# Interpreting Euroskepticism(s): The Anti-Establishment Parties of the 2014 Euro Elections and their Challenge to Integration[1]

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## Abstract

The 2014 European Parliament elections were widely construed as a major shock to the political narrative of European integration. A range of parties either skeptical of or openly opposed to the European Union saw major gains, including UKIP in Great Britain, the *Front National* in France, and the Five Star Movement in Italy. Though a diverse lot, the collective success of these parties triggered concern within pro-European parties and the EU institutions, and featured in the opposition from some heads of government to Jean-Claude Juncker's appointment as Commission President. A key question, then, is whether these electoral developments reflect a popular rejection of the narrative of integration. The academic study of party-based Euroskepticism can help us answer this, but to do so it must come to terms with the diversity of anti-establishment voices. Building on earlier textual analysis of UKIP, I propose to go beyond the hard/soft Euroskepticism distinction and map these parties in terms of the broader arguments that underpin their claims against the EU. In addition to improving our understanding of the political developments themselves, this can also inform ongoing debates about the Union's constitutional structure. In particular, I distinguish between populist and nationalist grounds for Euroskepticism, which cast very different lights on the "democratic deficit" and how to fix it.

The 2014 elections to European Parliament (or simply the "Euro elections") were at once fairly prosaic and quite momentous. At the top line, as it were, there was only a small change as the center-right European People's Party (EPP) lost ground to its socialist opposition, but retained its plurality. Among the smaller parties, however, the election made headlines due to the marked success of radical and anti-establishment parties, especially those skeptical of (or opposed to) European integration. Among these were Britain's UK Independence Party (UKIP) and France's *Front National* (FN), which achieved unprecedented first-place finishes in their countries. The success of such parties attracted broad attention as evidence of a wave of public

Euroskepticism across the continent—*The Economist* (2014) ran an article with the headline "The Euroskeptic Union," noting that "populist" and "antiestablishment" parties had received a quarter of the vote or more in member states as diverse as Greece, Italy, Denmark, Britain, and France. This concern even reached the level of intergovernmental deliberations, when a group of anti-federalist heads of government led by the UK's David Cameron tried unsuccessfully to block the appointment of EPP nominee Jean-Claude Junker as Commission President. Recent convention (intended to democratize the European Commission) holds that the President should be chosen by the largest party in the parliamentary election, but Cameron used the rise of Euroskeptic parties as evidence for his argument that the federalist Junker was in fact out of touch with the democratic will (Doyle and Martin 2014).

Though this particular intervention in the constitutional machinery of the EU failed (Junker was duly selected), the arguments made by these parties are not going away, and promise to figure into future constitutional debates. But these debates are never yes-no questions about being for or against Europe; likewise, these parties are making a range of specific claims, reflective of their own ideologies, political interests, and national circumstances. Thus, understanding the significance of the Euroskeptic electoral wave means unpacking the anti-EU discourse that these parties present. In this paper, I propose to do so through a specific analytical framework, one which focuses on the distinction between populist and nationalist bases for Euroskeptic claims. As I will discuss, there is an important difference between opposing Europe because it is part-and-parcel of the general disenfranchisement of "the people," and because it is a specifically foreign interference with the principle of national sovereignty. Among other things, this difference affects whether democratization or de-integration is the most pressing need for addressing the "democratic deficit."

My argument is structured as follows: In the first section, I (very briefly) review the literature on populism and nationalism in order to show how these can help us typologize different ways of articulating claims against European integration. I then proceed to preliminary analysis of four different parties within the (broadly-defined) Euroskeptic grouping: the aforementioned UKIP and FN, the Italian *Lega Nord*, and Greece's Golden Dawn. These short case studies are intended only to be illustrative of the framework I've developed, and exploratory of agenda for further research in this direction. Finally, I conclude by discussing the potential political implications of the different varieties of Euroskeptic claims.

**The Case(s) against Europe: Varieties of Euroskepticism**

To properly identify and explicate the challenge that these anti-establishment parties pose to their mainstream competitors and the European project as a whole, we need a new approach to categorizing political parties that moves beyond the existing silos of "left or right parties," "regional parties," etc. Studies of anti-EU parties often focus on distinguishing "hard" and "soft" Euroskeptics (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003, 2008); the latter, also called "Eurorejectionism" (Kopecky and Mudde 2002), reject both the principle of ever closer union as well as the current state of the EU institutions.[2] It is this rejectionist position that is notable in many of the emergent parties in the recent European Parliament elections, such as UKIP. In any case, most of these distinctions are built on mapping policy positions, or (for more traditional left-right divides) identifying the social status of their supporters.

