

# MIGRATION AND POPULISM

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**MERCATOR FORUM MIGRATION AND DEMOCRACY**

# **MIGRATION AND POPULISM**

**MIDEM ANNUAL REPORT 2018**

**(EXCERPT)**



**RESULTS**

## RESULTS

■ Migration is not the cause of the rise of populism in Europe. The causes lie deeper. However, the fact is: Migration has revealed or widened existing cleavages in and between the European societies. It is the catalyst, not the cause.

■ The political debate about migration in Europe follows various cleavages. Some are cultural; others are socio-economic or political. Regional and country-specific divisions also become visible due to migration: such as between the East and the West in Germany, between the North and the South in Italy and between the centre and the periphery in Great Britain.

■ The link between migration and populism cannot be explained purely in socio-economical terms. Right-wing populist parties rather benefit from cultural conflicts related to different perceptions of identity and belonging. Among those are also reservations towards Islam.

■ In some Western and Northern European countries, the cultural cleavage of conflict between ethnocentric-national and liberal-cosmopolitan values overlaps with fears of economic loss and decline. Thus, in welfare states like Sweden asylum seekers are also perceived as a cause of increased competition for social benefits.

■ Culturally grounded arguments for the rejection of migration are particularly pronounced in countries with a low share of foreigners. These include Central and Eastern European countries, but also Eastern Germany. Here, the fear of a losing identity and social cohesion promotes opposition to migration.

■ In general, attitudes towards immigration from non-EU countries have not become more negative even in the course of the 'refugee crisis'. Central and Eastern European states stand out as an exception. In these countries there is an evident trend towards more negative attitudes.

■ Public opinion prefers intra-European over non-European migration and labour migration over forced migration. The latter is particularly true for Central and Eastern European countries.

■ Never before, so many Europeans have perceived migration as one of the most important problems. Yet the importance of the issue of migration does not necessarily relate to the number of arriving asylum seekers – in many cases it is rather the result of significant media exposure and deliberate politicisation.

■ For right-wing populist parties, the salience of migration is a key prerequisite for the mobilisation of supporters in the protest against the 'ruling elite'. If the salience increases, then right-wing populist parties can expect gains in elections.

■ Right-wing populists contributed to a discursive shift towards a mostly negative description of asylum seekers. Right-wing populism thrives on the feelings of threat and negative emotions generated by migration in some parts of the population. For this purpose, right-wing populists deliberately scandalize and politicise migration.

■ Both political factors (e.g. government and party constellations) and 'external shocks' increase the opportunities for the rise of right-wing populism and promote a feeling of 'state failure' or 'loss of control' in parts of the population.

■ A further factor which enables the rise of right-wing populism is the perceived gap between a predominantly liberal or expansive migration policy on the one hand and the often more sceptical public opinion on the topic of migration on the other. Populists exploit this gap for the purpose of criticising the elite.

■ It is not solely those 'left behind' and the 'educationally deprived' who vote for populist parties, as is often assumed. Studies do in fact show that sections of the population with a lower level of formal education are more likely to have critical attitudes towards migration and that there is a greater probability that they will vote for right-wing populist parties. However, in some countries right-wing populists also benefit from voters with a higher level of education and income.

# **MIGRATION AND POPULISM**

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## POPULISM – WHAT IS IT?

One of the central political developments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the emergence and electoral successes of (right-wing) populist parties. The most prominent example of this development is perhaps the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States. However, in Europe too, populist parties on both the left and the right have achieved a number of notable successes in recent years. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) is the first right-wing populist (and in part ethnonationalistic) party which has entered the German Bundestag since 1949. Populists and right-wing parties have also performed strongly in other European countries. Here are some examples from the last twelve months:

- In October 2017 the billionaire and EU-critic Andrej Babiš won the parliamentary elections with his protest party ANO.
- Just a few months later (in January 2018) the incumbent President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman, narrowly won the presidential election for a second time with an emphatic anti-refugee stance.
- In October 2017 the right-leaning Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) won 26 % of the votes (after getting 20.5 % in the last elections) and is now once again part of an Austrian coalition government.
- In March 2018 the anti-establishment 5-star movement (Movimento 5 Stelle) achieved considerable gains and became the strongest party in Italy, while the right-wing populist Lega improved from 4 to 18 % and thereby rose to become the dominant force on the centre-right.

