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The three dimensions of European illiberal-transformative populism

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University of Milan
University of Amsterdam

Effects of exposure to immigration news:
The three dimensions of
illiberal-transformative populism

Ivo Bosilkov

**Effects of exposure to immigration news:
The three dimensions of European illiberal-transformative populism**

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colofon

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**Effects of exposure to immigration news: The three dimensions of European illiberal-
transformative populism**

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This thesis was prepared within the partnership between the University of Amsterdam and the University of Milan with the purpose of obtaining a joint doctorate degree. The thesis was prepared in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam and in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Milan.

Dit proefschrift is tot stand gekomen binnen een samenwerkingsverband tussen de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Università degli Studi di Milano met als doel het behalen van een gezamenlijk doctoraat. Het proefschrift is voorbereid in de Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragwetenschappen van de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Dipartimento di Scienze Sociali e Politiche van Università degli Studi di Milano.

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INTRODUCTION

‘they are not people like us

no no

they are primitive, illiterate, a bit simple-minded

but unscrupulous

they bring wicked tropical diseases

if you meet one of them

let me know’

‘look at the papers, walls and portals

and it will be clear to you brother

they are there.’

Darko Rundek, musician (‘Ima ih’)

The media and the ‘migrant crisis’

If in the last few decades immigration was considered one of the more concerning issues in the Western hemisphere, then since 2015 it has become an existential issue in European politics. 2015 was the year of the great Syrian refugee crisis, which sparked a chain reaction with repercussions ranging from the political functioning to the very social fabric of the continent. Beyond causing more restrictive policies (Akbari & MacDonald, 2014), breaking the Schengen system (Traynor, 2016), casting aside asylum procedures (Peers, 2016), and formenting new international alliances, like the ones between the EU and Turkey, or Italy and Libya (Haferlach & Kurban, 2017), the ‘migrant crisis’ has renewed previously voiced skepticism over the viability of multiculturalism and reinforced rejection of enlightenment values (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos & Zolberg, 2011).

But how did migration achieve this kind of importance, given that the refugee crisis has not caused a radical change to the situation from earlier, either in realistic or symbolic terms? A popular theory states that the migrant crisis has increased terrorism on the European continent. While the causal logic of this statement is questionable (see Bove & Böhmelt, 2016), there is little doubt that terrorist attacks have shaped the minds of Europeans in the years since the crisis started (Castanho Silva, 2018). Despite the fact that only an infinitesimal portion of people have actually suffered under a terrorist act, footage of men causing chaos in European cities has been replayed on traditional and social media, shocking citizens just as terrorists intended. Fear for security has added to growing concerns about economic security and cultural homogeneity (Preston, 2014), the latter two rendered even more intense by the images of endless lines of refugees on their way to Western Europe (Garcia-Faroldi, 2017).

The public would have never seen these images and been affected accordingly had they not been circulated by the media. Political communication exists for many decades now as an academic discipline, and the study of media effects is an integral part of it, documenting the impact media have on society (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Within this discipline, a volume of research has focused on investigating the impact of mediatized immigration on citizens (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Schemer, 2012; Sniderman, Hagendoor & Prior, 2004; Van Klingeren et al., 2015; Wojcieszak et al. 2015). This dissertation provides a new contribution to this volume, with a specific focus on one of the most recent developments in the migration phenomenon: the migrant crisis. Drawing from the media effects paradigms of framing and priming (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), as

common techniques of packaging news information about migration for audiences to interpret, this dissertation poses an overarching research question: *what are the effects of exposure to media content about the migrant crisis on citizens' political opinions?*

Yet, political opinions as an outcome is a broad term which has many facets. In the context of immigration news, most scholars have studied the perceived consequences of immigration (ex. Sniderman, Hagendoorn & Prior, 2004), attitudes towards immigrants (ex. Bos et al., 2012), and opinion on immigration policies (ex. Van Klingeren, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2017). Building on this research, this dissertation makes a leap forward, as it looks towards the deeper meanings of these attitudes, and their substantive implications to the political arena. Since it is already established that different presentations of immigration-related issues affect voting intentions (Schemer, Wirth & Matthes, 2012), with this research I investigate the role of media framing and priming in the evolution of the European right-wing populist rationale. As opposition to immigration has become the *raison d'être* of the so-called populist radical right (Mudde, 2007), I focus on the ideological twist of individuals that subscribe to its logic of horizontal exclusion of the 'dangerous others' from the 'virtuous people' (Reinemann et al., 2016), positing that it occurs as a result of exposure to migration news. This ideological twist involves the readjustment of three fundamental tenets of political thinking: *institutions*, *authority* and *identity*. This selection completes the research question: *how do news on migration affect public attitudes towards these three constitutive elements of political reality*, here conceptualized as skepticism towards mainstream media, support for increased presidential powers, and Europeanism, respectively.

I argue that the manifestations of these phenomena in the particular research context in fact represent the pillars of an *illiberal-transformative populist* movement currently on the rise on the Europe. Similarly to how a new species of political actors has emerged from traditional right-wing ideology earlier, becoming known as the 'new populist wave' (Rooduijn, 2013), I argue that populism's illiberal tendencies are now proliferating even further, capitalizing on citizens' permissive dispositions as a consequence of their negative sentiments on migration. Illiberal-transformative populism can thus be defined as an ever-more coherent proto-ideology originating from postcommunist Eastern European countries, where illiberal institutional tendencies have complemented citizens' populist worldview, through the state's response to migration and its presentation by the media.

Disentangling the relationship between migration in the media, public opinion and illiberal-transformative populism, and thus systematizing the latter's characteristics, is the main focus of this dissertation. To confirm the phenomenon's Eastern European roots, the dissertation sets the research arena in Macedonia, as this case mirrors general tendencies in the region, thus offering the conditions to observe the mechanisms of this process. This adds to another important goal: the mitigation of the contextual imbalance in research on media effects in the context of migration, as the Western point of view has so far received a disproportionate amount of attention. Finally, from a methodological perspective, I harness the power of experiments to demonstrate the immediate causal impact of news content on individual attitudes. The procedures I use reveal precisely the extent of communication's direct influence on thinking about politics, and together they provide a template for researching media effects of migration news with maximum control and efficiency, and minimum resources. I elaborate on all these advances in the following sections, beginning with the conceptual clarification of the main accomplishment of this dissertation: the development of illiberal-transformative populism as a novel and distinct concept in the field.

Trends of the populist 'people'

While populism scholarship agrees on its central element - the Manichean vision of a homogenous 'people' opposed to evil out-groups - distinct traditions exist within the field with regards to approaching populism as a political strategy, discourse or a 'thin' ideology (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Following the latter conceptualization, populism can be attached either to the traditional left or right wing (Aslanidis, 2015), achieving vertical (anti-elite) or horizontal (exclusionary of immigrant minorities) character (Reinemann et al., 2016). As already intimated, this dissertation contributes to the volume of literature studying right-wing populist ideology, with its specific focus being not on populist supply i.e. political actors, but on voter attitudes comprising populist demand (Sheets, Bos & Boomgaarden, 2016). Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel (2018) show that voting for the populist radical right is predicted by anti-immigration and authoritarian positions, as well as 'populist attitudes'. Yet, these authors stress that populist attitudes are a comprehensive construct, whose measurement could be less straightforward than simply tapping into anti-establishment sentiment.

In analyzing demand-side populism on an ideological level, the multifaceted origins and manifestations of populist attitudes must be accounted for, and combined with opposition to immigration and authoritarianism. With this approach, diminishing trust in political actors can be identified as one of the defining characteristics of the populist phenomenon. As Rydgren (2005) states, political institutions have found it difficult to adapt to the profound social and economic changes which left many voters feeling that elites are detached from reality. The distrust in the functioning of democracy has been a growing trend in the past decades (Pharr, Putnam & Dalton, 2000), and for populists anyone who is perceived as implicated in maintaining this disfunction is seen as an obstacle for the fulfillment of the will of the people (Mudde, 2004). In this sense, ethnopluralist conceptions of 'differentialist nativism' where anti-immigrant sentiment is generated (Betz, 2003) have been presented as the antithesis to the 'globalist project' of liberal multiculturalism, reinforcing the anger towards the cosmopolitan elites who seek to promote it, instead of 'protecting their own kin', both in economic and cultural sense. According to Inglehart and Norris (2016), among these elites are elected politicians, scientific experts and media pundits - institutional figures in the locus of the growing schism between populists and cosmopolitan liberals.

An additional reason why trust in the liberal political system has diminished and populism has grown in power is the increasing complexity of the political process which has made decision making opaque in the eyes of the people. As Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014) assert, populists are skeptical of institutional structures and features that are intrinsically pluralistic, such as compromises, mediating institutional bodies and procedures. Instead of this, populists have an affinity towards plebiscitary politics, personalization of power and direct, unmediated representation of the people, ideally by a leader who embodies the will of the homogenous and sovereign people (Hawkins, 2010). In short, the populist supporter wants the problems of the 'common man' to be solved according to their values and this has to be done by a remarkable leader (Mudde, 2004).

Finally, both complex institutional procedures restraining the popular will, and the threat to the cultural 'heartland', are exacerbated by the declining political autonomy of the nation state and the delegation of its sovereignty to supranational bodies. In Europe, one entity encapsulates the opaqueness and detached elitism against which the PRR are mobilized: the European Union. As Martinelli (2018) states, it is the hostility towards the European project of greater political integration where nationalism and populism merge. Recently however, the PRR realized that

scattered nationalistic movements are no match for the monolithic liberal globalism promoted by the European Union. This is why, in order to establish a united front against the EU, European populists decided to expand the idea of the homogeneity of the people as a cornerstone of their common ideology by creating the European people, not only as the virtuous silent majority in a brewing conflict with the Brussels elite, but as a cohesive new ethnocultural and historical in-group, native on the continent, and existing independent from the European project's civic ideals (Hafez, 2014). The out-group needed for this operation, was conveniently found in the immigrants and refugees, providing in practice the contrast theorized by Huntington's (1996) 'clash of civilizations'.

The emergence of illiberal-transformative populism

Such cultural Europeanism is a major difference from the previous exclusionary populist iterations which only focused on the nation. One of the main sources of this civilizational discourse is Victor Orban, who recently described Hungary's harsh treatment of refugees since the Syrian refugee crisis erupted in 2015 as 'defending Europe from the migrant invasion' (Walker, 2018). At the same time, Orban has also been vocal in branding himself as the champion of 'illiberal democracy', an ideology that is proliferating from Eastern European countries such as Poland, to the West itself, prompting political commentators like Zakaria (2016) to label it the greatest challenge to the post-war liberal democratic order. According to Bustikova and Guasti (2017), an illiberal swerve of a society occurs when two conditions are fulfilled: executive aggrandizement and contestation of sovereignty. The former reduces checks and balances, accomplished through attacks on the independent judiciary and political control of the media, while the latter assumes that the polity is under threat, regardless whether it is real or fabricated. The role of populist political actors in this dynamic is to legitimize the transition to illiberal democracy by presenting it to be in the name of the people. In other words, illiberal goals are to be achieved by populist means, as citizens themselves internalize populist attitudes to the degree that they would believe policy and government change are no longer enough.

It is this illiberal-transformative component which Inglehart and Norris (2016) do not account for in their continuum between populist and cosmopolitan liberal values, as they ignore the distinctly Eastern European developmental context of the fusion between populism and illiberalism. While illiberal tendencies are inherent part of populism in general, in this context they become

explicit and normative, expressed through the statements of politicians like Orban who claim illiberal democracy is in the interest of the people.¹ Thus I posit that, while rooted in the core tenets, or as Rydgren (2005) calls it, the ‘master frame’ of right-wing populism, this new variety of *illiberal-transformative populism* is an upgrade from its predecessor in three important ways. First, it incorporates a cultural redefinition of Europeanness (rejecting the European Union’s monopoly on it) vis-a-vis a non-European ‘other’ constructed only recently, primarily through the phenomenon of migration. This is a significant distinction from ‘regular’ populism. Second, it displays an even stronger tendency for personalized and therefore more authoritarian forms of governance, demonstrating greater indifference towards the liberal-democratic ideals (such as checks and balances and minority rights), thus extending the majoritarian principles of populism to the homogenous European ‘heartland’. Such tendency is not common for existing PRR parties in Western Europe, as they perceive the existing system as legitimate and even desirable, with its liberal values needing defending (Brubaker, 2017). Finally, the most substantial supply of its illiberal values is found in the deep distrust of all institutions which are seen as an instrument of the establishment preventing the realization of the popular will. Drawing from a strong conspiracist mindset (Krämer, 2014) and a tradition of anti-intellectualism (Akkerman, 2003), the most symbolic culprits of that establishment, and therefore most visible targets of illiberal populist contempt, are the mainstream media not under control of populist politicians, which through their journalistic values intentionally and maliciously promote the interests of the liberal elite. While rhetorical accusations of media bias are common for right-wing populists, such as Donald Trump (Krämer, 2018), in the case of illiberal-transformative populism they are reinforced by active institutional interference in media to curb the freedom of those who do not express the will of the people. In that way, hostility towards media becomes one of the main pillars of illiberal-transformative populist ideology.

These three elements - Euronationalism, preference for personalized rule and media distrust - are conceptualized here as the illiberal-transformative populist citizen’s expressions of the three fundamental dimensions of political life: identity, authority and institutions respectively. Based on this conceptualization of illiberal-transformative populism, they represent the main points of interest

¹ An analogy for the distinction between traditional and illiberal-transformative populists can be made with Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou’s (2016) distinction between *radical* parties which only use inflammatory rhetoric, and *extreme* parties which reject procedural democracy as a whole.

of this dissertation. The framework they create together is afforded by recontextualization of existing theory, an approach which yields a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of radical right-wing populism as an antipode of cosmopolitanism (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Therefore, this dissertation conceptualizes illiberal-transformative populism as an up-and-coming political doctrine, since its constitutive elements fit the definitions of what is an ideology: a set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved (Erikson & Tedin, 2003).

Migration and populism: a political communication perspective

The fact that illiberal-transformative populists identify media as a key concept is suggestive to the centrality of communication to the development of the political movement. As scholarly interest in the subject of populism has increased in recent times, the perspective of political communication has contributed significantly in understanding the phenomenon. Alternative conceptualizations of populism as discourse (Laclau, 2005) or rhetoric (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013) have paved the way for analyzing populism in the media. Mazzoleni et al. (2003) explain how commercial logic and journalistic practices have helped promoting populist political actors, while Jagers and Walgrave (2007) further clarified the way the PRR conveys its message, defining populism as communicative style. However, while political communication has made great advances in cataloguing populism in the mass media, a lot less effort has been devoted to showing how it actually relates to the masses. Such research, while scarce, manages to show the ways in which the populist message affects vote choice (Hameleers, Bos & De Vreese, 2017), political cynicism (Rooduijn et al., 2017) and citizens' populist attitudes (Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017). While these studies exhibit the feasibility of positing a causal relationship between media content and individual attitudes in the context of populism, there have been few that looked at any of the three underlying dimensions of *illiberal-transformative* populism, let alone all of them.

As the migration phenomenon has been identified as a common denominator of the illiberal-transformative populist components, it is through engaging with the political communication perspective that the nature of this relationship could be explained. Scholars in the field have consistently provided evidence that migration news influence individuals' beliefs about various aspects of the phenomenon (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Schemer, 2012; Sniderman, Hagendoor & Prior, 2004), highlighting the difference media makes for people with its varying

approaches to the issue. A recurrent finding from this volume is that negative representations of immigration, where immigrants are portrayed as a threat by a variety of techniques, result with stronger anti-immigrant sentiment and support for harsher immigration policies. The most common of these techniques is framing: content analyses of migration news have shown that migrants were framed as a threat even in the decades leading up to the recent rapid increase of the migrant flows (Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007), while the most dominant frame employed by media during the migrant crisis from 2015 was the security threat (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017).

From framing migration to illiberal-transformative populism

Evidently from the above, a research gap emerges whose closure is essential in the context of the main research question of this dissertation. If migration is most often presented through news frames, this should be the point of departure in explaining how media affects citizens' attitudes, beyond the effects that general media environment, visibility and tone (Van Klingeren et al., 2015) or broad media narratives (Caviedes, 2015) may have. At the same time, for studies that employ this approach, it is important to engage with outcomes that are less straightforward than attitudes towards immigrants (Bos et al., 2016) or the importance of immigration as a problem (Igartua & Cheng, 2009). These attitudes matter especially insofar as their implications within the political arena, and some of the more significant among them are the dimensions of the underlying concept of illiberal-transformative populism. How can framing affect these dimensions? According to De Vreese, Peter and Semetko (2001), media framing involves the selection, organization and emphasis of certain aspects of reality to the exclusion of others. Therefore, framing effects occur when changes in the presentation of an issue or an event by the media produces change of opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The underlying psychological mechanism of this change requires the availability of a given consideration in memory, the accessibility (i.e. salience) of the consideration, and the perceived applicability of the consideration compared to other accessible considerations in the process of alignment with the received information (Lecheler, Schuck & De Vreese, 2013). The latter is the only distinction framing has from the process of *priming*, for which only the condition of accessibility needs to be fulfilled, as the effect occurs when news content suggests to audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for performance evaluations (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The importance of this distinction should not be understated in the context of migration news coverage, which thrives on negativity. Threat can be primed by media, but a negative valence of information packages is also considered a distinctive attribute of frames; De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) juxtapose risk and opportunity frames, which shed insight on how migrants can potentially be portrayed in an inherently negatively or positively valenced way. Both the priming and framing approaches warrant separate examination as to their effects on illiberal-transformative populism. Yet, issue-specific frames, as a category within framing theory (Vliegenthart, 2012) do not only resonate in a more complex manner (through the cognitive search for applicability in order to form connections between different issues), but also offer a greater variety of possible issues that can be connected with the issues concerning the illiberal-transformative populist mindset. For example, Benson (2003) has expanded the valence conceptualization by demonstrating that migrants are presented either as threat or as victims. In the context of the migrant crisis, this was reflected in the change from a more humanitarian tone in the beginning, exemplified by the coverage of the death of Syrian refugee child Aylan Kurdi, to a more threat-dominated narrative as the crisis escalated and the number of migrants increased (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018), but also in how the public became more critical of media for being overly sympathetic towards migrants (Holt & Haller, 2017). Another common way of framing migration is in a broad and abstract context, assuming collective responsibility (thematic framing) or in particular cases with individual responsibility (episodic framing). Not least, political actors themselves add to the migration debate in a myriad of ways, with different motivations, yet exacerbating sociopolitical fractures.

Indeed, these features are not only very prominent in migration coverage, but they are also extremely pertinent with regards to public opinion, as the psychological process of alignment between media and individual cognitive frames determines the political attitudes related to illiberal-transformative populism.² If the effectiveness of media effects paradigms such as framing and priming in the shaping of public opinion has been demonstrated in the context of migration (Bos et al., 2016; Igartua & Cheng, 2009), and there are theoretical indications about the interconnectedness of the components of illiberal-transformative populism (as argued in the earlier sections), a logical

² Aslanidis (2015) considers populism itself as a frame, arguing that populist discourse can be perceived as a systematic dissemination of a frame that diagnoses the ‘corrupt elite’ as the problem and the political mobilization of the ‘noble People’ as the solution. However he also asserts that a value-laden structure of discursive frames, when sufficiently complex, can in fact resemble an ideology.

next step would be to test those paradigms on the attitudes pertaining to those components. Confirming that framing and priming the migration issue do affect all the three components of illiberal-transformative populism, would lend indirect support to the claim that they are different dimensions of a same phenomenon. Conversely, if illiberal-transformative populism as an ideology does unify citizens' conceptions of institutions, authority and identity through its components, then slanted news content about migration influencing all three would provide evidence about the influence of media in the entrenchment of political ideas and the construction of political movements.

Establishing media effects through experimental study

Confirming the existence of media effects is a daunting task in any context, and such difficulties make jumping the gun to verify a novel theory in the given circumstances even more discouraged. One of the favoured approaches of media effects studies in resolving this problem is linkage analysis: a combination of media content analysis over a given period with a subsequent survey documenting the patterns of citizens' media consumption in the same period and analyzing their attitudes (see for example Wojcieszak, Azrout & De Vreese, 2017). While a sound method in general, especially in terms of external and ecological validity, there are three problems with this approach: first, linkage analysis studies usually imply self-evaluations of participants' media use, which in terms of measurement can be considered unreliable. Self-reports can suffer from either intentional or unintentional bias, and in such context, validity becomes an issue, especially given individuals' tendency towards selective exposure, further complicating causal claims about the origins of their political attitudes. This leads to the second downside of the approach: in order to statistically account for the random error in self-reporting, a greater statistical power is required, and thus inevitably large sample sizes. Combined with the necessity for a long term observation of media coverage and multiple wave panel data in order to make out a clear trend, it is obvious there is a large cost in terms of resources, which renders a research of quasi-exploratory character that is tracking a recently nascent phenomenon somewhat complicated to execute.

