FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES

POLICYSOLUTIONS

Fondation Jean Jaurès

DAS PROGRESSIVE ZENTRUM

KALEVI SORSA SÄÄTIÖ

FONDAZIONE PIETRO NENNI

Progressive Answers to Populism

Why Europeans vote for populist parties and how Progressives should respond to this challenge

Tamás BOROS
Maria FREITAS
Johannes HILLJE
Chloé MORIN
Jussi PAKKASVIRTA
Ernst STETTER
Luigi TROIANI

Progressive Answers to Populism

Why Europeans vote for populist parties and how Progressives should respond to this challenge

Published by:

FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies
Rue Montoyer 40, 4th floor – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
T: +32 2 234 69 00
Email: info@feps-europe.eu
Website: www.feps-europe.eu

Policy Solutions
Révay utca 10 – 1065 Budapest, Hungary
T: +36 1 4 748 748
Email: info@policysolutions.eu
Website: www.policysolutions.eu

Partners: **Das Progressive Zentrum, Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Fondazione Pietro Nenni, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation**

ISBN: 978-2-930769-21-9

Responsible editors:
Ernst STETTER, FEPS Secretary General
Tamás BOROS, Co-Director of Policy Solutions
Maria FREITAS, FEPS Senior Policy Advisor

Authors: Tamás BOROS, Maria FREITAS, Johannes HILLJE, Chloé MORIN, Jussi PAKKASVIRTA, Ernst STETTER, Luigi TROIANI

Research contributor: Sophia GASTON
Editing and proofreading: Olaf BRUNS

Page layout and printing: Ferling Ltd. – Hungary

With the financial support of the European Parliament.

This report does not represent the European Parliament's views but only of the respective authors.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD – EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVES AND THE POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

ERNST STETTER, FEPS SECRETARY GENERAL

It is very clear that the results of the elections over the last five years are signalling to Progressives that they cannot simply continue thinking in traditional ways, proposing the usual and conventional solutions and hoping that the pendulum could shift in their favour, elevating them into a more powerful, governing position.

Citizens are no longer making the choice between Left and Right but rather between the democratic system and the anti-democratic system. What used to be the political center shrank, and those parties of the fringes now squeeze traditional parties into the contested “mainstream” middle. Against this backdrop, Progressives seem to slowly fade away in this battle and the important year ahead – that of the 2019 EU elections – does not seem to favour our chances. At present, social democratic parties are often not perceived as a credible alternative to conservatives or populists that gained substantial electoral support in several EU member states throughout 2017 - 2018.

Such a context and building up on the electoral trends observations that FEPS and Policy Solutions have brought about with our Populism Tracker website we decided that it was time to offer viable counter strategies for Progressives to tackle the easy answers offered by populists to contemporary problems.

From Germany to Finland, from Italy to Hungary and then France, FEPS and Policy Solutions engaged in a multi-partner, multi-layered research project that looks into the country-specific challenges posed by national populist parties or actors as it also offers potential forward looking European narratives to our parties that encompass overall societal questions of our time, in this crucial EU election year.

Therefore, I am grateful to FEPS member foundations and nominated experts that joined forces in view of realizing this project, as I am also grateful to the two main drivers of this insightful focus-group based research, Maria Freitas, FEPS Senior Policy Advisor and Tamás Boros, Co-Director of Policy Solutions.

I am confident that this handbook can shed a deeper understanding to contemporary societal and political dynamics as it also can serve as a useful inspiration to our policy-makers both at the national and European level and provide (as also remind) them that Progressives can re-claim the ground from these forces that play on fear and demagoguery instead of engaging in constructive dialogues for the betterment of our societies and public life.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of growing socio-economic inequality; the acceleration of economic, social and technological changes; the changes in the voter base of social democratic parties; as well as numerous other global trends, many liberal democracies may soon be led by populist politicians. In the European Union, roughly a quarter of likely voters would currently vote for populist politicians, whose actions centre on fighting against some outside enemy, the rejection of political pluralism and the irreconcilable conflict between the "people" and the elites. Most of these politicians have pursued an illiberal turn in their respective countries.

Hungary and Italy – among others – are already governed by populist parties, but from France to the Netherlands, populist politicians could assume leading governmental roles over the next few years in several major European countries. Based on a "radical" understanding and interpretation of democracy, populists seek to implement a form of government that demands uncontrolled authority on the basis of a popular mandate. This can be used to systemically weaken the institutional guarantees which are meant to safeguard minorities. Populists portray human rights as instruments to thwart certain majority positions as "anti-democratic", while the organisations that invoke these rights are labelled as "agents of foreign powers". If illiberal and populist leaders were to rise to power in other countries – in addition to the US, Italy, Poland and Hungary, where populists have already taken the reins of government –, then we could soon witness a widespread and far-reaching retrenchment in the area of progressive values.

Although, the problem of rising populism is becoming a more and more researched topic – FEPS and Policy Solutions joint research programme called “Populism Tracker” in 2015 being a testament to this –, there are very few if any serious analyses that offer an antidote to populism. With this book, we aim to change this situation.

The central objective of this book is to offer potential and effective answers to NGOs, politicians or anyone who wants to counter populism. We hope that the proposed country-specific and European progressive answers of this publication can be useful for wider parts of society than hate-based populism, as we also believe that they provide insights for Progressives to better respond to the problems and fears of those social groups that are most susceptible to the allure of populism. We want to offer in this book potential political answers to populism in a practical, solution-oriented and positive way.

In order to have a more in-depth understanding concerning the motivation of the people who would likely vote for populists, we conducted focus group researches in five countries. In France (among the voters of the National Rally and those of the France Unbowed), Finland (Finns Party voters), Germany (Alternative for Germany voters), Hungary (Fidesz and Jobbik voters) and Italy (Five Star Movement and League voters). The results of the focus group researches allowed us to develop country-specific but also common European progressive approaches that could prove to be more attractive than the populists’ response of illiberalism, isolationism, xenophobia or disregard for minority rights.

In the last chapter of our volume, we propose potential pathways for Progressives to best match voters’ expectations with regard to the most important European challenges in order to win back their

support and with the hope of contributing to some extent to the halt of rising populism in the continent.

We do hope that this book will be of use for all those readers who believe in the importance of a progressive future for Europe.

PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS TO POPULISM IN HUNGARY

Tamás BOROS, on behalf of Policy Solutions

Seventy percent. That is the share of likely voters in Hungary who indicated in 2018 that they would vote for a populist party in the next parliamentary election.[1] Fidesz, the ruling party, is supported by the majority of the Hungarian voters (56%), while the largest opposition party, Jobbik, would receive 14 percent. With this ratio, Hungary is ahead of every other EU Member State in the virtual ranking of populist countries. In the second-ranked country, Italy, the populist parties that make up the governing coalition – the Lega and the Five Star Movement – have "only" 57% support. These extreme levels of social support for populism in Hungary cannot be explained by the fact that populist parties fare well in the polls across Europe, or that we live in an "age of populism" or that Hungarian populist politicians – including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán – are so much more talented than their western European counterparts. Although these statements can be true, they nevertheless are not enough to explain the prevailing situation in Hungary.

1 T. Boros and G. Győri, *Populism Report – April-June 2018*, FEPS and Policy Solutions, 2018, Available at: www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/289/populism_report_q2_2018.pdf

Since the spring of 2010, the populist governing party the *Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Alliance*, commonly known as Fidesz, has won – by overwhelming margins – two national parliamentary elections, two municipal elections held simultaneously across the nation, and one EP election. During the same period, the *Movement for a Better Hungary*, commonly known as Jobbik – a previously far-right populist party that has recently pivoted towards the centre – has emerged as the country's largest opposition party. It is true, the situation of populism in Hungary is part of a broader global trend, but it is nevertheless an extreme version thereof. The Hungarian situation is special by any measure.

The goal of this study is to offer progressive proposals for reaching out to voters who currently opt for populist parties and to highlight practical alternatives that could serve to scale back populism. In order to do so, seen the specific Hungarian context, we need to first briefly examine three issues that are partially linked:

- How did the current political system, with its high levels of support for populist parties, emerge and what is this system like?
- Who are the political players in this system?
- What type of politics and policies do they stand for? What types of motivations, values and problems drive the voters to these parties?

The political system

By 2010, a mix of numerous political, economic, cultural and historical factors had combined to shake up the previously established quasi two-party political system, in which a centre-left progressive party, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), and a right-wing conservative party, Fidesz, had alternated in power. Social disparities increased because of the economic crisis, tens of thousands of families lost their homes because of debts, and social tensions between Hungarians of Roma and non-Roma descent increased. The public felt that state and government had failed to protect them from the impact of globalisation, from the crisis, and from loss of status, while at the same a series of scandals (one of the most notable of these was the leaked speech of the then Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in which he admitted to lie for winning the election) came to light that involved the elite. A strong majority, 62% of respondents at the time, indicated that the communist system which had preceded the democratic transition in Hungary, had been the country's best period.[2] The vast drop in the support of the Hungarian Socialist Party (due to the implemented austerity measures and the scandals of the Prime Minister) resulted in the collapse of the quasi two-party system, and the conservative Fidesz party managed to upset the previous balance in Hungarian politics. Fidesz also started to adapt one of the most salient features of populism: to cast itself as the sole genuine representative of the "people". And even though Fidesz had a real membership and party organisation – unlike the Freedom Party of the Dutch populist Geert Wilders, for example –, in practice it did not operate as a traditional party but as an

2 Source: *Median representative poll*, 2008, http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20130527-en-szeretem-kadart-o-a-magyarok-nagy-jotevoje.html

extremely centralised campaign machine, built already around a single person: Viktor Orbán. Thus, in many respects this period – characterised by the governance of the Hungarian Socialist Party and its liberal coalition partner, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) – offered ideal preconditions for a rise in populism.

Therefore, with the exception of the (socialist) governing party at the time, every political organisation competing in the 2010 election defined itself as being opposed to the entire system (rather than only against the programme of the governing party). All of them wanted to replace the entire system (rather than only the government in power). In this bizarre constellation, the only mainstream political force in Hungary was the Hungarian Socialist Party. Everyone else was against the entire system.

For these reasons it was possible for the Orbán government to issue a mere two months after their victory in 2010 a *Declaration of National Cooperation*, which was tantamount to the government's proclamation of a new social contract. Despite its name, this document was not actually about social peace but the eradication of Hungarian pluralism. The Fidesz government portrayed its own victory as a mandate for building the new political system (*the April election gave rise to a new social contract, whereby the Hungarians decided upon building a new system, the foundation of the National System of Cooperation*[3]), and has accordingly built a system which has drastically reduced the opportunities in the realms of funds, media, politics and the sciences of those organisations and individuals whose opinions differ from the Fidesz-line. Fidesz also officially branded their election victory as

3 *Political Declaration on National Cooperation*, 2010, http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/political-declaration

revolutionary authorisation by the public[4], and thus they regarded themselves as the sole representative of the people.

The political system that has been being built since 2010 resembles a directed democracy in many respects. In this regime, the entire public administration, the independent oversight authorities and the vast majority of the media serve the realisation of Fidesz's political objectives. Instead of letting them nurture and sustain democracy and pluralism, the government uses the instruments provided by democracy to consolidate its own power and to manipulate citizens.

Hence, the question can be raised whether the support of populist parties in Hungary would be as high as it is if they were operating in a truly democratic, pluralistic system, and whether their levels of support can even be compared to similar data from countries where the media and political competition are indeed free. Thus, all the data, strategies, public policy and communication recommendations must be assessed against the fact that the circumstances which are needed for a liberal and pluralistic democracy no longer prevail in Hungary.

4 Source: *Speech of Viktor Orbán in the Hungarian National Assembly*, 2010, http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-magyar-orszaggyules-alakulo-ulesen-2010-majus-14

Populist parties in Hungary

The Hungarian political spectrum includes five relevant parties: Fidesz-KDNP, Jobbik, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the Democratic Coalition (DK) and Politics Can Be Different (LMP). Academic literature usually categorises Jobbik and Fidesz as populist parties, while the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Democratic Coalition are their most important progressive/ leftwing contenders.

Table 1 - Election results of the major parties
(Parliamentary elections, 2006-2018, votes casted for party lists, in %)

	2006	2010	2014	2018
Fidesz	42.03%	52.73%	43.55%	47.36%
MSZP	43.21%	19.30%	26.21% (together with Democratic Coalition (DK) and other leftwing parties)	12.37% (together with Párbeszéd party)
Jobbik	-	16.67%	20.69%	19.80%
LMP	-	7.48%	5.47%	7.31%
DK	-	-	-	5.58%

After its foundation, **Jobbik** was considered as the only significant far-right party in Hungary.[5] The movement, which first gained massively in strength in 2009, became widely known because of the marches it organised against the Roma (Gypsy) minority; its successful effort at establishing the term "Gypsy crime" in public discourse, and the operation of Nazi websites that celebrated Hitler. Around 2009, the party was extreme but not populist, since it did not speak – or only rarely – of the conflict between the *Hungarian people* and the elite or the rejection of pluralism, nor did it claim to be the sole representative of the Hungarian people. It was only later that it added the concepts of "politicians' crimes" and anti-elite sentiments as elements of populism. Overall, Jobbik was more of a far-right/radical party[6] which only occasionally added populist rhetoric to its core issues.

After 2014, Jobbik deliberately launched a process which it termed "becoming a people's party". The goal of this process was to transform Jobbik into a moderate right-wing organisation and to thereby increase its social support, which appeared to have levelled off between the 15% and 20% marks. In other words, the party is not intent on transforming or overthrowing the democratic system but rather wants to gain power by complying with its rules. However, there was also some degree of compulsion behind this process: Between 2010 and 2014, Fidesz began to appropriate Jobbik's key issues and implemented relevant

5 See here: C. Mudde: *The Populist Radical Right*, Routledge, 2016
S. Gherghina, S. Mişcoiu and S. Soare (eds): *Contemporary Populism: A Controversial Concept and Its Diverse Forms*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013
R. Wodak, B. Mral and M. KhosraviNik (eds): *Right-wing Populism in Europe*, Bloomsburry, 2013 J. S. Murrer: *The Rise of Jobbik, Populism, and the Symbolic Politics of Illiberalism in Contemporary Hungary*, The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs, 2015, no. 2

6 D. Róna: *A Jobbik-jelenség*, Könyv&Kávé, 2016

policies in government[7], taking the wind out of the radicals' sails. As Fidesz became increasingly populist and nationalist, Jobbik was compelled to become ever more moderate.

For all intents and purposes, by 2018 Jobbik could no longer be regarded as a populist by any measure. It is not anti-elite, it is not anti-EU, it does not regard itself as the exclusive representative of the people, its policies are not based on antagonistic and symbolic wars, and its previously undisputed strongman, Gábor Vona, has resigned from all his party positions. For the time being, there is a quasi two-person leadership in charge after the introduction of a strong vice chair position. In fact, the first chapter of Jobbik's 2018 election manifesto was specifically about the importance of the democratic transition in Hungary. In that segment, they promised to reinforce all the cornerstones of liberal democracy in the event of their election victory (although, "naturally" the word liberal did not appear anywhere in the manifesto).[8] At the same time, the party's leaders and emblematic politicians still continue to include former skinheads and politicians whose claim to fame usually stemmed from anti-Semitic discourse.

Jobbik thus continues to remain far-right in terms of the persons who make up the party, but in terms of the policies it fights for, the party is anything but far-right. Since the party has not pursued any populist policies in recent years, there is a compelling argument for reviewing Jobbik's ideological categorisation in the relevant expert literature and to no longer classify it as a populist force – assuming the underlying dynamic does not change in the near future.

7 A. Bíró-Nagy and T. Boros: *Jobbik going mainstream. Strategy shift of the far-right in Hungary*, In: Jamin, Jerome (ed.): L'extreme droite en Europe. Bruylant, 2016
8 Source: Magyar szívvel, józan ésszel, tiszta kézzel (the official party programme of Jobbik): https://www.jobbik.hu/magyar-szivvel-jozan-esszel-tiszta-kezzel

As Jobbik became increasingly moderate, **Fidesz** turned towards radicalisation. Before 2010, it had been a conservative party with a combative style and a strongly hierarchical leadership centred around a single leader. In this period, Fidesz was neither populist nor extreme. As it took over government in 2010, however, the party's communication changed substantially. Embracing a populist rhetoric, in the first period after the election, it declared war on the IMF and multinational corporations. Then it launched a massive campaign against the "Brussels" elite. This communication, which sought to exude a sense of the "Hungarian people are engaged in a battle against the corrupt national elite", was aimed simultaneously at various grievances, satisfying voters who are critical of globalisation, deeply nationalistic and sick of austerity. Still, when compared to the period that followed the migrant crisis of 2015, these were only cautious precursors of what was in store. As of 2015, a new Fidesz narrative telling that an *epic struggle to save civilisation is raging in Europe between the Judeo-Christian "natives" and Muslim immigrants* emerged as a core element in Fidesz's communication.

Fidesz's political goals have been explicitly stated on several occasions in Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speeches: He wants to ensure that Hungary and Europe become *migrant-free zones,*[9] *he wants to strip the clique of European bureaucrats, who are in league with the economic elites, of their power and to give back the peoples of Europe control over their own national lives*, he wants to bring back the *grand pre-multicultural Europe of yore*.[10] In the meanwhile, he is working on building an illiberal democracy (which Orbán recently has

9 See here: Hirado.hu, 2017, https://www.hirado.hu/2017/10/23/orban-mi-magyarok-a-szabadsag-nepe-vagyunk/
10 See Kormany.hu, 2017, http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-az-1956-evi-forradalom-es-szabadsagharc-61-evfordulojan

begun to refer to as "Christian democracy"), and his most important domestic policy messages are supporting and boosting families.

Despite the pervasive use of conspiracy theories and the textbook examples of populist and anti-migrant rhetoric, Orbán remains actually a realpolitician. Under the guise of the past years' anti-IMF, anti-EU, anti-multinational corporation (MNC), anti-Soros and anti-migrant campaigns, he has engaged in a policy of massive cutbacks in the social sphere, which has allowed him to maintain a balanced budget through what were effectively successive – veiled – austerity packages, while simultaneously efficiently using EU-funds, reducing public debt and offering MNCs tax breaks and singularly low tax rates. These all have helped Hungary emerge as one of the most dynamically growing economies in Europe. For the most part, the anti-MNC, anti-elite, anti-EU and anti-austerity rhetoric only serve to conceal policies that are actually MNC and elite (upper-middle class) friendly, rely on EU funding and can be considered neoliberal/rightwing in economic terms. Unlike other populist parties, Fidesz's rhetoric in the European arena also runs counter to its own actions. This is manifest in the fact that in 94% of cases, the Fidesz MEPs voted along with the centre-right European People's Party group in the European Parliament, even as the Hungarian governing party was portraying itself as the most determined opponent of Brussels decision-makers.[11] However, all this does not extend to the management of the refugee issue. On that issue, the solutions urged by Fidesz do indeed fundamentally differ from western European solutions, as Fidesz relies on several unusual policy, criminal law and tax instruments to keep migrants (and those who support them) out.[12]

11 See: Votewatch.eu 2017, http://www.votewatch.eu/blog/polish-approach-weakens-v4s- leverage-to-influence-the-future-of-europe/
12 Read more about these measures here (in German): http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/14206.pdf

Voter attitudes

To come up with progressive answers to populism, we need more detailed knowledge of the values, problems and motivations of those voters who traditionally – based on their educational background, place of residence or social situation – might have belonged to the core leftwing electorate but have recently begun to vote for populist parties. In order to identify this segment of the electorate, we used two distinct methodologies: We analysed previous quantitative survey research, while at the same time also used qualitative focus group interviews to ask the voters of populist parties about public affairs issues.

As was noted previously, the policies of the two largest Hungarian parties, Fidesz and Jobbik, have changed radically over the past few years. As a result, there is a substantial number of voters now who have continued to vote for Fidesz for decades despite the fact that the party has been pursuing new, populist policies since 2010. And there are also voters who have supported Jobbik for 8-10 years and continue to stand by the party despite the fact that these day Jobbik espouses centrist policies instead of radical ones. Some clear trends emerge from the quantitative analysis of the respective bases of the two parties. One of the important findings is that Fidesz's level of support is roughly evenly distributed across various social groups. We do not observe the typical gender gap that characterises the populist parties of other countries, nor do we see regional concentrations or an overrepresentation among the elderly. In 2017, Fidesz's support in the entire electorate stood at 25.9%, and in no important demographic was its level of support lower than 23.5% or higher than 28.5%. There is some "oscillation", e.g. Fidesz typically performs better among those at the active ages of 30-49, in rural towns, among skilled workers, and among the highest, ESOMAR AB strata (that is, households

where the breadwinner has higher or intermediate managerial, administrative or professional occupation), while it is less popular among 18-29-years-olds, those with eight years of elementary education, and in the larger urban areas, that is the county seats. But the differences between these categories are no more than a few percentage points (see Table 2).