These electoral successes should not obscure the fact that populist and especially right-wing populist parties have not made gains only since the 'refugee crisis'. Populism has been an established feature of the European party landscape since the 1990s at the latest. However, it was only in the last decade that it experienced a strong upsurge. Calculations show that the voting share of populist parties going to populist parties in Europe in the year 2000 was on average around 6 % (cf. Fig. 1). In 2017 that number had almost tripled. This quantitative increase has also led to remarkable qualitative political changes: Populists are no longer ignored by established parties, as had long been the case. Often their demands are adopted and their style of politics is emulated. In some countries populists even form the government (e.g. in Italy, Poland and Hungary). The European party landscapes have also changed markedly with the rise of populism: Populist parties have contributed in many countries to the (temporary) end of the centre-left/centre-right duopoly, which has characterised European politics since the post-war period. Party systems throughout Europe are fragmented, and many have shifted to the right politically.

Right-wing populism in particular is on the rise in many European countries. However, considerable differences exist within Europe. A look at the map of European right-wing populism (cf. Fig. 2) shows a split between Northern and Southern Europe.<sup>1</sup> In Northern Europe (e.g. Germany, Austria and Scandinavia) right-wing populists are generally strong. In contrast, right-

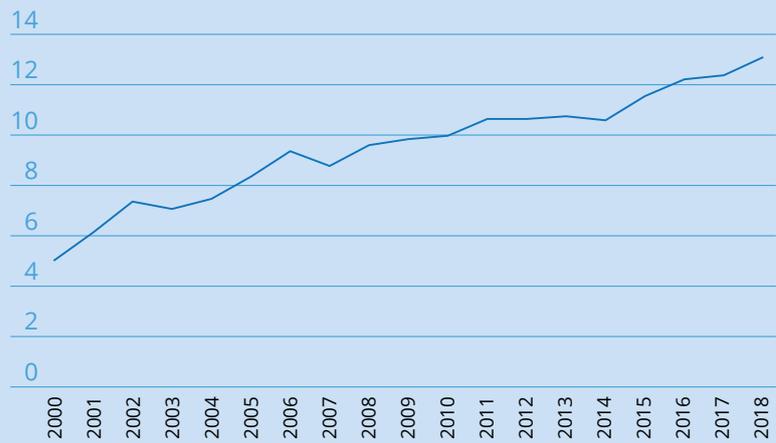
## THE RISE OF POPULISM

## POPULISM HAS CHANGED POLITICS

## DIFFERENCES WITHIN EUROPE

<sup>1</sup> The selection of populist parties here essentially corresponds with existing research literature (Mudde 2015; Inglehart/Norris 2017). Of course there is inevitably a degree of blurring when classifying populist parties. Politicians from established parties can at times adopt the xenophobic rhetoric of right-wing populist parties. In turn, there are right-wing populist parties which can take a more moderate course.

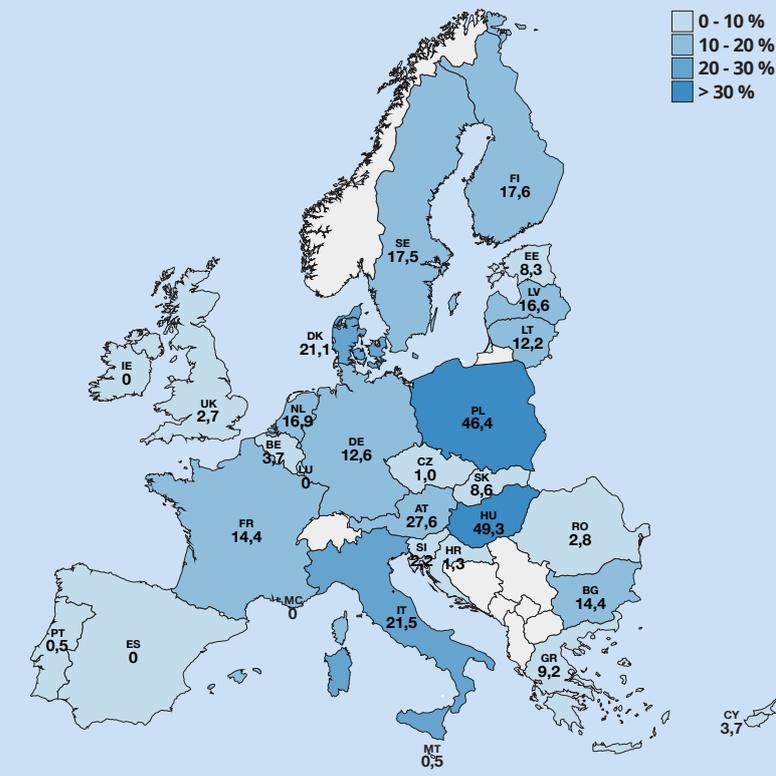
Fig. 1: Average share of the vote for populist parties in Europe in %