Thirdly and most importantly, as stated before, media content on the topic of immigration is constantly varying. With a coverage as diverse and fluctuating, isolating the immediate impact of key themes and messages to political attitudes relating to populism would require a much more

focused effort. Yet, there is a methodological approach which can circumvent all these issues. Experimental designs have a long tradition in political communication when it comes to media effects studies, and have also been used to measure the consequences of media representations of migration to the support of immigration policies (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013). More importantly, using experiments can not only show that migration news affect attitudes, but can also explain *how* it does that; the experimental method is especially known to advance knowledge about the nature of framing and priming (Druckman et al., 2011), thus systematizing the communication perspective on the relationship between immigration and populism in public opinion. In that manner, by applying the principles of these models in the development of experimental manipulations, a greater insight can be gained in the mechanisms of media effects in the topic of migration and populism. The possibility to manipulate content according to framing and priming principles pertinent to the topic of migration, followed by randomly assigning subjects to different conditions and controlling for confounding variables hugely facilitates the conducting of such a study in which the independent variable essentially represents different versions of the same media manifestation (migration news), and its effects are registered on three separate political concepts. As Nelson, Bryner and Carnahan (2011) state, experimentation and the study of communication effects ‘seem made for each other’ (p. 202), as experiments enable researchers to know with near certainty the communications to which respondents were exposed and that respondents did not select themselves those communications.

This is the major advantage of experimental designs over linkage analysis for this project. On a conceptual level, Zaller (1992) makes the recommendation to move from exposure to message reception as the key independent variable, where it is not only being exposed to a news story but also comprehending it and remembering it which matters. When testing the effects of framing or priming, not only the content can not be operationalized in the most adequate format unless experimentation is used, but it is also virtually impossible to assess how the cognitive processes above are put in motion. In experiments, stimuli can be tinkered with until balance between actual content and theoretical outline is found, and there is a possibility of subsequently assessing the manipulation’s success. In this sense, this dissertation represents a throwback to the classic ‘hypodermic needle’ model, as I test individual receptivity to a ‘one-step’ message flow while simultaneously accounting for a range of theoretically relevant factors. By using this model,

discovering the implications of migration news to the political attitudes and behaviors is much more straightforward, and greatly clarifies the role of media in the illiberal-transformative populist surge.

Case study: Macedonia

Despite experiments' external validity concerns, an additional aim of this dissertation is to generalize its results, not only to the case chosen as the political arena, but to a wider area. It is the characteristics of this case that make this generalization possible. A lot has been said here about the nature of illiberal-transformative populism, but where exactly can it be found? Earlier I mentioned Victor Orban as the ideologue of the fledging illiberal-transformative populist way. While being the most prominent representative of the movement, there are other political actors who share the same vision and political strategy. Many of these actors have appeared in Hungary's vicinity, thus emerging from a similar context: a post-communist society struggling with the diffuse effects of globalization's economic liberalization, and at the same time extremely sensitive to any challenges to its hard-won national sovereignty, such as the refugee crisis and the EU's 'relocation-quota' plan for its resolution. Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are also beginning to follow this populism-fueling pattern, as a regional illiberal axis is beginning to take shape via the so-called 'Visegrad Group' (Bustikova & Guasti, 2017). What these societies also have in common is underdeveloped institutionalization of their party systems, a history of authoritarianism, and a deeply ingrained skepticism towards multiculturalism, as ethnic and religious homogeneity is seen as the pillar of the state.

However, there are countries in Eastern Europe which have stayed under the radar of scholarly analysis, even though their political dynamics faithfully resemble those from the above cases: a departure from the rule of law as the foundation of liberal democracy, and a recourse to nationalism as the principal source of political legitimation, complete with hardened identity politics (Rupnik, 2017). Such is the case of the Republic of Macedonia, which for these reasons is selected as the case study, as it offers the possibility to make legitimate assumptions for the previously mentioned countries, with the additional potential for novel insight provided by the fact that it is not a EU member. In the past ten years Macedonia was ruled by VMRO-DPMNE, a right-wing party that has been defined as 'unequivocally populist' (Petkovski, 2015), in a rule which has seen democratic institutions eroded, media freedom curbed, and public deeply polarized along

partisan lines (Belicanec & Rieliev, 2012). With regards to immigration, the issue is highly salient in Macedonia as the country is located along the main transit route of Middle Eastern migrants, and similarly to Hungary, its controversial approach towards dealing with the migrant flux at the southern border with Greece has been a topic of intense coverage in international media (Dimishkovski, 2015). Even though in the early days of the crisis VMRO didn't have crystallized positions regarding the migration issue, with the eruption of a domestic political crisis the party has quickly began to instrumentalize migration, by emphasizing threats from migrants and promoting conspiracy theories, which resonated strongly with the nationalist segment of the country (Stojanovski, 2017).

All this sounds familiar as it reflects the context of the Visegrad Group. Yet, one element is absent - the open blame towards and confrontation with the European Union, as the candidate status of Macedonia implies less direct involvement of Brussels in internal affairs. This is why choosing Macedonia might be more beneficial than choosing one of the EU's postcommunist members, especially in light of investigating the hypothesized existence of European identity independent from the EU; if this pillar of theory holds, it would show that neither perceived membership aspirations (and therefore cultivation of civic values), nor the absence of the 'Brussels boogeyman' (as the elite scapegoat) are able to prevent the transformation of 'the people' to native Europeans, when faced with the migrant threat. In summary, Macedonia is similar enough to other cases in Eastern Europe in terms of culture, tradition and political context to draw inferences about the rise of illiberal-transformative populism in other Eastern European countries, yet simultaneously possesses the crucial difference of not being an EU country, offering a novel perspective on the illiberal-transformative populist surge as more than just a EU-backlash driven phenomenon.

Conclusion: contributions and caveats

This dissertation aims to identify the effects of media content on the topic of immigration, on (1) individual perceptions of media's unfairness, bias and corruption, (2) the public support for increased powers for the country's president and possibly even a presidential system, and (3) the emergence of new types of European identity among citizens, as a reaction to the increased changes in the political situation on the continent. It investigates these three particular aspects of political reality based on the informed assumption that they represent the ingredients of illiberal-

transformative populism, as a new ideology based on the populist radical right (PRR). It attempts to do so by the means of experiments, as the most convenient and straightforward method in which the precepts of communication paradigms such as framing and priming can be meticulously embedded in exposure content. This is done in order to observe framing and priming effects without any confounding factors that question their causal nature, and pinpoint precisely which aspects of immigration prompt the illiberal-transformative populist sentiment. The order of these experiments is unimportant and therefore randomly chosen, as all three aspects of the phenomenon have equal weight as constitutive parts. What is important is that these experiments are set in the novel context of Macedonia, a non-EU Eastern European post-communist country on the Balkan migrant route, ruled by a populist party for the last decade.

In this sense, although the main objective of the research is to confirm three separate causal relationships between exposure to systematized media content and cross-disciplinary concepts, it is establishing the framework of ‘illiberal-transformative populism’, a term coined for the first time here, that may very well be its greatest achievement of this dissertation. This is because the cross-disciplinary concepts affected by media content are fundamental aspects of political reality, whose mutual convergence points to the emergence of a new ideological system. This ideology called illiberal-transformative populism here is treated as a largely analytical category, with its conceptualization driven by theoretical intuitions and practical examples, rather than empirical support. Yet, the confirmation of an existence of the relationship between migration coverage and its three hypothesized constitutive parts would be a major step towards its validation as a concept, albeit an indirect one. With this approach, the principles of deductive reasoning set the research course, but a certain exploratory element also complements them. Therefore, the nature of this dissertation is perhaps most graphically symbolized by its insistence of the experimental method - the quintessential tool for testing theories, to explore whether hypothesized relationships hold, and under which conditions are they operative (McDermott, 2002). Naturally, questioning the epistemological justification of the latent variable conceived as individual-level illiberal-transformative populism can either result with the improvement of the concept, or ultimately even its rejection. However, the primary purpose of my experiments is to confirm the three separate causal relationships, which by itself would already be an indication of their proximity in a conceptual sense, and thus a basis for extrapolating a common criterion.

It needs to be recognized that despite the clarity of the theoretical overview, there could be additional attributes that make the populist citizen's views illiberal-transformative populist. Moreover, reverse causation in the sense that being illiberal-transformative populist can lead to selective exposure to news content about migration that reinforces one's previous positions could also be possible. However, such a hypothesis would not require a media effects study. A media effects study would need to take into account knowledge of how different aspects of migration news affect individuals, package it in the existing framework of communication models (with consideration of the actual content regarding the migrant crisis (Bosilkov & Drakaki, 2018)) in order to see what precisely drives these effects, and observe the effects of exposure on a theoretically derived dependent variable. The experiments I conduct include tests for a variety of additional relevant mechanisms throughout this process, often finding their origins in political psychology, as theoretical insight from this field is crucial for understanding shifts in political attitudes and behaviour, especially within the triangulation of migration, media and populism. The use of psychological concepts additionally underpins the highly eclectic nature of the dissertation. In the closing section of this introduction chapter, I lay out the structure of the dissertation by describing these experiments and the mechanisms explored within them.

Dissertation structure

Chapter 1, dedicated to media skepticism, operationalizes migration news as frames emphasizing the humanitarian or threat feature of migration, and checks whether those frames arouse the perception of hostile media among subjects (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985), as the first step towards a belief that media in general are untrustworthy. Inspired by the so-called 'liberal media bias' (Lee, 2005), this study draws upon populist politicians' ire towards critical journalism; while as mentioned, the first reference coming to mind for this phenomenon is Donald Trump's war on CNN, a similar practice has long existed in Macedonia by right-wing populist government officials. For this reason, individual partisanship is included as an important moderator of the main relationship, hypothesizing its influence in the ways media are conceived as a result of their reporting on migrants through partisan motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2005). How news coverage reflects on trust in journalism is a major theme in recent times, especially in the context of the 2015 migrant crisis. In this dissertation, it serves as the benchmark of how institutions of the

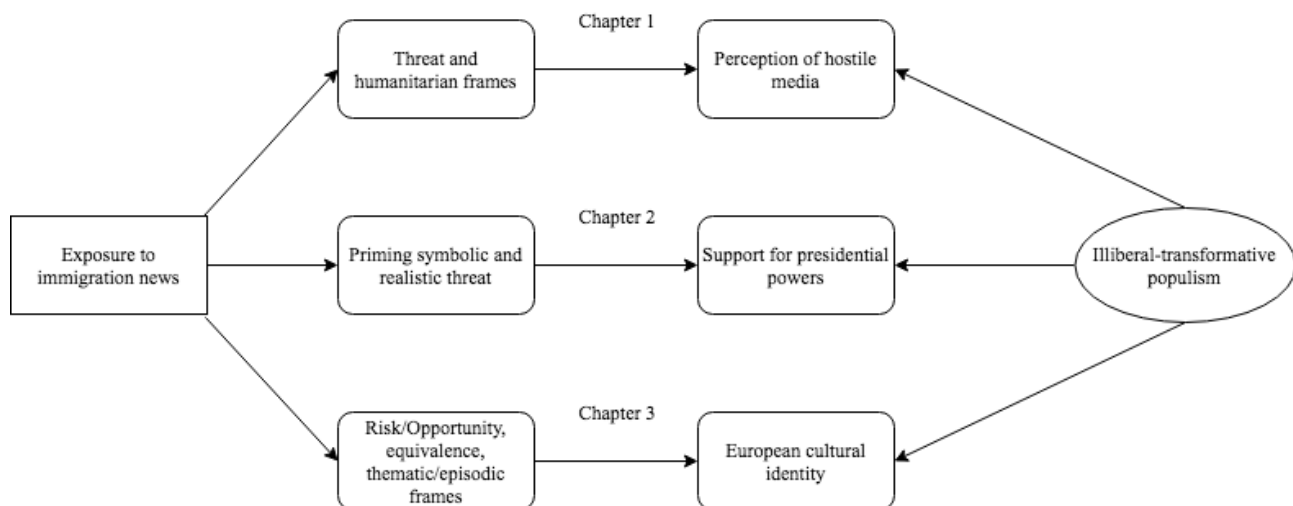
liberal establishment are denounced by populists, as I find that not only subjects who hold stronger anti-immigrant attitudes are likely to perceive particular content on migration as more biased against their beliefs, but also that this perception of bias is translated to the media as a whole.

Chapter 2 looks into the illiberal-transformative populist's propensity to reimagine the political system as free from the bureaucratic grip imposed by the pluralist separation of power. It does so by testing how different conceptualizations of threat from migrants (symbolic or realistic) affects the permissiveness of greater concentration of authority into one person - the president of the state - enacting the will of the people in a plebiscitarian fashion. In this chapter, I investigate the communication paradigm of priming, as I manipulate the awareness of presidential powers relevant to the migrant issue (such as veto rights, army use and policy enactment) in order to see whether different levels of salience of potential presidential responses to threat from migrants can raise citizens' willingness to grant those powers. This chapter serves to illustrate how threatening information about migration can trigger greater support for a strong leader (for which the president serves as proxy), thus tapping into the authoritarian dimension of illiberal-transformative populist attitudes. Yet at the same time, this chapter demonstrates the limit of experimental methods in investigating media effects, as the salience of the migration context has rendered subject manipulation ineffective.

Finally, Chapter 3 considers the deepening cleavage between European people about what it means to be European, as an effect of the mediatization of the migration issue. Drawing from literature on the effects of valenced frames, I confront two distinct media representations of immigration in Europe, as a risk or as an opportunity (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006), measuring their corresponding resonance with European civic identity on one hand, embracing the European Union's model of citizenship, and on the other hand the European cultural identity, which constructs a homogenous people of Europe based on their race, religion and tradition. In addition to deepening the knowledge of how media frames affect citizens through the use of equivalence and episodic/thematic framing, this chapter investigates the role of religiousness in how Europeanness is conceived when exposed to news content, as a crucial factor in the narrative of the 'native Europeans'. Thus, juxtaposing two increasingly contradictory visions of what it means to be European puts under scrutinization the process of horizontal othering, common to exclusionary populism (Reinemann et al., 2016), and in the argument of this dissertation, fundamental for illiberal-transformative populism.

Figure 0.1 is a visual representation of the theoretical model describing the causal processes underlying this research, as well as an illustration of the structure of the entire dissertation. On the left side, it shows the expected causal relationships between the iterations of the independent variable and the outcomes. On the right side, the arrows coming from the ellipse labeled ‘illiberal-transformative populism’ towards the three outcomes do not imply causality, rather that they are dimensions of the same unmeasured concept or ‘latent variable’, to borrow from structural equation modelling terminology and model visualization.

Figure 0.1. Causal model/dissertation structure.



What follows after this introduction is the first chapter. All three chapters are originally composed as stand-alone studies. For this reason, they contain a wide ranging variety of concepts, from psychology, through comparative politics, to European studies. However, as the contribution of this dissertation is not limited to communication science, I consider the interdisciplinary approach to be an advantage rather than deficiency.

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CHAPTER 1**The perceived bias of migration coverage: media hostility and partisan motivation in the processing of migration frames**

Abstract

This article investigates the role of migration coverage in the emergence of the hostile media effect, by taking advantage of an experimental design set against the backdrop of the ongoing ‘migrant crisis’ in Macedonia. We demonstrate how prior opinions on migration affect the perception of media bias in individuals exposed to two representations of migration: the humanitarian and the security frame. In addition, we investigate the influence of partisanship, both as a message feature and individual orientation, finding evidence of partisan motivated reasoning in frame processing. Most importantly, we discover that rejection of incongruent migration frames leads to increased media skepticism, especially among those with strong ideological identification. We discuss these findings in the context of the reinvigorated populist zeitgeist.

In today's fragmented media environment, partisans actively seek like-minded news (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009) and label those which are incongruent with their party positions 'hostile' (Coe et al., 2008). While research on the hostile media phenomenon (HME) has often considered party affiliation (Arceneaux, Johnson & Murphy, 2012; Baum & Gussin, 2007; Coe et al., 2008; Feldman, 2011), it has overlooked a specific issue that is essential to party support, especially in recent times: migration. Despite indications that citizens believe migration's negative aspects receive too little coverage (Beyer & Matthes, 2015), the only study that tests the issue as a source of the HME is the one of Matthes and Beyer (2015). However, since the eruption of the 'European migrant crisis' media have been even more under the spotlight for their reporting on the issue, sparking the so-called 'Lügenpresse' phenomenon in Germany (Holt & Haller, 2017). Given that news on migration have been shown to affect migration attitudes (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Schemer, 2012; Van Klingeren et al., 2015), and correlational research has established that negative attitudes towards migration are associated with perception that media are biased in favor of migration (McKeever, Riffe & Carpentier, 2012; Watson & Riffe, 2013), we seek to provide the elusive direct causal link between media representations of migration and perceptions of media bias through an experimental design that maximizes internal validity.

Thus, unlike previous studies, we argue that partisanship does not drive, but rather exacerbates the HME emerging from a polarizing issue which is inherent to party support. Disentangling specific issue content and partisanship, in order to account for the moderating influence of the latter to the emergence of media hostility, is achieved through the manipulation of party cues triggering motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Most importantly however, we contribute to hostile media effect literature by testing whether a perception of media bias remains limited to coverage of the particular topic, or ultimately spills over to citizens' overall trust in media as an institution. To accomplish this, we conducted two survey experiments in Macedonia, where the sudden eruption of a 'migrant crisis' enabled the conditions to tackle the research question.

Framing Migration

Before elaborating on the general framework, we analyze the existing media frames in the arena of migration news, which based on their 'particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral

evaluation and treatment recommendation' (Entman, 1993, p. 52) could prompt hostility among audiences. The most common research technique for capturing intricate media representations of migration has been frame analysis (Helbling, 2009; Lawlor, 2015; Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007). The reason scholars have favoured this approach is because of the measurement flexibility, allowed by the widely accepted definition of framing and its core principles. This facilitates making broad categorizations of media content in wide-ranging contexts and summarizing the essential dimensions of migration news which citizens subsequently evaluate (Beyer & Matthes, 2015). Despite differing operationalizations of frames in migration, a thematic convergence exists in scholarship. Benson's (2013) way of harmonizing scholarly divergences is to establish a universal dichotomy which collapses the bulk of context-specific migration frames in two overarching dimensions: a threat frame, emphasizing illegality and presenting a law-and-order issue, with focus on the need for law enforcement, and a victim frame, focusing on human suffering and human rights. This parsimonious frame typology, which deductively integrates and systematizes the most substantive aspects of migration frames is corroborated by Van Gorp (2005) and Milioni, Spyridou and Vadratsikas (2015), confirming its robustness across different case studies.

The Hostile Media Effect (HME)

By definition, frames on migration are issue-specific, as they pertain to a distinct topic, in contrast to generic frames which transcend thematic limitations (De Vreese, 2012). As Vliegenthart (2012) points out, issue frames are often also 'advocacy' frames - interpretations of issues or problems brought forward by actors.³ Hence, these 'opinionated' frames are inherently biased in favor of a certain perspective. As the 'victim' and 'threat' frames are also of such nature, their receivers are unlikely to perceive them as neutral. This perception could precipitate a phenomenon called 'hostile media effect' (Vallone et al., 1985), which has been defined as the tendency for partisans on opposing sides of an issue to see identical news coverage as biased in favor of the other side. However, because the 'victim' and 'threat' are emphasis frames, produced in actual media environments (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016), news coverage is by design already slanted.

³ This is also a major difference between issue-specific and generic frames, as the latter are more 'journalistic' and therefore descriptive, i.e. reproduced from political discourse. Although the topic of migration can be employed in generic frames, the victim and threat frame pertain specifically to two sides of the issue.

Thus to more accurately characterize audience's response to such slant, we employ the *relative* hostile media effect (Feldman, 2011), where partisans perceive less bias in news coverage supporting their view, than their opponents on the other side of the issue.