Table 2 - The voter bases of Fidesz and Jobbik in the population at large and in some vital demographic groups
(2017, n=1000, Source: ZRI Závecz Research Institute)

	Fidesz	Jobbik
Gender:		
Male	26.4%	15.6%
Female	25.4%	8.5%
Age:		
18-29	23.6%	15.7%
30-39	28.1%	16.4%
40-49	27.7%	14.2%
50-59	25.3%	11.2%
60-x	25.1%	5.4%
Education:		
8 years of elementary or less	23.7%	7.6%
Vocational school	27.8%	16.8%
Grammar school/secondary school	25.5%	13.8%
College. university	27.5%	8.8%
Place of residence:		
Budapest	24.5%	10.4%
County seat	23.9%	11.0%
Town	28.5%	11.9%
Village	24.7%	13.0%
ESOMAR status:		
AB	27.20%	8.20%
C1	25.30%	9.10%
C2	24.70%	13.40%
DE	26.30%	12.80%
Total population:	25.9%	11.8%

In the case of Jobbik, the party's support more typically stands out in certain demographics. In 2017, the party's total support in the entire electorate stood at 11.8%, but there was a substantial gender gap: 15.6% of men preferred Jobbik but only 8.5% of women. In other words, similarly to other far-right parties in western Europe, Jobbik is a "macho party" with nearly twice as many male as female voters. The party is also far more likely to be supported by those with vocational school training, as 16.8% of that demographic would vote for Jobbik; the trend of voters shifting from the left towards the far-right is also one that has been typical all across Europe. To consider also potential future trends, it is important to stress that Jobbik is very popular among youth: over 16% of voters under 40 support it, while in the demographic aged 60 or older it enjoys the support of only 5.4%.

The focus group research performed among Hungarians who vote for populist parties used qualitative methods to study the motivations of these voters. We performed the analysis on three groups: female Fidesz voters under the age of 45 who live in small towns in western Hungary; working class voters in eastern Hungary who are 40 or older, have some markers typically associated with former Socialist Party voters and currently support Fidesz or Jobbik; and male Budapest residents under 35 with higher education who are "radicals" and support Jobbik. Overall, therefore, we looked at completely different groups in terms of age, place of residence and educational attainment. Nevertheless, these groups were similar in many respects – in addition to the common feature that united all participants, namely their support of populist parties.

One of the key common characteristics of voters who opt for populist parties is the idealisation of Hungary in the 1980s. There was a single-party communist regime in Hungary at the time,

life was predictable, standards of living were rising steadily but slowly, jobs were secure and social inequalities were negligible. At the same time, however, there was no free press, there were no democratic elections or independent courts, only few people were allowed to travel abroad and the selection in stores was very limited. The dictatorship had grown more relaxed compared to earlier periods, but it could still happen that someone who held opposition views was incarcerated for political reasons. Despite all this – or maybe because of all this – for many populist voters the pre-transition period is the Golden Age they yearn for. The most important element of the underlying nostalgia is job security: voters feel that the notion of retiring after 40 years in the same job where they had started to work at the age of 20 was comforting. Even though they were neither economically competitive nor efficient, the grand state-owned enterprises of the communist era provided security and community. Moreover, since they were Hungarian and state-owned, they were also the source of a national pride of sorts. The kind of statements saying *back in the 1980s we still had the sugar factory, where there was work* were typical among such voters. The slower pace of life in the previous regime, its "tepidity", was seen as positive in all walks of life – the voters associate this world with greater peace, more love and closer human relationships.

The other period of nostalgia is the decade after regime transition, the 1990s. This was the period of hope when Hungarians believed that living standards in Hungary would rise to the Austrian level. In the 1990s there was freedom of speech, travel was free, and the stores were filled with western consumer goods. For the voters, these were the most important aspects of the regime transition. Moreover, in the 1990s it was easy to get a loan, GDP was rising, and Hungary seemed to be one of the top performers in the region in terms of economics and politics.

Over the past 15 years, however, these values and accomplishments have declined, despite their importance to voters. The world began to change increasingly quickly, taking on a runaway pace, and so did jobs, which are of pre-eminent importance. Predictability faded, stress increased, foreign corporations arrived in Hungary and then left from one day to the next. In the meanwhile, not only did the living standards of Hungarians not reach the desired western European level, but in fact – for the first time in history – they are even below the Polish and Slovakian levels. Those who vote for populist parties are full of apprehensions about rising prices, corruption and migrants coming to Europe.

The relationship between Hungarian voters and populist parties is unique in European comparison because Hungary has been ruled by a popular populist party for eight years now. Correspondingly, the anger of a significant portion of those who vote for populist parties is not directed against the government but against international players, the world order, the European Union or migrants. Fidesz voters tend to be very satisfied with the state of Hungary, with the job opportunities, economic development, the Prime Minister's anti-EU rhetoric and Fidesz's refusal to let migrants and refugees enter the country. Jobbik voters, by contrast, even while they acknowledge the government's anti-migration and anti-EU rhetoric, perceive huge problems, namely that nearly 1 million Hungarian workers have left the country and moved to western Europe; that the government has practically made it impossible for trade unions to operate; and that social, wealth and political disparities are continuously on the rise in Hungary. So, traditional left-wing issues are indeed among the most important concerns of Jobbik voters.

Contrary to our expectations we found that the Hungarians who support populist parties are not anti-globalisation. *Those who opt out* [of globalisation] *will fall behind, globalisation is like*

sunshine, it would be useless to deny that it exists – they said. They appreciate the fact that it is easier to travel now, that there is a greater selection of goods in the stores and that technology is improving, life is more comfortable. At the same time, they reject uniformisation, the fact that foreign capital has been allowed to acquire factories in Hungary, and they harbour resentments concerning migration, which they also attribute to globalisation, along with the exploitation of developing countries. The concept of nation-state is obviously very important to them; they want to enjoy the benefits of globalisation even as they also want to preserve Hungarian agriculture and Hungarian-owned factories or restore them to their former glory. Interestingly, these voters are more concerned about keeping those sectors of the economy that hardly produce profits, are uncompetitive and offer little added value (such as grain or sugar production) in Hungarian ownership than those areas on which the country's future could be built. These voters appear oblivious to the fact that there are hardly any Hungarian companies in the tech industry, that Google and Facebook rake in billions of dollars while they hardly pay any taxes, that there are a very few Hungarian start-ups which are successful internationally – what upsets them is that Hungarian agriculture is not flourishing as it did in 1980.

Thus, the biggest threat for populist voters is not globalisation or multinational corporations or technological progress. Instead, they are most apprehensive about lack of job stability, uncertainty, the lack of security, growing inequalities and various minorities: Roma people and immigrants. A key component of their anxieties about minorities concerns demography (*there will be more Gypsies than Hungarians and since they will be impoverished, there will be war*) and the distribution of benefits provided by the state (*if the state has to choose between a Gypsy and a non-Gypsy Hungarian, then the Gypsy will receive more support*).

However, this bloc of voters is not exclusively characterised by sentiments which are diametrically opposed to progressive ideas (i.e. resentments against minorities or anti-EU attitudes) but also by numerous left-wing values. These are, for example, the longing for social equality (*Equality meshes with human nature. In the 1960s we were dirt poor. But so was the neighbour. We were not frustrated by the fact how well others were doing)* and the importance of community *(A community cannot emerge when you have someone with a Ferrari and someone who is just miserable. Let everyone be an equal citizen instead*).

Therefore, we should acknowledge that a large swath of the Hungarian population is merely waiting for a credible alternative that represent the combination of traditional left-wing values and some progressive sentiments. In the following chapters we will examine strategies that build on these values.

The possibilities for progressive politics in Hungary

Since 2010, the Hungarian leftwing/progressive parties – Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and Democratic Coalition (DK) – have had to simultaneously compete with the populist conservative Fidesz, the (formerly) far-right Jobbik, and the legacy of their own previous terms in government, when the country became mired in a major economic crisis. In recent years, the opposition parties' communication has centred on the Orbán government's corruption scandals, while they tried to defend the pre-2010 democratic institutions from a total loss of relevance. These were complemented by social and welfare promises that emphasised the harmful impact of Fidesz' policies aimed at benefitting the (upper) middle classes. Presented with the traditional instruments

of politics (press conferences, signature collections), however, these have proved ineffective thus far: Even compared to what was previously considered the low-point, the election of 2010, in 2018 the support for these parties has declined by a further 200,000 voters.

Over the past three decades, Western European Social Democratic parties have pursued one of three typical strategies (or a combination thereof) to stem the tide of populism and to retain the loyalty of their voters: an insistence on their own progressive values and a forceful engagement of the populists on the basis of their own values **(*hold*)**; neglecting the issues preferred by the populists and pushing their own – economically-centred – issues **(*defuse*)**; or an adoption of the proposals proffered by the populist right, a readjustment of their own positions **(*adopt*)**.[13] There is no way of unequivocally ascertaining which of these strategies was successful and which failed, since the interpretation of success hinges to a significant extent on – among other things – the tactics pursued by the political opponents, the social context, the unity of the given party, the abilities of its leader and the broader economic context.

Given the political and economic situation in Hungary, considering the prevailing social values and building on the quantitative and qualitative research on the subject, we propose a unique combination of the ***hold***, ***defuse*** and ***adopt*** strategies for Hungarian progressives.

13 For a detailed discussion of these three strategies, see: T. Bale, Ch. Green-Pedersen, A. Krouwel, K. R. Luther, N. Sitter: *If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them*, In: Political Studies, VOL 58, 410–426, 2010

In the following, we will explain in detail why we believe that the ***hold*** strategy should prevail in the context of the pro-EU vs anti-EU dimension, why the ***defuse*** strategy ought to be followed when it comes to the issue of welcoming refugees vs. rejecting all immigration, and that a partial ***adopt*** strategy should be pursued with respect to issues concerning nationalism/patriotism vs. internationalism.

European Union: *Hold* strategy

One of the vital rhetorical elements of the populist parties' general approach is the criticism of the European Union, which sometimes takes the form of open hostility. Although an increasing number of voters identify with this narrative, in Hungary nearly 70% of the public continue to support the country's EU membership. A commitment to EU membership could thus emerge as an important symbolic issue for progressives which will allow them to take a forceful position on an issue where they know their stance is backed by a majority of the voters. The position of the relationship to the European Union is also unique because there are few topics in Hungarian politics that satisfy the criteria for successfully raising one's political profile: a) at the centre of the efforts to raise one's profile should be controversial and symbolic issue, it ought to be a wedge issue that is easy to frame in terms of distinct for and against positions; b) that the political opponents take a radically different position on the issue than progressives; c) the majority of the population identifies with the progressive position. In Hungary, EU membership and deeper integration is one such issue, which is why we recommend a more forceful *hold* strategy in this context.

It is evident that the question of how one ought to relate to European integration is increasingly emerging as a major political fault line in European politics, oftentimes replacing the traditional right-left divide on economic policy. On this particular issue, however, populists appear to have manoeuvred themselves into a tough spot because their euroskeptic position has thus far increasingly proven unable to offer a genuine alternative. Previously, they could promise that if elected, they would move their countries out of the EU, but today we know that an actual decision to leave would threaten any Member State with a Brexit-like chaos. This chaos or the sense of chaos could serve as a trump card in the hands of pro-EU forces. The majority of voters' clamour for security and stability, and the spectre of chaos might well deter them from their existing anti-EU attitude. It is no coincidence that in almost every Member State the EU's favourability rating is at the highest levels in decades.

To present the pro-EU position to the public, however, one needs to sketch a vision of a European Union that can protect its citizens. The "Europe Protects" narrative is simultaneously progressive, pro-Europe and satisfies voters' rising demand for stability and security. This narrative could emphasise that large enterprises should remain in European hands, the EU needs to protect workers from Asian and American acquisitions; strong EU-level trade unions need to be active across national boundaries to assert the rights of workers; the European borders, along with the security and freedom of EU citizens, need to be secured by EU border protection agencies and a European army – these are some of the potential directions that progressive parties could follow to boost their credentials in this area.

Migration: *Defuse* strategy

The right strategy to counter the populists' domination of the refugee issue varies by country. Given the Hungarian social, economic and political situation, however, the most realistic strategy is one of "reshaping the political agenda". The overwhelming majority of left-wing voters support Fidesz's approach to the refugee issue, and there is one symbolic policy decision taken by the Orbán government that even those voters who are least sympathetic to the government overwhelmingly agree with: the fence on the southern border of Hungary. Moreover, in this massively tabloid-dominated, simplified media environment, moderate, temperate messages cannot be successful. Obviously, for moral reasons the left cannot spout xenophobic messages of the kind advanced by the Hungarian right – and it would be neither credible nor politically beneficial. However, unequivocally embracing a stance that is diametrically opposed to that proffered by the government – i.e. an emphatically welcoming, pro-immigration policy – would run so drastically counter to the majority view among its voters that it would be tantamount to political suicide. In addition, part of this story is that – unlike in the majority of western European countries – in reality there is no immigration issue in Hungary.

One must also acknowledge that the migration issue is the trump card of the populist right – the longer this issue dominates European politics, the stronger the right-wing parties will become. It is thus in the fundamental interest of the left to steer public discourse back to its own issues: growing social inequalities, low wages, healthcare, education, and the situation of public services. Especially so since in numerous countries – including Hungary and Austria – the intense debates about migration deflect voters' attention from the fact that the governments pursue economic policies that predominantly benefit multinational companies and

the (upper) middle-class, while the poorer and less educated strata are increasingly falling behind. The debate about migration is a communication trap laid by the populist right. This is definitely the case in Central and Eastern Europe, but for the most part this also applies to Western Europe –, and the left should try to steer clear of this. The left needs to come up with public policy responses to the problems stemming from and related to immigration and the refugee crisis, but it also needs to make sure that its policies and narratives do not centre on immigration and refugees but its own traditional issues.

Patriotism/Nationalism: partially *adopt* strategy

With the increasing desire for stability and nostalgia, there has been a commensurate surge in the desire for the state to offer protection. Many are talking about a "resurgence of the nation". This trend has also manifested itself in Hungary. Still, we ought to beware of overly simplistic conclusions claiming that "nationalism has won". As seen before, the support for EU membership has not declined in Hungary, and compared to data from many Western European countries, the public's ill-feelings towards globalisation are no stronger in Hungary than in many other countries. Public opinion surveys have also shown that nationalist, traditionalist and revisionist ideas tend to be at the bottom of the rankings of priorities mentioned by Hungarians. Voters do exhibit a strong desire for community, national pride and the protections extended by the state (primarily in the labour market), but what they do not yearn for are aggression, war or conflicts – all the concepts, in other words, that we often identify with nationalism.

Thus far Hungarian progressives have not put an emphasis on the values of nationalism/patriotism and have instead – in part quite rightly – identified them as one of the main causes of the historical tragedies of the 20th century. But there are numerous examples of "inclusive nationalism", "liberal nationalism" and "patriotism", especially in northern Europe – Sweden, Denmark and Scotland, for example – and the United States.[14] In times prior, progressive movements would often invoke national solidarity in the name of social justice, emphasising that national unity and national awakening require burden-sharing and sacrifices, progressive taxation and an appreciation of workers. *Paying taxes, striving to reduce social inequalities and improving the situation of the underprivileged: that's genuinely patriotic behaviour* – as supporters of inclusive nationalism say.

National sentiment could also include our obligation to protect and support all members of our community – pre-eminently the weakest and poorest among them. One could subsume decidedly progressive values and accomplishments under the heading of national pride: social equality, tolerance and the willingness of the community's members to mutually support one another. Inclusive nationalism could build on the notion that it is fighting to forge a national community in which all the people living therein feel at home.

14 For further details about these, see the following sources among others: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/04/25/how-nationalism-can-support-or-divide-democracies/ https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2018/06/global-far-right-rises-snp-offering-inclusive-nationalism https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/08/nationalism-positive-case-immigration-counter-narrative-nhs https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/2/8/16982036/nationalism-patriotism-left-right-trump-democrats-solidarity https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/a-patriotic-left https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/03/opinion/sunday/liberals-reclaim-nationalism.

Inclusive nationalism could draw on the democratic values jointly professed by the nation rather than building on some narrower community and the enemies of that community. The reference to national solidarity thus breaks with class-based mobilisation – which are no longer relevant today –, internationalism and identity-based politics, and reclaims the concept of "nation" that has been expropriated by the right, strengthening the sense of unity without forgoing either solidarity or justice as values to be pursued.

By promoting the value of inclusive nationalism, the progressive left would partly pursue an "adopt strategy", for it would build on the national rhetoric of populists, abandon the class-based or internationalist approaches. Nevertheless – as we explained above – this would not at all imply a full identification with the concept of nationalism as it is understood by populists but would instead proffer a reinterpretation of the concept.

Bibliography

T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Stromback, C. De Vreese (eds): *Populist Political Communication in Europe*, Routledge, 2017

T. Bale, Ch. Green-Pedersen, A. Krouwel, K. R. Luther, N. Sitter: *If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them*, In: Political Studies, VOL 58, 410–426, 2010

A. Bíró-Nagy and T. Boros: *Jobbik going mainstream. Strategy shift of the far-right in Hungary*, In: Jamin, Jerome (ed.): L'extreme droite en Europe. Bruylant, 2016

T. Boros and G. Győri: *Populism Report – April-June 2018*, FEPS and Policy Solutions, 2018, www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/289/populism_report_q2_2018.pdf

T. Boros – G. Laki: *A Political Guide to Hungary*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Policy Solutions, 2018

S. Gherghina, S. Mişcoiu and S. Soare (eds): *Contemporary Populism: A Controversial Concept and Its Diverse Forms*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013

E. Laclau: *On Populist Reason*, Verso, 2007

J. Lukacs: *Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred*, Yale University Press, 2006

C. Mudde: *On Extremism and Democracy in Europe*, Routledge, 2016

C. Mudde: *The Populist Radical Right*, Routledge, 2016

J-W. Muller: *What is Populism?,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016

J. S. Murrer: *The Rise of Jobbik, Populism, and the Symbolic Politics of Illiberalism in Contemporary Hungary*, The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs, 2015, no. 2

D. Róna: *A Jobbik-jelenség*, Könyv&Kávé, 2016

E. Stetter, T. Boros, M Freitas (eds): *The State of Populism in Europe*, 2017, FEPS and Policy Solutions, 2018

R. Wodak, B. Mral and M. KhosraviNik (eds): *Right-wing Populism in Europe*, Bloomsburry, 2013

R. Wodak: *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015.

PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS TO POPULISM IN GERMANY

Johannes HILLJE, on behalf of Das Progressive Zentrum

Introduction

28 October 2018 was a historic day for the **Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)**. On that day, the right-wing populist party entered the parliament of the federal state of Hesse, which was, until then, the last state parliament where the party was not represented. Even the well-established Liberal party (FDP), the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and the Left party (Die Linke) do not hold seats in all the sixteen state parliaments, which have considerable powers in the federal political system of Germany. Only five years after its foundation, the AfD is represented in the national parliament (Bundestag), all state parliaments and the European Parliament. Yet it has not entered the national or any regional government until today. Although the speed of the rise of the AfD is astonishing, Germany has been described as *unusual among Western democracies*[15] regarding the strength of far-right parties. That is mainly because the electoral successes of Germany's far-right parties have been very

15 K. Arzheimer: *The AfD: Finally a Successful Right-Wing Populist Eurosceptic Party for Germany*? In: West European Politics 38, 2015

modest and confined to the regional level until 2013. Moreover, a pronounced euroskeptical stance – a key programmatic feature of most right-wing populist parties in Europe – had never been taken by any relevant German party in the past and was therefore never a driver for electoral success. Today, German exceptionalism is over. After missing the five percent threshold in the 2013 federal elections by only 0.1%, the AfD entered the Bundestag as third largest group by gaining 12.6% on 24 September 2017.

The AfD in the German Political System

For the first time in post-war Germany, a new party is about to establish itself nationwide at the far-right end of the political spectrum. The short history of the party can be described as a constant move to the right. The AfD was founded in 2013 in clear opposition to the eurozone bailout programmes. The party's first leader was the liberal-conservative Bernd Lucke, an economics professor from Hamburg, who already left the AfD in 2015 because of increasing *xenophobic and Islamophobic* tendencies, as he explained. Shortly before leaving the party, Lucke had already lost a vote on the party's leadership against Frauke Petry, who shifted the main focus of the party from anti-Euro to anti-migration. Due to the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants, the migration issue became very salient from September 2015 on. In early 2016, the AfD achieved several electoral breakthroughs in regional elections. In the run-up to the federal elections in 2017, the party faced further infightings between "moderate" and "extremist" members. Most of these internal conflicts ended in favour of the radical wing, which resulted also in the defeat of Frauke Petry over the leadership. Eventually, Alice Weidel

and Alexander Gauland represented the two wings of the party as lead candidates in the 2017 elections to the Bundestag. The current party's manifesto is in many points similar to other European right-wing populist parties. A key aspect is their anti-establishment view and the claim to know and represent the "true will" of the people. The party calls for more direct democracy ("Swiss model"), positions itself as clearly anti-migration, anti-Islam, anti-Euro and stands for deeply conservative education and family policies (e.g. opposing same-sex marriage). Regarding social policies, the party is divided between a social-nationalist and a more liberal-conservative camp. For several policy areas, the party has no concrete proposals yet.

