

# The Populist Radical Right in Europe

## *A Xenophobic Voice in the Global Economic Crisis*

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### 1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, populist radical right parties have established themselves in the party systems of several Western and Eastern European democracies. The examples reach from the French National Front (*Front National*, FN) to the populist parties in the Nordic countries and the Hungarian Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, Jobbik) to finally, in the context of the economic and financial crisis, the Greek Golden Dawn (*Χρυσή Αυγή*, GD). The European Parliament elections of 2014 confirmed the electoral success of these Eurosceptic parties, though their impact on the European political agenda remains to be assessed. They stand for a protectionist ‘national-populism’, which can also take the form of separatist regionalism in the case of the Italian Northern League (*Lega Nord*, LN), or the Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*, VB) in Belgium. Meanwhile, the populist radical right has also temporary shared governmental responsibilities (Delwit & Poirier 2007).

Beside other symptoms like high rates of voters abstention, populist radical right parties point to fundamental problems in modern (West-)European, globalized and urban segregated societies. These are linked to social exclusion and inequalities, to cultural differences and to the transformation of the nation state including its crisis of political representation. In this context, the populist radical right parties stand for nationalism and racism (Islamophobia/antiziganism), increasingly for ethnicized social welfare provisions (‘welfare chauvinism’), for the defence of national sovereignty (in relation to international institutional frameworks, such as the European Union) and finally for populist criticism of the political elites and representative democracy. While these parties had for a long time mobilized their voters around cultural issues, they have, in the context of in the global and the European economic and financial crisis, increasingly emphasised issues linked to economic protectionism and social security and so they have become attractive for an electorate in real social downward mobility or in fear of it.

Indeed, the crisis appears to be the magic moment for populism, especially for rightist populism. We consider that populism entails a specific political style which has a function of mediation particularly in times of crisis (Taguieff 2002), when the integration capacity of intermediary institutions within a polity is decreasing. We do not attribute a particular ideology to populism, since we deem it a ‘thin ideology’ at best (Stanley 2008). Nevertheless, we prefer an ideological definition, not via populism, but via the radical right whose main ideas lie in nativism (at the intersection of ethnic nationalism and updated forms of racism) and authoritarianism (Mudde 2007), in an economic ambiguity between capitalist liberalism and protectionism, and in a populist approach to democracy. Populism and the radical (or extreme) right are overlapping and their mix constitute the populist radical right, whose main organisation form is - beside the social movement and the ‘subcultural milieu’ - the political party. Consequently, we share the opinion that populist radical right parties constitute a new party family. Finally, one of the most important reasons for the fact that in contemporary Europe the populist radical right is more prominent than populist radical left parties is

probably the simultaneity of the ‘social question’ and the ‘national question’ in a context of globalization.

In this context, our main hypothesis in the present article is that there exists a significant link between economic, cultural and political globalization or ‘denationalization’ - understood in terms of both Europeanization *and* globalization (Loch & Heitmeyer 2001) - and the success and consolidation of the populist radical right across Europe since the 1980s. Given the global and the European economic and financial crisis, we focus on the economic dimension of this link. We first discuss the overall European similarities. Then we showcase them in three case studies: France, Finland and Hungary, intended to demonstrate how these similarities are articulated into national differences.

## **2. European similarities: economic protectionism, national identity and populism**

The relationship between globalization/denationalization and the radical right has been analyzed by several scholars via co-variations between, on the one hand, data measuring economic, cultural and political denationalization and, on the other hand, the electoral results registered by the radical right parties (cf. especially Zürn 1998: 256-287). In some studies intervening variables have been added, such as that asking for the performance of the universal welfare state inhibiting radical right success (Swank & Betz 2003). The aforementioned relationship can also be examined via Rokkanian cleavage theory, on which we will focus here supposing that cleavages are, in spite of contemporary high electoral volatility across democracies in Europe, still useful in predicting voting behavior. Thus the Western European party systems seem to witness the emergence of a new economic and cultural cleavage, which are according to Kriesi (2008) both polarized between positions of (open) ‘integration’ and (closed) ‘demarcation’, and on which populist radical right parties defend mainly the closed positions (for the cleavage structure in Eastern Europe see section 3. herein). In the following we specify these cleavages, then refer to them in analyzing first the political demand of the radical right electorate and then the supply-side of these parties, before we discuss finally in each section the corresponding explanations.

