Mainstreaming of Right-Wing Populism in Europe

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Introduction

This paper aims to portray theoretical debates to better understand the current state of the populist movements and political parties in the European Union, which is hit by various kinds of social-economic and financial difficulties leading to the escalation of fear and prejudice *vis-à-vis* 'others' who are ethno-culturally and religiously different. The main premise of this paper is that the ongoing social-political-economic-financial change in the EU resulting in fear against the unknown such as Islam, Muslims, refugees and migrants is likely to be turned by individual agents into cultural/religious/civilizational reification and political radicalization in order to overcome fear. The findings of this paper derive from a qualitative fieldwork held within the framework of a Horizon 2020 Research Project called "Critical Heritages (CoHERE): performing and representing identities in Europe".[1] The fieldwork was held the research team in Dresden, Toulon, Rome, Rotterdam, Athens and Istanbul between March and May 2017. The main premise of this work in progress is to claim that pathologizing right-wing populism is not scientifically and politically productive. Rather than being the cause of the current state of political crisis in many European Union countries, right-wing populism should be interpreted as one of the symptoms of the long-neglected structural problems augmented by neo-liberal forms of governmentality. In this regard, one of the most important claims of this paper among some others is that right-wing populism of the contemporary world is very different from its predecessor, far-right, or extreme right political parties. Today's right-wing populist parties have rather become mainstream political parties appealing to not only working-class, or unemployed social groups but also to women, LGBTI, middle-class and upper-middle-class secular groups who feel threatened by radical Salafi Islam. The paper will start with the elaboration of the contemporary acts of populism from a theoretical perspective to lay the ground for finding a set of theoretical tools to compare the six counties with regard to the growing incidence of populism. The paper will continue to elaborate on the ways in which the right-wing populist parties mainstream their movements by underlining welfare policies, Islamophobia, environmental issues, unresolved historical cleavages, critic of multiculturalism, diversity, unity and Europeanization. The use of the fieldwork data will be limited with the findings from Dresden as the rise of the *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD) in the general elections in Germany (September 2017) triggered the public fear against the populist threat. Due to the lack of space and time, this work in progress will not be able to go deeper to define the notions of European heritage that circulate broadly

[1] CoHERE was launched in April 2016, and lasts until March 2019. It is run by Newcastle University, and explores the ways in which identities in Europe are constructed through heritage *representations* and *performances* that connect to ideas of place, history, tradition and belonging. The research identifies existing heritage practices and discourses in Europe. It also identifies means to sustain and transmit European heritages that are likely to contribute to the evolution of inclusive, communitarian identities and counteract disaffection with, and division within, the EU. A number of modes of representation and performance are explored in the project, from cultural policy, museum display, heritage interpretation, school curricula and political discourse to music and dance performances, food and cuisine, rituals and protest. See https://research.ncl.ac.uk/cohere/

in the public sphere among the populist political parties and movements, and to investigate how the 'politics of fear' relates to these notions of European heritage and identities.

Mainstreaming of Right-Wing Populism in Europe

In 1967, researchers at the London School of Economics including Ernest Gellner, Isaiah Berlin, Alain Touraine, Peter Worsley, Kenneth Minogue, Ghita Ionescu, Franco Venturi and Hugh Seton-Watson organized a conference with a specific focus on populism. Following this pivotal conference, the proceedings were edited by Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (1969) in a rather descriptive book covering several contributions on Latin America, the USA, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. One of the important outcomes of the book, which is still meaningful, was that "populism worships the people" (Ionescu and Gellner 1969: 4). However, the conference and the edited volume could not really bring about a consensus beyond this tautology, apart from adequately having displayed particularist characteristics of each populist case. One of the interesting conclusions of this path-breaking conference was very well explicated in one of Isaiah Berlin's interventions during the conference (1967: 6):

> "I think we are all probably agreed that a single formula to cover all populisms everywhere will not be very helpful. The more embracing the formula, the less descriptive. The more richly descriptive the formula, the more it will exclude. The greater the intension, the smaller the extension. The greater the connotation, the smaller the denotation. This appears to me to be an almost a priori truth in historical writing."

Today, the state of play in the scientific community is not that different from the one in the late 1960s with regard to the definition of populism. Many studies have been conducted and written on the issue. But rather than having a very comprehensive definition of the term, the scholars have only come up with a list of elements defining different aspects of populism such as: anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, and anti-establishment positions; affinity with religion and past history; racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Islam, anti-immigration; promoting the image of a socially, economically and culturally homogenous organic society; intensive use of conspiracy theories to understand the world we live in; faith in the leader's extraordinariness as well as the belief in his/her ordinariness that brings the leader closer to the people; statism; and the sacralisation of the people (Ghergina, Mişcoiu and Soare, 2013: 3-4).

In a recent article, Cas Mudde (2016a), tries to answer the following question in order to understand the rationale of the populist masses in the wake of Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Alternative for Germany, Five Star Movement, FIDESZ and JOBBIK in Hungary, Sweden's Democrats, True Finns and many others: what is driving their resentment? Much of the discussion has swirled around which recent event – the Great Recession or the European refugee crisis – has done the most to fuel the rise of right-wing populism. Accordingly, a follow-up question Mudde has posed is whether the resentment is primarily economic or fundamentally cultural. His immediate answer to the second question is that neither event explains the phenomenon, which after all, predates them both. He reminds the reader that in 1999, the far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) received nearly 30 per cent of the national vote, and later Jean-Marie Le Pen even made it into the run-off of the presidential election in 2002. Hence, one could certainly argue that the recent economic crisis and the refugee crisis may have played a role, but they are at best catalysts, not causes. After all, if resentment as a social concept posits that losers in the competition over scarce resources respond in frustration with diffuse emotions of anger, fear and hatred, then there have been several other factors in the last three decades which may have triggered the resentment of the European public, such as de-industrialization, unemployment, growing ethno-cultural diversity, multiculturalism, terrorist attacks in the aftermath of September 11 and so on. (Berezin, 2009: 43-44).

There are various approaches to analyse typologies of populism in Europe as well as in the other parts of the world. The most common approach explains the populist vote with socio-economic factors. This approach argues that populist sentiments come out as the symptoms of detrimental effects of modernization and globalization, which is more likely to imprison working class groups in states of unemployment, marginalization and structural outsiderism through neo-liberal and post-industrial sets

of policies (Betz, 2015). Accordingly, the "*losers of modernization and globalization*" respond to their exclusion and marginalization by rejecting the mainstream political parties and their discourses as well as generating a sense of ethnic competition against migrants (Fennema, 2004). The second approach tends to explain the sources of (especially right-wing) extremism and populism with reference to *ethno-nationalist sentiments rooted in myths about the distant past*. This approach claims that strengthening the nation by emphasizing a homogenous ethnicity and returning to traditional values is the only way of coming to terms with the challenges and threat coming from outside enemies be it globalization, Islam, the European Union, or the refugees (Rydgren, 2007). The third approach has a different stance with regard to the rise of populist movements and political parties. Rather than referring to the political parties and movements as a response to outside factors, this approach underlines the *strategic means* employed by populist leaders and parties to appeal to their constituents (Beauzamy, 2013). An eclectic use of these approaches is probably more reasonable to analyse the rationale behind the growing popularity of populist movements and parties. However, one could also argue that the former approach is more applicable to the West and South European context, while the second is more appropriate for the explanation of the East European populism. Since the third approach concentrates on the organizational capacity and style of the populist leaders and parties, it is probably beneficial to help us understand all sorts of contemporary populisms.