Source: Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index / Own representation

wing populist parties are not even represented in parliament in some Southern European states (e.g. in Spain and Portugal). Where right-wing populism is weak, left-wing populist parties have achieved their greatest electoral successes (e.g. in Greece). A look at the map also reveals that right-wing populism was able to achieve its greatest electoral successes in Central and Eastern Europe. In countries like Poland or Hungary, right-wing populist parties are now part of the government and even provide the Head of State. In some countries there are several right-wing populist or far right parties represented in the national parliament (e.g. in Poland or in Slovakia).

Fig. 2: Map of right-wing parties in Europe



Source: Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index / Own representation

But what defines populist parties as populist? It is in fact not that simple to say what it is that defines populism. It is even a contentious issue among researchers as to whether ‘populism’ can be used to characterise certain parties and movements. Some view populism more as a political ideology (Mudde 2004; Albertazzi / McDonnell 2008) or as a popular or shallow understanding of democracy (Mény / Surel 2002). Others, however, equate populism with a certain political style or a specific mobilisation strategy (Barr 2009; Taguieff 2002: 80; cf. also Priester 2011). And yet: as varied as the approaches can be, the common ground in large parts of the research is striking. The phenomenon ‘populism’ is generally associated with parties or movements which aim to mark a ‘vertical’ antagonism between ‘those at the top’ and the people. The former is meant to refer to the elite, seen to be corrupt and self-serving and in opposition to the idealised, democratic will of the people, which populist parties claim to represent<sup>2</sup>. A typical message of populism is thus that the corrupt elite evades control by the people, the democratic sovereign (Canovan 2002: 27). Consequently, populists can be recognised by the fact that they demand the old parties and the elite to remove from power in order to give the ‘lost voice’ back to the people. The goal is always the reclamation of sovereignty, either internal (from the so-called ‘cartel’ of the established parties and the connected cultural and economic elite) or external (e.g. from the EU or the UN).

Populist parties or movements have some fundamental similarities, which can be summarised in a basic definition. Characteristic features of populism are:

- The idea of a homogenous popular will,
- which distances itself from the elite (political institutions, ‘old parties’).
- The claim of being the only way to directly implement the democratic will of the people.

“Democratic” is an important keyword here: Unlike extreme left- or right-wing parties populist parties do not seek a radical upheaval in the organisation of the democratic institutions from the outset. Populism invariably implies criticism of the intermediary forms of representative democracy, but not of tried and tested democratic processes like elections. Often populist parties are characterised by a concept of plebiscitary democracy. They bemoan the lack of responsiveness of the representative democratic system and the transfer of political power to supranational institutions and therefore pursue more direct democracy and referenda. The populists’ most common accusation: Politicians (or the political elite) have distanced or alienated themselves from the people.

“POPULIST” DOES NOT  
NECESSARILY MEAN  
“ANTIDEMOCRATIC”

#### INFOBOX - Distinction between left- and right-wing populism

The distinction between left- and right-wing populism can best be clarified using the concept of ‘the people’. For right-wing populists the definition of ‘the people’ is generally a cultural or ethnic one and it is accompanied by a horizontal marginalisation of the ‘others’ and ‘outsiders’.