### **2.1. Economic protectionism: class politics for ‘modernization losers’**

In several West European countries the class conflict of industrial and post-industrial society has been pacified (in Central and Eastern Europe the cleavages related to the modernization process have been different, cf. 3.) Economic globalization has accelerated the socio-structural polarization between - often more ideal-typical than real - modernization or globalization ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ and formed a new cleavage opposing neo-liberal to protectionist positions. Radical right parties and their electorate have aligned to this change.

In fact, for the demand side, several scholars see an *indirect* link to the globalization processes, in the sense that the populist radical right voters are to be found among the modernization losers (Oesch 2008, Spier 2010). At a closer look, the social profile of populist radical right voters supports this. The ideal-typical voter of such parties is a first-time voting young male, belonging to the petty bourgeoisie and the working class, with a relatively weak formal education qualifications and a rather low level of religious practice (Hainsworth 2008: 90-100; Norocel 2009: 240-242). As an impact of the economic crisis, these parties have apparently succeeded to consolidate their support base among the working class (Rydgren 2013: 1-9). In Western Europe, electoral geography corresponds partly to this. There are two distinctive areas with radical right voters: an urban or suburban vote with a strong base in

urban segregated and deindustrialized peripheral areas; there is also another noticeable electoral stronghold in rural and/or economically marginalized regions, which generally echoes country specific historical and political developments (such as in Finland). Specific to the Central and Eastern European context, these parties appear to gather their support preponderantly among the losers of transition to the market economy, in addition to the categories of voters described above; more clearly, a more mature male voter in a precarious job in a low-skilled position, or in long-term unemployment in mono-industrial mid-sized cities across the region. Finally, socio-economic voter's motivation, such as unemployment or precarious work, which for long played a secondary role, seem to have become more salient with the economic crisis.

Correspondingly, the political supply side has changed too. In the 1980s, the radical right parties tended to embrace neo-liberal positions. Since the 1990s, they have more and more shifted towards economic protectionism and anti-globalization discourses. Although generally displaying a certain ambiguity on economic matters, these parties have embraced a more protectionist approach in the last couple of decades, although earlier their winning formula was a combination of authoritarian solutions to social problems, and market-oriented solutions to pressing economic problems (cf. Kitschelt 1995). Indeed, contemporary populist radical right parties seem to have replaced their market-orientation with protectionist solutions, thereby becoming direct competitors to left-leaning parties on the political spectrum.

The social impact of globalization has led to a comeback of modernization theories, which include a rethinking of the two main micro-level explanations for the electoral success of the populist radical right: anomia and relative deprivation (Rydgren 2007; 2013: 5-9, cf. also the French case herein). Furthermore, given the contemporary context and the importance of the radical right, Mudde (2010) argues that the populist radical right has transformed from a position of 'normal pathology', as it was in the 1960s, to one of 'pathological normalcy'. From a sociological point of view then, it is increasingly difficult to reduce the support for the populist radical right in segregated European cities to a merely deviant occurrence; instead, it appears as a 'normal' aspect of a closed form of ethnic community-building. However, these social-structural explanations provided by the study of the demand-side, while necessary, are not sufficient for explaining the matter at hand.

## **2.2. National identity: how to combine with economic issues?**

Cultural globalization pursues the process of modern cultural differentiation and individualization. On the one hand, this opens new possibilities for the individual, on the other hand it can enclose it. In this sense, cultural globalization expands the opposition between libertarian/multicultural and authoritarian/ethnocentric values - stated for the 1960s and 1970s for the West European societies - on a transnational level and forms a new cultural cleavage which opposes 'open' positions of 'integration' to 'closed' positions of 'demarcation' (Kriesi 2008). As a cleavage, this opposition has political implications representing the defined relationship between cultural difference and political belonging within the territory of a nation. Finally, the corresponding concept of nation or national identity has firstly an internal (immigration) and secondly an external dimension (European integration).

The radical right stands here for the closed, ethnocentric and authoritarian positions. In fact, its electorate expresses national identity or the refusal of cultural difference, first, in protectionist and exclusionary positions against 'Immigration/Islam' (Perrineau 2007) and the EU, and combines them, second, with the voter motivation of 'security'. This corresponds to

the issue preferences of the supply side. The radical right parties, first, defend an ethnically defined national and religious identity against immigration and the ‘Islamization’ of Europe (Betz & Meret 2009) and against the EU (the antiziganism discourses of the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe are a functional equivalent of Islamophobia in Western Europe), and, second, they focus on internal (delinquency) and external security (international terrorism, etc.). These issue preferences translate the aforementioned ideological profile of the radical right: nationalism, racism and authoritarianism.