Mabel Berezin (2009) makes a different classification to explain the main analytical approaches to the new European right. He claims that there are two analytical axes on which European populisms capture their nuances: the *institutional axis*, and the *cultural axis*. In the institutional axis, their local organizational capacity, agenda setting capacity at national level, and their policy recommendation capacity, and at national level to come to terms with unemployment-related issues are of primary subjects of inquiry. In the cultural axis it is their intellectual repertoire to offer answers to the detrimental effects of globalization, their readiness to accommodate xenophobic, racist, Islamophobic discourses, and the capacity of their inventory to utilise memory, myths, past, tradition, religion, colonialism and identity. Using these two axes in analysing European populisms at present may provide the researcher with an adequate set of tools to understand the success and/or failure of local and national level. Through them, one could try to understand why and how many populist parties in Europe become popular in particular cities, but not in the entire country, as well as the role of non-rational elements such as culture, the past (or pasts), religion and myths in the consolidation of the power of populist parties.

Right-wing populism was not a pivotal issue in Europe in the late 1960s as Ernest Gellner and others observed in the conference organized at the LSE. Even later, some extreme right-wing parties were established, but they remained marginal in everyday politics. However, today right-wing populism has been mainstreamed, and such populist parties are very different from the preceding far-right parties. It seems that right-wing populism becomes victorious at national level when its leaders are able to blend the elements of both axes, such as blending economic resentment and cultural resentment in order to create the perception of crisis. It is only when the socio-economic frustration (unemployment and poverty) is linked to cultural concerns, such as immigration and integration, that right-wing populists distinguish themselves from other critics of the economy. This is the reason why right-wing populists capitalize on culture, civilization, migration, religion and race while the left-wing populists prefer to invest in social class-related drivers. As Ernesto Laclau (2005a) noted, a situation in which a plurality of unsatisfied demands and an increasing inability of the traditional institutional system to absorb them differentially coexist, creates the conditions leading to a populist rupture. This rupture may very well be sometimes right-wing and sometimes left-wing populism depending on the historical path each country has before taken.

Current state of politics in Europe indicates that right-wing populism has been mainstreamed. Contemporary right-wing populist parties are far from their predecessors, which were named as “far-right”, or “extreme right-wing” political parties. Marine Le Pen’s FN, Wilders’ PVV, Gauland’s AfD, or Orban’s FIDESZ are very different from the former far-right parties such as the NPD and REP in Germany, Jean-Marie Le Pen’s FN in France, or Lega Nord in Italy. The predecessors of the current right-wing populist parties were mostly marginal parties investing in racist and xenophobic political discourses, which appealed to some radicalized social groups located at the margins of the majority societies. Whereas, the current right-wing populist parties have successfully diversified their political

discourses. They are no longer simply investing in a narrow-minded racist political rhetoric, but also in *welfare policies* to remedy the immediate needs of working-class people, or unemployed groups who were negatively affected by the processes of de-industrialization, globalization, international trade, and Europeanization. They have now become catch-all parties, which could attract not only working-class men, but also women and LGBTI groups across all the social classes, a point which will be revisited shortly (Mondon and Winter, 2017; Farris, 2012). Furthermore, it is no longer a surprise to come across such right-wing populist parties with a very strong environmentalist, leftist, and critical political discourse appealing to the larger segments of the society. Another example to depict the mainstreaming of right-wing populism would be the successful incorporation of the discourse of secularism and republicanism to the party program by Marine Le Pen (Betz, 2015).

Political Imaginaries of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe

These populist parties across Europe and beyond also draw on different political imaginaries and different traditions, construct different national identity narratives, and emphasize different issues in everyday life. As Ruth Wodak (2015: 2) illustrates very well, some parties in Europe gain support by linking themselves with fascist and Nazi past as in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and France. Some parties gain legitimacy through the perceived threat from Islam as in the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland. Some others endorse an Evangelical/Christian fundamentalist rhetoric as in the US. Some establish their legitimacy through Euroscepticism as in Finland and Greece. And some parties build up their legitimacy through an Islamist ideology and a perceived threat originating from unidentified enemies outside and within, such as Turkey (Kaya, 2015a). One could argue that populist parties in different national settings often follow a path-dependent lineage to choose their rhetoric and discourses to mobilize their constituents.

Regardless of the issues, European public seems to have a shared opinion about the most important challenges they are currently facing in everyday life. The Heads of State or Government of the 27 members of the EU and the Presidents of the European Council and European Commission met in Bratislava on 29 June 2016 to diagnose the present state of the European Union and to discuss the EU-27's common future without the UK. The Bratislava meeting resulted in the 'Bratislava Declaration', which spells out the key priorities of the EU-27 for the next six months and proposes concrete measures to achieve the goals relating to: 1) migration, 2) internal and external security, and 3) economic and social development, including youth unemployment and radicalism. These topics were already outlined in advance by European Council President, Donald Tusk, and generally reflect the issues that most concern European citizens. These concerns were also revealed in the same order by the Eurobarometer Survey held in 2016.[2]

In a context of global economic crisis and uncertainty, the rise of neo-populist movements and Euroscepticism are two sides of the same coin. It poses the question as to whether the decrease of credibility in politics and the temptation to "overcome" the traditional parties with populist movements would be beneficial for European democracy. One of the puzzling features of populism is that it does not really fit into conventional conceptions of the left-centre-right political spectrum. For instance, in Latin America, populist movements have often been associated with the political left, which receives the strong support of the urban working class. However, in Europe, populist movements have been considered more of a right-wing phenomenon, which is often fuelled by peasant or worker support of nationalist myths and ideologies. But the distinctions are certainly not clear-cut, as left-wing populist movements may contain elements of right-wing nationalist ideology, and even European fascist and Nazi movements had distinctly socialist components in their political agendas (Howard, 2000). Nonetheless, one of the distinct elements which separate the left-wing populists from the right-wing ones is their reliance on the idea of re-educating people, an idea which originates from the socialist

[2] See European Parliamentary Research Service Blog, https://epthinktank.eu/2016/10/03/outcome-of-the-informal-meeting-of-27-heads-of-state-or-government-on-16-september-2016-in-bratislava/most-important-issues-for-eu-citizens/ accessed on 4 November 2017.

teachings that they grew up with. As opposed to the left-wing populists, the right-wing populists rely on the so-called *common sense* of people.