The term 'partisan' in the domain of HME research does not necessarily refer to political party supporters. For example, Gunther and Schmitt (2004) analyze how supporters and opponents of GMO food respond to (in)congruent content. If partisanship is a product of self-categorization in in-groups opposed to out-groups, according to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), then the motivation to protect one's own group increases with exposure to media content that renders that identification salient, especially among those maintaining strong group identification. In the context of our study, we posit that if people have negative views on immigration, they are more likely to believe that news coverage is too positive, compared to people who are less negative about this topic:

Hypothesis 1 - Individuals with negative (positive) views on immigration will see positive (negative) news frames as more biased than individuals with positive (negative) views.

Partisan Attachment and Party Cues

A more common interpretation of partisanship is the support of a political party. Although the proximity between right-wing ideology and anti-immigrant attitudes has been frequently demonstrated (ex. Van der Brug & Fennema, 2007), this association does not imply the two are synonymous. Thus, disentangling partisan identity from migration attitudes would allow measuring the extent of partisan influence in manifestations of the HME. Such influence would be especially prominent in the presence of party cues embedded in the message, as citizens with strong partisan attachment would be driven by partisan predispositions to reach conclusions in a particular direction and thus 'ignore or devalue contrary information and bias the perception of credibility or overlook important factors' (Taber, Lodge & Glathar, 2001, p. 208).

Such directional goals, where individuals will strive to defend their extant values, identities and attitudes are the main tenet of motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006) and highly relevant to framing effects, as frame strength often rests on symbols, endorsements and links to partisanship and ideology (Chong & Druckman, 2007). As Slothuus and De Vreese (2010) have shown that

citizens are more inclined to follow a frame which is party-sponsored, if they feel more attached to that party, we extend this rationale to the HME, expecting it to be further amplified (or suppressed) with partisan sponsorship of migration frames, depending on the degree of partisan identification:

Hypothesis 2 - Individuals with strong partisan identification will see news as more biased if opposing party endorses the report.

Media Skepticism

Arceneaux et al. (2012) refer to the phenomenon where viewers become increasingly suspicious of media, driven by reactions to outlets that represent political viewpoints contradicting their own, as *oppositional media hostility*. However, there has been little focus on its subsequent implications. Potentially the most pertinent one of these implications is whether bias perceptions about specific content or topics among opinionated partisans are projected on attitudes towards media in general. Research on the concept of trust in media reveals that partisanship again plays a crucial role. Lee (2010) discusses how both right and left in the US are skeptical of the media: the former due to a perception of journalists' liberal bias, while the latter because they perceive media as controlled by elites. Meanwhile in Europe, the recent migrant crisis has inspired the so-called 'Lügenpresse' phenomenon, where right-wing political movements have accused mainstream media of covering up problems related to immigration and general bias against any immigration critical perspectives in society (Holt & Haller, 2017). However, negative evaluations of the media have also come from the liberal camp, critical of the vilification of immigrants by the press (Suro, 2011). Accordingly, we expect that the perception of bias of articles on the migration topic will lead to inferences about coverage of the entire issue, and that these inferences will be further translatable to the overall evaluations of media.

Hypothesis 3 - Individuals who see migration news as biased will exhibit less trust in media overall.

Elaboration Likelihood

The causal relationships described thus far presumably require additional underlying mechanisms which would explain the cognitive processes involved in the attitude crystallization. We posit that the attitudinal outcomes above will only emerge if citizens are motivated enough to engage with the

frames, that is, when they find the subject at hand relevant enough, or when it achieves a sufficient level of ‘mismatch’ with their previous attitudes. If individuals are strongly opinionated about migration, and therefore find frames particularly incongruent, they will attempt to counterargue them, utilizing their central route for cognitive processing, as opposed to uninvolved individuals who do not attach special relevance to the subject, and therefore do not possess the motivation to evaluate the frame’s content, using only peripheral cues as a source of attitude change. This argument is in line with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979) from classic persuasion theory, which could provide the missing link in the causal chain bridging the paradigms of framing and the HME.

Hypothesis 4 - Hostile media effect will occur when exposure to an incongruent frame will cause increased elaboration in order to counterargue the frame.

CASE SELECTION

As the research arena for this study we have chosen the Republic of Macedonia. Crucially, this allows for a rare, non-Western perspective on the migration phenomenon. From a historical perspective, unlike Western European countries, Macedonia has not been a migrant destination and has only confronted the issue in recent times, as a ‘transit country’ on the much publicized Balkan migrant route after the escalation of the Syrian refugee crisis. The novelty of the issue and the country’s transit status means attention to migration is relatively low among the public, as confirmed by the fact that Macedonians do not consider migration as one of the top most important issues facing the country (Mihailovska, 2016). This makes the case convenient for media effects studies, as there is more room for shifts in public opinion as a result of exposure to news content. At the same time, these shifts would unlikely constitute an informational learning effect, since a basic familiarity with the migrant crisis has developed in the country, due to its international impact and the large number of foreigners entering Macedonia (Georgiev, 2015). As previous studies show (Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010; Zaller, 1992), this is an optimal environment for testing news content effects, as overly high salience results with potentially inflexible attitudes, while too low salience limits generalizability.

The political situation in Macedonia itself makes migration less salient, as the country has been entangled in a severe internal struggle between the two main parties, the ruling nationalist-

conservative VMRO led by Prime minister Nikola Gruevski, and Zoran Zaev-led liberal Socialdemocrat (SDSM) opposition, focusing on corruption and ethnic issues and thus deprioritizing migration. However, it is exactly this context that benefits our partisanship moderator in two ways. First, the lack of a multiparty scene exacerbates partisan polarization in the American model. Second, the two parties do not have explicit positions on migration, yet due to their ideological postures, a reputational pretreatment is expected (Slothuus, 2016), with the right-wing government emphasizing national security, and the progressives opposing them on the basis of human rights. This makes contrasting party endorsement of migrant frames highly realistic and effective as a cue.

STUDY 1

To test the hypotheses in the described context, we have conducted two experiments in which citizens were presented the frames on the topic of the migration crisis and subsequently had their opinions canvassed. The studies were similar in their design, but differing in sampling procedure, time frame and operationalizations of certain variables. We report these differences below as we first describe the experimental design and results of the first study and subsequently present the second.

Sample and Procedure

The experimental procedure in both studies assumed forced exposure (Arceneaux et al., 2012) to an asymmetric information flow (Hartman & Weber, 2009); that is to say, subjects were randomly assigned to experimental conditions: a humanitarian (victim) and security (threat) frame, their two corresponding party endorsed equivalents, and a frame-absent control. The first study followed a between-subjects, post-test only design. The survey in which the stimuli were embedded was administered via an online questionnaire. The subjects were mostly undergraduate students at the University of Skopje, recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. In total, 104 individuals completed the questionnaire in a period of one week at the end of April 2017. Subjects were of Macedonian ethnicity, in order to fully tap the effects of the political conflict between the main two parties, which in the Macedonian party system correspond generally with voters from the ethnic Macedonian majority.

Stimulus Material

We constructed the stimulus materials based on the theoretical perspective on migration frames and empirical insight about frames used specifically in Macedonia. Using the ‘victim/threat’ dichotomy as a point of departure, we adapted to the Macedonian case the framing and reasoning devices that Van Gorp (2005) uses to systematically disentangle the two frames as ‘media packages’ (p. 491). Furthermore, we followed the analytical categories developed by Benson and Wood (2015), which identify problem frames, cause frames and solution frames in the immigration context (p. 807).⁴ These frame conceptualizations generated the core structure and argument of our stimulus material. Finally, a separate content analytical study comparing Greek and Macedonian news coverage of the migrant crisis in 2016 (Bosilkov & Drakaki, 2018) provided substantial and stylistic elements to the construction of the stimulus articles, as specific axioms and phrases were incorporated from published pieces in order to reflect actual content on the subject, and thus increase ecological validity.⁵

All stimulus articles were of similar length and structure, while also employing similar journalistic style to convey the message, so that comparability between the frames is ensured (see Appendix A1). The same general context and specific event was described; that migrants are still crossing the border with Greece, with the victim frame emphasizing their suffering and advocating a human rights oriented approach, while the threat frame focusing on the social and security risks and advocating more restrictive policy. To construct the other two conditions, a party cue was introduced by simply replacing the names of the two experts giving quotes (a humanitarian aid worker in the victim frame and director of a ‘Center for security studies’ in the threat frame) with

⁴ The authors list *problems for authorities* (ex. undocumented immigration threatens the legal immigrations system), *problems for society* (immigrants threaten security and culture), *problems for immigrants* (violence, racism), *cause pull factors* (immigrants come to take advantage of social benefits), *cause push factors* (economic factors, persecution), *solution enforcement* (enhanced punishment for violations of law), *solution external* (foreign investment and diplomatic aid), *solution reform system* (immigration should be made less complicated) and *solution campaign*. Evidently these categories complement the victim/threat dichotomy.

⁵ For example, for the victim frame, we included a statement from a report “*Instead of transit, two weeks of life in Tabanovce*” published by Macedonian daily *Utrinski Vesnik* on 2 March 2016, quoting a refugee as saying I lost my house in the bombing and spent my last money to reach Europe”. For the threat frame, an example of a phrase we used was mentioned in the 7 March 2016 *Dnevnik* article “*Macedonia defending Europe from itself*”, stating “we can’t fill the camps and become a parking for migrants”.

names of members of the two main Macedonian parties, with their statements remaining the same. This change yielded the two partisan endorsed victim and threat frames, with Social Democrat and VMRO sponsorship, respectively. In order to achieve experimental realism, the manipulated content was embedded in the interface of the website of an existing Macedonian online outlet *Lokalno.mk*, one that is not known for any partisan affiliation which could potentially confound subjects' evaluations due to varying perceptions of source credibility (Arpan & Raney, 2003).

Measures

Hostile media perception. The dependent variable was measured through perception of article bias and perception of biased general media migration coverage. We measured *article bias* (oppositional media hostility) through asking whether the portrayal of the migrants in the article was neutral or biased against or in favor of the migrants, on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 ($M = 3.71$, $SE = 1.18$). *General media bias* consisted of two items about the favorability of the coverage of migrants in the media, the first asking 'Would you say coverage on the whole has been favorable or unfavorable to the migrants or neutral?' and the second 'How are migrants treated in stories you see about them?', both measured on a 1-7 scale from unfavorable to favorable. The two items were averaged to form an index ($\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.14$).

Media trust. Two items measured general media trust: a media feeling thermometer from 0 to 100 ($M = 21.36$, $SD = 19.36$) and a question asking how much of the time media can be trusted to report the news fairly (Always, most of the time, some of the time, almost never, none of the time), $M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.76$. These measures are commonly used to tap overall attitudes towards the institution of media (Ladd, 2010; Lee, 2005), and the way they are formulated makes a clear distinction with the previous battery in the survey regarding specific coverage of migration. As the two items didn't display sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .58$), they were treated as separate variables and rescaled from 0 to 1 for easier interpretation of regression coefficients.

Party attachment. The moderating variable was measured in different ways to capture the full complexity of the concept. *Party identification* was measured through a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong Socialdemocrat support, 4 neutral/independent, and 7 strong VMRO support ($M = 3.91$, $SE = 1.32$). We also assessed *propensity to vote* (see Van der Eijk, Van der Brug, Kroh & Franklin, 2006) for both parties, subtracting the scores to create an index. The same

procedure was employed in assessing feeling towards the two party leaders and party supporters, the latter in order to tap *affective polarization* levels (Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes, 2012).⁶ All variables were mean centered and normalized.

Manipulation check

We checked whether subjects have paid attention and understood the article by asking four factual questions about the content, requiring answers ‘true’ or ‘false’. The first one, addressed to all subjects in the experimental conditions (n=76), stated: ‘The intensity of the migrant crisis on the border has increased from last year’. 40.8% of the subjects gave the correct answer (‘false’), while 39.5% gave the wrong answer, with 19.7% stating ‘don’t know’.⁷ Responses to the other three manipulation check items indicated an acceptable rate of attention and understanding by the subjects. Out of 40 people that were in the victim condition, 67.5% answered affirmatively and correctly to the statement ‘There is a possibility for migrants to apply for asylum in Macedonia’, while out of 36 exposed to the threat condition, 75% answered correctly (‘false’) to the statement ‘The border security has enough resources to monitor the border’. The party endorsement manipulation check was also satisfactory: 65% answered correctly about which party offers endorsement in the social-democrat sponsored article (n=20) and 88.2% answered correctly the same question in the VMRO-sponsored article (n=17).

RESULTS

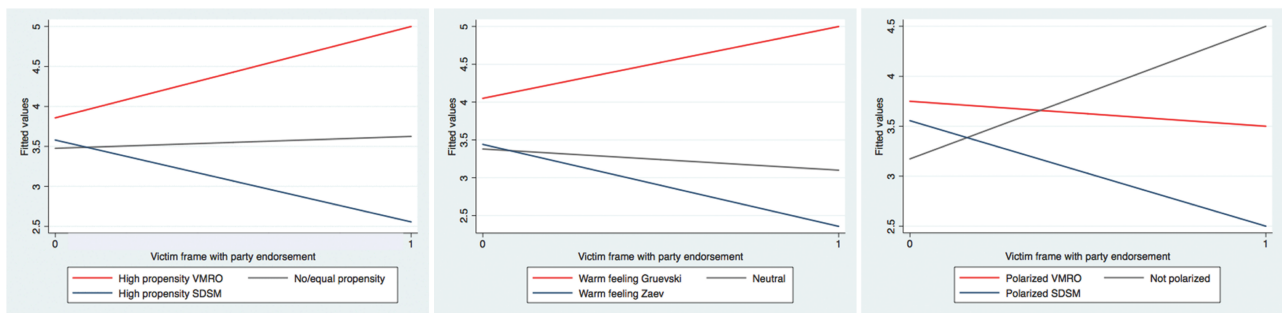
We first conducted a t-test to check whether the manipulations had an effect on the perception of article bias. Indeed, there is a significant difference in how much the subjects in the humanitarian condition ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.18$) and those in the threat condition ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.10$) consider the article to be biased, $t(74) = 2.11$, $p < .05$. Interestingly, subjects in both conditions consider the article’s representation of migrants to be more biased *against* the migrants than the middle point on the scale (4), which considers the article neutral/unbiased.

⁶ The procedure subtracted evaluations of VMRO from evaluations of SDSM, with higher numbers reflecting greater attachment to Socialdemocrats.

⁷ We addressed this in the second study by rewriting the first paragraph to emphasize that the crisis is less intense in comparison to the previous year (which was omitted in the original version).

Because in the first study we didn't measure migration attitudes before manipulation, we skip Hypothesis 1 and continue directly to testing Hypothesis 2, by regressing the perception of overall media bias on our frame dummies. We found no significant main effects of either party endorsed or not endorsed frames. However, when checking for the moderating effect of partisan attachment, marginally significant interactions are discovered for the party endorsed *victim* frame (but not the party endorsed *threat* frame) and several measurements of party attachment (propensity score $B = -.10$, $SE = .05$, $p < .10$; feeling towards party leaders $B = -.09$, $SE = .05$, $p < .10$; feeling toward party supporters $B = -.01$, $SE = .00$, $p < .10$). In order to interpret the coefficients we visually present the effect of the victim frame condition on bias perception, at different levels of partisan identification (Figure 1.1). The findings lend tentative support for Hypothesis 2 that partisans see opposing party sponsored news as biased.

Figure 1.1. Effect of victim frame on general perception of media bias regarding migrants, by party identification



Note. Greater (Y) score represents greater perception of bias in favor of migrants, measured on a 7-point Likert scale. A value of 0 on horizontal line represents means for subjects in control group, value 1 is means for subjects in victim frame with party (SDSM) endorsement. Categories generated by top 25 % (blue), bottom 25 % (red) and zero (grey) on propensity to vote (top), leader feeling (middle) and affective polarization thermometers (low).

As expected, perception of article bias is a significant predictor for views on the general coverage of migration ($B = .43$, $SE = .10$, $p < .01$), as the more the frame is seen as biased in favor of the migrants, the greater the perception that migrants are treated favorably by the media in general. Additionally, we also found evidence that an increase of perception that migrants are represented favorably in the media is a significant predictor for belief in media fairness, even after controlling for partisan identification ($B = .15$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). However, regressing media thermometer ratings on perception of migration bias in media has not yielded a significant effect ($B = .55$, $SE = 1.63$, $p = n.s.$). These results offer partial support for Hypothesis 3.

DISCUSSION

Our first experiment gives strong indications of the phenomenon of partisan motivated reasoning. Individuals exposed to the partisan (Socialdemocrat) endorsed victim frame demonstrate a different pattern in comparison to the control group: those with high propensity to vote VMRO and having warmest feelings towards their party leader see media as more biased in favor of migrants, while Socialdemocrats move towards the opposite end of the scale. However, opinion of media bias after exposure to the threat frame (with and without party cue) does not differ from the no-exposure control group. We can only speculate why this is the case. Extant research on the mechanisms of affective processing states that anxiety (as an effect of perceived threat) increases accurate information processing only in conditions where there is a great deal of incongruent information in the environment (Redlawsk, Civettini & Lau, 2007). As the threat frame is representative of migration coverage in Macedonia, as the study by Bosilkov and Drakaki (2018) suggests, perhaps ‘feeling just a little bit anxious might not be enough to trigger careful attention’ (Redlawsk, Civettini & Emmerson, 2010, p. 566).

Finally, those who believe migrants are treated less favorably also perceive media in general as less fair and objective, indicating that there is a link between perceptions of migration news and media as an institution (Hypothesis 3). The substantial implication of this finding is in line with the above discussion: as the information environment tends to emphasize the threat aspect of migration, those individuals who believe migrants are targeted by journalists exhibit decreased trust in media. In order to better understand this process, we need to capture preceding attitudes on migration, which is what we do in the second study.

STUDY 2

Sample and procedure

For the second study, we employed a two-wave (pretest and posttest) experiment, in order to tap within-subject change, in addition to between-subject effects. The data were collected in May 2017, with a two week period between the waves, chosen as the optimal amount of time that would simultaneously prevent subject sensitization and keep contextual changes at minimum. The sample was provided by Skopje-based polling agency M-Prospect, drawing randomly from a country-wide population in their database. Invitations were sent by email; in order to prevent subject priming to the purpose of the study, the description of the research in the invitation was disguised as ‘Media and politics in Macedonia: an opinion survey regarding media representations of political events’.⁸ The reported response rate for the first wave was less than 10%, yielding 337 complete responses, out of which 131 participated in the second wave.⁹ Their post-test responses were matched with the pretest. The sample was biased towards the younger cohorts as 44% of the respondents belonged in the category between 18-29 years, however ANOVA tests indicated that randomization to experimental conditions was successful, as there were no significant difference between groups for age, sex, education and ideology ($p > .05$).

Measures

Apart from adding demographics in the second study (age, gender, education, ideology), we rated political knowledge through six factual questions. We also complemented our measurement for article bias with a five-item semantic differential (Arceneaux et al., 2012), averaged to create an index ($\alpha = .82$, $M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.60$). Another item was added to the original HME measure, regarding the perception of the article author’s stance towards migrants (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004).

⁸ When invited to participate in the second wave, subjects were not informed it is a follow up to the previous survey, in order to avoid selection bias for individuals invested in the migration issue. The title of the research was described as “Survey on media and political parties in Macedonia”.

⁹ There was no significant difference between attitudes on migration scores between second wave participants and dropouts, indicating pro or anti-immigrant sentiment did not influence attrition,

For this study we also averaged the media thermometer ratings and media fairness measure to form a media trust index, as this time the two items displayed high enough reliability ($\alpha = .71$), and rescaled from 0 to 1.

Attitudes on migration. In order to generate a comprehensive account of migrant attitudes, we asked a total of 16 questions related to *general beliefs about migration* (Ex. ‘To what extent do you think Macedonia should allow migrants to come and live here’), adapted from Sides and Citrin, (2007), *perception of threat* (‘These days I am afraid Macedonian culture is threatened by migrants’), adapted from Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior (2004), and *policy preferences* or support for punitive policies (‘Government should increase efforts to deport illegal immigrants’). All items were measured via 1-7 Likert scales (Appendix B1). The items for were averaged to create indices and rescaled from 0 to 1, where higher numbers indicate more positive feelings towards migration.¹⁰

Elaboration. We measured elaboration through an open-ended thought listing technique (Cacioppo, Von Hippel & Ernst, 1997). Defining elaboration as ‘the degree of detail in respondents’ descriptions’ (Shah, Kwak, Schmierbach & Zubric, 2004), we coded a four category scale to assess the complexity of the open-ended responses (0 = no relevant consideration or keyword given to 3 = relevant consideration given, plus at least one additional independent sentence), with the two coders displaying high level of agreement (Krippendorff’s $\alpha = .85$).¹¹

RESULTS

To check whether attitudes on migrants reflect on a perception of hostile media (Hypothesis 1), we regressed our article bias and semantic differential indices on the three dimensions for migrant attitudes. We found no significant hostile media effect for either dependent variable. However, when we did the same analysis separately for subjects in the victim and threat conditions, we found

¹⁰ The scales for the three dimensions all yielded high internal consistency: general opinion (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$), threat perception (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$) and policy preferences (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$).