Cultural explanations for these positions also refer to the internal and external aspect of cultural difference in respect to the nation. Internally, concerning immigration, the ‘ethnic backlash thesis’ goes to the core in explaining the success of the radical right by the crisis of the national models of integration (Loch 2014). However, in times of the economic crisis, the ‘ethnic competition thesis’ is here at the center of interest. According to this thesis, social problems are ethnicized for individuals in economic competition, or in other words, socio-economic preferences of modernization losers voting for the radical right are ‘filtered by socio-cultural policy preferences’ of this electorate (Rydgren 2013). And externally, socio-economically motivated Euroscepticism is filtered in an analogical, i.e. cultural way, when the national and European identity of the radical right amalgamate to a ‘polycentric nationalism’ or ‘Europeanism’ that allows to defend European and Christian values against non-European civilisations and religions, especially against Islam.

### **2.3. Euroscepticism: defending economic interests via national sovereignty**

The political dimension of globalization and European integration does in its narrower sense not constitute a Rokkanean *cleavage* but contains a political-ideological conflictuality and meaning: ideas of a Europe of nations and of nationalism in the global world are opposed to federalistic concepts of Europe and cosmopolitanism. In respect to Europe, both, the voters’ attitudes and the party positions of the radical right are nationalistic and Eurosceptic while accepting European integration, but also rejecting it in the case of open Europhobia.

In fact, in the motivations of radical right voters anti-European sentiments are omnipresent. Perrineau (2007) shows for the European Elections of 2004, that ‘43% of the electorate of the radical right in (seven) Europe(an countries) consider that European integration has gone too far’ while ‘32% only think that the integration should go ahead’. These motivations can have the aforementioned cultural reasons. They can also stem from economic fears or disappointments. In Hungary, for instance, the disappointment of the economic development has even led to a ‘post-EU-accession syndrome’ (Ágh 2008), and in the 2014 elections, crisis pessimism was dominant in several European countries. By contrast, the Finnish case shows that the contents of Euroscepticism are permanently changing (Hartleb 2013: 361). This is also the case on the supply side, where Eurosceptic or Europhobic mobilization depends on the ‘populist moment’ of EU-debates or elections (membership, referenda like 2005 about the European constitution, recent ‘crisis’, etc.). However, fundamentally, Euroscepticism is political when the radical right criticizes the supranational form of the EU and builds the idea of the cultural and economic fortress on a Europe of nations.

Thus, the explanations for these forms of Euroscepticism lie on the side of the voters in subjective feelings of political alienation and dissatisfaction with the performance of a transnationalized political system (‘democratic deficit’); fundamentally, the criticism of the EU and the political ideas of the populist radical right on its institutions have to be seen

against the background of the transformation of national sovereignty (cf. the introduction of Guiraudon, Ruzza and Trenz in the present volume).

#### **2.4. Populism: an authoritarian voice in the ‘crisis’ of democracy**

Globalization and European integration have led to a decreasing congruency between the nation state and national democracy and so to a lack of its legitimacy. This external factor strengthens the ‘crisis of political representation’ in the member states, internally caused *inter alia* by individualisation, cultural differentiation and social inequality. The growing gap between political elites and ‘the people’ strengthens the process of political alienation and dissatisfaction with real democracy. This is the star hour of populism.

The crucial question for the demand side is here to know whether the populist vote for radical right parties is more a vote of political protest (*voice*) or of political-ideological support (*loyalty*). The Danish case for instance shows a high political satisfaction with the national representation system (Mudde 2007). However, the character of the protest option appears the latest then when parts of the radical right electorate move between this vote and voters abstention as *exit* option. This demonstrates electoral volatility, which is an indicator for the position of this electorate between, on the one hand, the decreasing integration capacity of political parties and, on the other hand, its alignment to the issues of the populist right on the new cleavages (Kriesi 2008: 38). On the supply side, (radical right) populism criticizes the elite, appeals to ‘the people’ and finally offers the charismatic redeemer (Taguieff 2002). In this function of protest and mediation, populism is - paradoxically - based on both, on participatory democracy with this appeal to ‘the people’ and on representative democracy with its participation in the institutions of democracy. Finally and in respect to its ideology, contemporary populism in Europe goes mostly hand in hand with the nationalistic, authoritarian right, as it offers a *cultural* identity which the social-democratic left - weakened in its scores and its ‘credibility’ - cannot offer at all (Reynié 2013).