That means for right-wing populists that in addition to the ‘us against those at the top’-ideology of populism there is also the horizontal dimension of ‘us against the others’. For left-wing populist parties the vertical differentiation between the people and the ‘corrupt elite’ plays a similarly

<sup>2</sup> See for example Mudde: “Populism considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte generale* (general will) of the people. Populism, so defined, has two opposites: elitism and pluralism.” (Mudde 2004: 543)

important role, whereby 'the elite' is embodied more by neoliberal institutions or the property-owning classes. This pattern of argumentation became stronger under the influence of the financial and economic crisis in 2008.

In contrast, the dimension of horizontal marginalisation or the exclusion of certain groups (e.g. refugees and ethnic minorities), is not central. Where right-wing populists look for differences, left-wing populists are more likely to find similarities. The people and the refugees are thus, from a left-wing populist perspective, the same in at least one respect: both are equally subjected to the processes of deregulation and of competition being squeezed out of the market, which were initiated by the economic elite. Some left-wing populists derive from this the radical demand for the democratic inclusion of the refugees (cf. Arnson/de la Torre 2013). More recent forms of European left-wing populism do not go that far: For them, although refugees are the victims of unfair economic circumstances, at the same time they are involuntarily serving the interests of employers and neoliberal politics in that they allow themselves to be misused for wage dumping at the expense of local workers (for example members of the French movement *La France Insoumise* use an argumentation similar to this).

#### BLURRY LINE BETWEEN RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Even if populism is not directed against democracy from the start (Decker/Lewandowsky 2011) that does not then mean that populism is completely harmless. On the contrary, in particular right-wing populists attack important building blocks of liberal and representative democracy: the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the press, fundamental and human rights. The institutional forms of intermediary political decision- and policy-making – like the parliaments, but also the parties and civil society associations – also become the focus of populist criticism and hostility. In addition, their concepts of politics and law as well as their actions in a governmental capacity often cross the threshold of authoritarianism and put democracies under stress. Symbolic for this is Viktor Orbán's "illiberal democracy", which is understood as a counter-model to the pluralistic and constitutional understanding of democracy with its separation of powers. It is based on notions of homogeneity and decision-making which run counter to the principles and processes of representative and constitutional democracy (Vorländer 2011; Vorländer 2016). The openly anti-pluralist right-wing populist notion of homogeneity often manifests itself in the claim of being able to represent the true will of the people alone and directly. This also results in a plebiscitary leadership structure in populist movements which turns against the institutions of liberal democracy, communicating with the people preferably via tweets (as is the case with Trump and Salvini) and understanding decision-making as an authoritarian act.

Populists put pressure on democracies. The issue of migration would appear to be of particular significance here: populist tendencies have increased substantially – as happened recently in Germany – following the 'refugee crisis' of autumn 2015, and have revealed divisions in the societies of Europe, as well as between the countries of the European Union. Is migration the cause of the strengthening of right-wing populism?

## HOW ARE MIGRATION AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM CONNECTED?

What is the relationship between migration and populism? To what extent and under what circumstances does migration promote populist politics? Initially it seems obvious that there is a link between migration and right-wing populism. After all, right-wing populist parties profited from the 'refugee crisis' or made political capital out of it. The AfD in Germany is an example of this, as is the success of the UKIP party in Great Britain. However, a closer look reveals that it is not quite so clear-cut that a rise in the number of refugees or immigrants inevitably triggers right-wing populist reactions. How else can one explain the fact that in immigration countries like Spain or Portugal there are to date no right-wing populist parties with seats in parliament?

The link between migration and right-wing populism is thus more complex than it appears at first sight. This study assumes the existence of an impact chain which generates an increase in votes for right-wing populist parties. Its main elements can be summarised as follows:

(1) The starting point is sudden migratory movements and the associated strong increase in the numbers of refugees or immigrants (as some European countries have experienced in recent years).