¹¹ For instance, if “(in)security”, “unrest”, “empathy” were one or several among the terms mentioned by respondents in association to the manipulations about the migrant situation in Macedonia, the terms were coded 1. Briefly elaborating in one sentence on these thoughts and emotions was coded 2, while 3 was assigned to elaboration comprising of two or more independent clauses. Non-responses and statements like “no comment” or “no thoughts or feelings” were coded zero.

a significant negative coefficient for the effect of policy preference on the semantic differential index ($B = -3.22$, $SE = 1.60$, $p < .05$), only for the individuals exposed to threat frames (full regression table in Appendix C1). After breaking down the sample by political knowledge, there was a marginally significant coefficient of high knowledge ($B = -4.17$, $SE = 2.97$, $p < .10$) for the effect of policy preferences on the semantic differential index for the entire sample. Table 1 presents coefficients for effects of migrant attitudes on HME by levels of knowledge, showing that individuals which prefer more tolerant policy will consider the articles significantly more biased, but only if they are politically highly aware. We consider these findings partial and conditional support for Hypothesis 1 and interpret them in the discussion section below.

Table 1.1.

Effects of Migrant attitudes on Semantic differential index by Knowledge.

Semantic differential	Low Knowledge	Medium Knowledge	High Knowledge
Intercept	6.98 (.79)***	6.68 (.75)***	5.68 (.63)***
MigrantOpinion T1	-.02 (1.69)	.39 (1.97)	.39 (1.48)
Threat T1	-2.81 (1.65)	-.75 (1.60)	1.57 (1.42)
Policy T1	.99 (1.97)	-3.71 (2.30)	-4.17 (2.08)*
R2	0.13	0.19	0.19
N	26	27	43

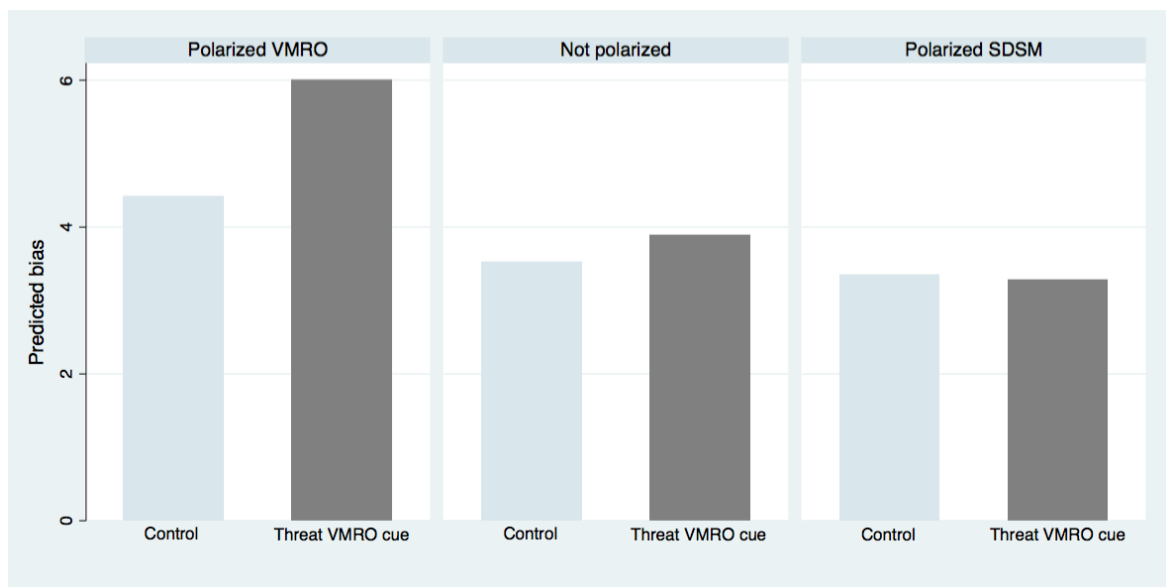
Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

When regressing the perception of overall media bias towards migrants at T2 on the frame conditions, in our model (also checking for possible effects of age, gender, education and ideology) we see another significant contrast effect, as party endorsed threat manipulation increases perception that media treat migrants favorably compared to the control group ($B = .67$, $SE = .28$, p

< .05).¹² However, when partisan attachment is included, this relationship is moderated so that more positive perception of Socialdemocrat supporters ('SDSM affective polarization') significantly reverses the above relationship, yielding stronger perception of media portraying migrants unfavorably ($B = -6.59$, $SE = 2.63$, $p < .05$). The discrepancy between opposing partisans is visualized in Figure 1.2. This finding complements the one about the party sponsored victim frame in Study 1, further supporting Hypothesis 2. The full regression table can be found in Appendix C1.

Figure 1.2. Effect of party cue threat condition on general media bias by feeling towards party supporters



Notes. Y-axis represents perception of general media bias in favor of migrants.

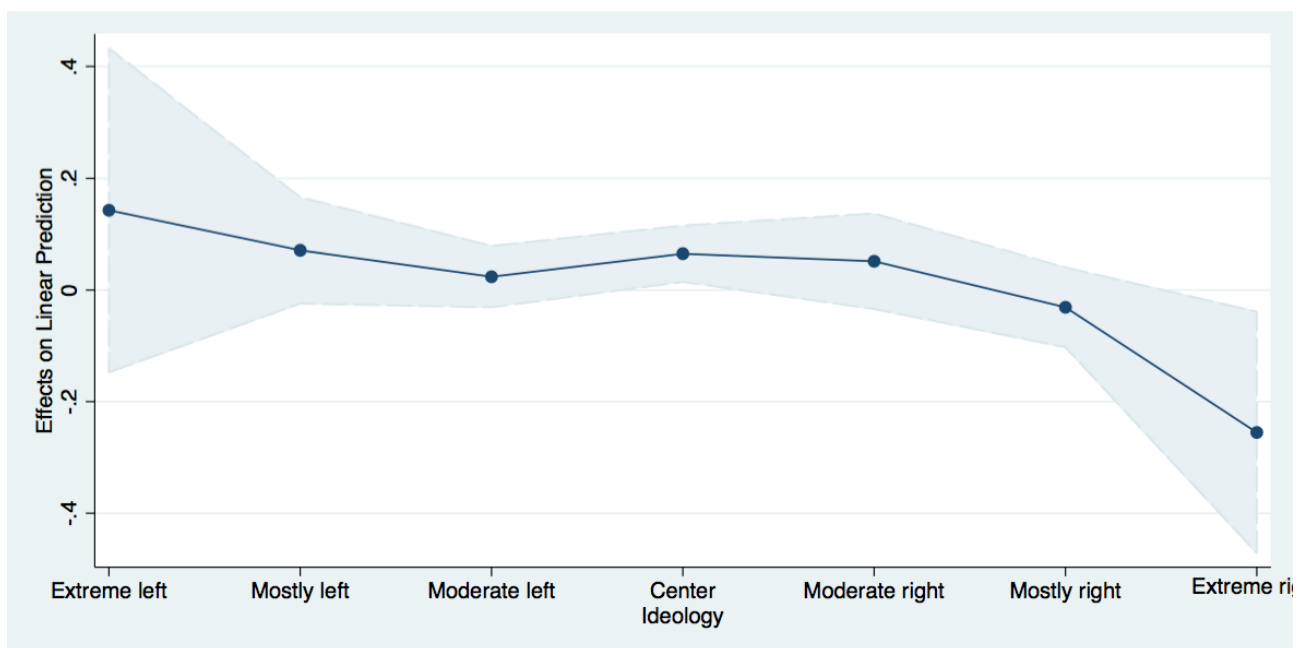
The three categories represent warm feelings for VMRO supporters (-100 to -49 thermometer ratings), moderate feeling (-50 to 50 thermometer ratings), warm feeling towards SDSM members (51-100 thermometer ratings).

General media bias measured on a 7-point scale with higher scores indicating favorable treatment of migrants.

¹² We also see a significant effect of ideology as an change of ideology from left to right on a 1-7 scale increases perception of bias by 17%, $p = .047$.

Hypothesis 3 posits that greater perception of general media bias regarding migrants will cause a greater overall media skepticism. Unlike Study 1, we find there is no significant effect of perception of bias on trust in media ($B = .14$, $SE = .17$, $p = n.s.$) when controlling for age, sex, education, political interest and knowledge. However, ideology seems to moderate the relationship, as trust in media significantly decreases for extreme right-wing ideologues ($B = -.40$, $SE = .18$, $p < .05$) compared to leftists. Figure 1.3 presents the marginal impact of ideological score on media trust.

Figure 1.3. Marginal impact of ideology on the effect of migrant bias perception to general media trust.



Note. Greater (Y) score represents more trust in media. Coefficients are unstandardized. Dashed gray area represents 95% confidence intervals.

Finally, with regards to Hypothesis 4, we find no significant effect of any type of framing manipulation on the amount of elaboration, $F(3,92) = 0.53$, $p = n.s.$, nor does elaboration itself

significantly affect scores on the semantic differential scale ($B = .22$, $SE = .14$, $p = n.s.$) or the perception of article bias ($B = -.02$, $SE = .08$, $p = n.s.$). We must therefore reject this hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The second study allows us to check whether antecedent attitudes on migration lead to perception that the article is biased (Hypothesis 1). Our findings show that individuals exposed to the threat frame who prefer a more tolerant policy towards migration will also perceive the article as hostile. This is no surprise considering the key premise of the relative HME: if news content advocates a position counter to prior beliefs, it will be seen as unfair. In relation to this, it is also interesting that individuals with more tolerant policy preferences who are highly knowledgeable also see content as unfair, regardless of manipulation. In this sense, we might be tapping into a single underlying dimension of pro-immigrant sentiment, as previous research has shown that more politically sophisticated citizens tend to exhibit greater tolerance for unpopular minorities (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). This is possible as tests show no significant difference between individuals varying in political knowledge for trust in media in our sample.

With regards to partisan motivated reasoning in the interpretation of frames (Hypothesis 2), findings complement those of the first study, as in this case the party endorsed threat frame exerts a significant difference between those with strong affective polarization for the two parties. What is intriguing is that VMRO supporters exposed to their party's cue tend to believe that media are more biased in favor of the migrants more than those in the control condition. This might represent an artefact of the so-called 'third person effect' (Perloff, 1999), where individuals believe that others are more susceptible to media messages than themselves, especially if they perceive the mediated opinion climate (Tsfati, 2003) as opposite to their own beliefs, and the article they just have read is an exception reminding them of that.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, findings from our second study evoke what both scholarly and public debate refers to as 'liberal media bias' (Lee, 2005). Trust in media decreases significantly as a result of greater perceived favorability of migrants, when we compare between left and right on the ideological spectrum. This is within expectations, yet results from the first study are not replicated: we do not observe a link between the perception of migration coverage and overall evaluation of media. Same goes for Hypothesis 4: increased elaboration does not derive from

greater affective engagement with incongruent frames. There could be other unmeasured causes of elaboration that explain its variance, such as the need to evaluate (Jarvis & Petty, 1996), or individual traits that we didn't account for. The small sample size prevents making inferences concerning this aspect. With this in mind, we conclude in the final section by focusing on the limitations, conceptual dilemmas for the future and normative implications of this study.

CONCLUSION

As stated, it is certain that the small N of both experiments offers limited statistical power for the purpose of identifying not only elaboration likelihood vis-a-vis media hostility, but also for all other assumptions.¹³ The extremely low response rate of Study 2 has undoubtedly hampered the efforts to establish the causal relationships we hypothesized. That being said, even with a meagre sample size, we find partial evidence of the existence of the relative hostile media effect (Feldman, 2011) with regards to migration (Study 2), and indications of oppositional media hostility in both studies (Arceneaux et al., 2012). This adds to a body of literature demonstrating the partisan contingencies of media effects, connecting it with literature on migration framing, in a novel context.

We identify two major conceptual puzzles from these findings that should be addressed in the future. First, we observe no difference between the effects of endorsed and unendorsed frames without the moderation of individual partisanship. This would indicate that party cues on the topic of migration are more important than the valuational aspects in the shift of media perceptions. This is in line with previous research (Arceneaux et al., 2012; Coe et al., 2008) which shows that partisanship trumps everything else when it comes to processing politics news. Thus, instead of just being auxiliary to social identity (which, presumably, migrants as outsiders should trigger), partisanship is actually the driving force behind perceptions of media coverage on the phenomenon. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, recent work has shown that partisan identity is in fact generating more hostility than race (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). As the level of party animus in Macedonia is extremely high due to contextual reasons, such partisan animosity is bound to reflect to media evaluations. A party signal could be a decisive factor not only about migration, but everything else. To determine this, a full factorial design which mixing frames and cues would

¹³ For illustration, post-hoc power analysis in testing the difference between groups for media trust indicates power was 15%.

perhaps be a better approach than complementing frames with reputation-based cues, despite the potential loss of validity from incoherent combinations.

Furthermore, unlike the West (or more recently Hungary), in Macedonia state and party policies on migration are not clearly defined, and debate on the issue is virtually non-existent as it is not a priority. In a situation like that party cues based on stereotypes facilitate attitude adjustment. This raises an important question: do party cues actually elicit partisan motivation reasoning, or do they simply function as heuristic tools? We assume that the underlying mechanism is indeed the former, as individuals scrutinize content in order to reach a directional goal. However, in light of our findings, there is a possibility that the party cue simply leads to heuristic processing for an ambivalent issue. Current research is divided on this topic (Petersen, Skov, Serritzlew & Ramsøy, 2012), but pinpointing the mechanisms of partisan information processing would shed additional light to the source of labelling of media as ‘hostile’, especially in combination with issues that are owned by a party (Walgrave & De Swert, 2004) or floating unattached in the political arena.

The second conceptual puzzle refers to the psychological mechanisms that contribute to the hostile media effect. As Taber and Lodge (2006) argue, motivated reasoning is ‘driven by automatic affective processes that establish the direction and strength of biases’ (p. 756). While scholars have analyzed how emotions impact the hostile media effect alongside cognition (Matthes, 2011), and also in the context of immigration (Matthes & Beyer, 2015), they have compared the affective underpinnings of the HME of the same issue across different countries, but not different issues within the same country. Through the threat frame, a polarizing and emotionally charged topic like migration is assumed to invoke anxiety, which has been shown to moderate partisan processing (Weeks, 2015). Valuable new insight can be generated by comparing the HME for issue frames of high and low involvement (Zaller, 1992), or a partisan conflict and consensus issue (Sluthuus & De Vreese, 2010), especially with a view to advancing insight about overall media trust.

While these present worthy research objectives for the future, the present study addresses a major gap in communication scholarship, which is the link between the hostile media effect and trust in media as an institution. While the latter would ideally be operationalized in an even more sophisticated way in order to prevent confounding with specific coverage (Kohring & Matthes, 2007), our tentative first step raises an important question in today’s sociopolitical context: is migration coverage symptomatic of the shifting role of media in the public sphere? The

transformation of migration into a contentious issue has provided the opportunity to extrapolate and generalize from perceptions of issue coverage to the media as an institution, as mainstream journalists have found themselves accused of being overly liberal, elitist and of touch with common people (Pasquino, 2008). This description echoes the spirit of populism, which treats institutions (including media) as a limitation of the *volonté générale*, and rejects liberal democratic ideals of minority protection (Mudde, 2007). As the traditional paradigm of ‘social responsibility’ is challenged by proliferation of alternative, opinionated and often unethical journalism in the digital sphere, a diminishing public trust in the media establishment opens the door to the surge of fake news, and thus, misinformed citizenship.

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CHAPTER 2**Priming migration threat and the public preferences towards executive powers**

Abstract

Does the perception of migration in times of crisis have implications that transcend the domain of policy support and alter systemic preferences among citizens? In an experimental study conducted in Macedonia (N = 312), we test how perceived realistic and symbolic threat from migrants affect attitudes towards increased concentration of political authority, conceptualised as support for presidential powers (such as veto rights) and for a presidential system. Findings show that citizens who see migrants as threatening towards cultural cohesion are more willing to see an empowered president. We discuss the implications of openness towards institutional design with more streamlined decision making in the context of rising illiberalism and populism in the wider region.

INTRODUCTION

While it is assumed that the legitimacy of any form of democratic government originates from citizenship, very rarely have the specific levers of presidential power been subjected to public scrutiny. A line of research deals with the evaluations of political institutions rather than their occupants or their performance (Aberbach, Peterson & Quirk, 2007; Caldeira & Gibson, 1992; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1995), out of which a subfield deals specifically with the public support for the various mechanisms of presidential authority and by extension, the polity's constitutional design. Reeves and Rogowski (2015) have grappled with the concept of public support for the levers of presidential power rather than simple presidential approval, while Aytac, Carkoglu and Yildirim (2017) have provided cross-national validity by gauging Turkish citizens' preferences for presidentialism as opposed to parliamentarianism. Both these studies have demonstrated that citizens' attitudes on institutional design are not fixed, but contingent on context such as executive rating, partisan bias, and often, exogenous shocks.

In this paper, we focus on the latter, as we investigate how raising the salience of a crisis ambient through the press could potentially cause shifts in individual perceptions of institutional legitimacy. In other words, we measure the spillover from public evaluations of the 'political' to those of the 'institutional' - or of the office itself, to the nature of the office - when media-originated threat varies. Thus, while previous work on the topic has looked at the impact of political upheaval on the support for presidential powers and presidentialism (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016), we make the distinction between the impact of varying *perceptions* of the level of political upheaval, by experimentally priming threat levels specifically from immigration, galvanized by the European 'migrant' crisis. For this purpose, we situate our research in the Republic of Macedonia, a country on the Balkan migrant route. The case selection is further justified by the fact that the Macedonian system finds itself on the middle of the continuum between presidential and parliamentary system (Metcalf, 2000), rendering the role of the president suitable for our priming procedure. In addition, Macedonia's communist legacy as a former member of the Yugoslav federation, where for four decades practically absolute power was concentrated in dictator Marshal Tito, encourages the examination of authoritarianism as a moderator of the main relationship, given that Tito is still held in high esteem in Macedonian collective memory (Vangeli, 2011).

While we find no support for the hypotheses, our analysis reveals that right-wing party support and especially perceived symbolic threat from immigrants are related to greater support for an empowered president. The discovery of a relationship between immigration attitudes and institutional preferences contributes to our understanding of how authoritarian tendencies in society can potentially play a role in populist dismantling of the separation of powers in democratic systems.

THEORETICAL RATIONALE

According to Reeves and Rogowski (2015), members of the public who approve of the president exhibit stronger support for executive powers, such as unilateral military powers, veto powers and appointment of judges. On the other hand, partisan heuristics seem to play a crucial role in the support for the proposal to change from parliamentary to presidential system in Turkey, as the proposed constitutional amendment comes from a polarizing figure in president Erdogan (Aytac et al., 2017). Finally, core democratic values such as egalitarianism, tolerance and support for minority rights are strong predictors for attitudes towards political institutions (Gibson & Caldeira, 2009). In contrast to the common understanding of the public as indifferent or insufficiently sophisticated to engage with the complexities of governance, these findings clearly indicate that certain conditions determine levels of support for presidential power. In another study, Reeves and Rogowski (2016) demonstrate that in the context of a crisis with implications to national security, the approval for unilateral use of presidential powers significantly increases. The notion that citizens prioritize social order to be delivered by political leadership is one of the most compelling arguments made by proponents of presidentialism as constitutional design, since it offers executive stability, as opposed to the constant gridlocks and frequent cabinet changes in parliamentarism (Linz, 1990).