I propose instead that we proceed by analyzing the "claims-making" of parties, not just who they are and what they stand for, but *how* they make their arguments in the context of

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[2] Note that while "Euroskepticism" has become broadly accepted in academic and political discourse, more specific terms are still contested. For example, party sympathizers prefer the more positive "Eurorealist" (Gardner, 2006), but Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) similar-sounding "Europragmatist" refers to a different current entirely.

political talk and text. In this case, I suggest examining the way that anti-establishment parties in the European Parliament frame and justify their Euroskeptic claims. On a theoretical and methodological level, this can be seen as an incorporation of party politics into the tradition of rhetorical political studies (Finlayson and Martin 2008), which has tended to focus on the rhetorical performances of individual leaders (though see Atkins 2011). While leaders' personality, styles, and beliefs are undeniably important in shaping the language that is used, that rhetorical language also contributes to binding and defining parties—as well as giving shape to the region-wide political debates . Thus, understanding the details of speeches and texts is equally important to understanding parties as organized actors.

Note that I refer to claims-making rather than argumentation, as is more common in rhetorical or "political discourse" studies (Finlayson and Martin 2008; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). This is for three reasons: First, I wish to deemphasize the process of collective deliberation and decision-making, in order to focus on the claims of individual parties. Second, I want to emphasize the fundamentally contentious nature of the politics around European integration—in the contentious politics tradition, these anti-EU claims would be categorized as either "programme" or "standing" claims (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 83-85). Though made by parties in this case rather than social movements (though the line is admittedly fuzzy in the case of, say, UKIP in the 1990s), the claims are much the same. Finally, I want to suggest that, in practice, the *political* claims often blur together with *truth* claims. It has often been *empirical* claims about the nature of contemporary Europe that underpin the *normative* (or deontic) imperative of opposing the European Union. The former are often contestable claims, but they are presented as taken for granted in the context of the political arguments. This echoes a social constructionist understanding of what would come to be called contentious politics as "the

activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" (Spector and Kitsuse 1977: 75).

Obviously, there are many ways in which a party's claims might be analyzed. A similarly worthy analysis of these same parties, for example, might focus on the particular ways in which their claims about immigration are structured. However, in order to understand the significance of the current Euroskeptic challenge, I propose two ideal-typical modes of anti-EU claim: populist and nationalist. Each of these concepts is the subject of a wide literature in its own right, of course, and in the sections below I (very briefly) discuss those literatures and proceed to discuss what kinds of Euroskepticism they imply.

*Populism*

Populist claims-making will be the most familiar to scholars of European parties (particularly right-wing parties) and party systems. Over the past two decades, there has been substantial academic attention to the origins and characteristics of an emergent (or re-emergent) European family of right-wing populist parties. This type of party has been given several different labels in the literature (associated with slightly different definitions): Abedi refers to "right wing-populist Anti-Political Establishment (APE)" parties (2004); Cas Mudde influentially coined "populist radical right parties" (PRRPs) (2007); while Eatwell settles for "the extreme right" in reference to many of the same parties (2000). In recent years, this conceptual framework has been applied to many of the prominent Euroskeptic parties across the continent, such as UKIP (Abedi and Lundberg 2009: 71).

A full review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. For the purpose of analyzing different Euroskeptic claims, the element I extract from these approaches is a

particularly definition of "populism." As defined by Mudde in his influential study of PRRPs, populism "is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,' (2007: 23). While Mudde's search for the distinctive core features of the PRRP phenomenon is a different goal from my analysis, three things are important about this definition: First, he makes note of the fact that populism is "not merely a political style" (Mudde 2007: 23). Second, there is a clear political claim about the current state of politics, that the greatest threat to society is the corruption of the elite and powerlessness of the masses. And third, there is a corresponding claim about political legitimacy, that it "should be an expression of the *volonté générale*" (Mudde 2007: 23).