There is no unique definition of the term "populism". Drawing on the interventions of Edwards Shils (1956) in the aftermath of the World War II, some scholars take it as *an ideology* (Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2016b). Some scholars read populism as *a strategy* embodied by various political parties to generate and sustain power by means of plebiscites, referenda and public speeches (Weyland, 2001; and Barr, 2009). Other scholars are more content with defining it as *a discourse* based on the assumption that populism is a part-time phenomenon instrumentalized by populist individuals whenever it is necessary to build up a stronger link with "the people" (Wodak, 2015; Hawkins, 2010). Based on a Gramscian interpretation, some scholars, on the other hand, tend to see it as *a political logic* (Laclau, 2005a, 2005b). In his seminal work, Peter Worsley (1969: 247) has already stated that populism is not a phenomenon that is specific to a particular region, nor is it the unique bastion of any ideological side of politics. It is rather an aspect of a variety of political cultures and structures. Eventually, following the Marxist scholar Peter Worsley (1969), some others define populism as a political style (Taguieff, 1995; and Moffitt, 2016). Pierre-Andre Taguieff (1995: 10, 41) makes his position very clear with the following quotation:

> "the only way to conceptualize populism is to designate a particular type of social and political mobilization, which means that the term can indicate only one dimension of political action and or discourse. It does not embody a particular type of political regime, nor does it define a particular ideological content. It is a political style suitable for various ideological contexts… [Accordingly] a democracy or a dictatorship may have a populist dimension or orientation, they can have a political style."

Unlike socialism, communism, environmentalism, feminism, social democracy or fascism, populism is still far from being a fully-fledged ideology since it does not still bear an internationally recognized and homogenously defined set of norms and values. There are rather national and regional manifestations of populism ranging from Europe to Latin America, or the Middle East. Hence, the ideology of an individual leader, or a political party might be, say, Communism, Socialism, Islamism, Nationalism, Fascism, or Ecologism, but the *discourse*, or the *strategy*, or the *political logic*, or the *political style* employed by the leader or the party in question could still be populism.[3]

The ongoing academic debates on the definition of populism mostly pay tribute to the works of Laclau (2005b) and the Essex School (Stavrakakis, Yannis and Giorgos Katsambekis, 2014). Moving beyond the Essex School, two operational criteria could be highlighted here: a discourse-oriented approach to populism is premised on establishing whether a given discursive practice under examination is, *first,* articulated around the nodal point, "the people," and, *second,* to what extent the representation of society it offers is a predominantly antagonistic one, dividing the society into two antagonistic camps: the elite, the establishment, or the power block on the one side, and "the people," the underdog, or the non-privileged on the other. When those two conditions are in place at the same time, it is safe to call a party or a movement "populist" (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014: 123). The terms along which the "people" and its enemy are constructed often seem to be determined *a priori:* the people should be "pure," "good," "homogenous" and always right, while the "establishment" should be "corrupt," "evil" and wrong (Katsambekis, 2016; Mudde, 2007). Paul Taggart's conceptualization of "the people" as "the heartland" could help us understand what the populists mean by "the people". According to Taggart, the heartland is a place "in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides" (Taggart, 2000: 95). The people in the populist propaganda is neither real nor all all-inclusive, it is rather a mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population (Mudde, 2004). Then, as Jan-Werner Müller (2016) rightfully suggests, one could define the populists as a different category of elites who try to grab power with the help of a collective fantasy of political purity. The Manichean dichotomy between "the people" and "the enemy" was very well elaborated by Isaiah Berlin (1967: 16) during the LSE Conference on Populism in 1967:

> "the enemies of the people have to be specified, whether it be capitalists, foreigners, ethnic minorities, majorities or whoever it might be. They have to be specified. The people is not everybody. The people is everybody of a certain kind, and there are certain people who have put

[3] For further discussion with regard to populism as an ideology and as a style see Tarchi (2013).

themselves beyond the pale in some sort of way, whether by conspiring against the people or by preventing the people from realising itself, or however it may be. The people must be specified. So must the enemy. The people is not the whole of society, however constituted."

Populist extremism feeds on the antagonism it portrays between the constituted 'pure people' and the enemies such as 'the Jews', 'the Muslims', 'ethnic minorities', or 'the corrupt elite'. In Europe, this purity of the people is largely defined in ethno-religious terms, which rejects the principle of equality and advocates policies of exclusion mainly toward migrant and minority groups. Despite national variations, these parties and movements can be characterised by their opposition to immigration, concern for the protection of national/European culture, adamant criticisms of globalization, the EU, representative democracy and mainstream political parties and by their exploitation of the 'culturally different' to the ethnic/religious/national Self. Their appeal to the idea of having a strong leader is also very common across the populist movements in the World. Populists simply argue that established political parties corrupt the link between leaders and supporters, create artificial divisions within the homogenous people, and put their own interests above those of the people (Mudde, 2004: 546).

The immigration issue is central to the discourse and programmes of all radical parties in Europe. According to a survey made in the second half of the 2000s, for instance, voters of such populist parties are significantly more likely to say their country should accept only a few immigrants, or even none: in Austria 93 per cent of these voters (versus 64 percent overall); in Denmark 89 per cent (44 percent); in France, 82 per cent (44 percent); in Belgium 76 per cent (41 percent); in Norway 70 per cent (63 percent); and in the Netherlands 63 per cent (39 per cent). In fact, fewer than 2.5 per cent of voters of populist extremist parties across six countries want to see more immigration (Rydgren, 2008: 740). Regarding immigration in Europe, a more specific form of hostility towards settled Muslim communities can be observed, particularly in the past decade. A large number of voters are anxious about increasing diversity and immigration which provides the electoral potential for these parties. Anti-immigration sentiment often goes together with anti-Muslim sentiments. For instance, in 1994, 35 per cent of the Danish People's Party supporters endorsed the view that Muslims were threatening national security; by 2007 the figure had risen to 81 per cent (as opposed to 21 per cent of all voters) (Goodwin, 2011: 10). Anxiety is not solely rooted in economic grievances, but support for these parties and public hostility to immigration is mainly driven by fears of cultural threat. The discriminatory and racist rhetoric towards the 'others' poses a clear threat to democracy and social cohesion in Europe.

Europe's right-wing populist parties have rejoiced at Donald Trump's win at the American elections held on 8 November 2016 and the UK's vote to leave the European Union, hailing both as a victory for their own anti-immigration, anti-EU and anti-Islam stances and vowing to push for similar results in countries such as France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Hungary, Germany and Sweden. The European public is not different from the rest of the world in the sense that it is also becoming more and more polarized between various Manichean understandings of the world as in the antagonistic dichotomies of "us/them", "pure people/corrupt elite", "privileged/underprivileged", which are interpellated and hailed by populist discourse.