After decades of stability, the German political system became more fragmented with the rise of the AfD. The two main parties, CDU/CSU and SPD faced major losses in the last federal election. However, as Mudde noted, the *election result mainly shows de-alignment from the mainstream parties, rather than re-alignment to AfD*.[16] Two-thirds of AfD voters in 2017 voted not in support of the AfD, but in protest against the other parties[17]. Therefore, it remains to be seen if the other parties will manage to win back voters from the AfD or if these voters will stay with the populists in the long term. It can be argued that the AfD's fate lies to large extent in the hand of the traditional parties and their ability to regain the trust of protest voters. Today, it is still too early to predict whether the other parties might succeed in pushing the AfD back, as the CDU and SPD are still in the midst of internal renewal processes. However, two recent

16 C. Mudde: *What the stunning success of AfD means for Germany and Europe*, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/24/germany-elections-afd-europe-immigration-merkel-radical-right, 2017
17 Infratest Dimap: *Wahlreport Bundestagswahl*, https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/wahlreport-deutschland/2017/, 2017

developments are noteworthy regarding the reaction of the non-populist parties to the AfD: In the Bavarian state election in October 2018, the ruling CSU (sister party of the CDU) put a strong focus in their campaign on migration and asylum by turning towards a more radical agenda and rhetoric. They tried to copy the AfD. However, the CSU failed with this strategy, as they received one of their worst results in history. On the other hand, the Green party won a historic victory by profiling themselves as the "anti-populist party" with a pro-migration and pro-European agenda.

The Electorate of the AfD

Survey Data

Against conventional wisdom, the AfD is neither a sole phenomenon of Eastern Germany (the former GDR) nor is it the party of the economically deprived. In fact, there is no such thing as "the typical AfD voter" with regard to residence, age, education, employment or income. Nevertheless, the AfD performs relatively stronger in Eastern Germany compared to the western part of the country: In the 2017 federal elections, the party won twice as much of the vote share in the East (21.9%) as in the West (10.7%). However, in some economically well performing Western German cities such as Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg (16.4%), the AfD scored almost as high as their average results in the country's East. With regard to gender, there is a considerable gap in the electorate of the AfD: While 16.3% of the German male electorate opted for the AfD, only 9.2% of female voters did so – almost two-thirds of AfD voters are men. In terms of age groups, the party performs best amongst voters between 35 and 44 years (16%) and less successful amongst young

voters between 18 and 24 years (10%) or older voters over 70 years.[18] On the level of the social structure of AfD voters, the picture is not very clear: for instance, a high unemployment rate in a certain region does not automatically lead to a high vote share of the AfD. Manual workers and unemployed are overrepresented among AfD voters compared to the whole electorate, but employees, civil servants and self-employed make up three-quarters of the AfD electorate. The majority of AfD voters hold a secondary school diploma. The picture becomes a bit clearer, if we consider the attitudes and values of voters. Studies have found two factors that account for AfD support:[19] First, the so-called "economic insecurity-hypothesis" postulates that support for the AfD is stronger the more voters are subjected to economic insecurities such as low average income, feelings of unhappiness about the private financial situation or job satisfaction. Second, the so-called "cultural backlash-hypothesis" states that the more voters feel culturally threatened by members of ethnic outgroups such as immigrants or refugees the stronger they tend to support the right-wing populist party. In a nutshell: two important drivers of voting for the AfD are economic and cultural fears.

Focus Groups

Quantitative survey data is well suited to identify sociodemographic characters of AfD voters and their attitudes on certain issues, but it cannot deliver a deeper understanding of their values, beliefs, attitudes and interpretative patterns. However, this deeper

18 Infratest Dimap: *Wahlreport Bundestagswahl*, https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/wahlreport-deutschland/2017/, 2017
19 See: D. Baron: *Who Identifies with the AfD? Explorative Analyses in Longitudinal Perspective*, SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research at DIW Berlin, https://www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=diw_01.c.601392.de, 2018

knowledge is key to develop counter strategies against the rise of right-wing populism. Therefore, we conducted three focus groups discussions in October 2018, each of them with six AfD voters from different age groups and with a range of educative and employment backgrounds. The following sections present the results of these focus groups discussions on values, attitudes towards globalisation and other major changes as well as identity and trust in institutions.

Values of AfD voters

The discussion on values in the focus groups addressed both the values of the participants as well the values they would ascribe to the AfD and other parties, notably the SPD. The participants were asked to position themselves between two values that were presented to them. The AfD voters opted neither for "change" nor "stability" alone but expressed their preference *for change to achieve stability*. Having negative expectations for the future, be it economically, socially or culturally, the status quo does not provide the stability that they are looking for. Also "freedom" and "security" are two values that depend on each other, according to the participants. Personal freedoms are important to them, but they can only be enjoyed in a safe environment, which should be provided by the state. A similar relationship can be identified between the values "community" and "individualism". The AfD voters appreciate both individual opportunities and the community but see the community as the framework in which an individual can act. Moreover, they prefer an "equal society" rather than a "rich society" in which some people could fall through the net. Between "globalisation" and "nation state", the participants expressed a tendency towards globalisation but based on nation states.

In a second step, we examined how AfD voters ascribe different values to the AfD and to the SPD. For the AfD, the participants expressed that this party could deliver the change that is needed to achieve stability. The party is clearly seen as a defender of the nation-state and it stands, in the eyes of the participants, for security. They also believe that the AfD promotes a sense of community within the country and they like the party for being more democratic that other parties. The views of the AfD voters on the SPD are in stark contrast to this: in general, the Social Democrats are described as having no profile, no credibility, no connection to the people (anymore) and no good leaders ("puppets"). Regarding the party's values, the SPD is seen as a party that supports globalisation and the participants associate especially the downsides of it with the party, like increased competition amongst workers. According to the AfD voters, the SPD neither stands for security nor freedom and it does not promote a sense of community within society.

The changes of our times

As mentioned above, AfD voters have in common that they have negative expectations for the future. However, these negative prospects are grounded in different reasons. Part of the focus group discussion focussed therefore on the question of the major changes in current times. The participants pointed out that a decline in security is a key characteristic of today's world. This decline in security has been described in two ways: First, in relation to their work, meaning decreasing job security, worse working conditions and therefore increasing economic stress and pressure at the work place. Second, a rise in crimes and a loss of the sense of security on the streets. Besides these vanishing certainties, the AfD voters have the impression that injustice has increased in Germany. Here they referred to increasing inequality

between the rich and poor on the one hand, but on the other also to the perception that migrants receive a special treatment from the state (e.g. social benefits) compared to non-migrants and citizens that have been living in the country for longer. The AfD voters feel that freedom of speech is being restricted, because criticism on the government's migration and asylum policy could not be articulated without rebuked (*left-green opinion dictatorship* as one participant claimed). Finally, voters also have the impression that solidarity among people is shrinking. People became more self-centred and would treat each-others less respectfully, especially in public places such as public transport. In sum, all changes that have been described by the participants, are negative and lead to a climate of insecurity, perceived injustice and declining solidarity.

Globalisation and Identity

In previous studies, AfD voters have been called "losers of modernisation" or "globalisation sceptics". Our focus groups discussions reveal a different viewpoint of AfD voters on the phenomena summarised under the term "globalisation". For the participants, globalisation (and Europeanisation is seen as one way of it) is not in general something negative. They see and experience the benefits of free movement, more and cheaper travel opportunities or products from around the world. However, the AfD voters think that the benefits of the globalisation are highly unequally distributed. In their view, large corporations rule the globalised world, national governments become increasingly powerless and the average worker suffers from more competition in increasingly globalised labour markets. The participants also see a negative impact of globalisation on local cultures and identities. Globalisation is perceived as a process that erases the specificities of different cultures and replaces them by one homogenous "global culture". As an example for this, participants

spoke about the big global brands and shopping chains *that can be found nowadays in almost every corner of the world. Local brands and little shops have been ousted by those international corporations*, which is perceived as a loss of local culture by the AfD voters. Not only the appearance of shops in their local environment changes, but also that English becomes more and more the dominant language. As result, the participants feel that identity is taken away from them and sacrificed for the economic logic of globalisation. In terms of their own social identity, they feel closely connected to their own city, but they also feel as Germans and Europeans. They want to preserve their own identity and culture, but they do not reject other cultures. In fact, they prefer diversity over uniformity in a globalised world. In a nutshell, the AfD voters do see the benefits of the economic globalisation, but also the social imbalance and they oppose the cultural globalisation.

Trust in institutions

Since the AfD voters perceive a decline in justice and domestic security, it is a relevant question how they evaluate the role of those institutions that are in charge of providing security and justice. The participants expressed a strong distrust towards the police and the courts. This distrust is mainly based on a perceived loss of control by the police regarding crime and violence committed by migrants. According to the AfD voters, the police as well as the courts are not tough enough on criminal migrants. These institutions would even make the situation worse (*like firemen who play with fire* as one participant puts it), for example by punishing other citizens harder for smaller crimes. However, the AfD voters have the least trust in politicians. In their view, politicians are unable and unwilling to stop the negative developments in their country. In particular, they see politicians as very immoral and untrustworthy persons. They are seen to be

corrupt, to break laws, act only in their self-interest and lost the connection to the people. This pessimistic view on the established political actors creates rage, fear and disenchantment. It is also one of the main reasons why these voters have turned away from the established parties.

Proposals for progressive strategies against right-wing populism

AfD voters have voted for a range of parties before a right-wing populist party appeared on the ballot paper in Germany. A progressive strategy for regaining trust of populist voters can only be effective if it specifically addresses the needs of those AfD voters who voted for centre-left parties in the past. As in any election campaign, there is only a certain part of the electorate that is convincible by a given party. Therefore, the following five proposals aim to address the results of the focus groups discussions based on progressive values.

1 Reviving the progressive brand: Be the agents of change

The results of the focus groups show on the hand that the SPD lacks a clear profile, but on the other that it is also associated with *negative change*s in society. In other words, people do not trust the SPD to change their lives for the better, also because they do not know what the party stands for. This is not primarily a problem of the party's manifesto, but of communication and ultimately of the party's brand. Essentially, a brand is a form of symbolic capital, it can be also thought of as a psychological representation of the party. The brand includes a set of ideas and emotions

that the public associates with the party. If the SPD is currently associated with negative change, it needs to be rebranded to *the agents of good change*. This requires: first, a clear definition of what is actually changing in today's world (e.g. climate change, digitisation of working places and society, globalisation). Second, a clear progressive vision in which direction the change should be steered. Third, a set of clear policy proposals on how the change can be managed and directed towards the desired goals. Fourth, an effective communication strategy that enables the party to set the agenda and frame those issues in a progressive way. Fifth, credible and charismatic leaders that are seen as trustworthy *agents of change*.

2 Reconnecting with people: Political co-working spaces at the local level

One important reason why traditional parties lost trust is that many people feel that these parties have lost the connection to the life of the average citizen.[20] It was also mentioned in the focus group discussions that *the SPD used to be like family*, but that this sense of community and caring has been lost. All this is directly related to the presence of a party in the people's local environment. Perceptions about a politician or a party can be shaped most effectively through direct face-to-face contact. A new strategy for the local presence of progressive parties is therefore recommended. The old model of local party bureaus, where citizens can pick up a leaflet or meet a politician during "consultation hours" once in a while, can apparently not bridge

20 J. Hillje: *Return to the Politically Abandoned*, Das Progressive Zentrum, https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en, 2018

the perceived gap between party and people. The SPD should think about a new model for local presences. This new approach could involve rebuilding traditional party offices into "political co-working spaces", which can be thought of as open spaces for citizens, where they find an infrastructure (meetings rooms, internet access, etc.) to work together on solutions for local issues or where they party organises political, cultural and social events. In these political co-working spaces, local issues instead of party issues would be at the centre. Also, individual citizens could be supported in their personal development by offering help for writing job applications or advise on education, housing, social benefits or other important topics. Solutions to problems of the community as well as the direct exchange among the citizens and the citizens and the party would be at core mission of these new party spaces. They would strengthen the local community and the connection of citizens to the party.

Naturally, such a space for citizens require that people proactively visit the place. This might be a hurdle especially for those who are deeply disappointed by the party. New local presences should be therefore combined with regular "door-to-door" outreach campaigns in relevant neighbourhoods. Canvassing is most effective in the long term, when it is not only done as a "knock out the vote" exercise before elections, but on a regular basis. In between elections, parties and politicians can visit the people with a "listing approach" instead of conveying certain electoral messages. Asking questions would help to understand better the people's needs, hopes and fears. In addition, this can be a useful way to collect contacts of people and reach out to them on digital channels afterwards.

3 Reframing the migration debate: Internal solidarity as a precondition for external solidarity

Apart from questions around humanity and culture, the issue of migration involves an important social dimension. In the focus group discussions, people expressed their perception that migrants receive a special treatment from the state, while they themselves have been told for many years that the state cannot do more for them. As a result, this sentiment of being underprivileged is turned against those who are allegedly overprivileged (migrants). It is a core concern for any progressive party that people who need of support from the state are not played out against each other. To avoid social tensions when a country takes in larger numbers of refugees or migrants, fears about social exclusion among the resident population need to be addressed beforehand. In other words, internal solidarity is a precondition for external solidarity. Focusing on social security and social justice is one element for reframing the migration debate. Another element is to speak about managing migration, but even more about implementing integration. Bad integration policies are a source for social and cultural tensions, but also for a rising number of crimes. Granting migrants faster access to work and education, promoting direct contact between new migrants and the resident population and creating a better cultural understanding on both sides are important ways to support integration and thereby increasing social cohesion. Nevertheless, apart from promoting integration, migration needs to be managed. The trust in institutions is also in decline, because people have the impression that the state lost the control over migration. Institutions that deal with asylum procedures, but also those who are supposed to guarantee internal security must be provided with adequate resources. Only a well-resourced state can manage migration and support integration.

4 Reshaping globalisation: The globalisation of social security

The focus groups discussions showed that people do not oppose globalisation in general, but they criticise that the benefits are unequally distributed. While corporations are benefiting from increasing competition amongst states on local factors such as corporate taxes, workers' rights, environmental standards or infrastructure, employees find themselves in a global competition with other employees, which leads to a feeling of social insecurity and fears for the future. The populists play exactly on these fears and promise more social security through a nationalist economic agenda. However, voters do not necessarily buy the argument that economic nationalism can secure the wealth that has been achieved by free trade. Nonetheless, as long as people fear about their future and that of their children, they might still follow the populist temptation. Therefore, progressive parties should consider that after a long period of globalising economic freedoms, there should be a phase of globalising social securities. Good starting points for that are both the social and the trade policies of the European Union. Harmonising minimum social standards (e.g. minimum wages, unemployment benefits) can stop social dumping and decrease the competition among workers within the EU's single market. Integrating strong social standards in the EU's trade agreements can promote fair working conditions and labour rights on a global level. A new phase of globalisation should not only put social standards first, but also environmental and democratic ones. Fighting climate change is a means to rescue the planet, but it is also a matter of social justice,

as climate change puts the poorest people most at risk.[21] For European progressive parties, the EU is the best level to address these global challenges in a joint effort. Europe should be seen and promoted as the shelter from the insecurities and dangers deriving from globalisation, free trade and climate change. This requires more common action within the EU, particularly in the areas of taxation, social policy and climate.

5 Rethinking identity: Bridging local, national and European identities

It is one of the popular explanations for the decline of the left and the rise of the right that left parties have focussed too much on identity politics in the past. The main argument is that left parties have been obsessed with a morally charged agenda on racial, gender and sexual identity and neglected the core social and economic challenges of their core electorate.[22] The results of the focus group discussions do not confirm this claim. According to them, the main failure of the progressives is to *have done too little against the dominance of corporate interests*, but not to have done too much for empowering cultural, religious or sexual minorities. The notion that strengthening the position of minorities will weakening that of the majority, which seems to be behind some of the arguments against the so called "left identity politics", is very much at odds with the core progressive value of equality. Instead of debating identity politics by playing off different groups against each other, progressives should clearly promote the idea of identity and equality. Equal opportunities can only be

21 M. Wolf: *Why climate change puts the poorest most at risk*, *Financial Times*, https://www.ft.com/content/f350020e-b206-11e7-a398-73d59db9e399, 2017
22 M. Lilla: *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*, Harper, 2017

guaranteed if we avoid any hierarchy of identities and attribute the same value to all different identities.

The core concern for progressive parties around the issue of identity should be another one: The participants of the focus groups were concerned with the fact that local identities are merging into a single "global identity" in the context of globalisation. This loss of local identity was mainly explained by the replacement of local shops by global chains. It should be an important mission for progressives to support local business, for instance by protecting them against unfair competition through tax dumping of international corporations. However, identity should be seen as in only dimension. The Eurobarometer surveys show that most European citizens feel attached to their region, their nation, but also to Europe.[23] Identity can be therefore thought of like an onion with different layers. It is up to progressives to attribute specifics meanings to these different layers of identity: The region is where people feel at home, the nation is what people identity culturally with and Europe as their best protection against the negative implications of globalisation.

23 European Commission: Eurobarometer Interactive, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/41/groupKy/206, 2018

Bibliography

K. Arzheimer: *The AfD: Finally a Successful Right-Wing Populist Eurosceptic Party for Germany?* In: West European Politics 38, 2015

D. Baron: *Who Identifies with the AfD? Explorative Analyses in Longitudinal Perspective*, SOEPpapers on Multidisciplinary Panel Data Research at DIW Berlin, https://www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=diw_01.c.601392.de, 2018

European Commission: Eurobarometer Interactive, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/41/groupKy/206, 2018

J. Hillje: *Return to the Politically Abandoned*, Das Progressive Zentrum, https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/politically-abandoned/?lang=en, 2018

Infratest Dimap: *Wahlreport Bundestagswahl*, https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/wahlreport-deutschland/2017/, 2017

M. Lilla: *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*, Harper, 2017

C. Mudde: *What the stunning success of AfD means for Germany and Europe*, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/24/germany-elections-afd-europe-immigration-merkel-radical-right, 2017

M. Wolf: *Why climate change puts the poorest most at risk, Financial Times*, https://www.ft.com/content/f350020e-b206-11e7-a398-73d59db9e399, 2017

PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS TO POPULISM IN FRANCE

Chloé MORIN, on behalf of Fondation Jean-Jaurès

Introduction

In many countries, the term populism is used with so many different significations that its very definition has become, as Ernesto Laclau said[24], quite elusive. France is no exception to this rule. The term – a negatively connoted derivative of the noble term "populus" or "people" – is often used to discredit political movements considered as outside the boundaries of political correctness, and even some apply it to the French President Emmanuel Macron as well as to the leader of the main center-right Republicans party, Laurent Wauquiez. It is quite interesting to note that some acts currently denounced as "populist" – criticising the media, proposing a referendum etc – have already been widely used in the past, even by figures that have hugely influenced contemporary French politics, such as General De Gaulle, founder of the Fifth Republic. Adding to the confusion surrounding the term populism, some political leaders such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of **La France insoumise** (France Unbowed, LFI), inspired by and following much of Chantal Mouffe's idea of a "left-wing

24 E. Laclau, *La raison populiste*, Seuil, 2008.

populism", openly claim the term, to reverse the stigma and make it a sign of his belonging to "the people" and his ambition to work "for the people".

The polysemy – or "elasticity" as Rioux[25] says – of the term populism is something most French intellectuals agree on. Its definition fluctuates. Some even go as far as saying that populism does not exist in French political culture. For Annie Collovald, the term of populism has been used more and more from the 1980s onwards in France as a synonym for demagogy or for political opportunism. According to her, the term tells more about who uses it than about those it designates. She establishes a link between the growing disconnection of the main political parties from popular classes, and their increasing use of the term populism – it could be an easy way to disqualify those who try to take popular classes into account. For some scholars, such as Catherine Colliot-Thélène, the term populism is even an obstacle to understanding the complexity of those political movements. Some, like Emmanuel Todd, defend the idea that the concept of populism is historically incompatible to the French political culture: It is not conceivable in the *country of 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871 and 1936* since these political revolutions have never sought to eliminate the Bourgeoisie elites.