At this political level, the explanations for the success of radical right parties in Europe depend on political structures and processes. The corresponding short and middle range theories reach from the type of democracy (consensual or conflictual) and of party system over political opportunity structures (party competition, electoral systems, etc.) and the radical right parties as political actor to the interaction between these parties and other political actors. Here exist important national differences. Finally, we can also find them in political culture which filters the legitimacy of resurrecting fascist or authoritarian legacies and codes the contemporary political life for rightist or/and leftist populism in European societies.

### **3. Regional and national differences: the populist radical right in France, Finland and Hungary**

Although East-West comparisons may be deemed less relevant and even controversial (Hartleb 2013), we do not discard them completely. More clearly, beside the European similarities we pay attention to regional and national differences in regard to both the populist radical right parties (dependent variable) and their regions and countries (independent variable). Consequently, in Western Europe national-populism – including its separatist forms of regionalism - can be interpreted as a kind of political ‘reaction’ to denationalization and globalization, a defensive nationalism in a global world of transformed national sovereignty. These processes build new cleavages, which we explore in particularly in highly developed countries, like France or Finland, where the class and religious cleavages appear to be

pacified. By contrast, Central and Eastern European societies host another type of populist radical right parties (Minkenberg & Pytlas 2013; Norocel 2013), which have developed in the context of a communist legacy, of transformation processes (to market economy, institutionalized party systems, liberal democracies) and of Europeanization and globalization. Here national-populism stands between Europeanization/globalization and the reaffirmation of a *regained* national sovereignty. Furthermore, the cleavage-structure is different (de Waele 2011). Some scholars argue that the legacy of the center-periphery cleavage is key in structuring even contemporary political life (Bafail 2006: 504-520; Lang 2009). To showcase our arguments concerning the region, we have opted for Hungary. Taking into consideration these regional differences, we argue that the parties we discuss in the following section are illustrative of the populist radical right party family in Europe in regard to both, the dependent variable and the independent variable.

### **3.1. New class politics in an old nation: the French *National Front***

The French National Front (*Front National*, FN) can be considered as a prototype for successful national-populism in Europe (Taguieff 2002). The party of Marine Le Pen was established in a context in which the post-industrial transformations and the effects of globalization had a considerable impact on French social cohesion and the emergence of modern forms of social exclusion (Wieviorka 2013). Moreover, the transformation of the sovereignty of this strong nation-state affects considerably its national political identity. Finally, given the fact that the gap between the ‘political class’ and the citizens has always been big in France, the crisis of political representation is particularly developed in this country. Against this background, the FN can be analyzed as an important actor in a party system in which the electorate experiences a realignment to the new economic and cultural cleavage of ‘integration’ versus ‘demarcation’ (Bornschier 2008).

In France economic globalization and the economic and financial crisis of 2008 had a profound impact on the level of unemployment and poverty and strengthened existing forms of social exclusion and urban segregation. The socio-structural polarization between the groups of modernization ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ contributed to the formation of a new economic cleavage opposing liberal to protectionist positions. The FN voters constitute an important part of these modernization ‘losers’, who feel socially excluded, threatened by status loss and search for social protection and security. It developed from originally right wing (petit-)bourgeois electorate living in the Eastern part of France in de-industrialized urban areas, and stands today between these right and newer left-wing working class voters, covering the entire national territory (Perrineau 2014: 47-52). This electorate is now more suburban-rural in its makeup than urban (Fourquet 2014). Within this heterogeneous electorate, the support of the *classes populaires* - blue-collar workers and lower-level employees with a low level of education - increased significantly particularly as the FN geared towards ethnicized welfare provisions and economic protectionism, which are part of a larger policy project of ‘de-globalization’ (cf. Betz & Meret 2013; Gougou & Mayer 2013 ). Fashioned into a ‘new working-class party’, the FN became a serious challenger to the Socialist Parti (PS), which increasingly finds its electoral support limited to the higher educated middle classes and seems discredited among its working class base by its time in office. In the contemporary context of economic crisis and increasing uneasiness with globalization processes, there seems to be a certain ideological contagion of some of the FN’s stances, though this is also influenced by a growing acceptance of nationalism and a rise of racism and Islamophobia in the attitudes of the FN-voters (Perrineau 2014: 206-214).