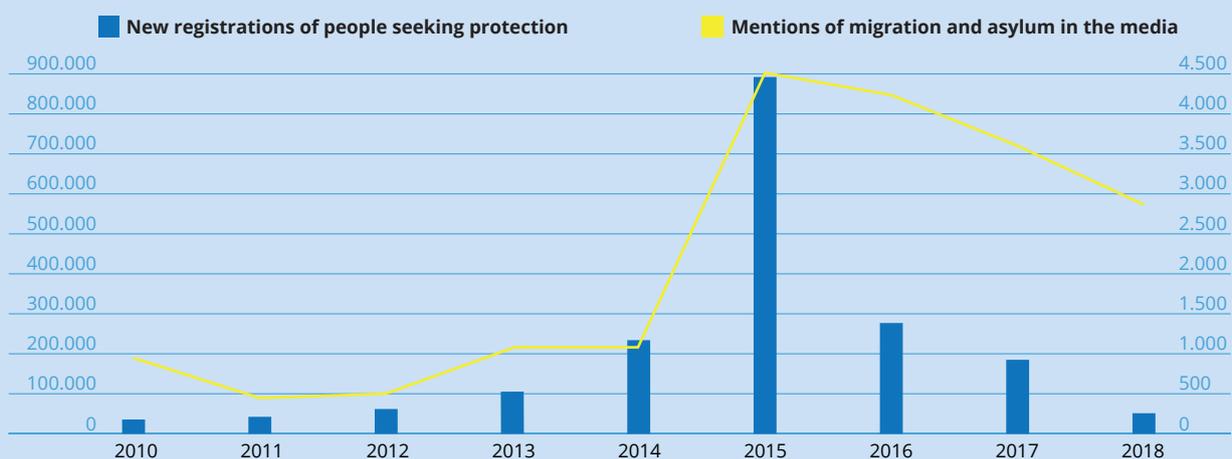
(2) As a result, media coverage and political discussions about the topic of migration and refugees commence in the receiving country (see Fig. 3). The immediate impact of the most recent forced migration can be clearly seen in the considerable growth in the number of relevant media reports – in particular at the height of the 'refugee crisis'. Increased media coverage and intensive political debates are generally linked and reinforce each other.

### IMPACT CHAIN: MIGRATION AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM

#### SUDDEN LARGE MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

#### EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE, INTENSIVE DEBATES

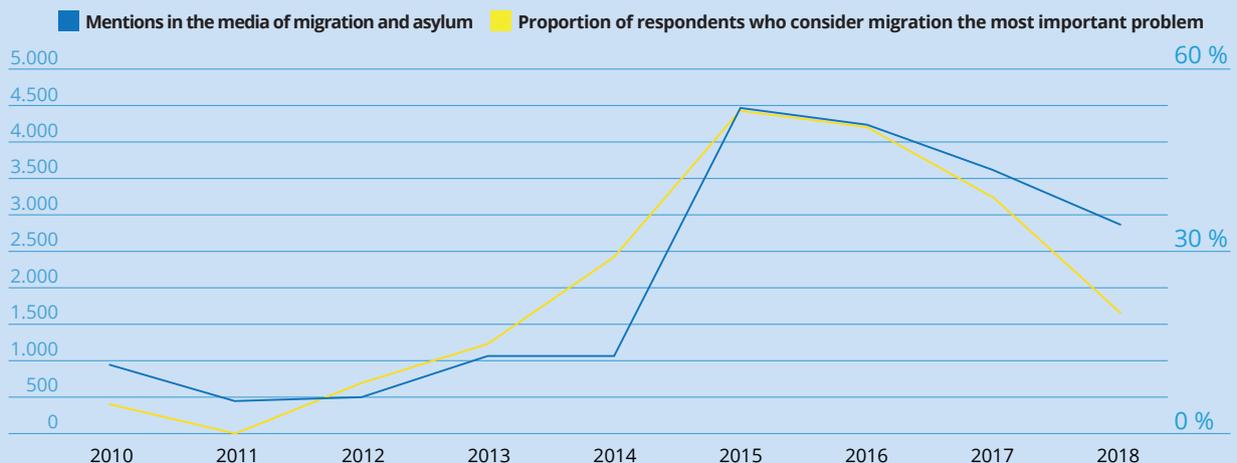
Fig. 3: Relationship between number of new registrations of asylum seekers and mentions of migration and asylum in the media<sup>3</sup>



Source: 2010-2013: BAMF / 2014-2018: Statista/BMI / Own representation

<sup>3</sup> From 2010 to 2016 the initial registration of asylum seekers was carried out using the system EASY. However, in 2015 and 2016 this led to numerous double registrations. The BMI later revised the figures downwards (see BMI 2016/ 2017). For 2018 the data until April have been recorded. Mentions in the media are based on the words "migration" and "asylum" being used in the online presences of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ.net), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ.de) and Spiegel Online (spiegel.de).