Applied to the varieties of anti-EU claims, this suggests a particular species of "populist Euroskeptic" argument. Such an argument holds that European integration is to be opposed because it is part of the general conflict the corrupt elites and the masses that also happens at the domestic level, and is a uniquely sharp example of unaccountable institutions taking decisions contrary to the interests of the people. This claim would logically not make a firm distinction between the actions of domestic elites and the European institutions. Stylistically, such party rhetoric will emphasize "the people" or "citizens," and oppose these to some broadly-defined threat (so as to encompass both domestic- and European-level opponents). Finally, they will be more likely to invoke ethnic and religious tensions in making their complaints against Europe— that is, in some way rendering them as the EU's fault, as opposed to general xenophobic speech which properly belongs to the other parts of the party discourse beyond Euroskepticism (and is outside of this analysis).

*Nationalism*

But populism—the general opposition between masses and elites, which exists at the European level in parallel with the domestic level—is not the only way to formulate a political claim against the EU and the process of European integration generally. Where Europe is seen primarily as a distinctly supranational entity—inherently violating the principle that political authority must be congruent with the national unit in order to be legitimate—the claim is better described as a nationalist one.

"Nationalism" is of course a long-contested concept in social science, encompassing political, cultural, and sociological conceptions of what it means to be and become a "nation." Gellner famously articulated national*ism* "a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (1983: 1). This definition can be useful regardless of the particular content assigned to the signifier "national unit." It is this point, the nature of the national unit and its historical development, which occupies much of the voluminous nationalism literature. Anderson (1983), for example, argues that nations are a kind of "imagined communities" which emerged from the socioeconomic processes of modernization, particularly print capitalism. By contrast, the ethnosymbolist school associated with Armstrong (1982) and Smith (1991) focuses on the necessity of long-standing ethnic symbols (like founding myths) for modern national identities to exist. Other scholarship on nationalism has engaged with different models of nationhood, such as the ethnic versus civic nationalism question (Ignatieff 1993) and the idea of a "new nationalism," which again do not necessarily conflict with nationalism as a generic principle of political legitimacy.

I thus return here to Gellner's notion of a political claim because my aim is to analyze party discourses in their political contexts, rather than to evaluate or historicize their respective

imagined communities. According to this understanding, then, nationalist Euroskepticism entails a different structure and style of argument from that of its populist analogue. The nationalist claim is that deep European integration is by definition illegitimate, because it attaches political power to something other than the national unit. More concretely, this will take the form of arguments that focus on conflict between states and the European institutions, generally taking for granted the normative preference for the former (e.g., that states will naturally be best placed to respond to the lingering economic crisis, if only allowed a free hand in their policies).

**Case Studies in Euroskepticism**

In this section I aim to illustrate the empirical application of this framework with four very brief case studies of Euroskeptic parties that achieved relative success in the 2015 Euro elections, and espouse different claims on the populist-nationalist spectrum: the UK Independence Party, the *Front National* (of France), the *Lega Nord* (of Italy), and Golden Dawn (of Greece). In each of these sketches, I first situate the party in the contemporary literature, with a particular focus on what those analyses suggest in terms of populist or nationalist orientations. I then present and discuss some illustrative (*not* dispositive) textual evidence in the form of extracts from European Parliament speeches given by MEPs representing the party. The aim here is not yet to provide a full empirical analysis, but to develop the theoretical perspective outlined above by showing what populist and nationalist claims look like in the context of actual rhetoric.

*UK Independence Party*

UKIP has emerged as a major challenger to the political establishment in Britain, as well as a regional standard-bearer of Euroskepticism as a central party goal. Currently led by Nigel

Farage (who has been an insider since the party's 1993 foundation), it distinguishes itself as the British party calling simply and directly for UK withdrawal from the European Union. The party finished first with 27% of the vote in the 2014 European Parliament election (the first time that anyone other than the Labour and Conservative Parties has achieved this since the 1979 advent of directly-elected MEPs), and took its first seats elected seats in Westminster with two by-election victories.[3] Moreover, pressure from UKIP has been keenly felt by the ruling Conservatives, with Prime Minister David Cameron promising to renegotiate Britain's role in Europe and hold an "in-out" referendum on EU membership in the next Parliament (should his party be re-elected; Mason 2014). Whatever the eventual fate of that promise, it is already clear that these parties are making a mark on what has long been considered a two- (or at most three-) party system. And at the European level, though Britain is already known as one of the member states least dedicated to integration, the rise of UKIP is likely to exacerbate tensions.