Cultural and religious difference are the most visible parts in the processes of cultural diversity and globalization. Accordingly, the issues linked to immigration constitute the core of a new cultural cleavage: if in the 1980s the FN discourse mobilized support around the 'insecurity' posed by uncontrolled 'immigration', more recently the focus was put on the alleged unwillingness of the Maghrebian migrants and their offspring to assimilate into French society, and Islamic faith was identified as a threat to cultural and religious identity (cf. Betz & Meret 2009; Bornschier 2010; Perrineau 2014). Under Marine Le Pen's leadership, the FN line is to 'de-ethnicize' such identity politics, claiming to be the sole party in French politics to defend republican secularism (*laïcité*) from the increasing pressure exercised by Islam. In this context, she accused the political establishment for abandoning. These ethnocentric and authoritarian appeals appear to gather the support of some workers, disenchanted with mainstream political line perceived too permissive to Islam. Consequently, although the central cultural explanation for the success of the FN lies in the challenges of the economic crisis and the difficulty of the republican model to address the cultural backlash posited by reminiscent French nationalism, the defense of secularism as the FN discursive core evidences, paradoxically, the focus on ethnicity with the help of class issues: the French worker's uncertainty on the job market is exploited with the help of escalating their fears towards the growing visibility of Islam in France.

In a wider sense then, the issues addressing European integration are part of the cultural cleavage between 'open' and 'closed' positions. Beside the economic and cultural cleavage-dimension of this form of denationalization – that is European integration – the political dimension constitutes a conflict about how to construct Europe: as a transnational political community, or based on the national borders of its member-states? In the second case, the French republican *souverainisme* of the left populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon was a challenge for the ethnic nationalism of Marine Le Pen during the 2012 presidential elections campaign, tapping on the Eurosceptic and even Europhobe attitudes present among the FN voters. In other words, Europe is regarded as a negative projection screen for various forms of economically, culturally and politically motivated Euroscepticism. This stance became stronger in the context of the European economic and financial crisis. The FN, on its part, strengthens the negative image of a technocratic 'Europe against the people', and argues in turn for a 'Europe of nations'. This needs to be understood in the context of France's long tradition of sovereign statehood and its status as former colonial power.

Finally, France is also a country with a closed elite and weak intermediary bodies. The 'crisis of political representation' is therefore particularly strong and has reactivated the French tradition of national-populism, at the expense of the two large political poles, on the left and on the right (Taguieff 2012). Among the various approaches that link the success of the populist radical right parties to political structures and processes (cf. 2.4.), the case of FN is a highly instructive example. On this matter, Marine Le Pen played a crucial role in the FN's recent success with her strategy of bringing the FN into the mainstream (*dédiabolisation*), which entailed using her rather cautious and less controversial political positioning on various political issues to 'normalize' the public image of the FN in general. On the other hand, the short term strategy of former president Nicolas Sarkozy to follow the FN on such issues as 'immigration' and 'law and order' further extended the quasi-fusion between the electoral basin of right-conservatives and that of the FN (Fourquet & Gariazzo 2013). To sum up, a preliminary conclusion is that middle range explanations may often account for the different success of populist radical right parties across Europe. At the moment, the FN is yet to convince the French electorate that is able to be part of a future cabinet. Marine Le Pen's political fortunes and her performance in the coming presidential elections in 2017 depend on

the long lasting socio-economic effects of the ongoing crisis and even more so on French political culture to accept or resist against such manifestations.