Features of Contemporary Populism

Moffit (2016: 29) classifies very well three main features of populism in today's world: 1) *appeal to the people versus to the elite*; 2) *bad manners*; and 3) *crisis, breakdown or threat*. Cas Mudde (2007) defines populism as "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people". It is "thin-centred", probably because it is not yet as thick as Communism, Socialism, Feminism, Ecologism, such that it does not qualify as a fully-fledged ideology. This Manichean understanding of the world which is based on a Cartesian duality between "pure people" and the "corrupt elite, or between "good" and "evil", or "believers" and "infidels", or the "majority" and the minority", or "friends" and "foes", appeals to the overall population, regardless of social class distinctions and political affiliations and is marked by deep suspicion of politicians, the powerful and the wealthy in society. Daniel Şandru (2013) draws our attention to a remarkable coincidence. Populism as a term apparently began its journey in the language of politics at around the same time when some thinkers started to proclaim the "end" of ideology in the beginning of

the second half of the 20th century. This was the time when class-based ideological cleavages were being replaced by ethno-cultural, religious and identity-based rhetoric in world politics, a point which will be revisited shortly. It could be argued that populism has some democratic elements, or what Shils (1956) calls "democraticism", as it supports popular sovereignty and majority rule. In fact, populism has also taken progressive shapes in history by upholding anti-elitism and the will of the people (Mudde, 2004; 2007). Populist politicians dismiss sophisticated institutions and bureaucratic jargon priding themselves on simplicity and directness, mostly delivered by charismatic and politically savvy leaders who represent "the people". By appealing directly to the people, populism is also said to attract and increase political participation of marginalised groups in society.

As rightly pointed out by Isaiah Berlin (1967: 3) "populism stresses the 'internal' values of the chosen group as against the 'external' values of the enlightened cosmopolitanism of the philosophers". Research has shown that populist parties, with their dynamism, grassroots networking, and adeptness at social media tactics, have been particularly effective in re-engaging young voters and the disaffected working class in politics (Köttig et al., 2017; Goodwin, 2011; Strabac et al., 2014; Kaya and Kayaoğlu, 2017). Similarly, populism can give a voice to groups that do not feel represented by mainstream parties or the elites, and in this way, can advance certain topics, which either intentionally or unintentionally are not being addressed by mainstream parties or receive little attention on the political agenda.

Similar to the appeal they have for "the people", populist leaders often have another similarity: "bad manners". Moffitt (2016) rightly reminds us that slang, swearing, political incorrectness, being overly demonstrative and colourful as opposed to being rigid, rational, technocratic, intellectual, and politically correct, are often what the populist politicians prefer to use in public. The rationale here is to present themselves to the people as if they are just one of them and close to the values, codes, norms and priorities of the people – a proximity the other elitist politicians could never have with the people. Populist leaders tend to use the right language, dialect, accent, mimics, body language, gestures, and ways of dressing to accord with the environment they are in. All these choices are often culturally specific, and have great political and cultural resonance (Ostiguy, 2009). These kinds of performative acts by populist politicians are staged to show a kind of "ordinariness" to the people. But this does not mean that populist leaders only stage such performative acts of "ordinariness"; they also stage alternative performances to invoke their followers that they are also extraordinary leaders with some merits, such as proving their virility and masculinity for male leaders, and femininity and maternalism for female leaders (Moffitt, 2016: 66). Silvio Berlusconi's notorious escapades with women and Vladimir Putin's tabloid pictures showing his topless body while hunting animals are examples of this. Sometimes, the performative acts of extraordinariness might have some religious connotations. Hugo Chavez presented himself as the reincarnation of Simon Bolivar; Berlusconi once declared himself as the Jesus Christ of politics (Moffitt, 2016: 63); and George Bush once presented himself as the Messiah (Singer, 2004). Populist leaders have another commonality showing their unordinariness to the people, i.e., their constant endeavour against the enemies in the name of the people they represent. Based on a constant state of paranoia, they voice the expectation that they will be killed by their enemies. Chavez's obsession was that he was going to be poisoned by the Colombian oligarchy (Halvorssen, 2010). The threat or fantasy of death via the hands of the enemy is a common trope among populist leaders.

The third common feature of populism is that it receives its impetus from the perception of crisis, breakdown, or threat originating from an outsider or insider element, or from an outside enemy, or from an enemy within (Taggart, 2000; Moffitt, 2016). The global financial crisis, the refugee crisis, migration crisis, fundamentalist Islam crisis, Minaret crisis, headscarf crisis, Burkini crisis, any sort of military threat, or many other crises are often articulated and rearticulated by populist politicians for their own vested interest to keep people on alert, so that it is easier to communicate with their constituents through at least one of these radically simplified terms and terrains of political debate. It is not a surprise then that populist politicians to constantly invest in crises since they simply live on them. In Latin America, sometimes populist politicians refer to imperialist conspiracies; in the Netherlands Geert Wilders often exploits the increasing Islamisation of the Netherlands as an imminent threat to social, economic and political well-being of the nation. Dramatization and scandalization imply a set of multiple references to the populist leaders, who construct themselves as knowledgeable, saviours, problem solvers and crisis

managers that may lead their constituents to have more confidence in the efficacy of the populist political style (Wodak, 2016: 11).

The culturalization of what is social, political and economic

Some of these factors are related to the rise of unemployment, poverty, inequality, injustice, the growing gap between citizens and politics and the current climate of political disenchantment. For instance, in the spring of 2014, youth unemployment in Greece was 62.5 per cent, in Spain 56.4 per cent, in Portugal, 42.5 per cent, and in Italy 40.5 per cent.[4] As for the Central and Eastern European countries, we should recall that the collapse of the USSR has allowed long-suppressed national aspirations to find their outlet in ethno-nationalist right-wing political parties and movements. The JOBBIK Party in Hungary, built upon such ethno-nationalist inspirations, is a good example (Dettke, 2014). From the 1980s onwards, the introduction of neo-liberal policies has contributed to social and economic insecurity (Mudde, 2007). These policies implied that individuals were expected to take care of themselves within the framework of existing free market conditions. This led to the fragmentation of society into a multitude of cultural, religious and ethnic communities in which individuals sought refuge. In turn, ruling elites, which include vote-seeking political parties, exploited these basic needs for protection by adopting discriminatory discourses and stigmatizing the 'others'.

The rhetoric of a 'clash of civilizations' also seems to be legitimising populist extremist politicians, who claim the impossibility of a peaceful coexistence between ethno-culturally and religiously different groups (Kaya, 2012a). Populist extremist movements are also shaped by the ideology of consumerism. A consumerist culture, which widens the gap between the wealthy and the dispossessed, contributes to people's fears and insecurities. A study conducted in the UK reveals that the recent riots in London and other large cities in the UK and Europe reflect a deeply inadequate economic and social ethos, imbalanced consumption, the breakdown of accountability, distrust in institutions, and severe government failings over more than two decades (The Guardian, 22 August 2011).

What is mainly a social and political problem is often being reduced to a cultural and religious clash in a way that disrupts peace and social cohesion (Brown, 2006; Kaya, 2012a). The growing popularity of this type of rhetoric has deepened existing ethno-cultural and religious barriers between groups. As a result, the universal nature of human rights is being replaced by alternative views, which use culture, ethnicity, religion and civilisation as markers to define and stigmatise those with a different background.