However, some historians point out that France had populist episodes in the early 20th century – if we accept that, as said earlier, the term refers to very different ideologies, values, and electoral strategies. However, today's populists in France mainly take inspiration from populist movements abroad, such as Latin American movements, which are a constant reference of France Unbowed, or European movements like in Hungary or Italy, which

25 J-P. Rioux, *Les populisms*, Tempus, Perrin, 2007.

are examples for the **Rassemblement National** (National Rally, former Front National, FN).

For Michel Winock[26], there are common characteristics between the Front National today and early twentieth century populist movements: *it is a protest movement against the elites (...) mainly against énarques* [the elite formed by the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, which has formed a great part of France's politicians such as Hollande, or Macron], *intellectuals, politicians cut from popular reality*. In the case of the Front National, Winock speaks of a "national-populism" in the sense that it is also a movement centred on identity, nationality, protectionism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and combating the European Union.

Between the 1990s and early 2000s, the study of populism in France has often essentially focused on the rise of the far-right and its consequences. Indeed, according to Rioux[27], the term populism only came back in use in the 1980s, to describe the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front – called national-populism by Pierre-André Taguieff.[28] Moreover, the extreme left has long been contained below 10% in general elections, thanks to the dominance of a center-left party (the Socialist Party) that had succeeded in relegating it to the political fringes by using co-optation and isolation strategies alternatively. Therefore, according to Winock, populism has often been identified exclusively to the far-right in France. While left-wing populism, in France, was "ouvriériste" – fighting for the working class –, right-

26 M. Winock, (propos recueillis par Thomas Wieder), *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France*, Paris, Éditions Points, coll. "Histoire" (no H131), mai 2014, 4e éd. (1re-éd. 1982), 512 p.
27 J-P. Rioux, *Les populismes*, Tempus, Perrin, 2007.
28 P-A. Taguieff, *La rhétorique du national-populisme*, Mots, Oct. 9th. 1984.

wing populism (most often called extreme right in France) was populist without class distinction.

However, as noted by Eric Fassin[29], the interpretation of the rise of populism has shifted in recent years: It is not only seen as a racist reaction to mass migration and terrorism anymore, but also increasingly interpreted as a reaction to neoliberal policies, especially in Northern France (similarly to the US Rust Belt or the British Midlands). For Jacques Julliard[30], since the French revolution, an alliance between the masses and the Bourgeoisie, based on a shared idea of progress, had helped left-wing parties to win elections, and thus contained populist movements coming from the left. However, the recent crisis of the idea of progress has broken this alliance. The Bourgeoisie does not conceive its interests – being open to globalisation, mobility, multiculturalism – as aligned with those of the masses anymore. Thus, the masses' need for social and cultural protection has found a new and apparently better answer in populist movements.

Today, most scholars agree on the fact that *France Unbowed* (far-left) as well as *National Rally* (far-right) are the main French populist movements. For the first time in recent French history, they have both been very strong contenders in the 2017 presidential elections. Some minor movements such as Nicolas Dupont-Aignant's *Debout La France*, or former FN strategist Florian Philippot's *Les Patriotes* can also be considered as populists. However, they remain electorally marginal so far. Therefore, in this paper, we will focus on France Unbowed and

29 E. Fassin, *Populisme: le grand ressentiment*, Textuel, Coll. Petite Encyclopédie critique, 2017.
30 J. Julliard, *La gauche et le peuple*

National Rally, but one should always keep in mind that all French political movements have some populist characteristics – be it communications, ideas, political tactics or strategies.

Description of the main populist parties

Electoral history and overall importance to the country's political system

The Front National has been considered a major political force in French politics ever since its very unexpected result of over 10% in the 1984 European elections. However, till the 2002 presidential election Front National has remained electorally marginal – because the French electoral system for the national parliament has no proportional representation. Moreover, it is a party that has usually had quite bad results in local elections, and mainly performed in the presidential one (14.38% in 1988, 15% in 1995, 16.86% in 2002, 10.44% in 2007, 17.90% in 2012). The only exception to this rule was the 2014 European elections, where the FN became the "first party of France" with 24.86% of the votes.

The emergence of a left-wing populist party is a more recent phenomenon: In France, the left-wing populists – or far-left, as it was called then – have long been contained to the margins of the political spectrum ever since the fall of the Communist Party. Although, the Socialist Party had long dominated the left, the 2017 presidential elections were the first time since François Mitterrand that the Socialist Party was relegated behind another left-wing party (one exception: the 2008 European elections, where the Greens took the lead). Mélenchon, a former socialist himself, who has vowed to destroy his former party, has been able to attract a

substantial proportion of former socialist voters, without losing the more "extreme" left-wing supporters.

Electoral demographics

According to the pollster Ifop, Marine Le Pen was able to attract 14% of Nicolas Sarkozy's 2012 voters in 2017, 6% of François Bayrou's (a key centrist figure who rallied Macron during the 2017 campaign), and 7% of former president Hollande's voters. The electoral segments where she was strongest were mainly people of working age, and especially the lower-income brackets (30% of employees, 39% of manual workers, 32% of people without higher education). She had many supporters in rural areas (26% voted for her, while she got only 22% of urban vote, and 14% in the Paris area). Her support was particularly weak among upper classes (13%) and the elderly.

As for Jean-Luc Mélenchon, he attracted a substantial proportion of former socialist voters (26% of Hollande's 2012 voters), as well as centrists (12% of Bayrou's 2012 voters). He attracted 27% of the 18 to 34 years old, 25% of employees and manual workers, 23% of the public sector employees. Contrary to Marine Le Pen, he received the most votes in the Paris area (23%), while his vote was spread evenly in urban and rural areas (20%). He also attracted higher socio-economic segments (17% of middle- and high-income groups) than the FN did. One should note that Marine Le Pen's voters are characterised by their fidelity: In the first round of the presidential election, she won back 80% of her 2012 voters. Jean-Luc Mélenchon obtained 75% of his 2012 voters in 2017. In both cases, that's much more than all the other competitors: François Fillon was only able to keep 60% of Nicolas Sarkozy's 2012 voters, and 75% of the 2012 socialist voters did not vote for the socialist candidate Benoit Hamon.

Another element to consider is that while the population aged 65 and more represented around a quarter of Emmanuel Macron's and François Fillon's electorates, they accounted for only 13.3% of Mélenchon's total voters, and 15.3% of Le Pen's. This inability of both populist parties to attract the elderly has been their main political problem over the last decade. Already in 2012, the "grey vote" was considered a bulwark against the populist insurrection – mainly due to the economic risks linked to Marine Le Pen's program (which proposes leaving the euro-zone), and to Jean-Luc Mélenchon's anti-European and Keynesian (relying heavily on public spending) platform.

The Fall of the Socialist Party

In September 2017, the centre-left French Socialist Party took a very symbolic decision: after its resounding defeat in the last presidential and parliamentary elections, it announced it would have to sell off its historic headquarters. Situated on Rue de Solférino, a few hundred feet from the National Assembly and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, this building had been acquired by the party in 1980, one year before François Mitterrand became the first socialist President of the French Republic. This decision has been hotly debated in the – remaining – socialists' ranks and has become the symbol of the party's difficulties. How has this center-left party, which as recently as 2012 held most executive powers in the Régions and Départements, and had a majority in the Senate as well as the National Assembly (the higher and lower chamber of parliament, respectively), managed to lose everything in less than five years?

Of course, the reasons for the collapse of the Socialist Party are not only circumstantial. They can be traced as far back as 2002 – the defeat of Lionel Jospin, the outgoing prime minister, in the

presidential election, and the subsequent inability of the party to reinvent itself, adapt to globalisation and take the turn of the 21st century. The socialists fared better in local elections – regional, municipal, departmental – but their inability to accede to the presidency between 1995 and 2012 is a symptom of their growing disconnect with the popular and lower-middle classes, and their inability to hold to a clear political strategy, between "Pro-EU" and "Eurosceptics", fiscal responsibility and Keynesianism, openness and protectionism.

On top of these long-term trends, the decomposition of socialism has undergone a huge acceleration since the end of 2016. First, there was the decision of President François Hollande, the socialists' "natural candidate", not to seek another term. Burdened by an abyssal unpopularity, unable to bring his political family together and threatened by the ambitions of his ex-protégé Emmanuel Macron, the President thought preferable to let his successors defend his legacy and his party's ideas in the 2017 presidential election.

Finally, the socialist primary was won by Benoît Hamon, but on the election day at least 75% of socialist sympathisers did not vote for the socialist candidate, and almost 60% of François Hollande's 2012 first-round supporters voted for Emmanuel Macron. 42% of socialists voted for Emmanuel Macron, and 23% for left-wing populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon[31].

Although Benoit Hamon had emphasised the lack of support from his own party that he suffered during his campaign, and especially

31 http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2018/10/12/01002-20181012ARTFIG00354-au-ps-une-base-militante-de-plus-en-plus-etriquee.php

the treason of his ex-rival Manuel Valls (who called socialists to vote for Macron well ahead of the first round), it is not clear that this had any significant impact on Hamon's electoral performance. Polls show that most voters deserted him within 15 days after his victory in the primary – as he was centred on building an alliance with the marginal Green party instead of talking to voters –, and in the weeks following the first TV debate. To this day, Hamon – who left his party in July 2018 in order to create his own movement – still says that the lack of support within his party played a major role in explaining his humiliating 6% score.

Never has the French Socialist Party known such a spectacular downfall, in such a short period. The percentage of voters declaring themselves "sympathisers" of the *Parti socialiste* fell from around 16% in January 2017 to less than 10%. Eight months later – as of December 2018 – it remained at the same level.

Attitude of the populist voters

In order to identify the key drivers of populism in France, the pollster Ifop conducted three focus groups during the fall of 2018. It focused on:

- Supporters of left-wing populism (France insoumise)
- Supporters of national-populism (Front National)
- Voters shifting from the French Socialist Party to left-wing populism

The first result is that left-wing and right-wing populisms have similarities in terms of worldview, but they also have very clear differences, which makes it difficult to imagine an Italian-style populist coalition being formed one day in France.

Indeed, sympathisers of Mélenchon, those of Le Pen, or ex-socialists all underline the perceived limits of a capitalist system they think is dominated by the rich and powerful. All three groups talk especially of unfairness and rising inequalities, both in terms of access to services, of taxation, or in how the laws and rules are applied – *tough on the weakest, and weak with the most powerful*. Moreover, all groups share a common distrust towards politics and politicians, whom they perceive as disconnected, self-interested and careerist, and incapable of understanding the problems of common people.

All three groups feel that it is increasingly tough to live in the current French society, and that liberties – understood in the broad sense, as freedom to make choices, to speak, and to build one's own life without being burdened by rules, taxation, social determinism – are decreasing.

However, beyond those common trends, we do see very clear ideological differences across groups, and especially between left-wing populism and right-wing populism. While the Front National voters adhere to conspiracy theories, often blaming immigrants and Muslims for economic, cultural and physical insecurity, voters on the left hardly ever blame immigrants and Muslims, and prefer to mention economic liberalism, individualism, and the irresponsibility of the rich and powerful.

One should note that former Hollande voters and Mélenchon's current voters converge on almost every point: they blame economic globalisation, financialization, and stay relatively open to other people, cultures or religions. In this sense, left-wing populists are closer to the traditional left than to extreme right populists.

If we would split the three groups into two, with the Front National voters on one side and Mélenchon voters – former socialists or not – on the other, two very different visions of the world emerge:

- On the one hand, the FN voters have a strong demand for protection and express the temptation to return to a glorious past, preserve culture and values that they perceive as weakened by globalisation and immigration. On the other hand, Mélenchon's voters express a strong demand for sharing, solidarity, and openness.

- In the light of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice, there is a great tension between FN voters' need for security and their demand for more freedom (free speech against "politically correctness", freedom from taxation, rules and constraints). On the left, the tension is rather between their desire for freedom (in the sense of "being free to build one's life") and their everyday economic constraints (poverty, taxation, purchasing power, unemployment).

- While both groups express frustration because of these tensions, they do not blame the same groups at all: FN voters link this tension to the "threat" represented by Muslims/migrants (amalgamated in the

same group), while Mélenchon voters relate this tension to the cult of money, financialization, and unregulated liberalisation.

- In the FN case, the dynamic is clearly nativist, the desire of preserving their identity and re-establishing rules and boundaries. In case of left-wing populism, the dynamic relies on the desire to change the economic model/paradigm, in order to restore cohesion and a sense of common purpose. Cohesion and better relationships between people on the one side, order and protection from the outside world on the other side.

- Regarding solidarity, while both express the need for more social justice, FN voters blame "assistanat" (state-handouts given without conditions to migrants or underserving people, and not to natives – perceived as hard-working), while Mélenchon voters blame shareholders ("finance rules the world") and the powerful elite (Mélenchon has reintroduced the word "oligarchs" to talk about them). Thus, while FN voters distinguish "real" and "false" poor, Mélenchon voters think the main tension fracturing society is between the "ultra-rich" and the rest of the population.

- The EU is seen by FN voters as a threat to national sovereignty, although the temptation to leave is moderate compared to the UK. Mélenchon voters see the EU as an *empty, technocratic shell,* which does not listen to common people, and has lost sight of the values of its founding fathers.

Ideological differences between these two groups are numerous, but one prevails over all the others: the issue of identity. While FN voters are proud of their identity – their roots, history, their culture, their values, and sometimes even their ethnicity and religion – and often talk openly about it and about how they see foreigners as perverting this identity, left-wing populists tend to avoid the subject altogether, either because they are very open and conscious of being a small minority holding an open view of citizenship in the French population, or because they fear being amalgamated with the "racists" of the Front National.

For Front National voters, the Nation is extremely important, with its history, values and ancestors. A book by Philippe de Villiers, a controversial figure of the French right, dedicated to Clovis, the first king to unite all Frankish tribes into one kingdom in the 5th century, had a big success and illustrates this glorification of heroic figures. Sometimes, in this group, we find references to "*la terre*" (the land) and "*le sang*" (blood, thus purity). According to these voters, nationality or citizenship cannot and should not be easily acquired. However, France Unbowed voters too claim some national symbols like the flag or the French language, but they tend to refer to less emotional and controversial symbols. Their conception of nationality is clearly more inclusive, and indicates they are left-wing voters before being populists on this topic.

At the heart of the question of identity stands the immigration issue. Especially since the beginning of the "migration crisis" in Europe, immigration has functioned as a catalyser, enhancing the dynamics already in place and giving a new sense to formerly separated and apparently unconnected issues.

The FN voters see migration as the root-cause of economic, identity and security problems; their whole ideology is organised around this perceived threat. Migrants are a scapegoat to them, that provides an explanation to all problems – i.e. individual and collective decline. FN voters have no or very limited empathy for migrants; in order to be "more politically correct" they often claim they are favourable to helping them, but only in their countries of origin.

Mélenchon voters talk about migration mostly in moral terms and feel guilty because of the treatment received by migrants and refugees in France. Some are really angry towards the government's perceived inaction, and others are more nuanced, because they would like to welcome people but are convinced that France does not have the necessary resources to properly integrate them.

This clear division between left-wing and right-wing populism in France is supported by evidence gathered by IPSOS and Cevipof,[32] which shows that the ideological convergence and electoral porosity between France Unbowed and Front National voters are very limited. Indeed, only 7% of former Mélenchon voters in 2012 have voted for Marine Le Pen in 2017. Ideologically, the divergences are quite striking:

- Le Pen voters are clearly *declinists*, 47% think France is engaged in an irreversible decline, while Mélenchon voters refuse to think of the future in such depressing terms.

32 https://jean-jaures.org/blog/entre-france-insoumise-et-front-national-de-solides-divergences

- Le Pen voters declare being more and more inspired by the values of the past to conduct their life, while only half of Mélenchon's voters do so.

- Immigration and Islam appear as the most radical divergences between both groups:
  - Only 30% of LFI voters think there are too many immigrants in their country, while 95% of FN voters do.
  - 58% of LFI voters think Islam is compatible with the values of the French Republic, while only 9% or Le Pen voters' do.

- Groups also have different political cultures: FN voters have a much stronger demand for authority – 98% of them think France "needs a leader to restore order". 87% of them are in favour of restoring the death penalty – against only 18% of Mélenchon's voters. Also, their distrust of democracy is more pronounced: 55% of Front National voters think another governing system would be as good as democracy, while 25% of LFI voters share this opinion.

- They also have divergences in social and economic issues: While both groups think social protection and redistribution are a priority, 59% of France Unbowed sympathisers against 10% of Front National / National Rally sympathisers think "France should be more open to the world". 88% of LFI voters against 44% of FN voters want France to keep the Euro as its currency, and 59% of LFI voters against 17% of FN voters think being a member of the European Union is a good thing for France.

Strategies for the Progressives: how to deal with populism

Evidence collected for this analysis – both qualitative and quantitative – tend to indicate that, despite of what Mélenchon, Le Pen or Macron claim, the populist/progressist divide has not completely erased the right/left divide. Although current populist movements clearly have an advantage, and the dynamic is on their side, they mostly gain voters from the fringes or abstention, and not so much from the moderates supporting the former left-wing government (although Mélenchon had succeeded in attracting many socialists during the presidential election, his current scores in voting intentions for the European elections and his popularity scores tend to indicate that he has lost them, even though the Socialists have not been able to attract the back).

In terms of strategy, this is encouraging, because it prohibits – in the short term at least – the perspective of a "populists union", which would clearly form a majority. For Progressives, it shows there is still common ground between left-wing populists and centre-left moderates (or social democrats). The only question is whether this common ground enough to form a new ideological platform.

1 Developing a defensive strategy

The first conclusion to be drawn from this overview of the populist dynamics in France is that, for Progressives, trying to win over voters who currently opt for right-wing populists would be very difficult if not impossible in the short term. As demonstrated by Marine Le Pen's electoral scores, FN voters tend to be loyal to their camp, and even if they have doubts about Le Pen's leadership following her poor performance in the presidential debate against

Macron, they are not prepared to vote for Progressives, because they do not share their core values.

However, this does not mean that the proposals of right-wing populists should be ignored, especially when they intersect with the majority's priorities. Indeed, the issue of immigration and of security is not a priority for citizens on the left – they do not place it at the top of their voting motivations, unlike right-wing and extreme right voters –, but it does not mean these topics would be uninteresting for them. Clearly, immigration is an issue for left-wing voters in the sense that they are attached to social cohesion, and voters fear that failing to integrate new residents properly – socially and economically – leads to social tensions. Most of these voters are open, but not necessarily multicultural: they want migrants to integrate, have rights but also duties towards the community, speak French, and share the values of the French social pact (equality, freedom, *laïcité* – secularity –, fraternity).

Trying to disregard an important political issue was a massive error of Progressives at the end of the 90s: Under former prime minister Lionel Jospin's leadership, the feeling of insecurity was wrongly considered as a "sentiment" that did not correspond to any real insecurity. But since Jean-Marie Le Pen's accession to the second round of the presidential election in 2002, the Socialists have understood that neglecting a major issue (the "ignore" strategy towards populists) was not the right way to deal with it and have updated their policies and discourses accordingly. The immigration issue today leads Progressives to the same strategic hesitation: Should they hold to their values – openness, humanity – at the risk of losing voters or should they be more pragmatic, and borrow tough positions from the right, or should they avoid choosing between both options by ignoring the issue as much as possible? The pragmatic option was tested by Manuel Valls, who openly criticised the German chancellor

Angela Merkel's decision to open borders in 2015. But it led to a huge disillusion within his own majority and paved the way for Macron's rise – who seduced the left by holding a much more open discourse on immigration, at least in 2016 and early 2017.

In any case, immigration, insecurity, the place of Islam in society and the issue of "identity" are topics that are very important to most French people – even if they are secondary for left-wing voters –, and for the future of Progressives, finding a way to deal with them without simply copying the right's positions seems necessary. Progressives should be able to demonstrate that it is possible to "live together" peacefully and not only "next to each other" (communitarianism) or "against each other", and to show that to achieve social cohesion there is no need to ask immigrants to forget their roots and abandon their religion. The key is to demonstrate that, under some conditions – learning the language, sharing basic values –, it is possible for all to find their place in the French society, and there is no need to exclude any specific group.

Having a clear point of view on the matter won't attract new voters (and could therefore be considered more like a defensive strategy than a conquering one), because those who vote only according to immigration or security issues will always prefer tougher positions, but it can at least avoid pushing more people towards the right.

2 Focusing on shared values and priorities

The second conclusion to be drawn from this study is that Progressives have room for progression towards former socialists who have left for Mélenchon (or Macron) in the last presidential election. Common grounds – as underlined in the previous part of this chapter – still exists and should provide the basis for reconstructing a left-wing political platform.