### 3.2. ‘Welfare chauvinism’ in Northern states: *The (True) Finns (Party)*

The (True) Finns (Party) (*Perussuomalaiset*, PS/*Sannfinländarna*, SF)<sup>1</sup> may be considered as a master case of a new type of welfare chauvinism. Founded in 1995 by the activists of the by then dying agrarian-populist Finnish Agrarian Party (*SuomenMaaseudunPuolue*, SMP/*Finlandslandsbygdsparti*, FLP) (Norocel 2009: 243; Arter 2012: 813), it had in its first decade of activity a rather modest though constantly positive electoral performance in the Finnish elections. In the eve of the 2008 global economic crisis, in the March 2007 parliamentary elections, it succeeded to gain five seats. Particularly salient was the party’s embrace of welfare politics in a Nordic tradition, albeit from a decidedly chauvinist nativist perspective (cf. Widfeldt 2000; Kestilä 2006; Arter 2012). However, the PS/SF’s claim to represent the ‘common man against the establishment’, coupled with a strongly nationalist – understood along Finnish ethno-linguistic lines<sup>2</sup> – and EU-critical stance (Widfeldt 2000: 492; Kestilä 2006: 174; Raunio 2012: 10) appeared to bear fruit in the aftermath of the global economic crisis. Indeed, one of the winning strategies was the strong opposition of the PS/SF chairman Timo Soini to the pro-bail-out consensus among the Finnish parties and the PS/SF’s overall Euroscepticism (Norocel 2009: 245; Arter 2010: 107, 117). In the April 2011 national parliamentary elections, the PS/SF registered an eightfold increase in the number of gained parliamentary seats to 39 MPs, consequently becoming the third largest party in Finnish politics (Arter 2012: 814-815; 2013: 99-100).

Some scholars argued that the election strategy adopted by the PS/SF particularly in the past EU elections (June 2009; May 2014) and national parliamentary elections (April 2011) was one that purposively focused on the country’s EU and Eurozone membership as an effective means to diverge attention from the strongly nativist and even outright racist stances some of its candidates held (Arter 2010: 498-499; Raunio 2012: 13). This needs to be understood in the wider context of the Finnish society, in which anti-immigration attitudes are mainly embraced by older and lower educated men that are not particularly interested in politics (Kestilä 2006: 187). However, as some other researchers have noted, the PS/SF espoused a strong authoritarian view on the Finnish society, claiming a return to the authority and legitimacy of a traditional society built on Christian family values (Norocel 2009: 247; Arter 2010: 497). Topically, in the wider context of discussing the imperative for the incoming migrants to assimilate into the host society, the discourses of several of the PS/SF candidates – such as Jussi Halla-aho, Olli Immonen – followed a wider European trend in which the problematic ‘immigrant’ becomes conterminous with ‘Muslim’ (Storm 2011; Keskinen 2012).

The PS/SF has also profiled itself as a political outlier in sharp contrast to the other Finnish political parties, which have constantly been criticized for blind submission to a political consensus that tends to efface their ideological differences (Arter 2010: 487; Raunio 2012:

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<sup>1</sup> For some time after the founding of the party, the informal English version of the party’s name, was the ‘True Finns’, whereby ‘true’ needs to be understood as conterminous with ‘ordinary’ or ‘common’. However, in August 2011 the PS/SF announced its official English name: ‘the Finns (Party)’ (Raunio 2012: 4); perhaps unsurprisingly, the chosen name lies close to the usual appellation of the country’s inhabitants in international settings – the Finns. To avoid such ambiguity, we have opted to employ the party’s bilingual abbreviation: PS/SF.

<sup>2</sup> Finland was part of the Swedish realm for over six centuries, then part of the Russian Empire in 1809 and eventually gained independence in 1917. Testimony to its past, Finnish and Swedish are official languages, and the small community of Swedish-speaking Finns is active in the socio-economic and political life of the country.

10). A case in point, the PS/SF chairman argued that ‘in Finland you can hold any opinion you like, as long as it is not a different one’ (Soini 2008: 149) and criticized the establishment for being estranged from the common citizens ‘because they believe that people are stupid and indifferent to all different’ (Soini 2008: 162). The solution to consensus politics was readily identified: enforcing a more plebiscitarian politics, whereby the vote of Finnish-speaking majority dictates the terms of democratic politics. In this regard, the PS/SF identified the rule of majority also as a means to defend the nation’s inherent Finnishness (*suomalaisuus*) against external – to curb the allegedly uncontrolled immigration – and internal threats – to address what the party perceives to be the disproportionate leverage that the Swedish-speaking minority has in Finnish politics – and to engage the country on a road to becoming monolingually Finnish and preserve the country’s cultural uniformity. The party’s strong Euroscepticism and national conservatism is also mirrored at the EU level as well. Indeed, the sole PS/SF MEP was vice-chair of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) political group. In the 2014 European elections, the PS/SF registered a good electoral score (2 MEPs) and was assiduously courted by the trans-European alliance crystallized around the FN, but eventually chose a more center-right conservative position together with the British Conservatives of prime minister David Cameron, indicative of the splitting among the various radical right parties at EU level.