The backlash against multiculturalism: Lost in Diversity

Extremist populist parties and movements often exploit the issue of migration and portray it as a threat against the welfare and the social, cultural and even ethnic features of a nation. Populist leaders also tend to blame a soft approach to migration for some of the major problems in society such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, drug trafficking and human trafficking. This tendency is reinforced by the use of a racist, xenophobic and demeaning rhetoric. The use of words like 'influx', 'invasion', 'flood' and 'intrusion' are just a few examples. Public figures like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Heinz-Christian Strache in Austria and others have spoken of a 'foreign infiltration' of immigrants, especially Muslims, in their countries. Geert Wilders even predicted the coming of *Eurabia*, a mythological future continent that will replace modern Europe (Wossen, 2010), where children from Norway to Naples will learn to recite the Koran at school, while their mothers stay at home wearing *burqas*.

It is also true that much public attention has recently been focused on Eastern Europeans. Consider the recent controversy around the 'website for complaints about Middle and Eastern Europeans', created by the Dutch Freedom Party in the Netherlands, which asked people to provide information about the 'nuisance' associated with migrant workers or how they had lost jobs to them. On 22 February 2012, in a letter to Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal, Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland asked the Dutch government to clarify its position regarding this website, and expressed the hope that the Dutch

[4] See http://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/. One should be informed about the fact that by September 2016 there was a significant improvement in the unemployment rates of these countries: Greece 50.4 per cent, Spain 43.9 per cent, Italy 36.9 per cent, and Portugal 28.6 per cent.

government would publicly distance itself from its content.[5] The Dutch parliament voted in March 2012 to denounce the Freedom Party's website, but the Dutch government, whose majority in the 150-seat lower house required support from the PVV's 23 lawmakers, has declined to condemn it.[6] This is only one among several events that are transforming the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant and immigrant-friendly country. On 10 April 2012, *Vlaams Belang*, a Belgian right-wing populist party, launched a website that invites people to report crimes committed by illegal immigrants, mirroring a similar site in the Netherlands set up by the far-right Freedom Party. The website invites people to file anonymous tip-offs about social security fraud, black-market work more serious crimes. *Vlaams Belang* was previously known as *Vlaams Blok*, but the political force had to change its name in 2004 after Belgium's Court of Cassation found it in violation of the law against racism. Filip Dewinter, the *Vlaams Belang* leader, defended the website because of the presence of 'tens of thousands of illegal immigrants' in Belgian cities and the problems stemming from them. This type of thinking and political discourse have attracted public support *vis-à-vis* an 'enemy within' who is created through the actual politics of fear.

A remarkable part of the European public perceive diversity as a key threat to the social, cultural, religious and economic security of the European nations. There is an apparent growing resentment against the discourse of diversity, which is often promoted by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, many scholars, politicians and NGOs. The stigmatisation of migration has brought about a political discourse, which is known as 'the end of multiculturalism and diversity.' This is built upon the assumption that the homogeneity of the nation is at stake and has to be restored by alienating those who are not part of an apparently autochthonous group that is ethno-culturally and religiously homogenous. After the relative prominence of multiculturalism both in political and scholarly debates, today we can witness a dangerous tendency to find new ways to accommodate ethno-cultural and religious diversity. Evidence of a diminishing belief in the possibility of a flourishing multicultural society has changed the nature of the debate about the successful integration of migrants in host societies.

Initially, the idea of multiculturalism involved conciliation, tolerance, respect, interdependence, universalism, and it was expected to bring about an 'inter-cultural community'. Over time, it began to be perceived as a way of institutionalising difference through autonomous cultural discourses. The debate on the end of multiculturalism has existed in Europe for a long time. It seems that the declaration of the 'failure of multiculturalism' has become a catchphrase not only of right wing parties but also of centrist political parties all across the continent (Kaya, 2010). In 2010 and 2011, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and the French President Nicolas Sarkozy heavily bashed multiculturalism for the wrong reasons (Kaya, 2012a). Geert Wilders, leader of the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, made no apologies for arguing that '[we, Christians] should be proud that our culture is better than Islamic culture' (Der Spiegel, 11 September 2011). Populism blames multiculturalism for denationalizing one's own nation, and disunifying one's own people. Anton Pelinka (2013: 8) explains very well how populism simplifies the complex realities of a globalized world by looking for a scapegoat:

> "As the enemy – the foreigner, the foreign culture- has already succeeded in breaking into the fortress of the nation state, someone must be responsible. The elites are the secondary 'defining others', responsible for the liberal democratic policies of accepting cultural diversity. The populist answer to the complexities of a more and more pluralistic society is not multiculturalism… Right-wing populism sees multiculturalism as a recipe to denationalize one's nation, to deconstruct one's people."

For the right-wing populist crowds, the answer must be easy. They need to have some scapegoats to blame. The scapegoat should be the others: foreigners, Jews, Roma, Muslims, sometimes the Eurocrats, sometimes the non-governmental organizations. Populist rhetoric certainly pays off for those politicians who engage in it. For instance, Thilo Sarrazin was perceived in Germany as a folk hero (*Volksheld*) on several right-wing populist websites that strongly refer to his ideas and statements after his polemical book *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen (Germany Does Away with*

5 Press release 22 February 2012.
6 Euractiv, Belgian far-right emulates the Dutch xenophobic website, 11 April 2012.

Itself: How We Gambled with Our Country), which was published in 2010. The newly-founded political party *Die Freiheit* even tried to involve Sarrazin in their election campaign in Berlin and stated *Wählen gehen für Thilos Thesen* (Go and vote for Thilo's statements) using a crossed-out mosque as a logo.[7] Neo-fascist groups like the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party (NPD) have also celebrated the author. They stated that Sarrazin's ideas about immigration were in line with the NPD's programme and that he made their ideas even stronger and more popular, as he belonged to an established social democratic party.

A recent survey conducted in Spring 2016 by the PEW Research Centre shows that many Europeans are uncomfortable with the growing diversity of society. When asked whether having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities makes their country a better or worse place to live, relatively few said it makes their country better. In Greece and Italy, at least more than half said increasing diversity harms their country, while in the Netherlands, Germany and France, less than half complained about ethno-cultural diversity (PEW, 2016).

Islamophobia as an ideology and a tactic

These populist outbreaks contribute to the securitisation and stigmatisation of migration in general, and Islam in particular. In the meantime, they deflect attention from constructive solutions and policies widely thought to promote integration, including language-learning and increased labour market access, which are already suffering due to austerity measures across Council of Europe member states. Islamophobic discourse has recently become the mainstream in the west (Kaya, 2011: and Kaya, 2015b). It seems that social groups belonging to the majority nation in a given territory are more inclined to express their distress resulting from insecurity and social-economic deprivation through the language of Islamophobia; even in those cases that are not related to the actual threat of Islam. Several decades ago it was Seymour Martin Lipset (1960) who stated that social-political discontent of people is likely to lead them to anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, regionalism, supernationalism, fascism and anti-cosmopolitanism. If Lipset's timely intervention in the 1950s is transposed to the contemporary age, then one could argue that Islamophobia has also become one of the paths taken by those who are in a state of social-economic and political dismay. Islamophobic discourse has certainly resonated very much in the last decade, and its users have been heard by both local and international communities, although their distress has not resulted from really anything related to Muslims in general. In other words, Muslims have become the most popular scapegoats in many parts of the world to blame for any troubled situation. For almost more than a decade, Muslim-origin migrants and their descendants are primarily seen by European societies as a financial burden, and virtually never as an opportunity for the country. They tend to be associated with illegality, crime, violence, drug abuse, radicalism, fundamentalism, conflict, and in many other respects are represented in negative ways (Kaya, 2015b). In what follows, referring to Michel De Certeau's path-breaking book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), I will address two different uses of Islamophobia in the west among right-wing circles: Islamophobia as an ideology, and Islamophobia as a tactic.