In order to build a new dynamic, Progressives should therefore start from the preoccupations and values that are shared by all the voters on the left:

- The idea that the elites – administrations, political parties, top-level management in the private sector – do not understand common people, serve their own careers instead of serving the citizens, and that the "system" should be changed. This idea should, however, be taken with precaution: as Macron's case shows, you might win elections with this anti-elite concept – but by reinforcing the argument that "everything is rotten", in the long run you contribute to create a society that longs for strong leaders, and hence for populists.

- The need for more economic regulation, especially in the field of (international) finance, and protection, especially at work (work-life balance, burn-out, quality of work).

- The idea that France should welcome people who flee conflicts and violence in their countries, an idea which should be reinforced.

- The need for social justice, redistribution from the richest to the poorest, and tackling rising inequalities.

- Putting climate change at the heart of all policies, in order to organise a true paradigm shift in the economic and social domain (change the way we produce, consume, commute and live).

- Left-wing voters, populist or not, constitute the minority of French people who still believe progress – economic, social, technological – is still possible, that tomorrow can be better than today, and that appropriate policies could "*changer la vie*" (improve our lives as Mitterrand's slogan said in the 80s). They are not status quo or conservative voters.

3 Impose an agenda and develop a narrative

Ignoring is probably not the most appropriate strategy to deal with the populists, because it gives the impression that Progressives are disconnected from real life or despise common people. However, addressing the priorities of populists' voters should not be understood as copying populists' discourses or collaborating/co-opting them. Both right-wing and left-wing government parties have tried this to various degrees in the past and only Nicolas Sarkozy succeeded in attracting a substantial proportion of FN voters – and he did it only once, in 2007, and failed to reiterate the trick in his 2012 and 2015 campaigns. Other attempts have always failed and contributed in consolidating populist parties over the long term, by giving the impression that they were right before everyone else, providing them more credibility through borrowing their words and their solutions or helping them set the agenda by putting their arguments at the center of the public debate.

By "addressing" populists' – and especially left-wing populists' – issues and priorities, one should therefore understand that it does not mean copying them but finding a progressive way to deal with these issues.

Among the lessons French Socialists have drawn from their 2012-2016 experience in power[33], one stands out: Politicians should provide a comprehensive and attractive narrative, a compelling view of the world and a direction to where they want to lead the country. The lack of narrative made the impression that Socialists in power did not "change life" (Hollande's slogan, "*Le Changement, c'est maintenant!*" [Change, now!] was conceived as an echo to Mitterrand's "*Changer la vie*" ["Change life"]) as much as preserved the status quo. They seemed to try to keep public finances in order but at the cost of massive tax increases for the middle classes, and Hollande seemed to preserve the status quo in Europe, but at the expense of France and French people's interests.

This ability to create a clear, understandable and aspirational narrative goes hand in hand with the ability of setting their own agenda. Clearly, populists are currently driving the political and media agenda – on immigration, security, identity –, thus playing to their strengths (voters see them as more credible on those issues), while moderates from both sides are often forced to play defence. Therefore, in deploying their narrative, Progressives should develop tactics in order to impose their agenda, create debate and controversies around their own propositions, and hence emphasise their own strengths. Finances and financial regulations, for example, have not been at the heart of the debate or in the media since Hollande's famous "*Mon ennemi, c'est la finance*" (Finance is my enemy) speech during the 2012 campaign, while people's demand for regulation and social justice has never been higher than now.

33 A. Bergougnioux, G. Finchelstein, *Inventaire 2012-2017: retour sur un quinquennat "anormal",* Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2018. Link : https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/inventaire-2012-2017-retour-sur-un-quinquennat-anormal

The only example of a Socialists succeeding in setting their own agenda and tying public debate to their proposals, is Benoit Hamon during the Socialists' primaries in December 2017 and January 2018. By promoting a basic income, he put the issue of work, work-life balance, robotization and the future of work at center stage. It resonated with many people's fears and preoccupations, and helped him to appear new, innovative and close to the people, and ultimately to win the primaries. However, due to its technical inexactitude and its huge cost, the proposition became a burden during the campaign for the presidential elections: Most French people are worried about debt and deficits and did not see a practical way of putting a basic income in place in any near future.

Hamon's example should serve all Progressives, since it demonstrates that with enough innovation and by focusing on people's core priorities, it is possible to take back control of the public debate from the hands of the populists. However, it also shows that attempts to do so should not be at the cost of credibility, and especially not economic credibility, because the issue remains essential for center-left voters.

Bibliography

«Populisme, Contre-populisme», Actuel Marx, n°54, 2013

«Peuple, populaire, populisme», Hermès, n°42, 2005

«Les populismes», Politique et sociétés, vol.21 n°2, 2002

Cécile Alduy, Stéphane Wahnich, Marine Le Pen prise aux mots. Décryptage du nouveau discours frontiste, Paris, Seuil, 2015

Hans-Georg Betz, La droite populiste en Europe. Extrême et démocrate? Paris, Autrement-CEVIPOF, 2004

Hans-Georg Betz, Stefan Immerfall (eds), The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movments in Established Democracies, London, Macmillan, 1998

Pierre Birnbaum, Le peuple et les gros: genèse du populisme, Paris, Hachette, 2012

Laurent Bouvet, Le sens du peuple: la gauche, la démocratie, le populisme, Paris, Gallimard, 2012

Nathalie Brack, L'euroscepticisme au sein du parlement européen. Stratégies d'une opposition anti-système au cœur des institutions, Promoculture-Larcier, 2014

Margaret Canovan, Populism, London, Junctions books, 1981

Janine Chêne, Olivier Ihl, Éric Vial, Ghislain Waterlot, La tentation populiste au cœur de l'Europe, Paris, La Découverte, 2003

Catherine Colliot-Thélène, Florent Guénard (dir.), Peuples et populisme, Paris, PUF, 2014

Annie Collovald, Le populisme» du FN, un dangereux contresens, Bellecombes-en-Bauge, Ed. du Croquant, 2004

Christine Couvrat, Joseph Yvon Thériault (dir.), Les formes contemporaines du populisme, Montréal, Athéna, 2014

Pascal Delwit, Philippe Poirier (dir.), Extrême droite et pouvoir en Europe, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2007

Alexandre Dézé, populisme ou l'introuvable Cendrillon. Autour de quelques ouvrages récents», Revue française de science politique, 1/2004 (Vol. 54)

Francette Fines, De l'influence de la crise autrichienne sur l'avenir de l'Union européenne», in Cinquante ans de droit communautaire. Mélanges en hommage G. Isaac, Presses de l'université de Toulouse, 2004

Sergie Gherghina, Sergiu Mişcoiu, Sorina Soare (eds.), Contemporary Populism: a controversial concept and its diverse forms, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013

Paul Hainsworth (ed.), The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA, London, Pinter, 1994

Guy Hermet, Les populismes dans le monde, Paris, Fayard, 2001

Michael Kazin, The Populist Persuasion: An American History, New York, Basic Books, 1995

Hanspeter Kriesi, (et al), West European Politics in the Age of Globalization, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Hanspeter Kriesi, The Populist Challenge", in West European Politics, 37(2), 2014

Ernesto Laclau, La raison populiste, Paris, Seuil, 2008

Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, New-York, Doubleday and Co, 1960

Nonna Mayer, Ces français qui votent FN, Paris, Flammarion, 1999

Yves Mény, Yves Surel, Par le peuple, pour le peuple: le populisme et les démocraties, Paris, Fayard, 2000

Cas Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007

Henri Oberdorff, Libertés fondamentales et droits de l'homme, Paris, LGDJ, 2013

Henri Oberdorff, «Le respect des valeurs communes: Démocratie, Etat de droit et respect des droits de l›Homme», in Laurence Potvin-Solis (dir.), Le statut de l'Etat membre de l'Union européenne, Quatorzièmes journées Jean Monet, Caen, 27 novembre 2014

Norman Pollack, The Populist Mind, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967

Laurence Potvin-Solis (dir.), Les valeurs communes dans l'Union européenne, coll. Colloques Jean Monet, Bruylant, 2014

Pierre-André Taguieff, L'illusion populiste: de l'archaïque au médiatique, Paris, Berg International, 2002

Carlos de la Torre, Cynthia Arnson (eds), Latin America Populism in the 21st century, Washington / Baltimore, Woodrow Wilson Center Press / John Hopkins University Press, 2013

Jean-Pierre Rioux (dir.), Les populismes, Paris, Perrin, 2007

Franco Venturi, Les intellectuels, le peuple et la révolution: histoire du populisme russe au 19e siècle, Paris, Gallimard, 1972

Stéphane Vibert, Le populisme et les aléas de l'expression démocratique», in Christine Couvrat, Joseph-Yvon Thériault (dir.), Les formes contemporaines du populisme, Montréal, Athena, 2014

Ruth Wodak, Brigitte, Majid KhosraviNik (dir.), Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse, Londres / New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013

PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS TO POPULISM IN ITALY

Luigi TROIANI, on behalf of Fondazione Pietro Nenni

Introduction

The increasing number of voters opting for populist parties represents the main issue progressive forces currently have to cope with in Italian politics. In order to understand how to overcome the support they currently enjoy, it is important to analyse the roots and motivations of the Italian people's support to populists. This paper aims at providing a clear view of the situation and offering tools for appropriate initiatives for progressive forces against populism.

First, in a short historical background we explain the evolution of the Italian political system after the fall of the Berlin Wall, making clear how the old political parties disappeared from the political scene and how new forces and parties appeared and obtained popular support. Particularly the two parties that are currently in power, the **5 Star Movement (M5S)** and the **League (Lega)** are described in the following chapters: their nature, programs, behaviours, contradictions and limits. In that very context, the centre-left Democratic party's evolution is also recalled, to make clear its present strengths and weaknesses.

To better understand the motivations and the criticisms articulated by the voters of these parties, a focus group research was recently run by FEPS, Fondazione Pietro Nenni and Istituto Nicola Piepoli. The results of these focus groups were taken into account for the conclusion of the paper.

Suggestions for defeating populist forces are also offered at the end of the paper, in order to help elaborating a progressive agenda which, in the short term, may help to reinvigorate the Italian progressive forces at the upcoming election to the European Parliament. Four pillars for action are suggested: a change in language and behaviour in respect to the last Democratic Party governments; exploiting the internal contradictions in the present government coalition; adopting an e-strategy to counter the intellectual and financial investments the Italian populist forces did in the so-called digital democracy; and building a strategic progressive alliance within the civil society and the parliamentary assembly.

Historical background and current trends in Italian politics

With the end of the bipolar system, Italian politics ceased to be dominated by two opposing actors, Christian Democrats (DC) and Communists (PCI). The "Clean Hands" (*Mani pulite*, in Italian) operation implemented by a group of judges from Milan in 1992 had devastating effects on the political system. In the following elections, anti-system parties as Northern League and "Rete" (Net) party achieved a good result, but the traditional architecture of Italian politics collapsed. In April 1994, the entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi became President of the Council of Ministers, the

Italian equivalent to a prime minister. At the end of the year, however, his coalition partner the Northern League (Lega Nord) left the government after fresh leakings of the Milanese judges. In the succeeding snap elections, a centre-left government under Romano Prodi was elected, but the following period was characterised by Berlusconi and Prodi, and later other centre-left prime ministers at the helm of the country – until the elections in March 2018.

On 4 March 2018, Italian electorate ousted the Democratic Party (DP) from power, favouring two conflicting populist parties: M5S and Lega (the League, known before as Northern League). M5S became the strongest party with 32.68% of the votes (133 MPs in the Chamber of Deputies), and the Lega became the third party with 17.35% (73 MPs) – the DP however loses heavily with 18.76% (86 MPs) (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Italian Elections, March 2018, Seats in Parliament

Political Groups	Chamber of Deputies	Senate
M5S	222	109
League	125	58
Democratic Party	111	52
Forza Italia	105	61
Fratelli d'Italia	32	18
Mixed group	21	12
Free and Equal, LEU	14	-
Autonomies	-	8
Senators for life	-	2
Total	630	320

Source: Italian Parliament

DP and the Free and Equal group (LEU, Liberi e Uguali, the leftist fraction led by Massimo D'Alema and Pietro Grasso which had divorced from Democratic Party three months prior to the elections), were defeated. LEU has become politically irrelevant, the Democratic Party has kept suffering an increasing state of confusion and internal strife, which would probably last until the party's primary and congress scheduled to Spring 2019.

After the refusal of the DP to enter into a coalition with the M5S, the movement agreed to form a government with the League. Even though M5S has almost twice as many MPs as the League, the leader of the League, Matteo Salvini, refused that M5S leader Luigi Di Maio became prime minister and imposed a compromise candidate, which was finally found in the person of the politically unknown law professor Giuseppe Conte. When Giuseppe Conte's government sworn in, Italy became the first country in Western Europe to have a fully-fledged populist government with a solid majority in a democratically elected parliament.

What are the reasons Italian voters opted for M5S and the League?

One of the factors why Italian voters opted for populist parties is related to the personalisation of politics and a growing cult of the leaders. Both Berlusconi and Renzi were considered as charismatic leaders, however, when they lost credibility they were abandoned and substituted with other leaders using the same playbook of the charismatic leader.

The second factor was infighting in the left that produced continuous splits and diverging fractions, ruining the image of the parties in the view of the electorate: Prodi's government and Renzi's government, in particular, experienced how far the internal divisions in centre-left may go.

The third factor was the economic and financial crisis from 2008 on. In the public opinion the responsibility for the increasing social injustices and rising unemployment due to this crisis were attributed to the previously ruling class. The arrival of an unprecedented number of migrants and refugees to the Italian coasts also contributed to the widespread dissatisfaction with the previous government.

It is likely that citizens felt abandoned, even excluded, by the Democrats' government, also perceived by many as arrogant, distant, absorbed in the internal bickering, unable to understand the issues raised by the Italian society such as security, the rising poverty, the lack of stable jobs, the bleak perspectives for young people and the unpopular management of immigration[34]. Table 4 shows how the previous centre-left government coincided with a shift in Italians' sentiment of exclusion.

34 On the occasion of the meeting in Milan between Matteo Salvini and the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the newspaper *La Repubblica* interviewed the municipality's head of social policies, Pierfrancesco Majorino from the Democratic party. He declared: "The welcome of immigrants was very badly managed, the towns often remained alone, including the ones governed by us. This may have nurtured fear. Let's remember that with Salvini the fear is a political project built on grudge". In T. Testa, 27 August 2018, www.repubblica.it.

Table 4 – Italy, The growing of the sentiment of exclusion, in %

Year	Feeling Excluded	Feeling Included
2005	46	54
2007	49	51
2009	58	42
2012	64	36
2013	69	31
2014	73	27
2016	66	34
2017	68	32

Source, Elaboration from Risso, Formiche, and Swg, Sept. 2017

The apex of the phenomenon, during Renzi government in 2014, shows that only a quarter of the population felt integrated and included into the general economic and social context. Even though the exclusion grew as a consequence of the 2008 crisis, during Berlusconi's centre-right government, it was not stopped by the centre-left, notwithstanding the positive economic record of the first year in power of Matteo Renzi.

From another perspective, table 5 (see below) confirms this trend: During the years when centre-left parties were in power, the feeling of being able to influence their own future was decreasing massively. With the centre-left government, although it was expected, people did not recover from the deep sense of failure that had appeared in the wake of the 2008 crisis and during the "technical" government of Mario Monti.

Table 5 – The diminishing ability of influencing the future in Italy[35]

2005	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
51	44	31	31	34	30	26	25	28	28	26

Source: Swg

Among the general sense of insecurity, the special fear of losing job and salary spread through society in the decade 2008-2018. Table 6 shows that during the years of the centre-left governments, fear diminishes, but it remained high, touching two-thirds of citizens.

Table 6 – Italy, % of people fearing that a member of their family may lose job

1987	2003	2004	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2014	2015	2018
45	31	50	39	46	60	71	78	64	68	65

Source: Swg

These sentiments were exploited by the online platforms dominated or run by populists with a very aggressive and effective language. The dialogue through these networks became a fundamental tool to conquer a relevant part of the electorate and public opinion, acquiring an influence competing with that of the traditional media.

35 "Looking at your present, what margins of power in modifying your future you feel is in your hands?" The percentage indicates the felt margin.

The League

The Northern League party originated from the hostile reaction of certain districts in Northern Italy against internal migration: people coming from the southern regions of the country. It was also directed against a national fiscal policy that redistributed a substantial part of the taxes collected in the wealthiest northern regions to the poorer regions of the South. The Northern League had started operating in 1989 as an alliance of regional parties and in 1991 it became a unified party.

From the very beginning it showed five characteristics:

- **Chauvinism:** The party, born racist, invented myths of Celtic roots spiced with Pagan rites at the sources of the Po river and symbols of an unproved heritage from medieval municipalities' fight against imperial power. The abuse of history and myths was essential in order to build the pretence of a "Nation of the North", or "Padania" (after the name of the plain at the foot of the Alps). It was aimed to separate the North as an independent state from the so-called "under-people" of the other regions of Italy. Paradoxically, even though the party has transformed into a unified Italian nationalist party, to this day it still identifies in its statutes as "Northern League for the Independence of Padania".

- **Strong connection to the territory and high sense of militancy:** Both aspects attribute charisma to the leader, the closeness of the leaders to the militants, the deep involvement of local economic and entrepreneurial activities in the party life. The League

takes into the account the interests of businesses, especially those of the millions medium-sized enterprises and professionals which guarantee the economic sustainability of the northern regions where the party governs and has its historical roots[36].

- **Traditional mass party organisation:** The League has strong internal debates, electoral processes, mass meetings, daily newspaper (until 2014). As a result, changes in the leadership of the party kept occurring and a continuous evolution of the electoral platforms took place.

- **Pragmatism** (or cynicism): The League kept adopting strategies solely in order to increase electoral support. Topics as fiscal federalism, Padania's independence, the refusal of migrants from southern Italy etc. were progressively abandoned in favour of larger and more promising targets. In the past, the party's participation in regional and national governments showed the same "pragmatism" in alliances that leaned from the left through the centre to the right, even though, in most cases, the League advocated its conservative rightist stances. In the present government, under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, the party is mostly acting as a traditional nationalistic rightist force with a distinct attention to business interests, combined with an exasperated and ferocious opposition to immigration. Asylum seekers

36 See M. Charrel, *Italie: les petits patrons du Nord séduits par la Ligue*, Le Monde, 29 Mai 2018, p. 4

have replaced the internal southern Italian emigrants as the target of the racist chauvinism of the League. As the new League successfully increases the number of its supporters in the central and southern regions, it cannot target the southern Italians as scapegoats anymore.

- **EU and international alliances**: from ambivalence to "sovereign" activism: Having been essentially a local and provincial phenomenon, the League has never actively been neither pro EU nor against the EU. When assuming national responsibilities, however, dealing with EU affairs and international politics comes as an objective obligation. Taking advantage from the populist surge in the US and in other European countries, the present leadership also plays an active part in gathering the European populist forces ahead of the European elections of 2019. Matteo Salvini also proposes himself as the president of the next Commission, giving for granted that the EU's populist forces will rally together and win. An example of how far the League may go with its alternative approach to handle international relations is the refusal of Italy to attend the December 2018 U.N. conference in Marrakesh dealing with "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration", imposed to the prime minister by Matteo Salvini, notwithstanding the previous commitment of the Italian government.

Five Star Movement – M5S

The Five Star Movement was created in October 2009 by its charismatic leader, the comedian Beppe Grillo as a civic reaction of distrust towards the traditional Italian political class and its habits. The grand design of the movement came from Gianroberto Casaleggio, owner of an internet consulting company. The party started its operation by mobilising people on issues like environmental sustainability, degrowth, e-democracy, redistribution of wealth, anti-interventionism in wars, and fight against corruption. The movement is an active adherent to the theories of disintermediation and direct democracy, and features ideas like the imposition of social justice through state interventionism, the redistribution of incomes by decree as well as animosity against the elites and their alleged crimes.

During its less than a decade of existence, M5S has developed a series of distinctive characteristics:

Personalisation of leadership: Beppe Grillo and Davide Casaleggio (son of the late Gianroberto and heir of his firm) are the undisputed leaders of M5S, with Grillo as the "guarantor of the movement". In avoiding the term 'party', Five Star Movement escaped the rules any party is requested to follow in its relations to the public and the law. Grillo initiated this strategic choice, ratified by e-consultations through "Rousseau", Casaleggio's internet platform. The same e-consultation was used, for example, when Luigi Di Maio was nominated to lead the M5S in the 2018 electoral campaign and consequently become a minister (and vice-prime minister) in the Italian government.

Direct Democracy: The association M5S has no "physical" structure such as official address or phone number. It does not hold congresses or similar rituals of political parties' traditional liturgy. Any internal decisional process is handled via the Internet, where supporters and sympathisers convene. Davide Casaleggio even theorises the disappearance of the parliamentary representative democracy replaced by the "direct" and "shared" democracy, i.e. the expression of the people's will and wishes through the net. M5S favours the "digital participating citizenship" as the "cultural revolution" which will eliminate the "19th century model of organising politics".[37] In an interview in July 2018[38], Casaleggio calculated that parliaments will be obsolete and useless in 10-15 years.