To conclude, the PS/SF does not seem to essentially differ in its political stances from the other populist radical right parties in Western Europe. However, in the context of the global economic crisis, the party appears to employ the convulsions witnessed by the Eurozone as a means to gain prominence in Finnish politics and deflect criticism on the increasingly conservative nativist and racist views of its rank and file. Such a stance had also direct consequences on the party’s stance in the government formation negotiations in the aftermath of the 2011 elections: the PS/SF refused to change its means to approach to the economic crisis and chose to become the largest opposition party.

### **3.3. Eastern European nationalism in the economic crisis: the Hungarian *Jobbik***

Hungary appeared at the beginning of the 1990s to be among the countries best equipped for the transition to democratic government and market economy in Central and Eastern Europe. Ethnically more homogeneous than other countries in the region, Hungary encountered serious challenges in its relationship with two ethnic minorities: the Jewish community (its socio-economic and political legacy in contemporary Hungary) and the Romani (the most numerous but also most discriminated against minority in the country, as well as in the region). Additionally, older sentiments of wounded pride directed at the effects of Trianon Treaty, which established Hungary’s contemporary national borders and in effect left significant Hungarian populations as minorities scattered around in the neighboring countries, were reactivated by various political actors on the right of political spectrum. This resulted in the use of the proclaimed Hungarian cultural exceptionalism for political purposes, particularly with regard to the previous Hungarian cultural hegemony in the wider Carpathian Basin (cf. Havlík 2012; Korkut 2012; Pirro 2013; Pytlas 2013).

The Hungarian Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, Jobbik), founded in October 2003, has inherited the populist radical right legacy of the rather marginal MIÉP (*Magyar Igazságés Élet Pártja*) and taken it to a different level of political legitimacy. More clearly, Jobbik successfully competed in the June 2009 EU elections, sending three MEPs to Brussels. In the April 2010 national elections Jobbik polled 16.7% (closely behind the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSZP/*Magyar Szocialista Párt*) and sent 47 MPs, from a total

of 386 MPs, to the Hungarian National Assembly (*Országgyűlés*). According to several researchers, Jobbik won on a ticket of radical rhetoric, which exploited popular discontent with the incumbent political elite, demanding the investigation into corruption scandals and the strengthening of political accountability, and the perceived societal danger posed by the Romani minority in Hungary (Havlík 2012: 147-149; Várnagy 2011: 993).

Indeed, Jobbik had contested the 2010 national elections under the slogan ‘radical change’ (*radikálisváltás*), brazenly calling for a nationally controlled economy to serve the Hungarian interests. This anti-elitist ‘radical change in the name of the people’ has been envisaged by Jobbik to bring about a stop to the alleged monopoly of foreign multinationals in Hungarian economy, to reign in corruption and ‘put those responsible in jail’ (Jobbik 2010a). Jobbik identified swiftly the main culprits for the country’s dire economic situation: both the social-democratic MSZP and the right-conservative Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Union (*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Párt, Fidesz*) (cf. Pytlas 2013: 170; Várnagy 2011: 993). Pretending to defend the interest of Hungarian-native economic actors, the Jobbik chair Gábor Vona accused Jewish business to attempt to ‘conquer’ economically the country, and reiterated that ‘Hungary is not for sale’. Vona’s remarks appear to fuse extreme right anti-Semitic rhetoric with strong economic skepticism towards the EU project (BBC 2013). Campaigning for the 2014 parliamentary elections, Jobbik maintained its electoral manifesto that ensured its previous electoral success (Jobbik 2010a), and emphasized its anticorruption commitment, in a sense, echoing the effects of ongoing economic crisis on the mood of wider Hungarian electorate (Balogh & Petsinis 2014).