Such stability is especially valuable in the case of crisis, where political leadership is expected to act quickly and decisively. In the Macedonian semi-presidential system (Frison-Roche, 2007; Metcalf, 2000), the president is democratically elected, but has more of a formal role and limited legislative authority, with the prime minister being the main locus of power and *de facto* head of state. However, when a state of emergency is declared, the president is granted emergency powers. This is what happened in August 2015, when the Macedonian government has declared a crisis situation lasting for two years, as a result of the unprecedented number of people that were

entering the country during the so-called 'European migrant crisis' (Chudoska-Blazhevskaja & Flores Juberias, 2016).

The transformation of the migration issue into a serious social problem, culminating with its treatment as a crisis phenomenon after the events of 2015, may have exacerbated the need for stability among citizens, possibly translating into more vocal demands for an institutional response. Such demands are usually materialized as policies; for example, in the United Kingdom in the 1990s 'political crises abroad which produced sharp increase in asylum applications triggered significant public and media alarm about a wave of refugees, to which government responded with two Parliamentary Acts targeted at asylum migration' (Ford, Jennings & Somerville, 2015, p. 1403). However, we argue that the desired 'institutional response' isn't limited only to policies, but can extend to the very design of institutions which enables (or constraints) policy implementation, when immigration is perceived to be a harbinger of crisis. In brief, if the people would doubt the performance of the government on resolving the immigration crisis, they would move towards support for more presidential powers, and in extension, a presidential system.

Yet, if people believe that institutional reform is required to remedy a migration crisis, naturally they would have to first believe that migrants are indeed a legitimate danger to society, capable of generating a crisis. According to Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014), opposition towards immigration is generated by considerations of self-interest and sociotropic concerns. Embedded within these considerations are both economic and cultural dimensions; with regards to the first, citizens believe that immigrants increase the competition for resources and generate economic insecurity (Sides & Citrin, 2007), while in terms of the second aspect, immigrants are seen as a threat to cultural cohesion and national identity (Green, Fasel & Sarrasin, 2010; Pehrson & Green, 2010). Social psychologists label the above categories 'realistic' and 'symbolic' threat - the main building blocks of integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), successfully shown to predict prejudice towards immigrants.

Having systematized the nature of threat using social psychology, we draw from political communication to understand its diffusion. Apart from personal experience and interpersonal communication, the media are the third source of people's perceptions. While media effects literature has established a causal link between negative portrayal of migrants, and anti-immigrant attitudes and behavioral intentions in audiences (Bos, Lecheler, Mewafi & Vliegenthart, 2016;

Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Schemer, 2012), the implications of this relationship for trust in political institutions and preference for a specific form of government, are relatively unknown. The theoretical underpinnings of the priming paradigm (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) can potentially illuminate the way to establishing these implications: because of the heuristical nature of political evaluations, citizens judge political entities based on the level of attention a particular aspect of political life is given by the media (Kinder, 1998). According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007, p. 11), priming ‘occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments’. Therefore, if viewers are primed with migration threat, as a common theme in migration news coverage (Benson, 2013; van Gorp, 2005), they will employ similar mechanisms in evaluating the institutional setup as they do for executive’s performance; according to its suitability for addressing such threat.

In line with our argument so far, we hypothesize that exposure to both symbolic and realistic threat from migration will lead to greater support of presidential powers (H1a), and a presidential system (H1b).¹⁴ This process should be further reinforced if presidential powers are highlighted through priming. Zaller (1992) famously argues that when individuals are called upon to make a political judgement, their response will be constructed by what is on the ‘top of the head’. Priming presidential performance has been cited as instrumental for presidential approval (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar & Simon, 1993); however, in the Macedonian case, the president has recently enacted controversial decisions such as amnesty (Gotev, 2016) and refusal to award government mandate (Marusic, 2017), putting not only himself under the public spotlight, but also the institutional range of the presidency. As Mendelberg (2001, p. 120) notes that ‘priming occurs when a person makes greater use of a given predisposition after exposure to communication that cues it in some way’, we can expect that if an audience (expected to be already as a whole sufficiently familiar to the president’s authorities given the context) is primed with a possible response (solution) via presidential powers when threat (problem) perceptions are increased, that should

¹⁴ We do not use the terms ‘presidentialism’ and ‘presidential powers’ interchangeably. Presidentialism is a system of governance, while presidential powers are the specific powers at the president’s disposal, whose extent is often, but not always determined by the institutional design of presidentialism (such as direct election, fixed term in office and control of the legislative agenda). This applies even more strongly to semi-presidential systems, such as the Macedonian one. For a detailed discussion, see Cheibub, Elkins and Ginsbourg (2013). We theorize support for presidentialism as the next ‘level’ - a more pronounced manifestation of support for presidential powers.

translate into even greater support for presidentialism (H2). This underscores our media effects perspective of presidentialism support vis-a-vis perceived threat.¹⁵

Mediators and (additional) moderators

Although the argument that greater feeling of threat from immigration will make citizens more supportive towards the increased use of discretionary presidential powers is compelling based on previous research, it still lacks an underlying mechanism which would explain exactly why this would be the case. It is plausible that the failure to properly address a threat on behalf of the political system would raise doubts about the viability of that system. Indeed, trust in political institutions has been equated with diffuse political support and linked to the effective functioning of democratic institutions (Easton, 1975; Gibson, Caldeira & Spence, 2003). Mishler and Rose (2005) demonstrate the positive effect of institutional trust on support for democratic values and political involvement, while Hough et al. (2010) find that trust specifically in justice institutions builds institutional legitimacy and commitment to the rule of law. From a security related perspective, the demand for more excessive punitive measures in the US, due to the salience increase of crime, comes *only* after a decline in trust in government (Zimring & Johnson, 2006).

Adding to this, social psychologists have demonstrated that in the presence of threat, trust decreases and breeds negative out-group evaluation (Voci, 2006), while both threat and trust predict prejudice in opposite way (Dhont & Van Hiel, 2011). Combining the two perspectives¹⁶, if feeling threatened on a personal level is negatively related with overall trust, and low levels of political trust depress institutional legitimacy, by connecting these two research threads, we expect that trust in political institutions will mediate the relationship between perceived threat in media and the support for presidential powers. Put differently, the decrease of general institutional trust resulting

¹⁵ We consider it to be of little theoretical interest whether priming presidential powers would affect support for presidential powers, so we therefore move on straight to presidentialism support.

¹⁶ The association between interpersonal and political trust has been established by previous research (see for ex. Kaase, 1999)

from perceived threat will positively impact support for presidential powers, as it represents a proxy for perceptions of a failing parliamentary system (H3).¹⁷

In this sense, beefed up executive capacity can be seen as the manifestation of the desire for more direct, simplified and assertive decision making in the face of perceived threat, much resembling the authoritarian model of the old communist regime. We therefore suspect that the endorsement for such practice would not be the same between citizens who differ in terms of individual-level authoritarianism. Altemeyer's (1996) description of the three crucial authoritarian traits seems highly relevant here: while *submission to authorities* plays well with the affinity for more unrestrained leadership (here conceptualized through presidential powers), *conventionalism* and *aggression towards outgroups* reveal how social disturbance, especially in the shape of a immigration crisis, can induce harsher attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Indeed, Feldman and Stenner (1997) provide empirical evidence that authoritarian predispositions are activated in the presence of perceived threat, enhancing the support for policies such as the death penalty or increased defence spending. As this moderation effect has been corroborated by several other studies (Cohrs & Ibler, 2009; Lavine, Lodge & Freitas, 2005), we argue that for authoritarians, the support for presidential powers as a response to content-induced threat would be even greater than for non-authoritarians (H4).

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

We conducted an online experiment with a post-test only design to test our hypotheses. Macedonia-based research company 'TIM Institut' administered the experimental survey, recruiting participants in eight regions of the country in order to ensure nationwide distribution. A preliminary sampling procedure of establishing principled willingness to participate was employed first, followed by email invitations with the survey link upon affirmative answer. Despite financial incentive of a 25 euro reward per region, low response rate of approximately 20 percent in the preliminary procedure yielded a total of 379 participants, out of which five did not agree to the

¹⁷ We do, however expect that trust specifically in the institution of president will increase, but only when presidential powers are primed. In that case, we expect that both the decrease of trust in other institutions, *and* increase of trust in the institution of president, will lead to greater support of presidential powers.

consent form and 62 did not complete the survey and were subsequently excluded from the analysis, thus yielding a final sample of 312 subjects.

The sample aimed at reflecting national variation regarding key demographic variables; despite overrepresentation of younger ($M = 37.2$, $SD = 12.13$), female (59.9%) and higher educated (64.6%) compared to census data, sufficient variation exists for population inferences to hold. After first being requested to give their consent, participants were asked to answer several demographic questions, followed by the experimental manipulation by a presentation of an online news article. Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, priming realistic and symbolic threat with and without a 'presidential cue' (priming the president's role in the crisis), in addition to a control group without any exposure. A timer of 50 seconds (minimum estimated time it takes to read the article) prevented the subjects to continue from the page without reading the stimulus article. The median time to complete the experiment was 10 minutes.

Stimulus material

Participants were exposed to a fictitious news piece, whose layout was designed to match articles from the online version of the national public service broadcaster MRTV, thereby increasing realism and ecological validity. The choice for the outlet is justified primarily by its ubiquitous reach and recognizability; however it also offers the advantage of preventing a priori dismissal of news as partisan biased (thus nullifying partisan-heuristic interpretations of content), stemming from familiarity with the normative ideal of public service broadcasters - to protect the public's interest by providing citizens balanced information free of political and commercial influences. While in the past decade this was hardly the case in Macedonia, as the public service was considered to be strongly leaning towards the ruling party (Mitevaska, 2017), recent government change has resulted with increasingly neutral reporting, creating the necessary context to examine its effects unburdened by a party scope.

The stimuli were originally developed in English and subsequently translated to Macedonian by a native speaker involved in the project. To construct the mediated realistic and symbolic threat stimuli in the context of immigration, we drew from the experiments of Stephan et al. (2005), who formulate the realistic threat emphasizing economic arguments (p. 4), and symbolic threat by emphasizing cultural and valuational aspects (p. 5). These extracts, modified and adapted to the

Macedonian case (for symbolic threat also emphasizing incompatibility with extreme Islamic values such as female subjugation and intolerance towards unbelievers for the symbolic threat condition), constituted the second of the three passages of the articles, in the shape of a statement from a leader of an existing anti-immigrant campaign ‘Awakening’. The campaign was involved in a controversial signature collection demanding a referendum against the possible settlement of immigrants on the Balkan route in Macedonia, a story which has been extensively covered in the country in the period of the research (Stojanovski, 2017).

The first passage, introducing the event, was identical across conditions, while the final one was a paraphrased response to the campaign by the government. In the two corresponding conditions priming the role of the president, a sentence was involved in the final passage, implying that the institution President of the country ‘will have the final word through his constitutional rights’, but omitting his name to avoid the influence of personal approval, as well as his explicit position on the issue, to prevent confounding support for presidential powers with anti-immigrant sentiment. All articles were equal in terms of length; an example of the stimuli (in its final version in Macedonian language) can be found in the Appendix A2.

Measures

Dependent variables. We use the same question as Aytac et al. (2017) to tap individual preferences for a presidential system versus parliamentary one. We measure agreement with the statement ‘a presidential system is better than parliamentary one’ on a 7-point Likert scale, reverse coded so that higher scores represent greater support of a presidential system ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.55$). For support for presidential powers we use four items (1 = completely agree, 7 = completely disagree): parliament should more strongly limit army use by the president, president should have greater veto powers, president should be able to appoint judges, and president should implement policies unilaterally without parliament approval (Reeves & Rogowski, 2015). The final three items were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect preferences for greater powers, yielding an average index on overall support for presidential powers ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.19$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.65$).¹⁸

¹⁸ The alpha in the study of Reeves and Rogowski is 0.67

Mediators. To measure institutional trust, we follow previous research by asking subjects about their trust in political parties, the parliament, constitutional court, president, police, NGOs and the media, measured on a 7-point scale. Due to the good internal consistency of the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$) and the high correlation between the measure 'trust in president' and the overall scale ($r = .55, p < .001$), we do not omit this item from the resulting general trust index ($M = 2.35, SD = 1.72$). However, this correlation is also lower than those between the index and each of the other items (over .70). Because of this, and the because we manipulate presidential salience (which could affect the responses for that question), we also keep the item as a separate variable and check for its unique effect in the mediation model.

Moderators. Authoritarianism was measured prior to stimulus exposure through four items which ask subjects questions about desirable traits that should be encouraged in children ('respect for elders' versus 'independence', 'obedience' versus 'self-reliance', 'curiosity' versus 'good manners' and 'being considerate' versus 'being well behaved'). State of the art research on authoritarianism (as well as the European Values Survey and the American National Election Study) is increasingly replacing Altemeyer's (1996) RWA scale with these 'child-rearing' measures (see Feldman & Stenner 1997), as they make a distinction from political ideology such as social conservatism and capture innate personal predispositions instead of attitudinal manifestations. Following Hetherington & Suhay (2011), the authoritarian response in each item is scored 1 and the non-authoritarian 0. As the items are binary, we conducted a Mokken scale analysis (see van Schuur, 2003) to confirm their reliability as a scale. The test reveals that our second item ('obedience' versus 'self-reliance') does not have a sufficient homogeneity coefficient to be included in the scale ($H_i < 0.30$). Thus we construct a scale ($M = 0.60, SD = 0.30$), based on the other three items.

In order to check the robustness of our measure, we included three indicators relating to social and political attitudes that authoritarianism should predict, which are unrelated to child-rearing attitudes (see Tillman, 2013); the first one asking subjects whether they agree it would be a good thing to have more respect for authority in the future (agreement indicating authoritarianism), whether they believe there is only one true religion (authoritarians are likely to agree with this statement), and their opinion on homosexuals adopting children (authoritarians should be opposed to such practice). We coded these questions so that higher scores reflect more authoritarian responses - all three had significantly (albeit weakly) positive correlation with our childrearing

measure; respect for authority ($r = .18, p < .001$), one true religion ($r = .27, p < .001$) and homosexuals adopting children ($r = .34, p < .001$).

Control variables. We included of demographic variables in the survey: age, gender, ethnicity, education, ideology (1-far left; 7-far right), party identification (1-strong Socialdemocrat; 7-strong VMRO) and political knowledge (measured by five factual questions on domestic, regional and EU politics). A randomization check was conducted revealing no significant differences between the experimental conditions for any variable except education ($\chi^2(12) = 25.71, p = .012$).¹⁹

Manipulation check

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to establish whether manipulation was successful. On a scale from 0-10 (with 0 corresponding with the perception that the article emphasizes entirely economic aspects of the migration issue and 10 representing the perception that it deals entirely with cultural aspects of the migration issue), there was a difference between the average score of subjects in the realistic threat condition ($M = 3.97, SD = 2.38$) and of those in symbolic threat condition ($M = 4.48, SD = 2.93$) but not a significant one, $F(1, 248) = 2.29, p = .132$. We also measured five indicators of perception of threat, three from a realistic and two from a symbolic perspective (see Appendix B2). All differences between the groups on these items were not significant, indicating that the treatment has not changed citizens' threat perceptions as intended. Moreover, as we obtained an eigenvalue above 1 for only one factor (2.85) after running a principal component analysis for the five items (explaining 57% of the variance), we concede that our 'realistic vs. symbolic' threat framework does not fit the data: instead of having two dimensions of threat - economic and cultural - we capture only one general threat dimension.²⁰

RESULTS

¹⁹ Age ($\chi^2(12) = 203.08, p = \text{n.s.}$), gender ($\chi^2(4) = 5.41, p = \text{n.s.}$), ethnicity ($\chi^2(8) = 6.38, p = \text{n.s.}$), ideology ($\chi^2(12) = 25.23, p = \text{n.s.}$), partisanship ($\chi^2(24) = 15.17, p = \text{n.s.}$), political knowledge ($\chi^2(12) = 10.82, p = \text{n.s.}$)

²⁰ Confirmatory factor analysis with unidimensional measurement for the two theoretically driven constructs had an unsatisfactory model fit ($\chi^2(4) = 42.84, p < .001, \text{RMSEA} = 0.20, 90\% \text{ CI } [.15; .25], \text{CFI} = .92$), and excessively low discriminant validity ($r = .95$), confirming the absence of two factor solution.

We used a t-test for H1, an ANOVA to test H2, and for H3 and H4 we applied Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro to conduct a regression based model of moderated mediation. In each test we controlled for education due to the failed manipulation. When comparing the non-exposure control group to the threat conditions as a whole, we found no significant evidence that increased threat leads to greater support for either presidential powers (H1a), $t(310) = -0.03, p = \text{n.s.}$ ($M_{\text{threat}} = 3.63, SD = 1.19; M_{\text{control}} = 3.62, SD = 1.18$), or for presidential system as opposed to a parliamentary one (H1b), $t(310) = 0.98, p = \text{n.s.}$ ($M_{\text{threat}} = 3.04, SD = 1.51; M_{\text{control}} = 3.25, SD = 1.70$). This means that the first two hypotheses are rejected. With regards to H2, while the presidential prime increases support for presidentialism for the 'cued' realistic threat condition ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.53$) compared to the one without the cue ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.55$), the difference isn't significant, $F(4, 311) = 0.80, p = \text{n.s.}$, and for the symbolic threat condition, it actually goes in the opposite direction from the hypothesized. Therefore we also need to reject both H2, confirming the apparent manipulation failure.

According to Hayes (2013, p. 169), even the failure to reject the null hypothesis for a total effect is no sufficient justification for skipping the investigation of the existence of a mediation mechanism. Therefore, we proceed by using his tool to conduct a simultaneous regression analysis in order to determine whether institutional trust has a mediating role between exposure to threat and the support for presidential powers (H3)²¹. The bootstrapping procedure with 5000 samples however does not yield a significant confidence interval for the indirect effect of the threat conditions on support for presidential powers through institutional trust ($B = .002, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.001, .002]$), which indicates that trust does not mediate the relationship and H3 should be rejected. When testing the same model with only the trust in president indicator instead of the trust index as a mediator, although we confirm that trust in president is a significant predictor of support for presidential powers ($B = 0.25, SE = 0.04, p < .001$), the indirect effect of the experimental manipulation on support for presidential powers, through trust in the president, is not significant, $B = .023, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.008, .060]$.

Employing the procedure with individual authoritarianism as a moderator between the experimental conditions and support for presidential powers (H4), we find a marginally significant

²¹ We operationalized the IV as a dummy variable coding the non-exposure control condition (0) and the threat conditions (1).

coefficient of the interaction term only between the dummy for *realistic president cued* threat (and none of the other dummies) and individual authoritarianism, on the *direct* effect ($B = -1.07$, $SE = 0.58$, $p = .065$); however this conditional effect runs in the opposite direction of the hypothesized one, since for subjects in the president-cued realistic threat condition, as their authoritarianism levels increase, their support for presidential powers decreases. Thus, the final hypothesis is also rejected.

Additional analyses

As we did not find any effects of our treatment (as also indicated by the manipulation check), we removed the experimental conditions from our model and proceeded with a series of cross-sectional analyses in order to establish whether the reason for the failure of our causal tests was related to our data. First, guided by theoretical insight about the relationship between partisanship and presidential approval (Reeves & Rogowski, 2015), we regressed support for presidential powers and presidential system on the our control variables (Table 2.1). We found that partisan identification is a significant predictor of support for presidential powers; the more citizens identified with the right-wing conservative VMRO party, the more they were likely to support increased presidential powers (Model 1), and a presidential system compared to a parliamentary one (Model 3). Moreover, interestingly it is ethnic Macedonians who tend to support greater presidential powers than the minority Albanians ($B = -.21$, $SE = .12$, $p = .076$). These findings follow a pattern in existing research, suggesting that there is nothing wrong with our data.²²

²² We do not find any interactions effects among combinations of partisanship, political knowledge and authoritarianism, indicating that the observed divergence in partisan support isn't conditioned on political knowledge or authoritarianism levels.

Table 2.1.

OLS regression model predicting support for presidential powers and system.