The movement **does not perceive itself as an expression of a specific side** of the political spectrum, refusing the classical right and left categories. Instead, it pretends to carry the expectations of common and unprivileged citizens against the elite and their political allies which are identified with practically all the politicians and parties who had governed the country until now.

M5S has regularly **refused any electoral alliance**, pretending to be the only "pure" political movement to govern the country, unwilling to accept any "contamination" from others. The pretended purity and morality of the movement has taken a hit by the compromises the M5S has been forced to accept from his coalition partner, the League, on issues like personal security, immigrants' rights, extinctive prescription, cutting of pensions of MPs and senators, tax reforms, and infrastructure building. These compromises

37 Quotations from the Rousseau platform, extraction 2 September 2018.
38 M. Giordano, *Intervista a Davide Casaleggio*, in "La Verità", 23 July 2018.

have provoked resignations of members of parliament and splits amongst the supporters of the movement.

All in all, M5S appears to be the authentic "populist" actor in Italian politics, whereas the League looks more like a traditional far-right party, a well organised and structured one, with certain populist behaviours. While the League is strengthening its role as the guarantor of order and the "Italian will" against the "invasion" of the asylum seekers and EU's "interferences", M5S mostly deals with economic and social issues in favour of unemployed and pensioners and promotes laws against corruption and privileges.

In government, the two parties are in conflict on many issues, and in several occasions the League – which has recently overtaken the M5S in opinion polls – has been toying with possibility of ending the coalition with new elections as a consequence.

However, after 6 months in government, M5S and League continue to enjoy popular approval. According to Ipsos' Nando Pagnoncelli, 53% of the electorate still has a positive opinion of the government. The image of Matteo Salvini as an inflexible Minister of Interior against the asylum seekers has given his party a boost in the polls, while support for M5S is eroding at the same time.

Taking into account that a large segment of M5S' supporters is believed to share rightist opinions and considering that League, as of November 2018, has nearly doubled its support in the polls compared to the March elections, an important question should be raised: Are the progressive forces in need of a strategy to counter populism, or do they have to fight the upsurge of the traditional authoritarian nationalistic Italian far-right?

Results of the focus group researches

In order to understand the motivations of the Italian populist electorate, focus group researches have been conducted between September and October 2018 by the Istitute Nicola Piepoli in cooperation with FEPS. Voters of the M5S and the Lega were interviewed in Rome and Milan, respectively.

The first set of questions was focusing on the values motivating the voters. In the answers given by voters of the M5S and the League, the past appears as a value in itself. All the interviewees stated memories of better times before the year 2010, and also the '80s and '90s were remembered as a positive era, especially because the economic growth and the availability of jobs at that time. They underlined that before the crisis and the "impoverishment" of the country, no sense of fear was apparent. Today's politicians are perceived as pursuing their own benefits and personal profits. The sentence of a M5S' voter gives evidence to this position: *I am 43 years old, and now everything is different from the past. Politicians of the past were trained, now they only pursue their own interests*.

The present distress is also reflected in the strong assessment of the focus group participants to the word "change". This notion was unanimously seen as a positive category, and its antonyms were perceived with a negative connotation, especially by younger interviewees. However, technological innovations are considered as one of the most important causes of the current stressful feelings of the voters.

Among the M5S respondents, no reference has emerged to the environmental issues, despite the importance officially attributed to it by the movement.

Another part of the everyday fears of the voters comes from globalisation, and the effect it had on identity, especially on "national" identity. The interviewed expressed ambivalent opinions: Positive on one side, linked to notions like progress, evolution, mobility, exchange between different cultures, easier connections and new job opportunities. Negative on the other, because of the loss of national identity.

It must be added that the positions on "national identity" of M5S and League are different in terms of issues and intensity. The voters of the League express a strong negative opinion on globalisation. They stress that the fundamental component of national identity must be based on respect for the *res publica* and its properties. Also, they claim the importance of traditions and the community. According to them, both have gone lost during the process of globalisation.

As a consequence, the interviewees do not see globalisation as a win-win situation. For them, there are winners and losers in the economy and in the labour market: The losers are craftsmen, the middle and lower middle class, while the winners are the multinational companies that take over many local companies and brands, thanks to cheap loans and lower taxes.

Another controversial issue among Italian populist voters is immigration, considered as being the consequence of globalisation. In this regard, Lega voters emphasised immigrants' poor attitude to adapt to Italian culture and lifestyle.

Differently from previous generations, the youth is not ready to belong to any of political, social or idealistic group. Instead, they choose to join sports clubs and animal-rights groups and associations engaged in village or town promotion. Idealism has lost its driving force and attractiveness compared to the past.

Italian society is perceived as being less fair than in the previous decades, in terms of distribution of income and wealth. Both in Rome and Milan and among both the M5S and Lega's voters, there is an agreement on the "disappearance" of the middle class, because it has declined in terms of income, and hence more social groups are living below the poverty line than before.

When the focus of the discussion was changed to politics, certain differences between Lega voters and M5S voters appeared in the focus groups, for example on the promise of abolishing poverty through a basic income. A voter of the Lega said: *I was really disappointed when I heard we will abolish poverty! What does it mean? The basic income is a wonderful concept and fair, philosophically speaking, but it's pure fantasy for Italy. Only rich countries can do this*. Rather compassionate comments were made, however, by M5S voters*: I saw people sleeping in the car due to the lack of a house. And another one stressing: Those who are waiting for social housing are not only the homeless, but also merely poor Italians*. And a third M5S voter said: *You see the poor people today collecting oranges at night, whereas our children all have PlayStation*.

Another part of the interviews was focusing on "trust". Most participants claimed to be disappointed by politicians of the various parties and declared to have mainly chosen a logo rather than the individuals or politicians. Trust for politicians is proportional to their ability to show proximity to voters, which is a quality that only a few have.

There is more trust in local politicians who are considered being closer to the reality and the needs of citizens and who are often engaged "in the field" through local battles that are highly appreciated and supported by citizens.

This general distrust is not directed against politicians of the Lega and the M5S. However, a certain malaise has been expressed by M5S' voters, in relation to the alliance of their movement with the League of Matteo Salvini. Disappointed with the contradicting behaviour of their movement, some M5S voters accuse the DP of betraying its own left-wing origins to pursue the interests of the large groups, banks and markets.

The last question raised in the focus groups focused on the European Union. M5S voters looked at the EU as an opportunity, especially for young people. For them, the EU represents the possibility of understanding and connecting different realities, stories and cultures. They enjoy the single currency that boosts free movement and provides more job opportunities in other Member States of the European Union. At the same time, the EU is perceived as a burden, a liability, constraining Italy within the economic parameters dictated by "Brussels".

Proposals for progressive strategies

A progressive alternative to the present Italian government will necessarily be elaborated by the Democratic Party (DP), the only existing force in the Italian political spectrum leaning towards the Left, with support on the ground and social embeddedness. Taking this into consideration, both sort-term and medium-term strategies are needed.

In the *short term*, the DP has no possibility of removing the populists from power. Instead, the party should build the conditions for a serious and credible parliamentary and social opposition. This could partly be done by taking advantage of the internal strife in

the government and the extreme weakness of the prime minister. For instance, the measures[39] taken by the government to modify the "Jobs Act"[40] of the Renzi government and the modifications' effect on the labour market may give an opportunity to the opposition. Many economists forecast that these measures will reduce employment, reversing some positive impacts that the previous two centre-left governments had on the labour market.

Two factors may weaken the effectiveness of the DP's short-term strategy. The continuous and noisy internal divisions weaken the image and the actions of the party, giving the public the idea that DP does not have a single vision, and that it lacks leadership. In this respect, the DP Congress in the first months of 2019 may provide definite answers.

The *medium-term* strategy for the progressives should be based on **four pillars**: a) A change with respect to the last DP government both in style and content; b) The identification of the internal contradictions within the present government coalition; c) The adoption of an e-strategy to counter the huge intellectual and financial investments the Italian populist forces implemented in the so-called digital democracy; and d) Building a strategic alliance with the civil society and the with other parties in the parliament.

As for the **first pillar**, the Democrats need to convince part of its former electorate to "come back home" and vote for a progressive platform. Democrats and centre-left in general need to be identified

39 Law August 9, 2018, n. 96,
40 This expression identifies a group of laws and decrees of the Renzi's government, adopted in 2014 and 2015. They were controversial laws, badly received in political terms, even though its effects on the labour market are still matter of discussion.

with justice and equality, as the party of the "weak" and of the "underprivileged", as it has been the case for more than a century. Job creation and consequent wage rise have to be alternative to the distributed money promised by the Italian populism.

At the same time, the Democrats need to carefully asses their potential electorate. The populist movements succeeded in offering their voters an identity, most of the time based on rage, hate and vindication. While the M5S has built an identity against the elite, the League has built one against strangers, Africans and homosexuals. Progressive forces in Italy failed to offer their own identity, instead they focused on technocratic government activities in the field of macroeconomy (with a certain success, it must be said), unsuccessful institutional reforms, and civil right reforms mostly related to LGBT people. None of these measures were perceived as offering an identity to the core voters of the Left.

As for the **second pillar**, it is up to the Democrats to give evidence of the internal contradictions of the government and highlight, using an appropriate language, the demagogy of its actions, pointing to the enormous differences between the announcements and the implemented measures.

The Democratic Party needs to invest in communication technology, as a **third pillar**. In the field of online communication, Democrats should catch up with the populist competitors. This will not be an easy task because fundamental doubts about the "democracy of the web", especially in relation to principles like participation, validation, delegation and deliberation still subsist.[41]

41 On this subject, see J. Richardson John and J. Emerson, *eDemocracy: An Emerging Force for Change*, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 25 January 2018.

The **fourth pillar** is the need to start taking into account the Italian electoral system: The DP needs alliances in civil society and in the political spectrum to be back in government. In terms of alliances with other parties in the parliament, DP may be forced to choose between Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Beppe Grillo's M5S. It may be an awkward choice. While the League is consolidating its nature as a rightist party, leaning to business, traditional values and the tutelage of Northern industrial interests, M5S in a number of issues affecting social problems, corruption and law enforcement, shows positions apparently not far from those of the centre-left.

An alliance, however, could result in a Trojan horse action by the M5S, with the complete disappearance of the DP as a consequence. In this respect, the historian Sylvain Kahn's article in Le Monde[42] has eliminated any doubt on the fact that M5S has nothing to share with the traditions of the democratic socialism: *(...) le M5S n'est pas ancré à gauche. (...) Or le M5S est un mouvement populiste inclassable, dont le programme revendiqué 'ni de droite ni de gauche' emprunte à toutes les traditions idéologiques, y compris la démocratie directe, l'écologie et la xénophobie. Le M5S ressort autant du 'populisme d'exclusion' que du 'populisme social et égalitaire.*

At the eve of the European elections, it is likely that the Italian progressives will coalesce with anti-nationalistic ("anti *sovranista*") forces, appealing to those voters who wish the European Union's advancement and the slowdown of nationalist and chauvinist parties. From a pragmatic point of view, progressives are helped by the fact that the number of undecided voters and abstainers

42 S. Kahn, *Le Mouvement 5 étoiles n'est pas ancré à gauche*, Le Monde, 29 May 2018, p. 21.

is growing – it was composed by more than a third of the voters in November 2018, the same percentage as those supporting the League in the polls, and 3.2 million more than in March 2018. This is exactly that segment of the Italian society where the pro-Europe message of the progressive forces could be heard.

Bibliography

Censis, *I valori degli italiani, Dall'individualismo alla riscoperta delle relazioni*, Marsilio, 2012

I. Diamanti, M. Lazar, *Popolocrazia, la metamorfosi delle nostre democrazie*, Laterza & figli, 2018

E. Risso, G. Neglia, *Equilibri e narrazioni dell'Italia postmoderna*, Formiche, pp. 40-49, August-September 2018

J. Schworer, *Populismi. Il "Movimento 5 stelle" e la "Alternativa per la Germania»,* Bibliotheka Edizioni, 2016

P.-A. Taguieff, *La revanche du nationalisme. Néopopulistes et xénophobes à l'assaut de l'Europe,* Puf, 2015

L. Troiani, *La diplomazia dell'arroganza*, L'Ornitorinco, 2018

L. Troiani, Zeitgeist: *The Populist-Nationalist Tide in Current International Politics*, Speech at State University of New York, Stony Brook, 29 April 2017

PROGRESSIVE ANSWERS TO POPULISM IN FINLAND

Jussi PAKKASVIRTA, on behalf of Kalevi Sorsa Foundation

Introduction

During the last decades, the Finnish political system had been dominated by the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, and the National Coalition party. In the parliamentary election of 2015, this habitual political triangle was shaken by the one and only genuinely populist political party, the Finns Party. The party received 17.7% of the votes, making it the second largest party in the Finnish multiparty system. The Finns Party entered into the government in coalition with the Centre Party and the National Coalition party. This new role induced many changes in the Finns Party tactics. Their participation in the government also created platform for a more radical right-wing inside the party, and finally the party split during the summer 2017. This division created two populist parties, one with even more far-right orientation, but also with less support. In the latest polls the support for right-wing populism in Finland has fallen to 10 percent. The other consequence of the split resulted in a new type of Finns Party, which resembles to right-wing populist parties in Sweden (Sweden Democrats) and in Germany (Alternative for Germany).

Short history of Finnish populism

Contemporary populism in Finland basically equal to the **Finns Party**, previously known as the **True Finns** (In Finnish *Perussuomalaiset*, PS). The Finns Party is a political movement with a strong nationalist ideology, founded in 1995 following the dissolution of the Finnish Rural Party, the first clearly populist political movement in Finland.

The Finnish Rural Party had been the first genuinely populist party in the country, which was found in 1959, as a breakaway faction from the Centre Party (called the Agrarian League at that time, founded in 1906). It was a new movement to answer the intense urbanisation and structural change of the Finnish society and economy in the 1960s. Finland was converting from an agrarian society into an urban, industrial and service-based one, accompanied by a liberalisation of social norms and the mainstreaming of mass media.[43] As other agrarian parties, The Finnish Rural Party worked to respond new societal challenges and changes in people's everyday life by catering increasingly not only the small farmers of rural areas but also many urban voters that had moved to the suburbs. In its new kind of populist rhetoric, the Rural Party spoke about "the forgotten people", referring to the underprivileged victims of urbanisation, specifically small farmers and new kind of marginalised groups outside the biggest urban centres of the country. In the Rural Party rhetoric, "people's enemy" was the political and economic elite in the cities, the "money power", which Veikko Vennamo – the Finnish Rural Party founder and the populist founding father in Finland – famously referred to as "crime lords".[44]

43 Ylä-Anttila 2017, Palonen & Saresma 2017, 19-22
44 Soini 1988: 23–40; Ylä-Anttila 201: 25-27.

Timo Soini, the Finns Party leader from 1997-2017, armed with his charm of "a common man", adopted a lot from the Rural Party's and Vennamo's political vocabulary. Soini had studied Finnish populism and the Rural Party was already in the focus of his MA thesis in political studies.[45] He managed to modernise this populist tradition, but at the same time, his party started to adopt new right-wing (immigration) policies too. This new type of populism was clearly visible in the municipal and parliamentary elections of the 2000s, when the boxer and wrestler Tony Halme from East-Helsinki's eastern urban neighbourhood appeared on the lists of Finns Party as an independent candidate, with clear anti-immigration attitudes. Halme was elected MP from 2003 to 2007 and started and continued his political career with continuous media scandals (using of drugs and illegal gun, for example). This behaviour was largely accepted by Timo Soini because people like Halme brought a new kind of support for the party. Halme-kind of media persons attracted many people in the suburbs – with active appearance in the yellow press (and some even with Nazi sympathies). They were thought to be persons who "dare to say things as they are", even though there were also critics to the racist tendencies inside the party. Timo Soini was still able to control all the fractions of the party, and with this new kind of urban and local profiles, the Finns Party started to significantly increase its support at the election in 2011 and 2015.

The Finns Party has also managed to win over large segments of the society living in regions of traditional Finnish forest industry. In this process, we can observe various similarities to President Donald Trump's campaign among the US Rust Belt blue-collar workers. The structural global changes and feeling of social uncertainty is often behind the success of new kinds of populist movements. In Finland,

45 Soini 1988

the economic crisis after 2008, and especially the closure of various paper factories and pulp mills – at the same time as lot of Finnish pulp production moved to China and Latin America – changed the voting behaviour of traditional Social Democratic workers. The populists' adaptation of traditional leftist anti-neoliberal and anti-globalisation rhetoric was quite efficiently combined with the simplified idea that by closing the borders, the Finnish industry can keep its workplaces. Many voters of traditional industrial regions – and also from the countryside – have also adapted the Finns Party immigration antipathy. The EU, the immigration, and the global liberal politics has become a useful "enemy" of the populists. These were, according the Finns party, platforms where "elites" want to define the life of normal Finnish people. Critique was targeted also to classical left-wing parties – especially to their traditional international solidarity towards others, as Muslims, refugees and migrants.

Finns party grows and becomes part of government coalition (2011-2017)

In the 2011 parliamentary elections – held during the aftermath of the European economic crisis – the Finns party won 19.1% of votes, and became, surprisingly, the third largest party in the Finnish Parliament. The state of the Eurozone – and the heated media discussion about the economic crisis in Greece and Portugal – gave the Finns Party an opportunity to frame the situation as a serious challenge for Finland and for the Finnish national sovereignty. The Finns Party also to present itself as a serious populist challenger to established "old" parties.[46]

46 Borg, 2012; Arter 2010; Kuisma 2013, Ylä-Antila & Ylä-Anttila 2015

Again, in the next elections in 2015, the party got 17.7% of the votes, making them this time, the parliament's second largest party. In 2015, the ongoing "refugee crisis" in Europe triggered extra support for the party, and also the party's very popular leader Timo Soini attracted many traditional voters from the left and the right.[47] In his rhetoric and media appearances, he has always seemed very successfully as the "man of the people".[48]

Before these two latest elections, the Finns Party was small (between 1 and 5%), and it was in opposition for the first 20 years of its existence. Even though there were strong pressures and possibilities in 2011 to be part of the government after their surprise victory, the so-called "Jytky" (a new world in Finnish political vocabulary, meaning "huge bang"), the Finns Party stayed in opposition. The party joined the government only after 2015 for the first time, together with a centrist and a conservative party (the Centre Party and the National Coalition Party), in a coalition lead by the Centre Party Prime Minister Juha Sipilä.

47 Ylä-Anttila & Ylä-Anttila 2015.
48 Niemi 2012

Table 7 - The Finns Party in parliamentary elections

Election	Votes	%	Seats	+/–	Rise of Position
1999	26,440	0.99	1 / 200		9th
2003	43,816	1.57	3 / 200	▲2	▲8th
2007	112,256	4.05	5 / 200	▲2	– 8th
2011	560,075	19.05	39 / 200	▲34	▲3rd
2015	524,054	17.65	38 / 200	▼1	▲2nd

Source: https://www.vaalitutkimus.fi/en/eduskuntavaalien_tulokset.html

Party splits

In June 2017, the Finns Party hold a very dramatic party conference, when its undisputed leader and Sipilä's government's foreign minister Timo Soini announced his resignation from the movement's presidency. The protégé of Timo Soini, Sampo Terho, and Jussi Halla-aho, a member of the European Parliament with harsh anti-migration profile, ran for the leadership. Halla-aho had skilfully organised a movement behind the scenes that guaranteed his victor, and on 10 June 2017, he became the elected leader of the Finns Party. Leaders of the Centre Party and the Conservative Party immediately announced that they would not continue the government coalition with the Finns Party as Halla-aho was charged with incitement to racial hatred and was convicted of breach of the sanctity of (the Muslim) religion. Subsequently, twenty Finns Party MPs, including Soini, one of the party's founding fathers, defected to form a new parliamentary group under the name **New Alternative**. All cabinet ministers were among this group of defectors. For a few days, it looked that

Sipilä's government coalition was about to break apart, but Soini and the New Alternative group agreed to continue staying in the government coalition.[49] This group, consisting of the more social reformist and not openly racist former members of the Finns Party, formed later, in November 2017, a new party called Blue Reform Party. This party has five ministers in Sipilä's government and their current support in opinion polls has been between 1-2%. At the same time, the old Finns Party, with a new and strengthened anti-migration profile has had 8-10% support in polls since the split.

In short, the division of the Finns Party in 2017 created a new Finns Party, which resembles quite a lot to right-wing populist parties in Sweden (Sweden Democrats) and in Germany (Alternative for Germany). This party holds the old name, Finns Party, while the small Blue Reform Party desperately searches new topics and electorate support but, apparently, the movement is without future in the Finnish political map.