The study of the party has generally been divided between understanding it as a single-issue Euroskeptic party and understanding it as part of the larger wave of right-wing populism in Europe. Key to the first is the simple pair of observations that the party opposes continued EU membership and that throughout its existence a sizeable portion of the British public has expressed deep misgivings about the process of European integration—the percentage who say they would vote for withdrawal in a hypothetical referendum has hovered around 40% between 1994 and 2003 (Baker et al. 2008: 104).[4] The simplest frame for interpreting the party, then, is as a "single-issue party" carrying the banner of British Euroskepticism (Usherwood 2008). The practical consequence of this approach has been a focus on the structural challenges facing single-issue parties, to the exclusion of other relevant dynamics. According to Simon

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[3] Not counting a handful of defections by sitting MPs and peers.
[4] It should be acknowledged, however, that the electoral math is not quite this simple: During the same period, the number who considered Europe an "important issue" only averaged about 30% (Baker et al. 2008: 106).

Usherwood, the party's history has been defined by a fundamental tension "between those who feel that the objective is fundamental to the nature of the party and cannot be compromised at any point, and those who accept a need to be flexible in the short run, in order to have a better chance of achieving the objective in the longer term" (2008: 256). Thus, for example, the organizational advantages gained by the party taking up seats in the European Parliament outweighed concerns about legitimizing that institution. Of course, this is not without cost in terms of internal dissension, with the grassroots supporters of most single-issue parties favoring ideals over expedience (Usherwood 2008: 261).

This approach implicitly challenges the conventional wisdom that considers European issues (and European elections) to be of the "second-order," subordinate to the "first-order" competition between parties of government over bread-and-butter issues (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998). However, the existence of independent Euroskeptic parties suggests that a growing number of voters consider European integration a first-order issue. This is reinforced by data showing that the pattern of Euroskeptic mobilization in the UK tends to track European rather than domestic political events (Usherwood 2007), and by an increasing recognition of social movement-style opposition to the EU outside of the party system (Fitzgibbon 2013). Still, outside of these advances over existing approaches, this line of analysis has spoken more to the study of Euroskepticism as an idea than to party politics as a field (i.e., in its framing as "party-based Euroskepticism;" Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003).

The second main approach associates UKIP with populist radical right parties, drawing on the literature discussed above. Abedi and Lundberg use the term "populist anti-political establishment party," arguing that UKIP is populist in that it "asserts that there is a fundamental divide between the political establishment and the people" and anti-establishment in that it

"challenges the status quo in terms of major policy issues and political system issues" (2009: 74).[5] The additional prefix "right-wing" is not often systematically addressed, but has become a commonplace in reference to UKIP's mostly-Tory origins and its positions on immigration and the welfare state. This overall approach has been empirically developed in two ways: On the first account, Abedi and Lundberg document examples of populist logic in UKIP communications, such as claims that all of the establishment parties are basically the same and that its own leaders do not consider themselves politicians, but rather "people from all backgrounds who feel deeply what the majority of British people feel" (2009: 76). They also note that the explicit EU withdrawal position is not only a challenge to the status quo in policy terms, but an attempt to "turn back the clock" in terms of the British constitution (2009: 75). In terms of indirect evidence about the party, Lynch, Whitaker, and Loomes present data from election surveys in 2009 and 2010. These data show that UKIP votes tended to correlate geographically with votes from the far-right British National Party, and that the party's voters were "slightly older, more likely to be male, white and drawn from social classes C2, D and E [killed working class, working class, and non-working], but less likely to have a degree, compared with voters for the three main parties" (2012: 747-49).