Fig. 4: Relationship between media mentions and salience of the topic of migration



Source: Eurobarometer / Own representation (The mentions in the media are based on the use of the words “migration” and “asylum” in the online presences of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ.net), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ.de) and Spiegel Online (spiegel.de))

### MOBILISATION OF FEARS AND ANXIETIES

(3) Both ‘activate’ the latent scepticism with regard to migration which is present in parts of the population (cf. Dennison/Geddes/Talo 2017). Strictly speaking, migration does not create these fears, rather, it triggers and strengthens them. Evidence for this can be seen in the increased importance of the topic of migration in the eyes of voters while the attitudes to migration remained the same (see Fig. 4). In concrete terms this means that for the most part the ‘refugee crisis’ did not make European populations more sceptical of or opposed to migration (with the exception of the Visegrad countries, where the trend in terms of attitudes towards migration had also been predominantly negative beforehand). The ‘refugee crisis’ ‘woke’ and mobilised anti-immigration attitudes, which were already present particularly amongst people with conservative-authoritarian value systems, but had not previously been openly articulated.

### VOTES FOR RIGHT-WING POPULISTS

(4) The ‘activation’ of anti-immigration attitudes, combined with the widespread dissatisfaction with the governments’ and European Union’s management of the migration issue was ultimately reflected in votes for right-wing populist parties, which had made the topics of migration and refugees the focus of their campaigns (Kaufmann 2018). The issue of migration is thus a prerequisite for the mobilisation of right-wing populist support in the protest against the ‘ruling elite’ and is the subject of polarising controversies in the political discourse.

### MORE RESTRICTIVE MIGRATION POLICY

(5) The impact chain of migration and right-wing populism generally results in a more restrictive migration policy, one which can not only be traced back to decisions made by right-wing populist governments (cf. De Haas/Natter/Vezzoli 2016). Non-populist governments (like the grand coalition in Germany for instance) have also taken a more restrictive course with regard to migration policy.

### MIGRATION MAKES CLEAVAGES MORE VISIBLE

A special feature of this impact chain is that it also gets set in motion or persists if there is not in fact strong growth in the number of refugees and (e.g. due to intensive media coverage) it is merely ‘imagined’. This applies in particular to Central and Eastern European countries, which in the past years hardly accepted any asylum seekers, yet in which the topic of migration temporarily led to intensive political debates and media discussions, from which especially right-wing populist parties like Jarosław Kaczyński’s party ‘Law and Justice’ (abbreviation: PiS) attempted to benefit. In these cases the right-wing populist parties gain a good part of their success from the fact

Fig. 5: The impact chain of migration and right-wing populism



Own illustration

that the mere prospect of increased immigration (in particular from non-EU states) becomes the subject of critical media coverage and emotionally charged political discussions. In some cases this can be used as proof for the contact hypothesis according to which the attitude towards immigrants is more negative if the population does not have any everyday contact with foreigners.

The impact chain of migration and right-wing populism is able to explain how the rapid rise of right-wing populism came about – but not why. Why does the topic of migration polarise democratic societies so strongly? In the past decades there have been numerous controversial topics (such as nuclear power or the financial crisis), which were not as politically explosive. The hypothesis of this study is that migration not only activates or strengthens attitudes critical of immigration<sup>4</sup>, but also makes latent existing fault lines within and between the European societies visible. Four central explanatory approaches to determine these cleavages can be identified: political-cultural, socio-economic, political-structural and socio-psychological.

Some populism researchers currently diagnose a kind of cultural “counter-revolution”. It is claimed that this is indicated by a move away from supposedly dominant liberal cosmopolitan values and worldviews which could support a tolerant integration policy and liberal migration policy. For example, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris argue in their study that the central dimension of the electoral success of right-wing populist parties is to be found in a mobilisation of the electorate along the political-cultural cleavage (Inglehart/Norris 2017); a cleavage which runs between an open, liberal and pluralist and a more homogeneous, traditionalist and nationalistic concept of society. According to Inglehart and Norris this cultural fault line runs right through European populations. In many cases whole voter segments are encompassed – among them often, although not always, people with a lower level of education, who feel marginalised by the elite or the established parties.