	Presidential powers		Presidential system	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Intercept	2.38 (.43)***	2.27*** (.68)	3.33 (.59)***	3.43 (.93)***
Age	.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	-.02 (.01)**	-.02 (.01)**
Gender	.09 (.12)	.10 (.11)	-.13 (.17)	-.13 (.17)
Education	-.14 (.09)	-.14 (.10)	-.40 (.12)***	-.40 (.13)***
Ethnicity	-.21 (.12)*	-.21 (.12)*	-.08 (.16)	-.08 (.16)
Ideology	.09 (.05)	.09 (.06)	.16 (.08)**	.16 (.08)**
PartyID	.34 (.05)***	.38 (.16)**	.26 (.08)**	.20 (.21)
Knowledge	-.02 (.08)	-.15 (.39)	-.04 (.12)	.07 (.43)
Authoritarianism	.32 (.21)	.67 (.66)	.40 (.27)	.25 (.90)
Knowledge*Authoritarianism		.03 (.28)		-.17 (.38)
PartyID*Authoritarianism		-.10 (.16)		.09 (.22)
PartyID*Knowledge		.03 (.07)		-.00 (.10)
R2	0.24	0.25	0.18	0.18
N	312	312	312	312

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

With our first hypothesis we also wanted to test the preference for presidential system as opposed to a parliamentary one, following Aytac et al. (2017). Model 3 and 4 show that younger cohorts are significantly more likely to support a presidential system, however the effect size is small ($B = -.02$, $SE = .01$, $p = .020$). There is also a negative coefficient for education, ($B = -.40$, $SE = .12$, $p = .001$), indicating that with the increase of the level of education, there is a greater preference for a parliamentary system. Finally, the coefficient for ideology supports the previous

finding about partisanship (right-wing ideologues are significantly more supportive of a presidential system, $B = .16$, $SE = .08$, $p = .033$). However, we also do not find any significant product terms from the aforementioned combinations for this DV.

Suspecting that even though priming migration through manipulated news content has not affected attitudes on migration, these attitudes are still existent in people's minds, we sought to explore the distinctive effect of symbolic and realistic threat perceptions. We did this by dissolving the general threat perception scale we established from our manipulation check items, back to the original specific immigration attitude variables.²³ After plugging these variables as predictors for our DVs in a multiple regression, an interesting finding emerges: while the indicators of economic threat perception, namely 'migrants take vs. create jobs' (MigrantJobsImpact), 'migrants strain social services' (MigrantStrainServices) and 'migrants make the economic perspective worse (MigrantEconPerspective) do not exhibit any significant relationship with either support for presidential powers or preference for presidential system, this is not the case for the two indicators of symbolic threat (Table 2). Indeed, the more citizens believe that migrants enrich the local culture (MigrantCultureImpact), the less they will endorse greater presidential authorities ($B = -.09$, $SE = .03$, $p = .005$) and the less they will be open to a presidential system ($B = -.10$, $SE = .04$, $p = .013$).

²³ Tests for multicollinearity indicated that despite loading on a single factor, low level of multicollinearity was present (VIF = 2.62 for MigrantEconPerspective, 2.24 for MigrantCultureImpact, 1.85 for MigrantStrainServices, 1.58 for MigrantCultureImpact and 1.36 for MigrantJobsImpact).

Table 2.2.

OLS regression model predicting support for presidential powers and system from perceived migration threat.

Attitudes on migration		
	Presidential powers	Presidential system
	B (SE)	B (SE)
Intercept	4.49 (.16)***	4.15*** (.20)
MigrantJobsImpact	.00 (.03)	.08 (.04)
MigrantCultureImpact	-.09 (.03)**	-.10 (.04)**
MigrantStrainServices	-.02 (.07)	-.11 (.08)
MigrantEconPerspective	-.03 (.06)	-.04 (.08)
MigrantCultureThreat	-.11 (.05)**	-.18 (.06)**
R2	0.16	0.18
N	248	248

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

As seen from Table 2.2, we find similar results for MigrantCultureThreat (lower score indicates greater agreement that migrants threaten Macedonian culture). However, once the other demographics are included as covariates, the significant effects disappear for MigrantCultureThreat, with only marginally significant coefficients for MigrantCultureImpact as a predictor of support for presidential powers ($B = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $p = .056$) and preferences for a presidential system ($B = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $p = .063$). This indicates that once other variables are partialled out (especially partisanship and ideology), the effect of anti-migrant attitudes on our DVs diminishes.

Finally, prompted by the marginally significant results in the realistic threat condition for H4, we set out to investigate the theoretically established moderating effect of perceived threat on the relationship between individual authoritarianism, and support for increased presidential powers

and presidentialism as a system, this time without accounting for any exposure effects. While for the latter we found no significant results (Table 2.3), in the interaction model for presidential powers we discover a significant coefficient for authoritarianism ($B = 1.11$, $SE = .47$, $p = .018$) and a significant product term ($B = -.44$, $SE = .19$, $p = .026$), indicating a potentially suppressing effect of the experimental conditions in this case, where exposure apparently alleviates the relationship between authoritarianism and favorability to presidential power.²⁴

Table 2.3.

OLS regression model showing the interaction between perceived threat and authoritarianism for presidential powers and system.

	Presidential powers	Presidential system
	B (SE)	B (SE)
Intercept	3.59*** (.33)	3.27 (.42)***
Perceived threat	-.08 (.13)	-.23 (.16)
Authoritarianism	1.11 (.47)**	.96 (.60)
Perceived threat*Authoritarianism	-.44 (.19)**	-.34 (.25)
R ²	0.16	0.15
N	248	248

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

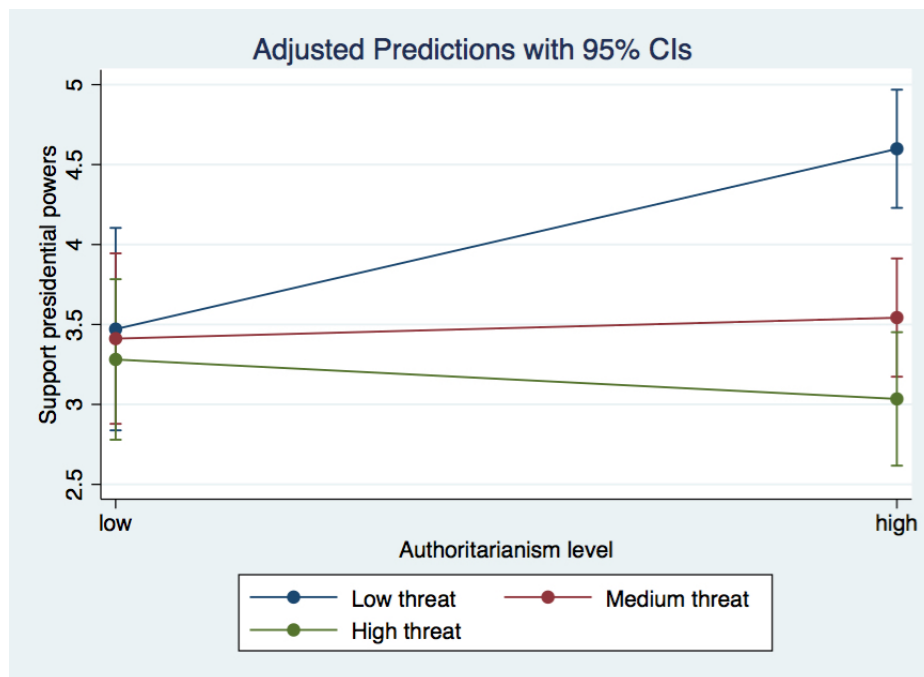
* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

However, the significant simple effect for authoritarianism once again points out to a counterintuitive pattern; it is when the threat is perceived to be the lowest that an increase in authoritarianism corresponds with greater support for presidential powers, rather than the other way around. Indeed, when comparing the effects of authoritarianism on support for presidential powers

²⁴ We speculate that this represent an experimental artifact, where subjects perceived the stimuli as ‘leading’ or agenda driven.

at the mean value of perceived threat ($B = .26$, $SE = .24$), and one standard deviation below ($B = .83$, $SE = .36$) and above the mean $B = -.29$, $SE = .33$), we observe that with the increase of threat, the effect of authoritarianism on support for presidential powers decreases.²⁵ This is visually represented in Figure 2.1. We discuss these findings in the final section of this paper.

Figure 2.1. Moderation of effect of authoritarianism on support for presidential powers by perceived threat.



Note. Higher Y-score indicates greater support for presidential powers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Previous experimental research studying immigration news coverage has focused on its impact on outcomes such as attitudes on immigration (Igartua & Cheng, 2009), immigration policy opinion (Ostfeld & Mutz, 2014), or behavioral intentions like information seeking and personal contact (Bos et al., 2016). At the same time, another subfield in political sciences, distant from the study of media effects, has investigated public attitudes toward presidential power (Aberbach, Peterson & Quirk,

²⁵ However, once we include our control variables as covariates in the model, the significant interaction between authoritarianism and threat disappears.

2007). Driven by theoretical considerations, in this study we connected these two remote relatives, thus posing a bold question: do news about migration have bearing on citizens' ideas about the constitutionally established extent of presidential authority, especially in a crisis ambient resonating a perception of threat?

Our endeavour has not yielded the outcome we expected based on existing literature. All six of our hypotheses have not been supported, as we were not able to show that media-conveyed migration threat increases the support for more expansive presidential powers, which is how we conceptualized the preference for stronger and more decisive leadership. Yet, our subsequent analyses showed that it was not a fallacious conceptualization that led to the rejection of the hypotheses. Indeed, we have effectively confirmed the second part of our 'equation': immigration sentiments are related to the desire that the president be endowed with greater powers. Thus, the reason for not finding confirmation about the first part of the equation, that is, immigration news affecting sentiments on immigration, is partly contextual and partly methodological. We explain these two deficiencies in greater detail, before returning to the implications of the above finding.

The contextual reason for the absence of effect from exposure to the manipulated content, and indeed the failure of the manipulation check, is likely to be the considerable media attention that the immigration issue has drawn in Macedonia in the months leading to the experiment. Choosing the anti-immigrant referendum campaign as the basis of our stimulus was a double-edged sword: while it boosted external validity due to the presentation of a real-life event, it also presented a limitation due to the fact that subjects may have likely already made up their mind about it, due to its extensive coverage by local outlets. Insights from framing theory, as closely related to the priming technique we used (see Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), point out to the fact that under the circumstances of high salience of a given issue, the effects of its use for experimental manipulation will have small impact (Iyengar, 1991, p. 62). This is what Druckman and Leeper (2012) label a 'pretreatment effect': it could be that a frame registers no effect because it already moved the respondents before the experiment, and one more exposure does little (p. 875). This may well be the case for the present study, and a possible remedy in future studies would be an experimental design with repetitive rather than single-shot exposure to content.

Adding to this is a methodological deficiency; namely, the decision to use the layout design of the website of the public service broadcaster as the source of the manipulated news content. The

logic of this decision was based on the recent undertaking of a more neutral role in political news reporting by the public service, due to which (we hoped) choosing it as source would help to avoid the potentially confounding influence of a private media outlet that could be perceived by the subjects as partisan-biased (Baum & Gossin, 2007). It is quite likely that this decision backfired, as the amount of time passed since MRTV has changed its editorial policy to be more balanced has been only a few months, after years of cultivating the image of a mouthpiece of the previous government. This lack of credibility might have squashed the possibility for a priming effect even among those who have not been ‘pretreated’.

Yet, it seems that the strive to insulate the design from partisan interpretations was justified, as it was party orientation that was the key predictor of support for presidential powers. In fact, the highly controversial nature of the signature-gathering operation (Stojanovski, 2017) was not the only reason it drew public interest, but also the revelations that members of the conservative right-wing VMRO party were behind its organization, fostering additional partisan animus in an already polarized environment. Our analysis demonstrated that right-wing conservative VMRO supporters were more supportive of increased presidential powers, a finding that is made even more remarkable given the fact that Macedonia does not have a presidential system and lacks a substantial public debate about moving towards it, as is the case in Turkey (Aytac et al., 2017). In order to generalize that conservatives have a stronger tendency to support presidential power a cross-national perspective is required, but the current study is in the least an indicator for a possible larger pattern of partisan and ideologically driven public opinion towards the role of presidents.

Beyond replicating Reeves and Rogowski’s (2015) findings that identification with the party from which the president comes increases the support for the institution’s powers, we discover two patterns with potentially major implications regarding citizens’ political behavior. Firstly, as we have noted earlier, anti-immigrant attitudes are associated with the desire for stronger presidents. This finding offers a novel insight on the meaning of immigration for citizens, which is beginning to transcend the realm of policy preferences and instead elicits contemplation of systemic changes. Such a shift represents a testament to the increasing centrality of the immigration issue to political life even outside of the Western context. Yet at the same time, it is hardly surprising that this meaning is fueled by the threatening connotations of immigration, especially symbolic ones, and that it enhances the need to preserve the existing social (if not constitutional) order. After all, Eastern Europe has a long history of strong executive power, which in places like Macedonia evoke

fond memories of a leader who ‘gets things done’ (Vangeli, 2011), as opposed to liberal democracy’s institutional complexity and the facade of pluralism masking elite corruption. Opposition to immigration in traditionalist and conservative environments is bound to exacerbate the demand for more streamlined decision making.

This brings us to the second and final point that our data make: individual authoritarian predispositions’ relationship with the support for presidential powers is moderated by levels of perceived threat. However, the moderation does not exactly correspond with the findings from extant research - here, the increase of support for presidential powers from low to high authoritarians is greater when perceived threat is low, rather than high. How do we explain this? The common assumption that threat activates traits of authoritarianism among those that possess them has been debunked by Hetherington and Suhay (2011) who demonstrate that for authoritarians the variation in perceived threat does not change their opinion much, compared to non-authoritarians, since they already have strong demand for order and hostility to outgroups regardless of the threat. This is likely the case here too; moreover Cohrs and Ibler (2009) also find that authoritarianism increases the likelihood of perceiving threatening arguments independent of the actual presence of threatening information (p. 91). Further research is needed to shed light about why presidential support increases from non-authoritarians to authoritarians among respondents perceiving low threat, and perhaps also greater consistency of authoritarianism measurements.

Despite the limitations, this study provides evidence that the right wing, authoritarian and anti-immigrant segments in Macedonian society could favor stronger executive powers. Although we try to steer clear of normative conclusions, it is difficult to see the rise of illiberal and populist forces in postcommunist Europe as merely coincidental to the above findings. In a poll conducted only a few years after Poland’s EU accession, about three quarters of Polish citizens have reported to consider democracy to be too indecisive or incapable to maintain law and order, and about half considered that ‘it does not really matter whether the government was democratic or undemocratic’ (Rupnik, 2007). This ‘return of dormant strands in the region’s political culture and thus its potential vulnerability to authoritarian temptation’ (p. 24) was back in the ‘good days’, before the economic and migrant crisis. Ten years later, Rupnik (2016) observes a populist surge in Eastern Europe championed by Poland and Hungary with the ultimate aim of ‘illiberal democracy’, seeking strong executive power and seeing checks and balances as imposing undue constraints on the sovereignty of the people (p. 80). While support for stronger presidents does not necessarily

equate with illiberal-populist tendencies, given that decreased commitment to the rule of law is associated with a significant increase in support for unilateral powers (Reeves & Rogowski, 2016), such a link can't be excluded in the context of the present circumstances of political turmoil.

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CHAPTER 3**The contingent Europeanism:****Effects from immigration news framing on European civic and cultural identity****Abstract**

Although considered one of the main determinants of European Union support, European identity has hardly been involved in media effects literature examining attitudes towards the EU. We address this gap by conducting three experiments whose factorial designs combine the most common frames in immigration coverage (valence, equivalence and episodic/thematic frames). Facilitated by the context of the migrant crisis in a European (yet non-EU) country in the Republic of Macedonia, our analysis finds evidence that both civic and cultural dimensions of Europeanism are contingent on media exposure, and that European cultural identity is especially reinforced by a frame presenting immigrants as a risk to Europe.

INTRODUCTION

Individual attitudes on the EU are more complex than simple policy approval and performance evaluations. Boomgaarden et al. (2011) have identified five dimensions of EU attitudes, one of which is EU identity, relating to the pride in being an EU citizen, closeness to other Europeans and identification with EU symbols. Indeed, previous research demonstrates that the feeling of European identity is a prerequisite for any identification with the EU polity and institutions, and therefore a source of legitimacy for the latter (Fligstein, 2008; Herrmann & Brewer, 2004). While it has been established that various EU related attitudes are strongly influenced by media (Azrout, Van Spanje & De Vreese, 2012; De Vries et al., 2010; Wojcieszak, Azrout & De Vreese, 2017), their effect on the feeling of ‘Europeanness’ has been largely overlooked. As social identity theory (SIT) stresses the contextual contingency of identity development (Tajfel, 1981), and media are capable of shaping political context, with this study we aim to address this gap.

To do this, we first decompose European identity into a civic and cultural interpretation, both emerging from the classic typology of national identity between a civic and ethnic model (Smith, 1991). After capturing the different meanings of the concept through this dichotomy, we use framing theory to investigate the effects of news content on the intensity of European identification. We do this in three concrete ways: first, by adapting Schuck and De Vreese’s (2006) ‘risk versus opportunity’ valenced framing in the immigration context, second, by complementing this scheme with equivalence frames on EU asylum policy, and third, by testing the comparative effect of episodic and thematic immigration frames on identity. The reason we embed news content in the context of immigration is because SIT suggests that salience of out-groups enhances the construction of in-group identity and self-categorization, and also because scholarship shows the importance of immigration to attitudes on Europe (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005).

Finally, as literature suggests that individual conceptions of immigration are closely connected to Christian identity (Storm, 2011) and that Christianity is also closely related to the idea of European cultural cohesion (Göncz & Lengyel, 2016; Segatti & Westle, 2016), we test the moderating role of the importance of being Christian in the relationship between news exposure and European cultural identity. We conduct three corresponding experimental studies, situated in the Republic of Macedonia, an EU-candidate country on the Balkan route of the European migrant crisis.

Conceptualizing European identity

After decades of focusing on sociotropic cost/benefit calculus explanation for EU support, social scientists have come around to the idea that identification with Europe is one of the driving forces behind attitudes on the European project (McLaren, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2005). For example, Mitchell (2014) has shown that individuals who feel more European exhibit stronger support for further economic integration. Similar to national identity, European identity draws from the framework of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981). However, unlike the primordial conception of national identity, which sees the imagined community as a historically determined given (Gellner, 1997), a common European identity has been constructed by European institutions, based on enlightenment ideas like democracy, the rule of law and humanism (Mayer & Palmowski, 2004). Bruter (2005) calls this top-down product of the EU's supranational design 'European political identity', with its universalist character reinforced by implicit meanings of identification emerging from the possession of EU citizenship: the common currency, mobility, policy and legal frameworks.

With the EU becoming more visible and polarizing in recent times (Wojcieszak et al., 2017), this identification has become even more explicit, especially for an emerging cosmopolitan class with greater political sophistication and an attachment to the idea of Europe united in diversity, expressed via the EU's multiculturalism and conflict mediation (Fligstein, 2008). At the same time, another perspective of European identity has emerged, in line with the premise that support for, or identification with the EU is not necessary for its existence (Schilde, 2014). In the increasingly polarized European context, many citizens have begun to embrace of a primordial interpretation of Europeanism, based on a shared history and religion of the continent's peoples. This version of a European cultural framework has been framed as normatively xenophobic and reactionary (Fligstein et al., 2012) and is seen as an expression of 'ethnic pan-nationalism' (Westle & Segatti, 2016) according to which boundaries of Christian Europe are perceived as unchangeable and objective.

These conflicting visions of identity: primordial versus civic (Hülse, 2006), particularistic versus universalistic (Delanty, 2002), ascribed versus achieved (Wright, 2011), do not only emerge from the juxtaposition of the national and European identity anymore, rather are a feature *within*

European identity. This dichotomy is best summed up by Bruter (2003): European civic identity refers to the degree Europeans feel as citizens of a European political system whose rules, laws and rights have an influence on their daily life, akin to constitutional patriotism (Habermas, 1992), while European cultural identity is the perception that fellow Europeans are closer than non-Europeans. While an overlap between the European civic identity and identification with the EU surely exists, the subtle difference is captured by Cram's (2012) distinction between 'identification as' and 'identification with'. What is ultimately contested by the two interpretations is the meaning of being European, or in other words, the perceived boundary between who is European and who is not.

Media and the context of immigration

These boundaries are constructed continuously, as political identities have been shown to vary over time, confirming their nature as fluid and evolving (Bruter, 2001). For example, Verhaegen, Hooghe and Quintelier (2014) show how economic considerations influence the feeling of Europeanness. This is in line with the principles of social identity theory, according to which it is the salience of the context that determines self-categorization (Turner & Hogg, 1987). According to Huddy (2001), categories spontaneously emerge and change with the attributes of category insiders and outsiders. Thus, as different individuals can hold different meanings of identity, changes in salience can affect how these meanings are created, and therefore also their intensity.