However, in terms of the ideal-types outlined earlier, UKIP's *claims* about Europe (setting aside domestic issues, the social base of its support, etc.) are distinctly nationalist: The party is organized around the fundamental argument that the ills of British society could be largely ameliorated *if only* the country were ruled exclusively from Westminster, free of foreign imposition from Brussels. Indeed, this framing is one of the things that differentiates UKIP from the British National Party (whose shadow it is always keen to escape), because the latter party's

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[5] Abedi and Lundberg include a third criterion for populist anti-political establishment parties, "[a] party that perceives itself as a challenger to the parties that make up the political establishment" (2009: 74), which seems redundant in light of the other two, but certainly applies to UKIP.

extremist populism implies that a significant political reorganization of the UK—not just its liberation from the EU—would be necessary. This kind of nationalism—an avowedly forward-looking version, of which UKIP is fond, likely to further distance themselves from the extreme right—is reflected in this passage from the party's 2010 manifesto:

> While UKIP is realistic about the difficult economic and political challenges Britain faces, we take a positive view of Britain's place in the world - a stark contrast to the defeatist and apologetic stance taken by other parties. UKIP recognises Britain as a global player with a global destiny and not a regional state within a "United States of Europe."
>
> (UKIP 2010: 10)

And indeed, it is also reflected in their interventions in European political discourse, such as this declaration by Farage in a June 2014 European Parliament debate following a meeting of the European Council: "We are the ones who want democracy, we are the ones who want nation states, we are the ones who want a global future for our countries, and do not want to be trapped inside this museum." In other words, supranational governance is construed as problematic because it represents a major restraint on *states'* ability to achieve the progress that would naturally be possible (or so it is implied) absent the imposition of Europe.

*Front National*

France's FN is one of them most controversial and enduring radical-right parties in Western Europe, most famously disrupting French politics and attracting worldwide attention when then-leader Jean-Marie Le Pen bested the Socialist candidate and reached the Presidential run-off in 2002. Though that peak heralded the beginning of a decline in popularity for the party, it has recently become resurgent under the leadership of Le Pen's daughter Marine. The FN of Marine Le Pen has established itself as a key player in the contemporary wave of anti-establishment parties in the European Parliament, on the strength of a resounding first place

showing in the 2015 EP elections in France.[6] Though the party's far-right reputation has made formal cooperation with other parties difficult—including a public spat between Le Pen and UKIP's Farage (Owen 2014)—it is an important party to consider in this analysis because of its recent success (in one of the EU's largest members) and its historical role as a paragon of right-wing populism.

Indeed, in the literature on the radical right, the FN was always a subject of particular attention; Mudde calls it the "most famous" such party and notes that it is "considered the prototype by various scholars" (2007: 41, citing Davies 1999 and Simmons 1996). As this language makes clear, the party as it existed under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen was an archetypal populist party according to Mudde's understanding (discussed above). Recent analyses of the party under Marine Le Pen, however, suggest its resurgence has been accompanied by a shift in its political claims. For example, Startin (2014) shows that, among other strategies, the party has had increasing success tapping into the Gaullist legacy in France to build up its own legitimacy. Without delving into the literature on that concept, it is clear enough that Gaullism is not a populist ideology, and indeed was distinctly nationalist in its troubled relationship to the European project.[7] This discourse accompanies a general move by the FN to integrate itself more into the French party system, while still retaining its oppositional policies (Shields 2014). One scholar, expressing the wide-sweep of this change and its success in attracting more young and female voters, calls it a "Marinisation" of the party and consequently of French politics (Stadelmann 2014).

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[6] The FN, received 24.85% of the votes cast only 20.80% for the center-right UMP and only 13.98% for the governing Socialist Party (European Parliament 2014).

[7] There is an obvious parallel here with UKIP's desire (basically from its earliest days) to associate itself with Thatcherism.

In other words, this literature suggests that the FN is moving away from its "prototypical" populist right-wing alignment, and possibly toward the nationalist pole as I have defined it (especially if the party continues to appropriate the trappings of Gaullism). Turning then to evidence from recent EP debates, the following remarks from an FN MEP on the 2015 EU budget are illustrative:

> The vote on the 2015 budget showed again the exorbitant amount of unfunded liabilities, which are a form of debt to the Union. Taken together, they represent almost 30 billion euros in unpaid bills end of 2014 and about €220 billion of commitment authorizations not covered by payments. *Therefore, what is the legitimacy of the Commission, which commits these monthly sanction procedures for excessive deficits against France and Italy, as she gathers herself these debts?* That is the credibility of Mr. Juncker, who announced a multi-year program to invest an additional €300 billion, without specifying how it will be funded? *Ultimately, it is still the Member States who will be involved, unless a European tax is founded…*European leaders will find its justification.
>
> (Monot 2014; emphasis added)