Other social scientists and economists are convinced that the rise of populism reveals a socio-economic cleavage. The argument: The rise of populism can be traced back to primarily economic reasons (like slow growth

## THE POLITICAL-CULTURAL CLEAVAGE

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLEAVAGE

<sup>4</sup> The hypothesis that migration strengthens attitudes critical of immigration also reflects the results of studies, which show a – slight – increase in right-wing populist attitudes in the German population (Vehrkamp/Wratil 2017; Vehrkamp/Merkel 2018; Zick et al. 2016).

and increasing inequality) and is supported by concerns about the increasing international economic integration. The Harvard economist Dani Rodrik argues that the advance of economic globalisation creates political opposition especially amongst those who fear social decline (Rodrik 2011). Particularly in Northern Europe, one reason why right-wing populist parties can benefit from economic concerns like unemployment is said to be the skilful linking of migration and the shortage of resources for the welfare state (Manow 2018). This occurs for instance when refugees are made responsible for supposedly being a burden on the labour market or for significant financial expenditure in the area of social services.

#### **THE POLITICAL-STRUCTURAL CLEAVAGE**

Particularly among political scientists populism is viewed from the 'supply side'. For them, the research clearly does not go far enough if the sole explanation given for the success of populism is the increased demand for populist political offerings. Another crucial factor is the change in the communication strategies of many parties. Specifically populist parties are said to be particularly effective because they fill a space which was left often by the established parties (Muis/Scholte 2013). There is no other policy area where this alleged gap between representatives and citizens is as pronounced as it is for refugee and immigration policy. Migration research defines this as a democratic gap, which has played into the hands of right-wing populist parties (Angeli 2018). The argument goes as follows: compared with the stance of the European citizens, who are often critical of immigration, the course taken by most of the governments in the past decades in matters relating to immigration has been quite liberal. For right-wing populist parties like the AfD that is a welcome opportunity, because they can argue that established parties ('the elite') have governed without consulting the 'people' in terms of migration policy.

#### **THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL CLEAVAGE**

It is common to attribute populist voting behaviour to the cognitive and mental disposition of democratic citizens. This includes disenchantment with politics, a lack of political interest and other socio-psychological factors such as deficits in terms of education and range of experiences. Thus right-wing populist attitudes are often associated or explained with limited international experience or with a lack of contact with migrants. Put simply, the assumption is that people who have regular contact with foreigners and people with an immigrant background are less susceptible to right-wing populist stances. One could conclude from this that in areas with a low proportion of foreigners – such as in eastern Germany or in many regions of Central and Eastern Europe – the population tends to categorically reject immigration (cf. Allport 1954).

#### **A SINGLE EXPLANATORY APPROACH IS INSUFFICIENT**

There is a 'grain of truth' in each of these four attempted explanations, which reflect four different cleavages. However, taken individually they are of little help when trying to explain the rise of populism. An example: socio-economic explanations ignore the fact that the success of populist parties has continued in recent years despite economic recovery and sinking unemployment. Put simply: If economic arguments alone had decided the result of the Brexit vote, the populist campaign of Brexit advocates would probably not have succeeded and Great Britain would have remained in the EU. Or, to name a further example: If economic growth had been a decisive factor for the Polish population, then the right-wing populist Law and Justice party (PiS) would never have become the country's dominant political force because there is hardly a country in Europe which has experienced growth as strong as in Poland between 1989 and 2015. Nevertheless: socio-economic factors cannot be totally dismissed. They are also often evident in the background of the cultural interpretations. The welfare chauvinistic view taken by many right-wing populist parties is a good example. Its core idea: only the native population deserves to be entitled to social benefits – not outsiders.

## CLEAVAGES OVERLAP

In the MIDEM annual report the aforementioned cleavages are examined using a number of European countries as examples. The preference hereby was to examine countries in which elections have taken place in the past two years, which were marked by the 'refugee crisis'. The central question to be answered is: What is the relationship between migration and populist electoral successes? Given the breadth of the countries examined, as expected, the answers to the question are diverse. One thing is clear: It would be misleading to put the rise of right-wing populism exclusively down to the struggle between stronger nationalism and liberal cosmopolitanism. Rather, the aforementioned four cleavages overlap to varying degrees and thereby create regionally specific conflict situations.