The Blue Reform Party has transformed into a silent supporter of Sipilä's government, supporting the coalition's neoliberal working life and health system reforms. In short, after the split of Finns Party, both of its inheritors, the new anti-migration Finns Party, and the Blue Reform Party, have shifted to the right. Based on the opinion poll numbers, this shift has also affected negatively their electoral support.

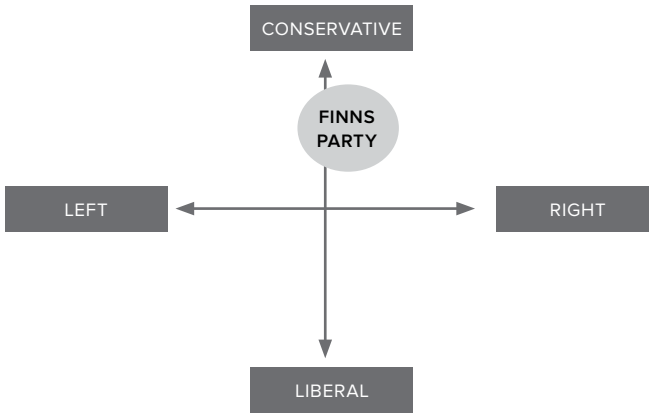
49 Nurmi 2017, 247-272

Finnish populism on the political map

The Finns Party is a unique movement in European context. The originally very rural party combines social democratic or left-wing welfare state economic policies, with traditional conservative values, such as homeland security, Lutheran religion[50] and ethnic Finnish nationalism. On the other hand, the value-conservativeness of the party has been repeatedly challenged by various media scandals of its members of parliament – such as drunkenness, violent and macho behaviour or racist comments. Although, many researchers describe the Finns Party as economically left-wing and socially conservative, as a "centre-based populist party" or the "most left-wing of the non-socialist parties", there are many right-wing populist elements in the party's programme and ideology. The party's leaders and voters predominantly describe themselves as "centrists". The party has drawn people from left-wing parties, but many features of their program – especially anti-migration aspects – have attracted supporters from conservative and centrist parties. The Finns Party share values of most populist right-wing parties in Europe, especially in terms of euroscepticism and anti-globalisation.[51] Its economic policies support welfare state – but restricting its services to "ethnic Finns". In the European Parliament, the Finns Party belongs to the European Conservative and Reformist Group where it co-operates with parties like the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom, Law and Justice of Poland and the Sweden Democrats.

50 A remarkable fact is that the Finns Party's most famous leader, Timo Soini, is an active Catholic – in Finland, where 70 % of the population is Lutheran and less than 1% Roman Catholic. In this way, he represents "the others" in the Finnish political scene.
51 Kuisma 2013

Graph 1 - Values of the Finns Party in a political map



.

Source: HS https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000002818175.html.

The party ideology in a nutshell

Because of the Finns Party electoral success of 2011 and 2015, and because of its split in 2017, populism has become a hot political issue in Finnish political life. The party members have directed important ministries in Juha Sipilä's coalition, and they are followed with special interest in Finnish media. To produce analytical, objective academic understanding of the Finns Party, without bias by heated public debates, especially in social media, has proven to be quite complicated. Finns Party members' comments are often quite aggressive, polarising, and incite "dramatic responses on purpose, as it divides citizens into the

'people' and its enemies".[52] As for other populist movements, the enemies of the Finns Party supporters are the traditional elite and media, as well as the immigrants and refugees. Also, feminists, Swedish speaking Finns and homosexuals have often been targeted by Finns Party supporters.[53]

As often in populist movements, the "hidden ideology" of the party is not pronounced clearly in its official descriptive documents[54]. It has to be looked for in acts and everyday politics, not in the softened official texts formulated to be suitable for all possible voters. The Finns Party itself informs in its official web pages that the party's *platform and policy is built on work ethics, entrepreneurship, and a balanced social welfare system linked to Christian values*. This kind of agenda could be easily found in many traditional Christian or conservative parties.

The Party underlines that it has *support from all sectors of the political spectrum and defies being put into any traditional left-right pigeon hole*. It states that it seeks *rational solutions with emphasis on activism and creativity while maintaining respect for both social and individual responsibility*. It further says it is oriented towards the individual as the building block in the society and cautious towards the growing harmfulness of corporatism. The official web-page (in English) summarises that the *basic foundation of the Party is a recognition of the Progressive traditions of equality of opportunity for all, an equitable and defendable distribution of wealth, and a public responsibility towards those citizens who, due to circumstances beyond their control, lack the possibility to pursue a good life*.

52 Ylä-Anttila 2017
53 Ylä-Anttila & Luhtakallio 2017
54 https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/kielisivu/in-english/

Social democratic or even socialist tendencies are also pronounced clearly in the Finns Party's texts – the party is for all, and for the poor, but not for the elites. The state's role in Finnish society and welfare policy – to help provide opportunity and education and health – is emphasised. However, they claim that *the individual has the responsibility to make every effort to provide for their own well-being and that of their families and communities – self-reliance is a valuable attribute which should never be under-estimated*.

The slogan "Justice for all" summarises the party's main ideology and policies. An important part of the "justice for all" declaration is that enforcement and punishment related to laws should be applied equally to all – with no consideration given to different economic and political standing of those violating laws. In practice, the *"all"* seems to mean only ethnic Finns and not all the people living in Finland.

According to the Finns Party's texts, private enterprises and creative market environment and infrastructure must be ensured in Finland. The Party seeks support both from traditional Finnish working class (mainly from the paper and metal industry) and from owners of small and medium-sized businesses. In the cities, also the unemployed "ethnically" Finnish voters support the Finns Party, especially in suburbs with a relatively high immigrant population.

The Finns Party declares that the general national economy consists of "cake makers" and "cake eaters" – and that the Finns Party is oriented towards the "cake makers" – be they business owners, logistics industry workers, health care professionals etc. Especially immigrants and refugees are seen as "cake eaters". According to the populists' rhetoric, they are taking jobs from "real Finns", using national resources in a wrong and corrupt way.

Law and order are the last key topics underlined in the party texts. Likewise, the fight against all kinds of corruption is mentioned in the Finns Party populist toolkit – as in most European populist parties' narrative. In Finland, the Finns Party has surprisingly many policemen as activists and also as MPs.

Last but not least, nationalism is a theme consistently repeated in all party texts. The Finns party presents populism as a noble ideology, which just seeks to empower the people. Often nationalism is a rhetorical device that offers refreshing change to the politically correct "jargon" of "old parties" and mainstream media. The Finns Party have succeeded in gaining supporters from the traditional left-wing parties by presenting a new and more attractive or simple form of criticism to neoliberalism and globalisation than other parties. Criticism to the EU was also strongly pronounced, especially in the 2011 elections, when all Finns Party candidates pronounced repeatedly that "Finnish financial support" should not be given to Greece or Portugal.

Nationalist stereotypes

The most pejorative or negative connotation of populism has been identified with radical right-wing political parties. But there is also a new trend: many parties and movements all over the world increasingly often accept the label "populist" not as an insult but as a badge of honour.[55] In a way, Donald Trump's style to do politics has converted – surprisingly – the traditional US Republican Party into the biggest and most influential populist party of the world. In

55 Houwen 2011, 32; Ylä-Anttila 2017, 1

this way, claims about the supposed "populism" of various political actors on the left and right have become ever more commonplace. Somehow, especially today, *Populism is best defined as a political strategy*.[56]

What is obvious is that movements like the Finns Party have been very successful in using nationalist stereotypes in their policy and rhetoric. The key ideology of the party – along with the "justice for all" approach –, nationalism, is loaded with stereotypical concepts, opinions and beliefs. For populists, nations need an "other," and stereotypes do a good job of constructing this "other". Stereotyping is built on a cognitive process of categorisation that requires simplification to help people make sense of world events, objects and experiences as well as create a seemingly common-sense discourse about others. Hence, stereotypes produce simplified images of ethnic groups, different cultures or behaviours together with a positive or negative valence related to these images.

Stereotypes allow us to simplify and systematise ambiguous information. With stereotypes, the growing amount of data is easier to understand, recall and predict. Producing stereotypes is thus also, recognisably, one element of the "post-truth" era. National stereotypes are a strong element in both (social) media and politics – and all the populist parties have been capable of using this political method and weapon.[57]

The Finns Party uses these stereotypes: "they vs. us", "national vs. EU", "internal vs. external". Also, an anti-immigration aspect was

56 Weyland 2001, 189
57 Pakkasvirta 2018

openly declared in the Party's Program for the 2011 elections.[58] It asks immigrants to accept Finnish cultural norms, without exactly explaining what these norms are. The party also underlines the role of national sovereignty over EU in immigration issues. Recent documents and programs for elections ask for immigration policies to be based on "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." The Finns Party also says that immigrants who are legitimate employees or entrepreneurs are welcome in Finland. However, *immigration not related to work should be limited via minimising financial incentives and through a more severe family unification policy*. The Finns also reject mutual European policy of "burden-sharing" and claims that refugee quotas must be adjusted to national financial situation, and that criminal immigrants must be deported to their home countries.

There are also various nationalist anti-immigrant elements in the section *For the protection and furtherance of Finnish culture*. The party documents declare how *Finnishness is a unique element of the world's culture. It is something to be valued as the cornerstone of Finnish society. It must be preserved*. One aspect of the ideology of the Finns is given in the party's interpretation for multiculturalism: *Multiculturalism is one of the relevant attributes of the 21st century world. Being Finnish is one aspect of that world and its part in it should be promoted and defended*". For the Finns Party, *patriotism means selflessness for the cause of the Finnish community*.

58 English Summary of the program: https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Perussuomalaisten_eduskuntavaaliohjelma_2011-english_summary_ 2.0.pdf
All the programs can be downloaded from here: https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/tietoa-meista/puolueohjelma/ . The document that declared openly the new, more radical trend in True Finns immigration policies is made in 2010 by Jussi Halla-aho's group. It is called in Finnish "Nuiva Manifesti": http://www.vaaliman-ifesti.fi/

The party's 2015 immigration programme proclaims even harder conditions for immigration: *The refugee quota has to be lowered, the burden-sharing mechanisms of the Common European Asylum System has to be opposed, the use of public funds to advance multiculturalism has to be prevented, the conditions of family unification by migrants have to be tightened, the positive discrimination (of refugees) has to be ended*.

Gradually, the Finns Party has transformed into a right-wing anti-immigration party. This is historically somewhat paradoxical as the founder of the Finnish Rural Party – which is the predecessor of the Finns Party –, Veikko Vennamo, has organised the biggest Finnish reception of refugees in 1944: the resettling of 400 000 Karelian war refugees from Russia in Finland.[59]

Attitude of the Finns Party voters

In order to better understand the attitude and the motivation of the Finns Party voters, focus group interviews were conducted (two in Helsinki, two in Kouvola) in autumn 2018. Based on the interviews, we can make five statements:

First, there was a strong and nostalgic pining after something "old", even among young people. They were longing for *the independent and authentic Finland* that somehow existed in their minds before EU-membership and the arrival of refugees and migrants (even though the number of the "others" in Finland has been relatively very low compared to other Nordic countries).

59 Virtanen 2018; Vaarakallio & Palonen 2017, 50-51

However, many discussants emphasised the need of stability, referring also to the actual status quo: *do not change anymore the Finnish society.* Most interviewees felt that the "liberals" and social democrats are representing "change" and "globalisation", while the Finns Party defends stability.

Second, national identity was a very important value in all focus groups. There were deep worries about the survival of Finnish culture and traditions, especially because of the *uncontrolled immigration*. The Finns Party was considered by the interviewees to be in favour of national identity while Social Democrats were, again, seen as defenders of globalisation and some "bad kind of internationalism". The national economic stability was an important issue for all. They claimed that Finland should be more financially sound. In general, globalisation was seen as negative, because profits are going abroad and not to those Finns who have been working for decades for the benefit of the nation. This is quite a strong anti-neoliberal statement. However, many interviewed young people saw also positive aspects in globalisation, such as free movement within the EU and travelling (but this should only be available for the Finns: [only] *for us to move and travel in Europe and the world*). Even the often-criticised euro got some positive mentions for this very reason.

Third, the words "freedom" and "security" raised lot of discussion. Both values were understood as very important, but most interviewed chose security over freedom. Insecurity was linked to immigrants, terrorism, sexual harassment of women, etc. Again, the Finns Party was seen best to represent security in the complex world.

Fourth, according to most interviewees, the demand for social and cultural equality and political correctness, in general, have gone too far in Finland and in general in the world. There is *enough equality, other things are also important*. However, social equality was mentioned as something important – *the society should help the people with problems but not too much*. That is why individual responsibility was also emphasised as important, also for ethnic Finns: *it is not only immigrants who misuse the social security system*. Focus group participants also said that *our own problems have to be resolved first*, only after that comes the world, the refugees and other problems.

Fifth, the concept of trust was an important issue in the focus groups. The interviewed had strong trust in Finnish security and law. Policemen and firemen were mentioned as the most trusted persons/professions. The trust for traditional politicians and EU institutions was very low in all groups. Many also mentioned that Finland is too much like a *good pupil* in the EU – a country that follows 100% strictly all the financial and legal regulations and EU standards, meanwhile many other countries do not. Finland is said to be just a *stupid payer* within the EU.

Other issues raised in discussions were, for example, the feeling of belonging and community. Social media was criticised – it creates too much discussion on *marginal issues*. Also, politically correct leftist or green activists in social media disturbed many interviewed. Younger participants also mentioned that not necessarily the immigrants are the problem – the problem is that in Finland they are given too much space.

The question of "majority" was also often present in the discussions. Many interviewed mentioned that the opinion of the "majority" is not heard – without defining who really the majority

is. This reflects one of the basic ideas of populism: the belief that there is somewhere a “real people”, or a unique “one nation”. This shows that it is still quite easy to sell the political agenda that there a homogenous political community in many European states -– a “majority”. Even though we know very well that what they call “majority” is usually only a party or an idea with the support of maximum of 20% of the population.

Lessons to learn from populism in Finland

In political history, populism is often understood and explained in negative terms – as a description of political parties or politicians, who have been accused to act in “populist” or in other inconvenient ways. On the other hand, almost all political movements carry populist elements. Most of our actual leading Western politicians perform often – especially in the media – in a populist way. Perhaps, a more interesting definition to populism, thus, comes from Ernesto Laclau, who presents populism in a more positive way, as an emancipatory social force through which marginalised groups challenge dominant power structures. The populism always has two faces – and many definitions, in Finland and elsewhere.

All new European populist right-wing movements declare that they are nationalist in their policy, practice and ideology. The nationalism is the true basis of populism. To respond the challenge of anti-immigration nationalism – in Europe and worldwide – the traditional liberal and left-wing parties have to be able to redesign their understanding of nationalism. Nationalism is a kind of a chameleon phenomenon – it survives in the global world and it offers an important toolkit for every electoral process. A deep and

a new kind of analysis of the meaning of nationalism and the (new) social media is needed even more, especially for the traditional progressive political movements in Europe.

Nationalism can be understood not only as a creation of political community, but also as a construction of the world.[60] Nationalism reflects long-term mental changes (values, norms, and the psychology of the masses). Many populist parties have been successful in representing this kind feelings of their voters, in simple but also efficient ways. The populists have understood – and thoroughly believe – that nationalism is the most useful human strategy and successful socio-cultural recipe for the construction of the surrounding world.

In Finland, because of the growing importance of the Finns Party since 2011, all the parties have sharpened and nuanced their political vocabulary concerning nationalism and immigration. The most significant impact of the Finns Party has been that almost all parties are more critical to immigration issues. Consequently, many voters who had opted for the Finns Party between 2011 and 2015 seem to go back to their preceding parties. The other obvious lesson to learn is that taking on government responsibilities has heavily damaged the populist party in Finland, eventually even causing its split into two parties.

For progressive political movements, one of the challenges is how to balance between "positive nationalism", international solidarity and new social insecurities of our time. "Positive nationalism" could mean alternative ways and methods to accept the complexity of modern life – combining of social openness with

60 Pakkasvirta 2014

reliable national control and security. Communities, some kind of frontiers, and social networks are apparently still important for the voters. “Positive nationalism” could offer a political community that combines freedom and responsibility – be it inside one nation or in a union of nations.

Nationalism is getting stronger and stronger every single day by the media. Evidences show that social media discussions maintain and even fuel nationalism and national stereotypes.[61] Internet has made new kinds of communication possible for different groups and social movements. Many right-wing populist movements used to criticise globalisation, and specifically globalisation of capital, but now they are also openly racist or at least very negative towards immigrants and refugees.

Post-truth politics constitute a new political and media culture — a culture in which debates are framed largely by their appeals to emotions and disconnected from truth and facts. Social media is especially efficient at producing repeated assertions and ignoring factual rebuttals — and falsifying facts or their importance. All this is strategically used to create alternative political realities that benefit particular political movements or players. As much as it is important to understand these mechanisms, it is perhaps even more important to focus on the power of lay people’s community to collectively reflect upon and reproduce the social and political reality.

Our era of the internet communication offers new opportunities to explore the collective formation of political realities, and to question traditional explanations concerning modern identities

61 Pakkasvirta 2018

and the ways in which diverse realities are constructed. This especially concerns citizens' perceptions of their own nations and that of the "others." Seen the heated discussions on migration and the rise of new forms of national populism, progressive politics and policies face huge challenges.

Bibliography

Arter, D. (2010) “The Breakthrough of Another West European Populist Radical Right Party? The Case of True Finns”. *Government and Opposition* 45, 4, 484–504.

Borg, S. (2012) ”Perussuomalaiset”, in S. Borg (ed.), *Muutosvaalit 2011,* 191–226. Oikeusministeriö, Helsinki.

Houwen, T. (2011) “The Non-European Roots of the Concept of Populism.” Sussex European Institute Working Paper No 120.

Kuisma M. (2013) “’Good’ and ‘Bad’ Immigrants: The Economic Nationalism of the True Finns’ Immigration Discourse”, in Korkut U., Bucken-Knapp G., McGarry A., Hinnfors J., Drake H. (eds) *The Discourses and Politics of Migration in Europe. Europe in Transition,* The NYU European Studies Series. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Mickelsson, R. (2011), ”Suomalaisten nationalistipopulistien ideologiat”. In M. Wiberg (ed.), *Populismi: kriittinen arvio,* 147–173. Helsinki: Edita.

Niemi, M. K. (2012) “Messenger and Defender – Timo Soini’s Populist Leadership and Media Strategies in Winning the Elections of 2011”, *Research on Finnish Society* 5, 7–17.

Niemi, M.K. (2013) “The True Finns Identity Politics and Populist Leadership on the Threshold of the Party’s Electoral Triumph”, *Javnost - The Public*, 20:3, 77-91.

Nurmi, L. (2017) *Perussuomalaisten hajoamisen historia*, Into: Helsinki.

Pakkasvirta, J. (2018) "Latin American Stereotypes in Finnish Social Media". *Iberoamericana – Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 47(1), 94–107.

Pakkasvirta, J. (2014) "Notes on theory of nationalism", in: *Multi-layered Historicity of the Present: Approaches to Social Science History.* Haggrén, H., Rainio-Niemi, J. & Vauhkonen, J. (eds.). Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Department of Political and Economic Studies, pp. 75–92 (Publications of the Department of Political and Economic Studies; no. 8).

Palonen, E. & Saresma T. (2017) *Jätkät & Jytkyt. Perussuomalaiset ja populismin retoriikka*, Vastapaino: Tampere.

Raunio, T. (2012) 'Whenever the EU is Involved, You Get Problems': Explaining the European Policy of The (True) Finns", *SEI Working Paper* No 127; EPERN Working Paper No 26, 2–29.

Soini, T. (1988) *Populismi - politiikkaa ja poltinmerkki: SMP:n roolinmuutos.* MA thesis in Political Science, University of Helsinki https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/37345/populism.pdf

Virtanen, A. (2018) *Vennamo - Mies ja hänen puolueensa*, Art House, Helsinki.

Weyland, K. (2001) "Clarifying a Contested Concept. Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics", *Comparative Politics* 34, 1, 1–22

Ylä-Anttila, T. & Ylä-Anttila, T. (2015) "Exploiting the Discursive Opportunity of the Euro Crisis: The Rise of the Finns Party." In: Hanspeter Kriesi & Takis Pappas (eds.): *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession.* ECPR Press, pp. 57-75.

Ylä-Anttila, T. (2017) *The Populist Toolkit. Finnish Populism in Action*

2007–2016. Department of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences University of Helsinki (Academic Dissertation). Unigrafia, Helsinki.