Most notable here is the particular focus on the relationship between the EU and the member states, as in the italicized passages. Despite invoking sensitive issues of taxation and spending, there are no references (directly or indirectly) to the people, as we would expect from a populist Euroskeptic claim. Instead, as we would expect from a nationalist Euroskeptic claim, the basic argument is that the member states have a legitimate right to organize their economies (including running deficits), and that it is the supranational authority which exceeds its ambit when it sanctions their fiscal decisions and aims to usurp their monopoly on taxation. Again, the same Euroskeptic attack on the EU budget could be made in other ways, but the fact that it takes a nationalist form here is relevant. Of course, I do not claim that this is completely representative of FN discourse, or empirical proof that "Marinisation" is happening,[8] but I do suggest that it keenly illustrates the analysis of claims-making in terms of these ideal-types.

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[8] In a related economic debate, a different FN MEP made a clear (if not especially radical) populist claim in complaining that "even as people undergo an economic crisis that never ends , this report proposes nothing less than to continue the policy of austerity which we can only see harm" (Bilde 2015).

*Lega Nord*

The Italian LN is another radical party that has been widely studied in the literature, though it is somewhat less of a clear-cut member of the populist radical right party family (it is excluded for example in Ignazi 2003). The party's support for an autonomous "Padania" (comprising the northern regions of Italy) represents the regionalist current among populist radical right parties, in which the enemy of the people is located "within the state [but] outside the nation" (Mudde 2007: 69). In this case, the corrupting influence being the people of central and southern Italy (with Rome as the metonymic villain). Like the FN, the *Lega* has undergone a change of leadership, from longtime leader Umberto Bossi to Roberto Maroni and then Matteo Salvini. The path of the two parties, however, has been substantially different. The LN under Bossi was fairly pro-European, while being staunchly nationalist in the Italian context (like a right-wing analogue of the Scottish National Party). Under Maroni and (especially) Salvini, this position has reversed: The party has adopted more stridently Euroskeptic policies (such as opposition to the Euro), allied itself with other right-wing Euroskeptics (as with UKIP in the now-defunct Europe of Freedom and Democracy group), and substantially downplayed its federalist and separatist roots.

The strategy has paid-off with modest but stable showings in recent elections,[9] including advances among new groups of voters. The latter gains, it has been suggested, show the potential for a durable rise in the party's support (Passarelli and Tuorto 2012). Most radically of all, given its origins, the party has recently begun to organize a sister party in the south—*Noi con Salvini,* meaning simply "Us with Salvini"—which would act alongside the LN as a new right-wing

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[9] In the 2014 Euro elections the LN finished fourth with 6.2% of the vote (European Parliament 2014). This was a slight decline from 2009, but an improvement on their showing in the 2013 General Election.

Euroskeptic opposition party at the national level (Binnie 2015). At least domestically, the party

will not be able to maintain separatist nationalism as one of its central claims, but a complete

reversal and acceptance of Italian state nationalism seems unlikely. As a result, it is probable that

Salvini's new network of parties will need to rely more heavily on the populist element of its

identity to present a coherent electoral appeal.

Assuming that this tendency is extended to the party's European discourse, it may look

something like this intervention in the debate on the FY 2015 EU budget:

> Having blamed the crisis on Member States, after imposing austerity measures costing
> blood and tears to their citizens, Europe today presents its accounts. Ahead of the 25
> million unemployed Europeans and 3 million Italians who despite having a job live in
> hardship without being able to afford a decent meal or a roof over their heads, Europe is
> asking for more money. In a time when people need support and services and companies
> seek new funds to promote their competitiveness, the EU should be the first to set a good
> example.
>
> <div align="right">(Bizzotto 2015)</div>

There is a clear contrast between the way that this claim is expressed and the way that the FN

structured its own critique of the budget process (see above). Though the member states are

mentioned in the first sentence, this is merely in giving an example of EU buck-passing. The

core of the argument is about the hardship faced by average citizens and the uncomprehending

and heartless response they have received from the European institutions. The populist rather

than nationalist orientation of this claim can also be seen in the parallel references to Europeans

and Italians in the second sentence: This is not primarily a narrative of foreign imposition, but

one about the shared struggle of European masses against uncaring elites. Finally (and setting

aside the populism/nationalism question), it is worth noting that this passages illustrates the

limits of the conventional left-right model for understanding debates at the European level, since

this exact passage could easily have been presented by a party of the radical left.