In ideological terms, Jobbik profiled itself from the onset as a ‘conservative and radically patriotic Christian party’, claiming that the protection of Hungarian values and interests are its fundamental purpose (Jobbik 2010a). Tellingly, it contested the 2009 EU elections with the slogan ‘Hungary to Hungarians’ (*Magyarország a magyaroké!*) (Havlík 2012: 142). Continuing the line of revisionism and radical nationalism of MIÉP, Jobbik fuses religion and nationalism, considering Christianity to be the cornerstone of Hungarian state. In this sense, the party has merged its appeals for the preservation of Hungarian Christian values with demands for the radical redrawing of national borders, denouncing the ‘Trianon diktat’ that established contemporary Hungary, to include those areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries (Pirro 2013: 15-16; Pytlas 2013: 164). The portrayal of ‘socially undesirable phenomena’ – namely, the poverty stricken Romani – as a mosquito to crushed by Vona in one election TV spot (Jobbik 2010b), and the more recent demands in the parliament for special registration lists of Jews – considered a ‘threat to national security’ – unveil the extent to which Jobbik blends rigid interpretations of Christian values with nationalism and xenophobia. Jobbik’s Euroscepticism appears thereby to be an indirect consequence of such an ideological stance, whereby emphasis is put on the urgency to preserve the Hungarian culture and restore national pride (Pirro 2013: 21), in the context of the EU’s ‘liberal cultural-dictatorship [sic]’ (Havlík 2012: 148).

Vona consequently identified the Russian sponsored Eurasian Union as an alternative to the EU, arguing that ‘Hungarians are sick passengers on a sinking European ship that has lost its values’. His argument merged protectionist appeals – terminating Hungary’s economic dependence on the EU– with calls to preserve the country’s unique national identity – both European and Asian-Altai (Jobbik 2013). This position was echoed in Jobbik’s attitude concerning the social and political turmoil in Ukraine in early 2014, when the party supported the Russian Federation’s unilateral annexation of Crimea (Jobbik 2014). However, such remarks do not seem to increase the party’s appeal as a possible partner for the new Fidesz-

led government, although Jobbik consolidated its position as the third largest political force, in the latest national elections in April 2014 polling 20.3% (or 23 MPs in the new and significantly smaller national assembly totaling 199 MPs). In the May 2014 European elections, Jobbik secured 3 MEPs in the next legislative, but because of its radicalism Jobbik was both avoided by the emerging alliance around the French FN and swiftly dismissed as extremist by the PS/SF.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Returning to our hypotheses, the supposed relationship between denationalization/globalization and the electoral success of the populist radical right parties across Europe seem to rely on its cleavage-related similarities. This also becomes manifest in the real or subjectively perceived and oftentimes ethnicized precariousness of their voters under the impact of the contemporary global economic transformations and become more acute under the economic crisis. Correspondingly, socio-structural explanations (anomia, relative deprivation) for the success of the populist radical right are necessary but not sufficient. In fact, as the case studies showed, the specific traditions in Western and Eastern Europe and in the different nation states determine the emergence, development and legitimacy of these parties according to elements like the welfare state system, the legacy of fascism and political culture, the concept of nation or the particularity of the various political opportunity structures, which in turn impact on the profile of the populist radical right party thus emerged. These factors joint together explain the relative success or failure of such parties across Europe.

In terms of political participation at the European level, the populist radical right is fairly divided, though with a stronger present across the various political groups in the European Parliament. As such, the French FN with its 24 MEPs failed to consolidate the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) parliamentary group by employing Marine Le Pen's national recipe of political mainstreaming. On the one hand, the PS/SF refused to join forces with the FN especially because EAF was perceived to be too radical. On the other hand the FN dismissed the idea of inviting the Hungarian Jobbik to join the EAF because of Jobbik's extremism. Consequently, most of the populist radical right MEPs are now among the Non-Attached Members (NA), consequently with significantly diminished political leverage.

In conclusion, what are the political implications and prospects for the populist radical right in Europe? In the generally fragmented and at times bipolar (West-)European party systems, most mainstream parties are still uncertain how to interact with the populist radical right parties. These parties challenge the conservative right along issues connected to identity and law and order. The cooperation of the conservative right with these parties enables the populist right to come into the mainstream of the political scene, at times at the expense of the conservatives. On the other side of the political spectrum, the radical right is challenging left wing parties, particularly those of the European social-democratic party family, in the electoral competition for (sub-)urban middle- and working class. In fact, the new 'winning formula' for the radical right combines authoritarian solutions for social problems with social-protectionist and even outright welfare chauvinist solutions for economic issues. More generally, in the contexts of persistent socio-economic difficulties, the political message of populist radical right appear to slowly migrate towards the middle of the political field, thereby replacing the populist radical right deviance with a 'pathological normalcy'. However, we deem that social phenomena and political developments may be accounted for with the help of political categories, in the sense that the political culture of a specific country still

functions as a major interface that determines the success of the populist radical right and for the society's capacity to resist it.

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