Ylä-Anttila, T. , Luhtakallio, E. (2017) “Contesting Gender Equality Politics in Finland: The Finns Party Effect.” In: Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan & Andrea Petö (eds.): *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.

CONCLUSIONS FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVISM

BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE POPULISM EXPERT TEAM

TAMÁS BOROS

In almost every country across the continent, populism constitutes a threat to the values and achievements of progressivism, while it also jeopardizes the political standing and success of progressive movements. Populism is opposed to the advances that the progressive movement stands for, it has positioned itself against the ideals of social mobility, openness and equality, as well as the fundamental values of humanism and enlightenment. Populists are at the same time also successful in luring leftwing voters, with the result that they now constitute governing majorities in several European countries either alone or in coalition with other populist or centre-right parties. Of the five countries investigated in this volume, Hungary is the only one where a populist party alliance governs alone without being compelled to enter into a coalition; in Italy a coalition of two populist parties holds the reins of power; in Finland the junior partner in the governing coalition is a populist formation; in France a populist party is the most popular party right now and its leader is the main challenger of the incumbent president, Emmanuel Macron; and in Germany the populists have gained representation in all 16 state parliaments within the span of a few years.

No matter how different the histories, economies, cultures and political structures of these countries are, our focus group research shows that the voters of populist parties are often guided by the same impressions, experiences and sentiments when they decide to turn away from mainstream parties. These similar sentiments can be grouped around four major concepts:

1. A strong nostalgia for the 1980s and 1990s
2. A surging sense of national identity
3. A desire for economic justice
4. A desire for greater security and stability

From the Eastern European Hungarians over the Mediterranean Italians all the way to the Finns in the North, for a significant portion of voters these four trends were decisive in terms of how they view everyday life. At this point it makes sense to take a more detailed look at what these concepts mean.

A strong nostalgia for the 80s and 90s

When we asked our research participants about the golden age of their countries, they almost uniformly referred to the 80s and 90s. This general perception prevailed even though in Hungary this period was at the same time mostly spent under (and in the final years of) communist single-party rule. In Italy, politically speaking the period was marked by two relatively stable governments led, respectively, by the Socialist Bettino Craxi and the Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti, while in France it was mostly dominated by the government of the Socialist politician Francois Mitterrand. In people's minds, the 80s and 90s are primarily associated with economic growth and job security. This is the past that voters' thoughts hark back to, which they consider the age of stable security when their countries were still "independent and

authentic". Because of the changes they experienced over the last two decades, these days the same voters barely even feel at home in their own home countries.

Resurgent national identity

The importance attributed to the resurgence of national identity, of the idea of the nation as a safety net and as a force of cultural cohesion and unity, has also emerged as a general trend. Voters feel that their roots, their history, their traditional values and often even their religion are threatened by a changing world. Obviously, they perceive globalisation – and sometimes the European Union – as one of the main sources of these threats, but the voters of populist parties specifically perceive that immigrants pose a greater danger even than globalisation. A recurring fear is the "death" of national culture or the nation more generally, which is "caused by (Muslim) immigrants". At the same time, these voters also harbour apprehensions about the uniformisation of nation-states, which is a result of the activities of multi-national corporations, the uniformly designed shops, restaurants and cafés. Nevertheless, to some extent contrary to prior expectations, globalisation is not fundamentally a negative concept for these voters – in some cases it was seen as positive, and in many others it was perceived as only partially negative. Voters perceive and acknowledge the benefits of globalisation, primarily in terms of the immense selection of goods and the possibility of cheap and simple travel. The assessment of the European Union is less optimistic, but even in that context voters perceive some obvious positive impacts. On the whole, however, these voters would like the nation-states to preserve their dominant position in the context of international co-operations as well, against the influence of multinational business entities and supranational organisations.

Desire for economic justice

As we noted above, the voters of populist parties are not necessarily against change and globalisation, they are only opposed to their current form of expression. These voters clearly align themselves with leftwing economic values when they relate critically to globalisation because of the tendency of the latter to increase differences in wealth, to divide societies, and to destroy small local enterprises and local or regional manufacturing. These voters also see it as part of the injustices engendered by globalisation when they perceive that (international) laws do not apply equally to everyone, that they are more likely to afflict the weak than those with power and influence. On the whole, they feel that the fruits of globalisation are distributed unequally in the world.

The other source of the prevailing sense of economic injustice relates to the issue of refugees/immigrants. According to the supporters of populist parties, social disparities are on the rise and social cohesion is diminishing also because – they believe – immigrants/refugees are provided with massive state assistance (accommodation, support for finding a job, benefits), even while the majority of the population receive “no support from the state”. In Hungary, where immigrants make up less than 2% of the total population, respondents most often made such claims about Roma, who make up the largest ethnic minority in the country.

The growing desire for justice is variably interlaced with criticisms of capitalism or with nativism or racism, but regardless: voters correctly perceive that social cohesion is declining in several respects in all the countries investigated.

A desire for greater security and stability

The desire for security and stability has unequivocally increased over the past decade. The 9-11 terror attacks in the United States, the acts of (mostly) Islamic terror in Europe, the concentrations of crime in some large urban centres, along with the spread of real and fake news concerning the aforementioned, have all combined to shake the sense of security in parts of the electorate. In addition to the perceived decline in public safety, the labour market was another source of constant insecurity and instability. Voters continue to attach great value to their personal freedom – especially in the sense of everyone being allowed to live their lives freely and without interference with their privacy – but at the same time they expect the state to use all its powers to ensure their safety and security.

It is readily apparent that in this prevailing "age of fear", for many people security has emerged as a more paramount value than freedom. The other keyword that struck a chord with respondents was stability. Even though in most countries unemployment is at record lows, this has failed to dissipate the sense of insecurity and instability experienced by many, which makes them apprehensive that a given job or maybe even an entire industry may suddenly vanish. Similarly, the unfathomably rapid changes in technology, the transformations of the urban landscape and in the ethnic composition of the places where they live, the replacement of established social customs – all these lead to a backlash as part of which a significant proportion of voters clamour for changes that will finally yield stability.

In addition to these four broad themes that characterise the present European zeitgeist, the voters of various populist parties hold vastly different views on a whole range of issues – depending on

their country or social group, their respective reasons for leaving the mainstream party they used to support and for realigning themselves with an anti-establishment formation often vary significantly. Still, the motivations that unite them provide us with enough of a foundation to propose some common European-level progressive answers to the crisis wrought by populist parties.

Progressive Counter Strategies to Populism?

A seemingly simple solution to respond to the problems of disappointed European voters is to just copy the rhetoric and/or policies of populist parties. For the progressive parties, such a course would be both morally unacceptable and also wrong-headed in terms of a winning electoral strategy. Still, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the populist parties obviously talk about several issues that reflect on real grievances and problems felt by the voters, which the left has not addressed over the past few decades. Thus, one constantly recurring question is in how far the left ought to stick by its core position and in how far it should adapt to the changing environment, as well as what issues it ought to own the narrative of and push for in public discourse. Furthermore, progressive parties must pursue different strategies in those situations where populists have already taken the reins of government than in countries where they are not in government yet but already major opposition players, and a still other route in places where populists are of marginal relevance in national politics.

Taking all the above into consideration, we propose strategies for European progressivism concerning six broad issues:

- European integration;
- Community;
- Patriotism;
- Socio-economic protection;
- Migration;
- Cooperation.

European Integration

The news industry may be projecting a different perception, but in reality public opinion polls have shown for years that support for European integration is at record highs in most European countries. Improving economic indicators, declining unemployment and the chaotic circumstances of the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU have resulted in a favourable situation for pro-EU politics. The progressive parties must seize this opportunity: this is the topic on which they are not only right to support and be vocal about but that also stands alongside the majority against populists.

At the same time, however, being pro-EU cannot be limited to a policy of preserving the status quo. The progressive side must act as an agent of change which steps up for a European Union that protects its citizens, not only in terms of safety but also with respect to their jobs, their welfare and against the harmful effects of globalisation. Europe needs to be protected by introducing a minimum level of social benefits – the harmonisation of minimum wages, welfare assistance and labour regulations. The European Union is the world's largest economic player and as such if it were led by the Progressives, it could use its power to combat the exploitation of workers by multinational corporations, climate change and rising social inequality.

Community

Since identity politics has become a predominant political cleavage that typically exacerbates conflicts between various social groups, an important strategic step for progressives to address this contemporary phenomenon would be to generate an identity that extends to the entire community without being exclusionary. A political discourse that features only technocratic and economic policy approaches cannot lead to success against the populists. The weakening of local communities, the disintegration of trade unions, and the growing levels of social isolation have prompted a need for belonging to a community of some sort. Traditionally, in the 20th century, the organisation of such communities was performed by the left. While the far-right builds its own communities by pointing to alleged common enemies, liberal ideologies envision community as the coexistence of various different identities. It would be vital for the left/progressives to stress that it is not building a community based on ideals that divide individuals and peoples but on ideals that unite them. A community that is welcoming to different kinds of people is at the same time also pro-equality: it does not create hierarchies between the members of the community, it is accepting of different identities without ranking them in social stratifications, it neither discriminates against nor promotes any of them.

Patriotism

National identity has been in resurgence in many countries throughout the last decade. In the meanwhile, no European identity of any kind has succeeded in supplanting the power of national identities. The desire for stability and a growing sense of nostalgia have once against catapulted the nation into the limelight as the entity that is presumably best capable of

protecting the community. In light of the lessons of the two World Wars, progressives are – for good reason – wary of resurgent nationalism, but this does not necessarily imply that progressive forces have to reject national identity or the nation as a positive community. There are numerous ideological frameworks based on a concept of the nation that point beyond an exclusive sense of nationalism.

Some call it inclusive nationalism, others refer to it as liberal or positive nationalism, but many prefer the word patriotism. This kind of positive and inclusive nationalists reconciles social openness with the community's justified expectation that the state provides for the security of the community, and act decisively and effectively in the interest of the same. National sentiment could also include the obligation to protect and support all members of the community – pre-eminently the weakest and poorest among them. One could subsume decidedly progressive values and accomplishments under the heading of national pride: social equality, tolerance and the willingness of the community's members to mutually support one another. Inclusive nationalism could build on the notion that it is fighting to forge a national community in which all the people living therein feel at home.

Socio-economic protection

In those countries where rightwing populists rise to power their economic policies typically include neoliberal elements; they tend to make the position of employees more vulnerable and favour domestic or international big capital over workers. This provides an opening for progressives to reach back to some elements of traditional leftwing politics. There are primarily two areas where voters perceive substantial problems in all of the countries involved: the labour market (vulnerability in the workplace,

work-life balance, low pay) and increasing social inequality. By emphasising traditional left-wing economic policies, in which the protection of employees and social justice are core concerns, progressive parties could regain the trust of those voters who need protection.

Migration

Migration is arguably the most divisive issue within the left. From the total rejection of all migration all the way to completely doing away with borders, various proposals have been put forward depending on the country, the political movement or the given politician's values. Still, in general, migration as a political campaign issue is the gift that keeps on giving for right-wing populists. Thanks to this issue, they have managed to win over millions of voters, as they did in Italy or in Spain in 2018. What is certain is that with respect to migration there is no way to win on this issue from a left-wing perspective.

Nevertheless, it is important for the left to present its own policy proposals on the subject, and these proposals should place integration as a priority. The lack of integration leads to social conflicts, increasing crime and a decline in social cohesion. Voters increasingly expect immigrants who arrive in their countries to not just coexist with them but to also fulfil their obligations towards the community; they expect immigrants to learn the language of the host country and to identify with the community's most fundamental values. It is also important for the left to propose immigration policies which show that the state is in control and can manage crises. The kind of rhetoric which essentially says that "migration has always existed and will always exist, there is nothing to be done about it", or which asks citizens who have just had to battle their way through the crisis to sacrifice even more, is

doomed to fail. But to adopt the oftentimes racist rhetoric of the far right is of course unacceptable, it would be a mistake on both moral and pragmatic grounds.

Cooperation

Finally, it is readily apparent that with the exception of one or two EU Member States, in most countries there is no scenario that would allow the largest left-wing/progressive party to form a government alone. With the surge in the support of populist parties, the traditional left-right divide has become supplanted by party systems that feature at least three major players. This had led to protracted government formations like the one we have seen in Sweden, the Netherlands or even in Germany. Correspondingly, the progressive response to the rise of populists must also include a strategy of identifying who the potential coalition partners in a given country are, which parties one can (and then has to) cooperate with. Based on the experience of the past decades, even though grand coalitions with centre-right parties might seem convenient in terms of policy aspirations, and at times they seem inevitable for political reasons, they threaten to weaken and have in some countries led to a substantial diminishing of support by voters for the left.

Thus, the right strategy in this context differs from country to country – and there is no one size fits all answer – but it is readily apparent that in terms of both progressive values and pragmatic considerations, it is often a better idea for progressives – also in the European Parliament – to enter into cooperation with those parties on the left of the political spectrum than to become unrecognisable in a grand coalition.

CONTRIBUTORS

Tamás BOROS is a political analyst and a member of the Scientific Council of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in Brussels. He is the strategic director, co-founder and co-owner of Policy Solutions, a Budapest-based political consulting and research institute. He is a member of the Hungarian Political Science Association. Mr Boros is also a regular guest of political talk shows on Hungarian television and often comments on current affairs in international media (e.g. The Economist, Financial Times and the BBC). His publications and analyses tend to focus on Hungarian domestic politics, populism and political extremism. Previously, he worked as an EU and communications expert for the European Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary. For four years, he also served as the director of an NGO, the Pillar Foundation. In 2005 he was the winner of the Young European of the Year award offered by the German Schwarzkopf Foundation.

Maria FREITAS joined FEPS in April 2015 and is responsible for projects pertaining issues of democratic participation, populism and new political movements. At FEPS she is also leading the Millennial Dialogue, a global youth engagement initiative that aims to create a better understanding of the priorities and values of the Millennial generation and their interaction with politics, political systems and institutions. She has over three years of experience in EU Affairs in Brussels, having worked at the European Parliament, first with Member of European Parliament, Luis Paulo Alves, representing the Azores and then with the Parliament's Chairman of the International Trade Committee, Vital Moreira. Maria holds

a law degree from the Lisbon University and a Master of Arts of European Political and Administrative Studies from the College of Europe in 2014. Maria brings on board significant experience in European Union policy and politics as well as advocacy outreach and engagement strategies. Before joining FEPS Maria worked at PaRR Global, the Financial Times' competition law consultancy as a junior analyst. Maria also worked at Vodafone where she covered the European Commission's Digital Single Market Strategy and Telecoms Single Market negotiations.

Sophia GASTON is a social and political researcher, who conducts international, citizen-focused projects on social and cultural crises, political change, the media and democracy – with a focus on threats to governance in Western nations. She is currently a Visiting Fellow at the LSE's Institute for Global Affairs and the Director of the Centre for Social and Political Risk, based at the Henry Jackson Society. Until June 2018, Sophia was the Deputy Director and Head of International Research at Demos think tank, where she produced a number of largescale investigations into issues such as: the cultural and political influence of 'nostalgia' in Britain, France and Germany; the media and populism in the UK and Germany; and a six-country study into the rise of social, cultural and economic insecurity in Europe. She has formerly held research and strategic roles in a range of UK and international NGOs, the civil service, and private sector. She holds a First Class Honours master's degree in political communication and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Johannes HILLJE works as a freelance political consultant in Berlin and Brussels. He is also a Policy Fellow at Das Progressive Zentrum. Prior to that, he worked in communications at the UN in New York, and as part of the editorial team for ZDF's heute.de. In 2017, he published a booked entitled Propaganda 4.0 – Wie rechte Populisten Politik machen. Hillje has a master's degree in politics and communication from the London School of Economics and in political science and journalism from the University of Mainz.

Chloé MORIN graduated in Economic history and Development economics at SciencesPo PARIS and the London School of Economics. She spent 5 years as an advisor to the French Prime ministers Jean-Marc Ayrault and Manuel Valls, specifically on public opinion analysis and communications strategy. She has been the director of Fondation Jean Jaurès' Public opinion observatory since January 2017. She is now an international project director at Ipsos Global Affairs, a business unit dedicated to conduct surveys for international institutions and NGOs, and chaired by former Education minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem.

Jussi PAKKASVIRTA is professor of Area and Cultural Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has published widely on theories of nationalism and history of ideas. His other research interests are interdisciplinary methodologies, environmental conflicts and culture of social media – especially new applications of "social media big data". His latest research project is Citizen Mindscapes – Detecting Social, Emotional and National Dynamics in Social Media (Mindscapes24). The consortium of twenty researchers builds a research frontier for social media analysis by focusing

on Suomi24 – Finland's largest topic-centric social media, and one of the world's largest non-English online discussion fora. The consortium brings together researchers from social sciences, digital culture, welfare sociology, language technology, and statistical data analysis, developing new ways of exploring social and political interaction. Pakkasvirta has studied also Latin American nationalism, social and cultural movements. At the moment, he is the President of European Council for Social Research on Latin America, CEISAL (2016-2019).

Ernst STETTER is the Secretary General of Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) since 2008. He is also a regular commentator on EU affairs in the media and visiting fellow at University of Greenwich, London. He is an Economist and Political Scientist. He studied in Tübingen and Heidelberg (Germany) focusing on international trade, finance, economic and social policy as well as development issues. In 1980 he obtained his PhD in political science entitled "The Association of ACP-Countries (Lomé I and II) to the European Community and the STABEX-System." In 1976 Ernst Stetter began his professional career as a lecturer in economics at the DGB Trade Union Centre for Vocational Training in Heidelberg. From 1980 to 2008 he worked for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in various positions. He spent the first four years at the FES as a Consultant in Dakar, Senegal. In 1988, Ernst Stetter was appointed as Head of the Africa Department. In 1994 he started working as Head of the Central Europe Unit. In 1997 he moved to Paris and became Director of the FES Office in France, then in 2003 he was appointed Director of the EU-Office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Brussels. In 2003 he received the French decoration of Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite.

Luigi TROIANI is associate professor of International Relations and EU History and Politics at Pontifical University St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. At the same university he is also the chair of Iscop, the Higher Institute of Communication and Public Opinion. He is member of the Scientific Council of Foundation of European Progressive Studies (FEPS), and a member of the Executive Board of Pietro Nenni's Foundation where he is responsible for international affairs together with research and studies. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of "Travel Retail Italia", a quarterly magazine of studies and research. Mr Troiani is a weekly columnist at the American newspaper America Oggi and at lavocedinewyork.com. He has been a researcher at IAI, International Affairs Institute, Rome, and researcher associate at Harvard University, Center of European Studies. His recent books are: La diplomazia dell'arroganza, L'Ornitorinco, 2019 (it includes the chapter: Nationalist-Populist Tide in Current International Politics, pp. 923-958); La politica internazionale secondo Nenni, (edit.), Bibliotheka Edizioni, 2018; European Relations with the Americas: Focus on Migrants (pp.172-194), Closing Remarks (pp.259-264) in S. G. Rotella (edit.), The Challenge of Migration in North America and Europe, Comparing Policies and Models of Reception, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Forum Italicum Publishing, 2018.

Olaf BRUNS is a freelance journalist based in Brussels. A former deputy head of the Brussels office of the international news broadcaster Euronews, he now works for several publications amongst which the FEPS's Progressive Post. Parallel activities include teaching, conference moderation and documentary films. Olaf works mainly on the disruptions modern democracy is currently

facing: anger, nationalism, populism and big tech. He holds a master's degree in Social Anthropology from Paris XIII University in France, his research included extensive fieldwork in Western and Southern Africa on how the concept of ethnicity is used in modern politics.

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES

Progressive Answers to Populism

Why Europeans vote for populist parties and how Progressives should respond to this challenge

In the European Union, roughly a quarter of likely voters would currently opt for populist politicians, whose policies centre on fighting against some outside enemy, the rejection of political pluralism and the irreconcilable conflict between the "people" and the elites/experts. These politicians pursue an illiberal turn in their respective countries. Although, the problem of rising populism is becoming a more and more researched topic – FEPS and Policy Solutions also started a joint research programme called “Populism Tracker” in 2015 –, there are very few if any serious analyses that offer an antidote to populism.

The central objective of this book is to offer potential and effective answers to NGOs, politicians or anyone who wants to counter populism. We hope that the proposed country-specific and European progressive answers of this publication can be useful for wider parts of society than hate-based populism, as we also believe that they provide insights for Progressives to better respond to the problems and fears of those social groups that are most susceptible to the allure of populism. We want to offer in this book potential political answers to populism in a practical, solution-oriented and positive way.

Contributors :

Tamás BOROS, Maria FREITAS, Johannes HILLJE,

Chloé MORIN, Jussi PAKKASVIRTA, Ernst STETTER,

Luigi TROIANI

- This book is edited by FEPS
  with the financial support of the European Parliament
- **ISBN number 978-2-930769-21-9**