*Golden Dawn*

The most extreme right of the parties covered here, by almost any measure, is Greece's Golden Dawn, led from its inception by Nikolaos Michaloliakos (a former Greek Army commando dismissed because of involvement in far-right political violence). Having its roots in a (very small) social movement in the 1980s advocating for a return to military government, the party's recent success in the context of widespread social unrest has been interpreted as a significant threat to Greek democracy (Bistis 2013). Though not as successful in the Euro elections as UKIP or FN, Golden Dawn still finished third with 9.45% of the vote (European Parliament 2014). This was a 20-fold increase over its prior showing, and a fairly striking result for an extremist party. Obviously, this owes much to the depth and extent of the economic crisis in Greece (Koronaiou and Sakellariou 2013; Angouri and Wodak 2014), and may not represent a lasting challenge to Greek party politics. However, the apprehension associated with having such parties sitting in the European Parliament may make their particular contributions to European debates even more relevant, inasmuch as they will shape mainstream responses.

In terms of the right-wing populism literature, Golden Dawn has not received as much attention as the preceding parties. In part this is because of its recent ascendance, but also because of questions of categorization: Mudde excludes parties like this from his category of populist radical right because he considers support for democratic principles necessary for his conception of populism (2007: 49-50).[10] Indeed, the party is notable for not even including provisions for democratic deliberation in its internal governance, preferring a military model (Ellinas 2014). However, this is an unnecessarily narrow definition. Given the basic definition (discussed earlier) of populism as the belief in a society fundamentally divided between the

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[10] The most significant Greek party included in Mudde's (2007) analysis is the Popular Orthodox Rally (also known by the Greek acronym LAOS), the electoral fortunes of which have declined substantially alongside the rise of Golden Dawn.

people and corrupted elites and outsiders, Golden Dawn fits well. In fact, populism appears to be

a major organizing philosophy for the party and a key to its success: "One of the party's main

publicized activities is helping Greek people in the community facing increasingly serious

problems in many aspects of their daily lives as a result of the economic crisis" (Koronaiou and

Sakellariou 2013). This behavior, which is always very clearly limited to aiding ethnic Greeks

(including offers to "protect" them from immigrants in various ways; Dalakoglou 2013: 518),

has been used to categorize the party as nationalist. However, a distinction should be made

between this *ethno*-nationalism and the political conception of nationalism that I outline above;

the former can be seen as much more of a xenophobic species of populism ("ethno-populism,"

essentially), for the reasons outlined by Mudde (2007: 69-73).

The evidence from European Parliament debates is mixed, however. Like FN, Golden

Dawn's ethno-populism translates into a blend of the nationalist and populist ideal-types at the

European level. For example, in a debate on regional economic coordination, one Golden Dawn

MEP explained that:

> I am voting against this particular report because it promotes the centrally controlled
> economic and social governance of member states, weakening the respective national
> governments. Also it disproportionately promotes many benefits to the Roma than for
> other citizens.
>
> (Synandinos 2014)

In this passage, a claim about the centrality of national sovereignty (the normative value of

which is entirely taken for granted) is juxtaposed with the classically right-populist claim that the

people will suffer because of an unfair preference for an outsider group. Elsewhere, however, we

see more ideal-typically populist claims: "I am voting against the draft European Union general

budget, financial year 2015, because it shifts the center of gravity closer to the numbers and

power than to their own citizens" (Fontoulis 2014). And when the new European Commissioners

were presented to the EP after the 2014 elections, Golden Dawn's Georgios Epitideios[11] made

the following complaints about the process:

> But, the way in which the choice of commissioners is carried out is not really a very
> honorable one for us in the European Parliament. It is basically a formality; the
> Commissioners have been chosen by the countries in collaboration with the president of
> the European Commission and then what follows is that we are called upon to say yes or
> no to this choice. So this is a pure formality. For this reason we cannot exert any
> influence, we cannot really intervene. We could intervene if there were two candidates
> for each portfolio but until that happens this is just showcasing we are just under the
> illusion that we are participating in an exercise where we have no influence.
>
> (Epitideios 2014)

This is a more populist than nationalist argument, in that it focuses on a general lack of

accountability rather than a particular imposition of Brussels on the nation-state. In addition, it is

striking for being a precise and almost prosaic procedural claim. As with LN's anti-austerity

discourse, this is a reminder that a label like "extreme right" does not tell us everything about

how these parties will participate in European political debates. And while this kind of claims-

making is unlikely to make headlines at home or abroad, it may yet reverberate in the echo

chamber of elite discourse.