The construction of a contemporary European identity is built in part on anti-Muslim racism, just as other forms of racist ideology played a role in constructing European identity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Use of the term 'Islamophobia' assumes that fear of Islam is natural and can be taken for granted, whereas use of the term 'Islamophobism' presumes that this fear has been fabricated by those with a vested interest in producing and reproducing such a state of fear, or phobia. By describing Islamophobia as a form of *ideology*, I argue that Islamophobia operates as a form of *cultural racism* in Europe which has become apparent along with the process of *securitizing* and *stigmatizing* migration and migrants in the age of neoliberalism (Kaya, 2015b). One could thus argue that Islamophobism as an ideology is being constructed by ruling political groups to foster a kind of false consciousness, or delusion, within the majority society, as a way of covering up their own failure to manage social, political, economic, and legal forces and consequently the rise of inequality, injustice, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and alienation. In other words, Islamophobism turns out to be a practical instrument of social control used by the conservative political elite to ensure compliance and

[7] See http://www.morgenpost.de/politik/inland/article105070241/Pro-Deutschland-ueberklebt-Sarrazin-Plakate.html accessed on 5 November 2017.

subordination in this age of neoliberalism, essentializing ethnocultural and religious boundaries. Muslims have become global 'scapegoats', blamed for all negative social phenomena. One could also argue that Muslims are now being perceived by some individuals and communities in the West as having greater social power. There is a growing fear in the United States, Europe, and even in Russia and the post-Soviet countries that Muslims will eventually take over demographically.

A PEW survey held in 2006 indicated that opinions of Muslims in almost all of the western European countries are quite negative. While one in four in the USA and the UK displayed Islamophobic sentiments, more than half of Spaniards and half of Germans said that they disliked Muslims; and the figures for Poland and France for those holding unfavourable opinions of Muslims were 46 per cent and 38 per cent. The survey revealed that prejudice was mainly marked among older generations and appeared to be class-based. People over 50 and of low education were more likely to be prejudiced.[8] Similarly, the Gallup Organization Survey of Population Perceptions and Attitudes undertaken for the World Economic Forum in 2007 indicated that three in four US residents believe that the Muslim world *is not* committed to improving relations with the West. The same survey finds out that half of respondents in Italy (58 per cent), Denmark (52 per cent), and Spain (50 per cent) agree with this view. Israelis, on the other hand, represent a remarkable exception with almost two-thirds (64 per cent) believing that the Muslim world *is* committed to improving relations. The image on the other side of the coin is not very different. Among the majority-Muslim nations surveyed, it was found that majorities in every Middle Eastern country believe that the West is not committed to bettering relations with the Muslim World, while respondents in majority-Muslim Asian countries are about evenly split (WEF, 2008: 21).

Islamophobic discourse has recently been legalized and thus further normalized through the laws against the hijab (2004) and the burqa (2011) and the recent debates around the state of emergency in France in the wake of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks. In the meantime, Pegida and other political groups have attempted to exploit the New Year's Eve 2016 assaults in Cologne, which were blamed on male Muslim refugees (Ingulfsen, 2016). Islamophobia was previously more prevalent among male populations (Kaya and Kayaoğlu, 2017). However, in the last few years, the use of gender rights has also been particularly prevalent in the stigmatization of Islamophobia. Some features and manifestations of mainstream Islamophobia relate to what has been defined as "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007) and "femonationalism" (Farris, 2012). Gert Wilder's Party, PVV, in the Netherlands and the AfD in Germany, whose current co-leader (Alice Weidel) is openly gay, have recently attracted many women as well as members of the LGBTI community who are becoming more and more vocal in their attacks against Islam on the basis of its supposed inherent illiberalism against the position of women and gays in everyday life (Mondon and Winter, 2017).

The role of Islam and refugees in Europe is a common trope in the interviews. During the interviews conducted with our interlocutors, they often expressed their concern and fear over the "infiltration" of Islam and its potential effects on their own countries and on Europe. In their imaginaries, Muslim-origin immigrants are often constructed as « extremists », « terrorists », and « criminals » who allegedly cannot understand European values. A 28-year-old male interlocutor, office worker, in Dresden, expressed his concerns about the Islamist threat that he has recently observed in Germany and Europe:

> «German culture is all about punctuality, diligence, strong work-ethic, and not so much rambling as it is the case in other countries. *The AfD says that Islam does not belong to Germany*. That's right. There can be a few who believe in it, but please not the extremists and also not so many. The AfD also rightly says, that we should not always stick with our history, Second World War and so on. Am I responsible for what happened then? No, and neither are my parents. We should be allowed to be proud to be Germans.»

Islamophobia is one of the common tropes that we have observed in most of the interviews we conducted with the supporters of the right-wing populist parties in Europe. The quotation above does not only

8 For the data set of the surveys on Islamophobia see http://pewresearch.org/; http://people-press.org; and for an elaborate analysis of these findings see http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/18/islam.religion. One could also visit the website of the Islamophobia Watch to follow the record of racist incidences in each country: http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/category/anti-muslim-violence (entry date 16 November 2017).

display the Islamophobic, or anti-Muslim, sentiments, but it is more than that. It shows that local and historical elements play an important role in the growing appeal to riht-wing populist parties. For instance, such interventions coming from the public in the former East German provinces and cities are translated to, or rather, reinforced by the AfD leadership in the following way which has its roots back in the famous *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Debate) of the 1980s.[9] Alexander Gauland, the co-leader of the AfD, publicly made the following statement on 2 October 2017):

> "If the French are, quite rightly, proud of their emperor and the British of Churchill, then we [the Germans] have the right to be proud of what soldiers achieved in the first and second World Wars." [10]

Famous Historians' Debate (Historikerstreith) which started in the aftermath of American President Ronald Reagan's visit to the cemetery of the former Nazi soliders in Bitburg in 1986. This visit was used by the conservative historians such as Ernst Nolte to normalize the Nazi Past in an attempt to compare the Holocaust with the other mass murders such as the attrocities expereinced by American Indians in the USA and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Jürgen Habermas furiously responded to such attempts of normalization of the conservative historians within the framework of the German Vergangenheitsbeweltegung (coming to terms with the past), which became a crucial element of the post-war German political culture. However, the East Germans apparently did not go though the same process of coming to terms with the Nazi past. The quotation from our interlocutor proves that there is a lot to be done in the Eastern provinces of Germany with regards to the Nazi past.

