking and in the debate about the future of Europe.



European Policy Centre  
14-16 Rue du Trône/Troonstraat  
B-1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Tel : +32 (0) 2 231 03 40 Fax : +32 (0) 2 231 07 04  
Email : [info@epc.eu](mailto:info@epc.eu)  
Twitter : [@epc\\_eu](https://twitter.com/epc_eu)  
[www.epc.eu](http://www.epc.eu)