However, despite this fact, existing research has barely attempted to posit a link between European identity and media, as a known determinant of salience. If it is agreed that news content has impact on political attitudes (McQuail, 2010), and that EU institutional persuasion is actively forging European identity (Hermann & Brewer, 2004), then exploring the role of mass communication in this process certainly requires further investigation. In the first study that has done this, Bruter (2003) has demonstrated that exposure to news about the European Union does in fact cause a shift in the feeling of European identity. According to this study, the effect is greater on the civic component of European identity than on the cultural one, given that the latter, referring to a European-wide civilization, is less likely to be affected by specific news on EU performance. In order to add to the findings of this study, and further disentangle EU support and European identity by exploring possibilities for variation in cultural identity, a different news context is required.

Drawing from the work of Huddy (2001), who asserts that core values and differences from outgroups give meaning to identity, we find this context in the so-called European ‘immigration crisis’.

The issue of immigration has important implications to core values and outgrouping vis-à-vis political identities. Previous research makes strong hints about the relationship between immigration and attitudes on Europe. Besides finding that anti-immigration sentiment is a strong predictor for opposition to European integration (Azrout & Wojcieszak, 2017; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005), studies have also demonstrated that stronger identification with the EU is positively correlated with tolerance towards immigrants, in contrast to the perceived importance of being Christian (Garcia-Faroldi, 2017). Since a major feature of European civic identity is support for EU multicultural principles, and for cultural identity such feature is Christianity, it becomes evident how attitudes on immigration could potentially influence the meaning of Europe for citizens, given that the media are known to be among the factors shaping those exact attitudes (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Wojcieszak & Azrout, 2016).

Ultimately, immigration can be a two-edged sword with regards to European identity, depending on how it is conceptualized. Weber (2016) finds that across Europe, the presence of immigrants in one’s region of residence leads people to become more open about other cultures and gives rise to European identity. On the other hand, as identity is reinforced by out-group threat, it is conceivable that immigration can trigger what social psychology refers to as the ‘in-group projection model’ (IPM), according to which national identity can be reimagined as included in a superordinate European category, when a negative evaluation of an out-group exists (Wenzel, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2007). In a situation like the migrant crisis, where immigrants would assume this role, the IPM suggests a way of extending identity meanings from the nation to Europe, facilitating the emergence of what we refer to as ‘cultural’ Europeanness.

From framing immigration to European identity

Due to its complexity, media highlight specific aspects of immigration, in order to provide meaning to the issue and promote particular definitions and interpretations of it: what the controversy is about and the essence of the issue (Entman, 1993). Political communication scholars refer to this process as framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Indeed, media has mostly framed the recent

migrant crisis in a negative way (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017), but frequently also used positive frames (Benson, 2013), reflecting a common pattern in general issue coverage, known as *valenced* framing. Valenced frames, indicating inherently positive or negative aspects of a message, have been shown to affect among else public opinion on the EU (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003), EU enlargement (De Vreese, Boomgaarden & Semetko, 2011) and common European foreign and security policy (De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009). The influence of valenced frames is usually directional; that is, a positive frame prompts a positive evaluation, and vice versa. Taking into account the existing themes in immigration coverage, and previous examples in research of valenced framing, we apply the scheme which Schuck and De Vreese (2006) use about EU enlargement support (risk versus opportunity) and adapt it to the immigration issue. Accordingly, we expect a directional influence of valenced frames, albeit with one exception: due to the nature of the ‘cultural’ conceptualization of European identity, presenting benefits of immigration should not be capable of affecting a more primordial interpretation of identity, and one that already carries a predisposition against immigrants.²⁶ Thus we posit our first hypothesis:

H1a. Framing immigration as a ‘risk’ for Europe will affect European civic and cultural identity negatively (i.e. in such a way that it reduces feeling of identity).

H1b. Framing immigration as an ‘opportunity’ for Europe will affect European civic identity positively (i.e. increasing feeling of identity), but it will not affect European cultural identity.

One possible caveat is that news content representing immigrants in a negative manner could also be interpreted by European citizens in a way which might reinforce their cultural entitativity - the perception of European people as homogenous ingroup vis-a-vis ‘the other’ (see Castano, Yzerbut & Bourignon, 2003). As this assumption would be in line with the in-group projection model, we formulate an alternative hypothesis:

²⁶ The argument made by Bruter (2003) is that European cultural identity is too entrenched to be affected by news; as research states that negative news have greater impact than positive ones (Soroka, 2006), we posit that only the ‘risk’ frame could impact identity and not the ‘opportunity’. This, coupled with Knoblock-Westerwick and Meng’s (2011) findings that the political self-concept (including that of ethnic identity) is reinforced only by congruent messages, we consider to be sufficient hint that a cultural identity which makes a sharp distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans will likely not be affected by the ‘opportunity’ frame.

H1c. Framing immigration as a ‘risk’ for Europe will affect European cultural identity positively (i.e. in a way that will increase feelings of identity).

A comprehensive framework of frames

We argue that because immigration by itself is a key European issue, framing it as positive or negative can make a difference in citizens’ identity conceptions. However, as the issue itself is inseparable from EU institutional response to it, we would also need to observe how the latter might exacerbate this difference, given the spillover of EU performance evaluations to European identification (Cram, 2012). Thus, in order to more accurately assess the effects of exposure to immigration frames, we need to also account for EU migration policy.

Given the range of individual opinions over what constitutes a good or bad policy (see van Klinger, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2017), a simple way to introduce this element is to provide statistical data, which in combination with the valence can potentially activate corresponding cognitive schemas, trigger evaluation, and consequently influence identification. According to Eurostat, in 2017 around 20 percent of first instance asylum decisions at EU level resulted in positive outcomes. By framing this information in different ways, we can test how presentations of logically equivalent content affect individuals, while conveniently circumventing any normative positions on policy. With such approach, in addition to the emphasis framing to which the valence frames belong to, we also employ *equivalence* framing, a concept from classic psychological studies, and one often recommended for greater attention in communication research by scholars (Cacciatori, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016). Drawing inspiration from Tversky and Kahneman (1979), EU immigration policy can be presented as one of gains and losses (asylum acceptance or rejection), depending on how it complements frame valence. We hypothesize:

H2a. Framing immigration as a risk for Europe with EU asylum acceptance (rejection) policy frame will affect both European civic and cultural identity more (less) negatively than without it.

H2b. Framing immigration as an opportunity for Europe with EU asylum acceptance (rejection) policy frame will affect European civic identity more (less) positively than without it.

Different ways of packaging information have different impact on audiences. As people are more likely to relate to concrete examples instead of abstract narratives, journalists often include a human interest angle as a more efficient way to attract audience attention and engagement (Aalberg & Beyer, 2015). This type of framing, also known as episodic, is intrinsic to the coverage of immigration, as it presents an issue by offering a specific example and prompting individualistic attributions of responsibility (Gross, 2008). In contrast, thematic frames place issues into a broader context, as they promote systematic solutions to the audience. Existing research has shown that the difference between episodic and thematic frames can lead to variation in public opinion regarding the issue (Aaroe, 2011). The above studies have also shown that when emotions are elicited, the episodic frame has a stronger capacity to influence opinion in the direction implied by the frame. As Gross (2008) argues, this is because the ‘human interest’ details of an episodic frame should be more emotionally engaging than the pallid statistics of a thematic frame (p. 172).

Lecheler, Schuck and De Vreese (2013) argue that these emotions are triggered by the content of the frames and therefore mediate the relationship between exposure and attitudes. Moreover, as in their study they also test valenced frames, they investigate how positive emotions (enthusiasm and contentment) and negative emotions (anger and fear) affect opinions on EU enlargement. As these particular emotions are also highly applicable in the context of the risk and opportunity regarding immigration and Europe, we hypothesize:

H3a. Framing immigration as a ‘risk’ for Europe will affect European civic and cultural identity more negatively when the frame is episodic, than when it is thematic, when there are increased negative emotions.

H3b. Framing immigration as an ‘opportunity’ for Europe will affect European civic identity more positively when the frame is episodic, than when it is thematic, when there are increased positive emotions.

Additional moderating influences

We mentioned before that the very idea of European cultural identity draws heavily from a tradition of Christianity, as the main common denominator of European nations through the centuries. According to Delanty (1995), Christianity has been constantly used to define Europe, without at the same time being identical with it. Survey research shows that the importance of being Christian is a predictor of European identity for both elites (Göncz & Lengyel, 2016) and citizens (Guglielmi & Vezzi, 2016). With regards to immigration, Storm (2011) has found that identifying with the Christian religion makes one more likely to think immigrants are a threat to national security. By this rationale, Christianity should not factor for those individuals whose perspective of Europeanness as civic is triggered by a positive depiction of migration.

H4. Framing immigration as a ‘risk’ for Europe will affect cultural identity even more negatively when individuals feel it is important to be Christian to be European.

Finally, given the proximity of support for EU membership and European civic identity, it is reasonable to predict a positive interaction between the two. If Christianity should affect only cultural identity, here it is the opposite; support for EU membership should not influence how framing immigration alters the feeling of cultural closeness with other Europeans, as it implies the perception of the EU as a political institution (or even a common market). Our final hypothesis is therefore:

H5. Framing immigration as an opportunity for Europe will affect civic identity even more positively when individuals are supportive of EU membership.

The Macedonian case

Two reasons make Macedonia a suitable case for conducting this research. First, as a country on the ‘Balkan migrant route’ of 2015, immigration is not an obscure topic of news coverage, and with Macedonian citizens already familiar with the topic, potential media effects would not be limited to simple information learning. Furthermore, immigrants transiting the country on the journey to Western Europe have come from predominantly Muslim countries, thereby equating the perception of immigrants as a culturally different ‘other’. The second, and also more important reason is that Macedonia is a European country, but one that is currently not a member of the EU, rather only an accession candidate. This distinction offers the possibility to remove the effects of EU institutionalization and all the ‘banal’ aspects from its presence (Cram, 2012) on European identification, thus adding a new perspective to the volume of European identity literature, by investigating to what degree existing identity conceptualizations apply to a novel context.

This way, setting our study in Macedonia could not only be potentially generalizable to other EU candidate states, but might also provide insight into the meanings and boundaries of Europeanism in Eastern Europe. European integration of post-communist countries has followed a narrative of ‘return to a geographical and historical home’ (Neumann, 1998), but also civilizational progress through the embrace of Western liberal democratic values. Yet, according to Damjanovski (2017), high accession support in Macedonia is of sociotropic nature and related to anticipated economic benefits for society from EU membership. Identifying the common and diverse aspects and logics of identification with Europe between EU and non-EU (yet nonetheless European) citizens, renders Macedonia a highly suitable case for the research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To test the hypotheses we conduct three online experiments with a between-subjects design in the period of May-June 2018. In the first one we test only the effects of the one factor (immigration valence) on the DVs (Hypothesis 1). In the second one we include equivalency frames on EU immigration policy to create a 2x2 design (Hypothesis 2). In the third, we add the episodic/thematic typology, resulting with a 2x2x2 factorial design (Hypothesis 3). As we have established the theoretical framework and all the hypotheses prior to data collection, repeating the tests in each subsequent experiment served to ensure thorough and robust testing with different samples. For the

purpose of clarity, we display the overall design in Table 3.1. Below we provide details about the operationalizations of the all the variables we use in testing the hypotheses (including Hypothesis 4 and 5), while we present the sample and stimulus modifications separately for each study. After each result section we briefly discuss the most pertinent findings of the particular study.

Table 3.1.

Overall research design.

	Hypotheses	Factors	Additional moderators/mediators	Operationalization of dependent variable
Experiment 1	H1, H4	Valence	Importance of Christianity (MO)	Bruter (2003) Reijerse et al. (2013)
Experiment 2	H1, H2, H4, H5	Valence + Equivalency	Importance of Christianity (MO), EU membership support (MO)	Bruter (2003) Reijerse et al. (2013)
Experiment 3	H1, H2, H3, H4, H5	Valence + Equivalency + episodic/thematic	Importance of Christianity (MO), EU membership support (MO), emotions (ME)	Reijerse et al. (2013)

Note. Mo=moderator, ME=mediator

MEASURES

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1-completely agree, 5-completely disagree) and reverse coded so that higher scores reflect greater agreement. Items are available in Appendix A3.

Dependent variables

European identity. In all our experiments the key dependent variable was measured in two different ways. The main operationalization was based on a total of twelve measures from Bruter (2003)

distinguishing between *civic* and *cultural* identity. In both Study 1 and Study 2, after conducting principal component analysis with varimax rotation²⁷, three factors with eigenvalue over 1 emerged from the solution, instead of the two expected from theory. Based on factor loadings over 0.5 (recommended for small sample sizes, see Field [2009]), we constructed three indices in Study 1: one for civic identity, by averaging items ‘right to vote in European Parliament elections’ and ‘common institutions’ ($\alpha = .67$, $M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.81$); one for cultural identity by averaging items ‘Europeans share a “common heritage” making them slightly closer to one another’ and ‘feeling closer to fellow Europeans than for example to Chinese or American people’ ($\alpha = .58$, $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.79$), and finally, one we labeled ‘*pragmatic*’ European identity (referring to the perception of benefits from having EU citizenship, but not containing any affective aspects), as exemplified by the high factor loadings on the following items ‘right to travel without borders’ and ‘right to travel without passports’ ($\alpha = .60$, $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.77$).²⁸ After the same procedure for Study 2, factor loadings suggested adding one item to the civic index (‘a common European flag, anthem and passport’), $\alpha = .68$, $M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.90$; one item to the cultural index (‘to be a member of the European family’), $\alpha = .71$, $M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.88$, and one item to the pragmatic index (‘common European passport is a good thing’), $\alpha = .68$, $M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.71$.

To ensure robustness in the event that Bruter’s (2003) measures do not behave as theorized, we included a second operationalization of European identity, adapted from Reijerse et al. (2013) study of national citizenship representations in Belgium. This operationalization yielded a clear civic and cultural dimension after conducting the PCA in Study 1 and 2: all the five items meant to capture cultural identity and the same amount for civic identity clearly loaded on the theoretically established dimensions in the first two studies.²⁹ For this reason, we only used these measures in Study 3 and not Bruter’s. Surprisingly however, PCA in the third study has shown that two items (‘have european ancestors’ and ‘be born in Europe’) do not load on the same factor as the other three items intended to capture cultural identity. According to Reijerse et al (2013), these two items are used in classic definitions of ethnic citizenship representations, which only in recent times have

²⁷ Given our theoretical discussion, we depart from the assumption that the factors are not correlated with each other.

²⁸ We discuss this dimension in more detail in the concluding section.

²⁹ Civic identity (Study 1: $\alpha = .80$, $M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.72$, Study 2: $\alpha = .82$, $M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.83$); cultural identity (Study 1: $\alpha = .78$, $M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.82$; Study 2: $\alpha = .79$, $M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.83$)

been integrated in the ‘cultural’ framework. For this reason from these items we created an additional European ‘ethnic’ identity index in Study 3 ($\alpha = .79$, $M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.22$), besides the civic ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.96$) and cultural one ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.12$).³⁰ The results of the factor analyses are available in Appendix B3.

Moderators and mediators

Importance of Christianity. Following the operationalization from the IntUne survey (see Westle & Segatti, 2016), participants were asked only one straightforward question: In your view how important it is to be Christian to be European? (Study 1, $M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.38$; Study 2, $M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.36$; Study 3, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.43$).

Support for EU membership. We assessed EU support in Study 2 and 3 (H5) by including a commonly used question (ex. Gabel, 1998): Membership in the EU is a good thing/neither good or bad thing/bad thing/don’t know. Don’t know responses were subsequently excluded in order to treat the variable as interval and the item was reverse coded (Study 2, $M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.71$; Study 3, $M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.77$).

Emotions. Following Lecheler, Schuck & De Vreese (2013), four emotions are measured and used separately as a mediating variable in Study 3 (H3), using a seven-point scale (1-strongly agree, 7-strongly disagree) to answer the question: When thinking about the content of the article on immigration, I felt enthusiasm/contentment (positive) and anger/fear (negative).

Control variables

To confirm random assignment over experimental conditions, we measured gender, ideology and partisan orientation in Study 1 and 2, and added age and education in Study 3. There were no significant differences between experimental conditions regarding any of these variables in all three studies, indicating successful randomization.

³⁰ While this dimension is an anomaly lacking theoretical foundation, we consider it relevant in the grand design and interpret it in the final section.

STUDY 1**Sample and data**

The sample consisted of Macedonian undergraduate students at the Skopje University, who were asked to forward the survey to their colleagues to increase sample size. 196 subjects completed the experiment, of which 66.3 percent were female, with mean age 21.61 years, and average mean of 3.77 ($SD = 1.19$) on the ideology scale (1-far left, 7-far right)³¹. Participants were first required to give consent, after which they answered the moderating and control variables, and then exposed to the stimuli, for which there was a minimum reading time of 50 seconds (the time required to read the article) before continuing to the answer the dependent variables.

Stimulus

All manipulated content was originally written in English, as we have drawn from various scholarly sources to develop it, and afterwards translated to Macedonian. The stimuli in all three conditions (risk, opportunity and control) consisted of three paragraphs of text, presented to the subjects as an extract from an article recently published in an unnamed Macedonian news outlet (the word total for all conditions was around 200). The first paragraph was equal across all three conditions; it introduced a fictional event (a debate on migration organized by a ‘European democracy forum’ in Zagreb, Croatia³²), after which the next two paragraphs varied for the risk, opportunity and neutral condition.

In the first paragraph, we took phrases from Schuck and De Vreese (2006) which aimed to emphasize the valence (‘consensus among participants has been encouraging/warning: immigration can be a great opportunity/risk for Europe’), also using words like ‘advantage’ and ‘prosperous’ in the opportunity and ‘disadvantage’ and ‘threatening’ in the risk condition. Aiming to stress the cultural benefits (or drawbacks) from immigration, the first paragraph incorporated content from

³¹ Mean scores were similar for partisanship, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.02$

³² The location for the fictional event was chosen because of its proximity to Macedonia and EU membership, thus priming ‘Europe’.

Heinmueller and Hiscox (2007: 400): immigration can inject new artistic and intellectual life in society (or undermine traditional culture by creating ethnic enclaves).

Diversity as a benefit and cultural undermining as a threat were complemented in the second paragraph with considerations about how they would reflect on the democratic system. We intentionally omitted mentions of economic advantages or disadvantages, in order to discourage instrumental reasoning and focus on the affective and valuational dimensions which prompt identification. Moreover, the two themes that were presented corresponded with the civic and cultural dimensions of identity with regards to the effects we were interested in. For the risk condition, we used phrases from the symbolic threat experimental condition designed by Stephan et al. (2005): ‘a lack of experience with democracy has led them to distrust of democratic principles’, arguing that this could lead immigrants to question the legitimacy of institutions and lack of fulfillment of civic duties. In contrast, in the opportunity condition, we highlighted the desire to be part of a democratic system with free speech and rule of law as the main motivation behind migration, with its outcome the improvement for the public sphere and pluralism.

Finally, we had a neutral condition which does not take neither positive nor negative position on immigration and simply describes an event at which the positive and negative consequences of migration in the cultural and political sphere are discussed. This condition serves to disentangle the effects of priming immigration and Europe, and the framing effects from valence. All the conditions (in English) are available in Appendix C3.

Manipulation check

As part of the first study we checked whether manipulation intended by our stimuli was successful. Similar to Schuck and De Vreese (2006), we asked respondents in all three conditions to what extent they agreed that immigration was presented as an opportunity, and as a risk. After subtracting the scores on both items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, the resulting index confirmed that manipulation was successful ($F(2, 146) = 36.50, p < .001$), with the mean difference for subjects in the opportunity condition being negative ($M_{\text{difference}} = -1.46, SD = 1.83$), that in the risk condition

positive ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.68$, $SD = 1.79$) and the neutral one not different from zero ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.15$, $SD = 1.93$).³³

RESULTS

To test H1 about the effect of frame valence on European identity, we conducted a series of one-way analyses of variance. While our tests showed that subjects in both the risk and opportunity conditions consistently exhibit stronger European civic and cultural identity, these differences fail to reach statistical significance in both Bruter's (2003) measure of civic identity ($F(3, 192) = 1.03$, $p = \text{n.s.}$) and the one of Reijerse et al. (2013) which we used as robustness measure ($F(3, 192) = 0.30$, $p = \text{n.s.}$), as well as the latter's cultural identity index ($F(3, 192) = 0.09$, $p = \text{n.s.}$).