## SPECIFIC CLEAVAGE CONSTELLATIONS IN EUROPE

In **Central and Eastern Europe** migration has made socio-cultural, political-structural and socio-psychological cleavages visible. The significance of the latter is not to be underestimated. Most Eastern European societies are ethnically much more homogeneous than those of their Western European neighbours and have little experience with immigration from Africa or the Middle East. In countries like Poland or Hungary there is no everyday contact with people from these groups, which is why they suffer from strong prejudices. In addition, attitudes towards immigration in Central and Eastern Europe are more negative than the average and have worsened further in the wake of the 'refugee crisis'. This is another reason why it is easy for right-wing populists and nationalists to describe the cultural identity and homogeneity as threatened and to claim the role of protectors. However, the strict rejection of a liberal migration policy is also one consequence of the increasing estrangement of Central and Eastern European societies from the political elite, especially the EU institutions, which wanted to impose a binding reception quota for refugees. Parties like PiS in Poland or Fidesz in Hungary were successful in describing European 'refugee quotas' as a threat to national sovereignty, which had been regained after decades of foreign dominance and to link the quotas with the problems of crime and terrorism. It is therefore not surprising that the popularity of the EU in most Central and Eastern European countries has suffered considerably in recent years.

The attitude towards migration from non-EU States is much more positive in most countries in **Northern and Western Europe** as compared to Central and Eastern Europe. It is also remarkable that in the wake of the 'refugee crisis' no deterioration in the climate of opinion has taken place. The decisive factor for the success of the right-wing populists in Northern and Western Europe was the fact that migration gained almost unprecedented prominence as a political topic. For many voters migration is the most important national and European problem, even ahead of the perennial issues of unemployment or economic growth. The considerable increase in significance or salience of the topic of migration was useful for right-wing populist parties. This enabled them to target the mobilisation of those parts of the electorate that are critical of or opposed to immigration and to profit from the increasing polarisation of attitudes towards migration.

In some Northern and Western European countries the topic of migration has also made socio-economic cleavages visible. The marked increase in the number of asylum seekers is perceived in parts of the population as a kind of catalyst for problems, such as the increase of competition between winners and losers that drives society apart. This is exemplified by the argument that a liberal migration policy causes a financial burden and disadvantages for the native population – whereby the financial support for the asylum seekers on the one hand and for needy locals on the other is perceived as a zero-sum game. This in essence welfare chauvinistic way of thinking is particularly pronounced in countries with a comparatively high level of social security (including for example Sweden). Often however it

is connected with fears of decline and loss in the future, which are more related to the political and cultural consequences of migration than the socio-economic effects. The concerns of a large portion of those who vote for right-wing populists in Western Europe actually focus more on the cultural consequences of migration (like the fear of losing one's own way of life and identity) than on its socio-economic effects. The causes of British Euro-scepticism and reasons for supporting Brexit tend to be of a cultural rather than an economic nature.

#### CLEAVAGES IN SOCIETIES

Country-specific cleavages are also made visible as a result of migration – for example between the East and the West in Germany, between the North and South in Italy. Similar to Central and Eastern Europe, right-wing populist orientations resonate strongly in **Eastern Germany**. Attitudes which are xenophobic and critical of migration are on average more widespread there than in Western Germany and provided favourable conditions for the emergence of movements like Pegida (Vorländer/Herold/Schäller 2016; 2018). The 'divide' in **Italy** between the North and the South also translates into two different forms of populism: firstly, the right-wing populism of Lega, which has strong cultural elements and focuses on problems caused by immigration (like rising crime), and, secondly, the more strongly left-wing orientated populism of the 5-star movement, which primarily focuses on socio-economic problems.

#### FACING CLEAVAGE CONSTELLATIONS

When comparing the European countries it is apparent that migration makes country-specific cleavages more pronounced, therefore leading to different types of populism. In order to confront these populisms with political action, one must therefore look at country-specific conflict constellations. In answering the question of how to contain processes of polarisation and radicalisation, which are dangerous for democracy, migration policy is not the only relevant policy area. Instead, there should also be a focus on political action which addresses the underlying societal problems.

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