**Conclusion**

    The party analyses sketched above are a preliminary illustration of how the theoretical

opposition between the nationalist and populist ideal-types of Euroskepticism can help us

analyze the concrete talk and text of European political parties. Obviously, much more extensive

textual analysis will be required to fully map the discourse of Europe's major Euroskeptic parties

(which seems from this initial foray to be a fairly complex and mixed picture), but any such

analysis requires a theoretically-developed starting point. So, then, what is the significance of

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[11] Epitideios is one of Golden Dawn's more eccentric figures, a retired general fond of wearing his uniform for political appearances (and, ironically, a former director of the EU Military Staff; Mac Con Uladh 2014).

this particular schematic for understanding these parties? I suggest that it shows promise in at least two ways: It can help us to explain the parties' relative success in the recent period, and it tells us something important about how these Euroskeptic discourses intersect with broader debates around European integration.

The first point, of course, is a major analytical goal of conventional party politics: understanding why some parties succeed at some times and others do not. In this analysis, I am interested neither in being able to predict elections results, nor in giving specific advice to parties on successful strategies. However, I believe that this analytical approach can still help us to understand party success. Parties make rhetorical arguments not just in the hope that they will attract supporters, but also in an attempt to structure the overall terms of debate in ways that are more favorable to themselves than to their opponents—what I have elsewhere called "discursive heresthetics" (Dye forthcoming). More precisely mapping the nuances of these insurgent parties' claims will allow us to better understand how they have apparently outmaneuvered larger parties on the battlefield of discursive politics. In terms of future research directions, this suggests both a particular attention Euroskeptic campaigning, as well as analysis of the relationship between these claims and other arguments. For example, it will be useful to examine the relationship between nationalist Euroskepticism and other kinds of nationalist claims (i.e., separatism).

The second point is not about the parties themselves, but the significance of the claims that they've crafted to the broader political debates about the future of Europe. In particular, I suggest that the populist/nationalist distinction can tell us quite a bit about the perennial "democratic deficit" concern—a particularly important area to unpack because the widespread public support for radical Euroskeptic parties is and will be seen as another piece of evidence that the deficit is widening. Considering the major possibilities for democratic reform, I think

that the two claims point in very different directions: For populists, the democratic deficit is a systemic problem, a lack of meaningful voice for the people that extends from the local level to the supranational. Though the details would still be a matter of debate, democratization of the EU—greater powers for the elected parliament, new deliberative institutions, etc.—could plausibly answer that claim. On the other hand, European-level democracy is a contradiction in terms for ideal-typical nationalists (unless and until there were a European nationhood, which is unlikely in the near-term to say the very least). Only a return of powers to the nation-state—increasing the role of national parliaments or rolling-back integration entirely—could satisfactorily answer this kind of claim. Meanwhile, a simple return of powers to national governments or parliaments as they stand would be cold comfort to pure populists who think their national leaders are as corrupt as all the rest. The existence of this pronounced tension shows the importance of learning more about the claims-making of opposition parties before hoping to counter their rise with structure reforms.

Of course, it remains an open empirical question whether these parties and their fellow travelers would actually support or oppose particular reforms based on the analysis I've proposed. A populist party may have many reasons for supporting an increased role for national governments in decision making, just as nationalist parties have seen fit to leverage a strengthened European Parliament. But in addition to providing a plausible starting point for answering that investigation, I argue that this may have independent significance. Previous claims are not determinative of later developments—the parties have agency—but nor can they be freely dispensed with. The power of political claims-making is that it constructs a foundation onto which future arguments can be built, which will be more powerful the closer they hew to the original logic. And in a broader sense, these opposition claims serve to demarcate the terms

of debate around constitutional questions in Europe (even in dismissing them, the mainstream

parties are essentially legitimating them as the lower bound of some range of ideas), which will

in turn delineate the range of possible resolutions.

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