Another lesson to be learned from Germany with regards to the popularity of right-wing populism appealing to growing number of people is the political resentment of various groups to the current policies of the leading political parties. A 70-year-old-female pensioner in Dresden expressed her concerns about the fear of Islam in the following way:

> "We should take the history as an opportunity to think about the present and the future. In Europe we had a bad heritage with the First and Second World War. The Russians then released us and Germany was divided. In Germany we still have the connection to Europe and also to the USA and we have feelings of guilt, we have to. When I think about the Marshall-Plan for example, it is all clear. That is why we have to help refugees in need. But you do not have to invite them, like Merkel did, or pin on a "Refugees Welcome" and sit around in the German Parliament like Sigmar Gabriel did. There is a limit to everything. And with everything the government did in the past years, the limit is exceeded and that is dangerous for the German and European heritage. When we have an Islamic caliphate in Germany one day, the European heritage will be gone. Maybe it sounds exaggerating, but I think we should be really careful. Many of the Muslim refugees have dangerous thoughts in their minds. Otherwise you would not think of driving a bus into a crowd."

Apparently, recent wave of terrorist attacks in European cities has created a strong resentment against the liberal refugee policies of a few European states such as Germany and Sweden. The actual fear of terrorism committed by radical Salafi-Islamist terrorists triggers the anti-systemic populist resentment against the mainstream political parties. Germany provides thre reader with some other lessons. It is not only the fear of the present but also the unresolved social-economic disparities of the past which trigger the right-wing populist inspirations. Majority of the interlocutors in Dresden expressed that they feel forgotten and that their economic interests are not being properly addressed. A 55-year-old female teacher in Dresden expressed her resentment to the reunification policies and its aftermath during the Kohl government in 1990s:

> "It seemed to me that every government, including the German one, was busy trying to save all the banks. I cannot imagine that the German government would make so much effort when it comes to helping the middle class and the self-employed. In the end, *already the GDR under*

[9] For a detailed overview of the German "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" (coming to terms with the past), see Ernst Nolte (1986); Habermas (1986a) and Habermas (1986b). For a detailed discussion on the Historians' Debate and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* see also Maier (1988: 9-16), Holub (1991: 162-170), Wolin (1989).

[10] Alexander Gauland (2.10.2017), Kyffhäusertreffen 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bt4if8KecaA accessed on 14 November 2017.

> *Helmut Kohl has been mugged.* Greece did not fulfil the criteria when it became a member back then. And now, they still do not fulfil them and will probably never fulfil them. You just feel bad as German citizen. The AfD demands that Europe should be left to its founding members and the whole structure should only be confined to economic cooperation."

The collective memory about the social-economic disparities of the reunification years seems to be kept intact by many East German inhabitants. Those who were disappointed by the reunification process still seem to have resentment against the central state actors, and they express their political resentment by engaging themselves in anti-systemic right-wing populist discourses. The following statement of a 19-year-old male trainee from Dresden affirms the social-economic and political drivers, which maintain the growing popularity of the AfD in Germany, especially in the eastern provinces:

> "I do not have any money to be saved. I have no rich family or something like that. And the German government is always putting the money in their pockets. Who are they ? Well they are the banks and all the corrupt people working together with politics, and also poor countries like Greece, Hungary, Romania, and also for the "Oil-eyes" [German, *Ölauge*], the asylum seekers. This is what I like about the AfD, they are showing off the misbehaviour of these politicians."

These statements from the field indicate that mostly the problems expressed by the supporters of the anti-systemic right-wing populist parties are social-economic-political based structural problems. Individuals need different ways and channels to express their concerns in everyday life. Michel De Certeu (1984)'s notion of *tactic* is very explanatory here.

> "... A tactic is an art of the weak... The more a power grows, the less it can allow itself to mobilize part of its means in the service of deception. Power is bound by its very visibility. In contrast, trickery is possible for the weak, and often it is his only possibility as a last resort" (De Certeau, 1984: 37).

Individuals tend to generate tactics in their everyday life in order to adapt themselves with the regulations of the prudentialist post-social state that formulates different *strategies* (De Certeau, 1984) such as neo-liberalism, globalism, multiculturalism, diversity, deindustrialization etc. Those who are rather uneducated, unqualified, and socially, economically and politically unintegrated, are not accurately equipped to come to terms with the present conditions mainly shaped by global financial crisis and refugee crisis. Making communities becomes one of the ways for them to cope with uncertainty, insecurity, unemployment, exclusion and poverty in the age of deindustrialization. Ethno-cultural and civilizational communities refer to symbolic walls of protection, cohesion and solidarity for such social groups. For those who feel politically, socially and economically neglected it becomes handy to speak from the margins so that they could be heard by the political elite in the centre. Hence, it is a practical tactic to use an Islamophobic discourse, or a populist discourse, in order to be easily heard by decision makers. Hence, one should be careful about patologizing the right-wing populism by immediately equating it with the past events such as Nazism, Fascism, Francoism etc. Populist rhetoric as well as Islamophobic rhetoric can also be a trickery played by the weak as Michel De Certeau put it very well. Furthermore, there comes the risk that the mainstream parties may instrumentalize the fear of the past in order to conceal their failure in resolving current structural problems.

The growing affiliation of the supporters of right-wing populist parties with culture, nativism, authenticity, ethnicity, religiosity, traditions, myths, and civilizational rhetoric provides them with an opportunity to establish solidarity networks against structural problems. The interviews we conducted show that majority of the supporters of right-wing populist parties are not religious by habitus, they are mostly secular, agnostic, or even atheist. Such individuals who are on the one hand, socially, economically and politically deprived, and on the other hand, are in quest for communities to defend themsevels against the detrimental effects of globalization are more likely to be appealled by right-wing populist discourses that simplify, binarize, culturalize, civilitionalize and religionize what is social, economic and political in origin. What is remarkable in our interviews goes in parallel with the observations of Rogers Brubaker (2017: 1208).

> "The growing civilizational preoccupation with Islam in European populisms has profoundly transformed the political semantics of self and other: the collective self is increasingly defined n broadly civilizational, not narrowly national terms. The civilizational-level semantics of self

and other have internalized liberalism – along with secularism, philosemitism, gender equality, gay rights, and free speech – as an identity marker of the Christian West vis-a-vis putatively intrinsically illiberal Islam."

In parallel with the Huntingtonian paradigm of "Clash of Civilizations", the term civilization here is reduced to religious differences, and Christianism as a cultural form, but not religious form, to be celebrated by liberals, atheists, agnostics, and others versus the rise of radical Islam challenging the secular forms of life. The feelings of social-economic and political deprivation are not only expressed by means of resentment against multiculturalism, diversity, migration and Islam, but also by means of resentment agains the European Union institutions, which are believed to be imposing a unified transnational identity challenging national sovereignty and nativism.

Eurosceptic populism: Lost in Unity

In addition to the growing popular resentment against multiculturalism and diversity, there is also a growing resentment among populist segments of the European public against the discourse of unity, which is also promoted by European institutions as well as by scholars, politicians, local administrators and NGOs. Right-wing populist leaders have always tried to capitalise on anti-EU sentiment. Most recently, the perception that European leaders are failing to tackle a developing economic crisis is fuelling further hostility towards the European Union, both right and left. As will be shown shortly, for instance, the *Lega Nord* is a vocal opposition of Mario Monti's technocratic government in Italy, disparaging his ties with the European elite. Marine Le Pen is stoking up fear of the EU as part of her campaign for the French presidency. The Dutch Freedom Party has called for a return to the national currency, becoming the first political movement in the Eurozone with a large popular base to opt for withdrawal from the single currency. What is more dangerous is that a larger group of people, fearing the consequences of the economic crisis, may be sympathetic to Eurosceptic populism without being committed supporters: the risk is that their grievances could be hijacked by populist movements.[11] The 2016 Spring Global Attitudes Survey of the Pew Research Centre shows that many European citizens have lost faith in the European Union. In a number of member states, ratings for the EU are significantly lower than they were before the onset of financial crisis (PEW, 2016).

Populist parties in many member states of the EU are known for their Eurosceptic positions, especially right-wing parties. Their Euroscepticism has become even stronger after the global financial crisis, which has afflicted the EU since 2008. Accordingly, in their edited volume, Kriesi and Pappas (2015) reveal that the recession led to a growing public support for the populist parties. Comparing the election results before and after the financial crisis they found that populism in Europe increased notably by 4.1 per cent. However, the support for populist parties shows remarkable differences from region to region. The populist surge has been very strong in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe with a rather anti-systemic content. Nordic populism is also on the rise, but it has a rather systemic nature, and populist parties including Sweden's Democrats and True Finns Party are even supportive of their competitors' policies. In Western Europe too, populism was bolstered by the financial crisis. With a very strong Eurosceptic content, France and the UK experienced a sharp increase in public support for right-wing populism (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015: 323). In Germany, however, right-wing populism also increased, but the main reason for this increase is the refugee crisis.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to undertake a literature survey based on theoretical and empirical analysis to bear on the questions of cause and response: what factors are causing growing numbers of citizens to endorse populist parties of right or left? It is often presumed that the affiliates of such populist parties are political protestors, single-issue voters, "losers of globalization", or ethno-nationalists. However, the picture seems to be more complex. Populist party voters are dissatisfied with, and distrustful of mainstream elites, and most importantly they are hostile to immigration and rising ethno-cultural and religious diversity. While these citizens feel economically insecure, their hostility springs

11 See the post by Marley Morris: ''European leaders must be wary of rising Eurosceptic populism from both the right and the left'' on the blog ''Europp'' - European politics and policy, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 26 March 2012.

mainly from their belief that immigrants and minority groups are threatening their national culture, social security, community and way of life. They are perceived by the followers of the populist parties as a security challenge threatening social, political, cultural and economic unity and homogeneity of their nation. The main concern of these citizens is not only the ongoing immigration and the refugee crisis, they are also profoundly anxious about Muslim-origin people who are already settled mostly in western European countries. Anti-Muslim sentiment has become an important driver of support for populist extremists - a sentiment that is based on the perception that all Muslim-origin people are ethnically, culturally, religiously, politically and economically homogenous. This means that appealing only to concerns over immigration such as calling for immigration numbers to be reduced or border controls to be tightened, is not enough.

Populist parties seem to be investing in the worsening economic conditions, public attitudes to immigration, attitudes and prejudices towards Muslims and Islam, and public dissatisfaction with the response of mainstream elites to these issues. The views and ideas they espouse cannot be dismissed as those of a marginal minority. It seems that these parties are here to stay. Public concern over immigration and rising cultural and ethnic diversity, anxiety over the presence and compatibility of Muslims, and dissatisfaction with the performance of mainstream elites on these issues are unlikely to subside. As Mathew Goodwin (2011) stated in research conducted in 2011, the enduring nature of this challenge is perhaps best reflected in then-recent findings that demonstrate how populist extremist parties are not the exclusive property of older generations. There is evidence that those who vote for such parties are also influencing the voting habits of their children. For instance, it is known that 37 per cent of the support for Front National leader, Marine Le Pen in France comes from those aged under 35, who are hit by a prolonged state of chronic unemployment.

This paper has also argued that a populist political style has become very widespread, together with the rise of neo-liberal forms of governmentality, capitalizing on what is *presented as* legitimate in cultural, ethnic, religious and civilizational terms. The supremacy of cultural–religious discourse in the West is likely to frame many of the social, political, and economic conflicts within the range of societies' religious differences. Many of the ills faced by migrants and their descendants, such as poverty, exclusion, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of political participation, and unwillingness to integrate, are attributed to their Islamic background, believed stereotypically to clash with Western secular norms and values.

It was also argued that populist political style has become very widespread together with the rise of neo-liberal forms of governmentality capitalizing on what is cultural, ethnic, religious and civilizational. The supremacy of cultural-religious discourse in the West is likely to frame many of the social, political, and economic conflicts within the range of societies' religious differences. Many of the ills faced by migrants and their descendants, such as poverty, exclusion, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of political participation, and unwillingness to integrate, are attributed to their Islamic background, believed stereotypically to clash with Western secular norms and values. Accordingly, this paper has just argued that 'Islamophobism' is a key ideological form in which social and political contradictions of the neoliberal age are dealt with, and that this form of culturalization is embedded in migration-related inequalities as well as geopolitical orders. Culturalization of political, social, and economic conflicts has become a popular sport in a way that reduces all sorts of structural problems to cultural and religious factors – a simple way of knowing what is going on in the World for the individuals appealed to by populist rhetoric. It was also argued in the paper that Islamophobia is not only an ideology, or a strategy, generated by right-wing populist parties, but also a tactic to be used by the supporters of right-wing populist parties to express their social-economic and political concerns using the power of speaking from the margins to make more echo.

Eventually, another constituent of the contemporary forms of populist rhetoric is the growing resentment against the European Union, which is perceived by the affiliates of populism as one of the sources of the current political and economic crisis. In such a period of structural, political and economic crisis triggered by the ongoing refugee crisis and escalating waves of terrorism, a growing number of European citizens, mostly lower-educated, male in 30-50 age-bracket, rural, and unemployed segments of the European public, are likely to become more affiliated with nativism, localism, and Euroscepticism. The transnational character of the European Union has recently become one of the main focal points of

criticism for the populist political leaders, who happen to invest in the capitalization of the feelings of getting *lost in unity*. However, the right-wing populist parties are no longer satisfied with the conventional profile of supporters from socially-economically and politically deprived segments of the society, but they are also recently able to attract voters from all around the political spectrum irrespective of gender, age, class, region and status. Hence, pathologizing the current state of right-wing populism is very misleading as it may lead us to miss the fact that populism is not actually the cause of the problems that we experience nowadays, but rather the symptom of the long-neglected structural problems.

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