However, for the cultural identity index based on Bruter (2003), we find a significant effect for both risk and opportunity groups (as well as the neutral one), $F(3, 192) = 3.48$, $p < .01$. Exposure to both risk ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.73$) and opportunity ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.71$) has significantly increased the feeling of cultural Europeanness compared to the non-exposure control group ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.57$).³⁴ This is an ambiguous finding, as it defies H1a and supports H1c (risk frame positively affecting cultural identity), but also contradicts H1b (where we expected no effect of opportunity frames on cultural identity). All tests for the moderating influence of importance of Christianity were however not significant, indicating the absence of the interaction effect hypothesized in H4.

DISCUSSION

The fact that exposure to news content framing immigrants as a risk increases the feeling of European cultural identity indicates that being confronted with a threat from a common 'other', reinforces the feeling of closeness with other Europeans. However, why cultural identity (and not civic) is positively affected by the opportunity frame is more difficult to explain. It is possible that cultural identity is less exclusive than what Bruter (2003) suggests. Regardless, findings from Study

³³ As the manipulation for Study 1 confirmed participants recognized the manipulation, we deemed repeating of the procedure unnecessary for the subsequent studies.

³⁴ Difference between the control and the neutral condition was not statistically significant.

I demonstrate that European cultural identity is not fixed and media can move the boundaries between who is perceived as European and who is not.

STUDY 2

Sample and data

In the second experiment we followed the same procedure with a different sample, increasing the number of students to obtain a larger size ($N = 245$), of which once again the majority was female (63.7 percent). The majority of the students came from a different university in another town in Macedonia, preventing a repetition of filling the survey, but also providing a more ‘countryside’ perspective. The subjects once again displayed sufficient variance by political positions (partisanship and ideology).

Stimulus

One paragraph was added to the stimuli from Study 1; both risk and opportunity conditions were complemented with an equivalence frame informing subjects that ‘in 2017 EU member states have *accepted almost 20 percent or rejected more than 80 percent* of the asylum applications’. As this information is consistent with the actual percentage of acceptance rate of first instance asylum decisions, it also increases external validity. The addition of the equivalence frames yielded four conditions (plus a non-exposure control group).³⁵

Results

While the effects of only the valence factor on the main operationalization of the dependent variable recorded in Study 1 were not replicated, there is a marginally significant difference between levels of civic identity according to our robustness measure by Reijerse et al. (2013), $F(2, 242) = 2.45$, $p = .088$), according to which exposure to both risk ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.77$) and opportunity ($M = 4.09$,

³⁵ The neutral condition was removed from the design from Studies 2 and 3.

SD = 0.83) fosters stronger civic identification than the non-exposure control group ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.92$). This can be considered another mixed result regarding H1, as H1b holds, but H1a is contradicted.

Another set of ANOVAs were conducted to account for the effects of introducing a second factor in the manipulations (H2). The main identity measurements however yield an effect with statistical significance when the equivalence frame is included in the analysis. The means for all three identity dimensions across conditions are displayed in Table 3.2, showing that subjects in the ‘risk-acceptance’ condition have a significantly stronger civic identity than those in the ‘opportunity-rejection’ condition, $F(4, 240) = 2.47$, $p < .05$. This finding goes against what we predicted in H2; we discuss it below.

Similarly to Study 1, we find no significant interactions when including importance of Christianity (H4). However, the product term between support for EU membership and frame valence approaches significance for European civic identity, $F(4, 211) = 2.28$, $p = 0.062$. After probing the interaction, we find a somewhat counterintuitive negative simple effect on civic identity in subjects exposed to the opportunity frame ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.11$) compared to those exposed to risk ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.12$), among those who believe EU membership is a good thing (see Figure 3.1). This runs counter to H5; however at the same time, those who think EU membership is a bad thing have increased their feeling of European civic identity after exposure to the opportunity frame ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.30$), compared to the control group ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.30$).

Table 3.2.

Means of types of European identity per frame condition

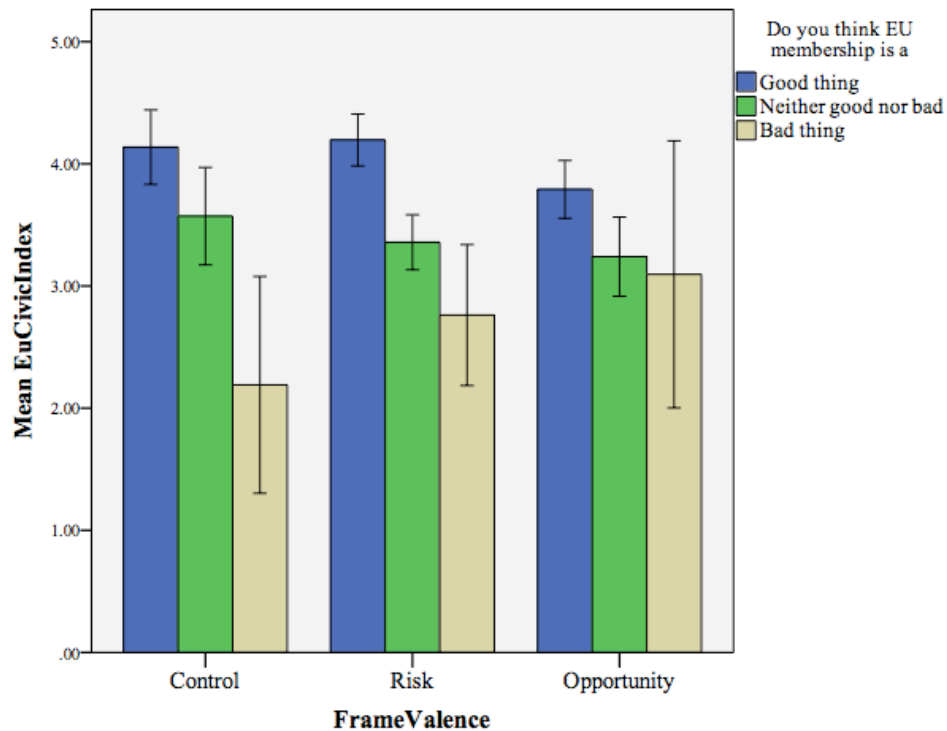
	Risk		Opportunity		
	Accept	Reject	Accept	Reject	Control
Civic	3.89 (0.86)*	3.49 (0.84)	3.75 (0.77)	3.38 (0.94)*	3.58 (0.98)
Pragmatic	4.31 (0.66)	4.14 (0.76)	4.42 (0.75)	4.30 (0.50)	4.27 (0.80)
Cultural	3.72 (0.74)	3.49 (1.07)	3.59 (0.96)	3.72 (0.70)	3.57 (0.90)
<i>N</i>	52	48	44	45	56

Note. Standard deviations in parentheses. Means with asterisks are statistically different at $p < .05$ from each other. Higher scores signify stronger identity levels.

DISCUSSION

The emergence of higher levels of civic identity among subjects in the risk condition with an equivalence frame conveying acceptance policy, compared to subjects in the opportunity condition with equivalence frame stressing rejection, is indeed puzzling. We hypothesized that the risk representation, in combination with information about a substantial number of accepted asylum applications should lead to less identification with Europe, based on Tversky and Kahneman's (1979) considerations about the perception of gains and losses. However, one possibility for this finding is exactly that we might have misinterpreted what gains and losses mean in terms of EU immigration policies and its subsequent relationship with European identity. Citizens could very well believe that accepting *only* 20 percent of the asylum applications in the context of risk from immigration demonstrates vigilance on the EU's behalf, thus solidifying the belief in European civic values, such as the rule of law. Meanwhile, is within expectations that citizens who are presented with information of immigrants as an opportunity for Europe but still rejected in large numbers can feel less identification with the civic meanings of Europe, possibly through loss of trust.

Figure 3.1. Effects of Frame Valence on European civic identity by EU membership support



STUDY 3

Data

Skopje-based polling agency M-Prospect provided the sample ($N = 406$) by recruiting potential participants from its database via email invitations. The sample was obtained on a national level and was almost perfectly balanced regarding gender (50.5 percent of the participants were female), in addition to variance of educational level (52 percent high school, 38.9 percent undergraduate, 6.7 graduate). Mean age was 39.79 years ($SD = 14.77$). Data collection period was two weeks with the reported response rate around 20 percent.

Stimulus

Following the rationale leading up to H3, we modified the existing combination of valence and

equivalence frames that constituted the four conditions in Study 2 by creating a thematic and episodic version for each of them, yielding eight total manipulations (plus a no-exposure control group). The fictive news content substantially remained the same; what changed was the source of the two main themes (cultural advantages/threats of immigration and appeal/distrust of democracy for immigrants) - in the episodic frames, two fictional individuals from different European countries, age and profession are quoted with the purpose of forwarding the positive and negative arguments from a perspective of personal experience, while in the thematic frames these arguments arrive from research findings and government institutions, implying societal attributions of responsibility (Gross, 2008).

RESULTS

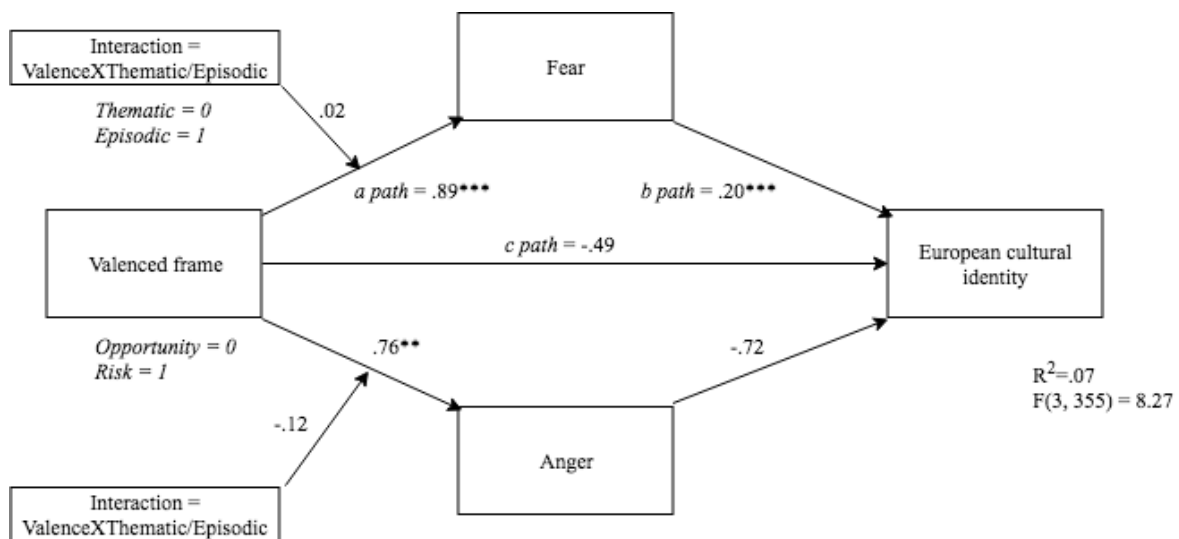
We find no significant effects of frame valence on either civic or cultural identity, contesting the results of the two previous experiments regarding H1. However, for the new category emerging from our factor analysis labeled European ‘ethnic’ identity, subjects in the risk condition had a lower score ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.24$) than those in the control group ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.08$). This pattern extends to H2: while there is no significant difference between identity levels of either the civic or cultural type exerted by the single factor of acceptance versus rejection equivalence frames, in the 2x2 factorial design, the risk and rejection combination further depresses ‘ethnic’ identity ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.23$) compared to the control group. While we do not confirm our hypothesis (having no theoretical expectations about the ‘ethnic’ category, and moreover no effect for the other two conceptualizations), this pattern is similar to the one for civic identity in Study 2, with the most likely reason once again being dissatisfaction from EU immigration policies, in combination with different gain/loss interpretations from the ones hypothesized.³⁶

To test H3a and H3b, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis, also known as conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2013). A commonly used tool in this approach is the PROCESS macro in SPSS which provides bootstrapped confidence intervals to improve the power of a model. Using a bootstrapping procedure with 10000 samples, we find significant indirect effects of valenced frames on emotions; with regards to H3a, when we include only the negative

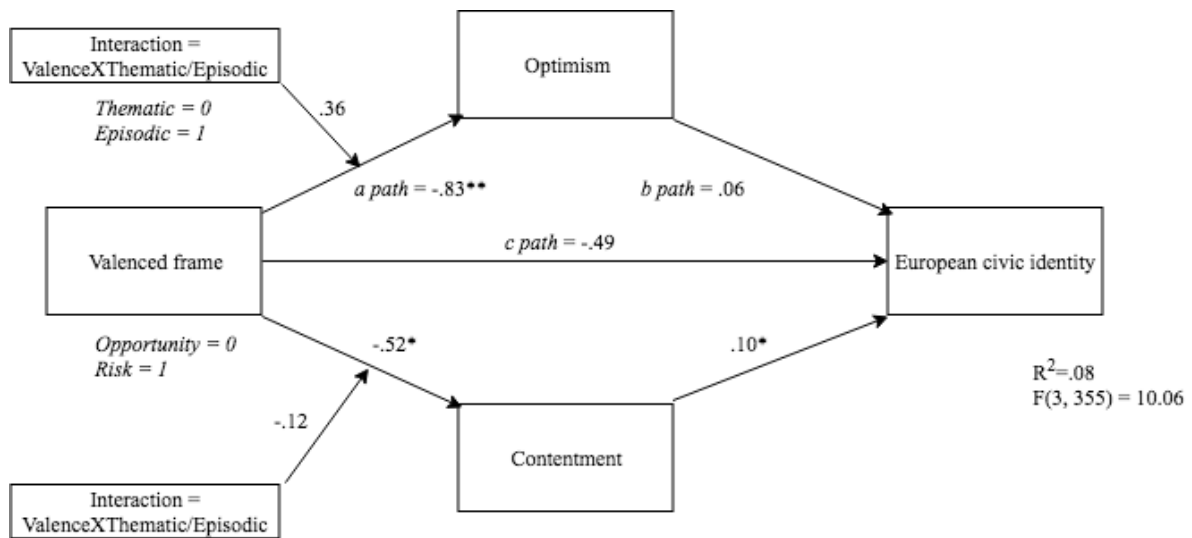
³⁶ For example, the information that more than 80 percent of asylum applications are rejected could be perceived as insufficient by participants with anti-immigrant and/or anti-EU sentiments.

emotions in the model, the risk frame does significantly increase both fear and anger compared to the opportunity frame. However, European cultural identity is positively affected only by fear.³⁷ In the second model where we use only the positive emotions as mediators (H3b), the opportunity frame indirectly affects European civic identity (vis-a-vis the risk frame) through positive emotions; a significant positive effect of frame valence exists on both enthusiasm and contentment, however only contentment in turn affects significantly civic identity in a positive way. All the coefficients are presented in Figure 3.2. Yet, there is no significant interaction between valence and episodic/thematic frames, suggesting H3 should be rejected.

Figure 3.2. Moderated mediation models showing the indirect effect of valenced frames on European identity, moderated by thematic/episodic frames, through emotions.



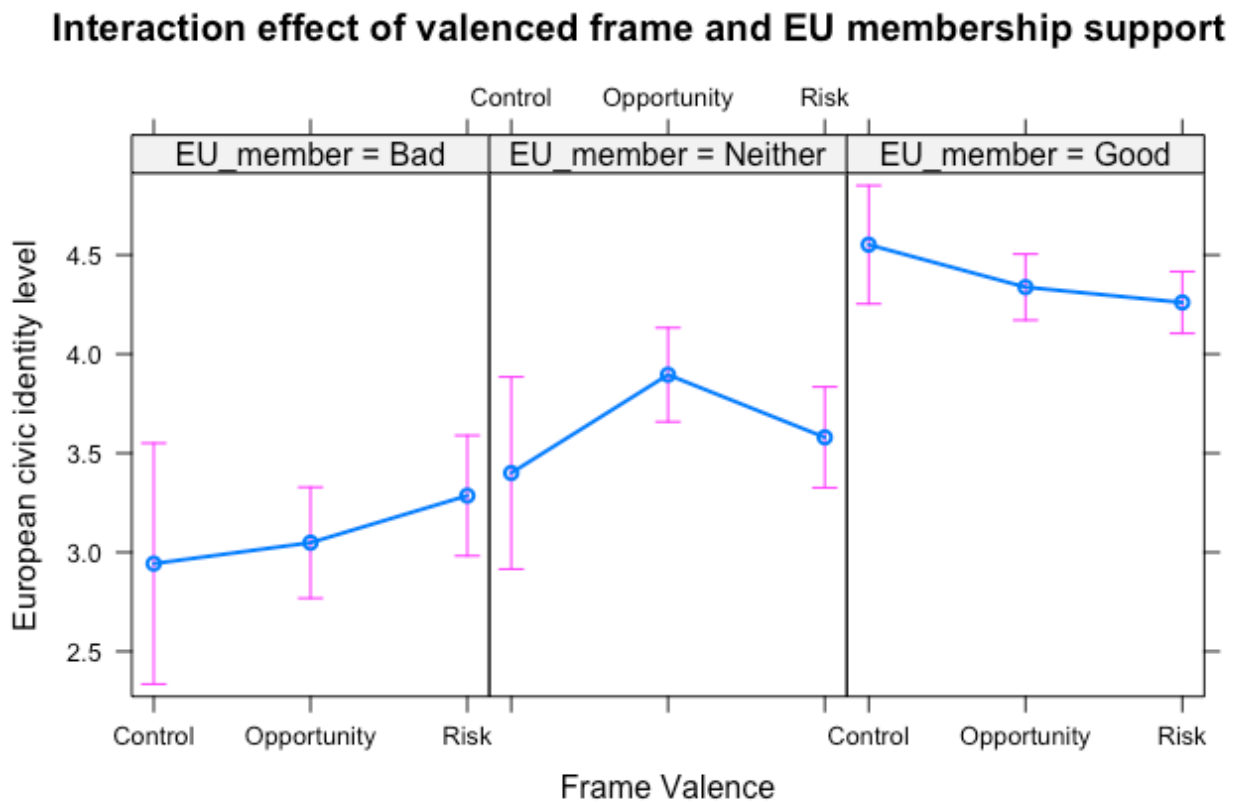
³⁷ Indirect effects are absent in the case of the European ‘ethnic’ identity.



Notes. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. (a) Indirect effect of valenced frame on European civic identity through optimism and contentment. (b) Indirect effect of valenced frame on European cultural identity through fear and anger.

Importantly, a marginally significant interaction does exist between valenced frames and the importance of Christianity in the case of European cultural identity, $F(8, 406) = 1.80, p = .075$. Among the subjects exposed to the risk frame, those who believe being Christian is very important for being European score over one point higher on the European cultural identity scale ($M = 4.38, SD = 0.15$) than those for whom it is not important ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.17$). While this is in contradiction to H4 as formulated in the theoretical framework, it follows the already established alternative logic emerging from H1c. We discuss this below. Finally, we find additional support for H5, as support for EU membership interacts with frame valence in a similar fashion as in Study 2, $F(4, 384) = 2.13, p = .076$ (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. Interaction effect of frame valence and support for EU membership on European civic identity.



DISCUSSION

While we do not find the expected effect of thematic and episodic frames, Study 3 reveals the mechanism behind the effect of valence on European identity: emotions. The risk frame positively affecting fear and anger, which in turn affects European cultural identity (fear only), supports our argument that negative news on immigration can influence the intensity of Europeanism's cultural interpretation, especially given that the direct effect is indeed non-significant. Moreover, the positive direction of this influence is in line with H1c: greater perception of common out group risk

increases the sense of ‘cultural entativity’. Study 3 demonstrates that fear is the crucial factor in this dynamic.

CONCLUSION

The mixed results regarding our hypotheses in our three experiments reflect the high complexity of European identity, but also its contingency. The main addition to Bruter’s (2003) seminal study, as the inspiration for this paper, is the evidence we find that news content can not only affect civic, but also cultural Europeanism, previously considered to be less fluctuating than the civic one. Using immigration as the news context, we discover that presenting it as a risk actually reinforces cultural identity (Study 1), confirming our hypothesis stating that faced to a common ‘other’, citizens tend to see themselves more as culturally European. In addition, the mechanism behind this phenomenon seem to be emotions; fear in particular is what mediates the effect (Study 3). With regards to this communicative aspect, our findings adds to existing literature about the framing effects in general, and valence effects specifically. Along this line, equivalence frames also make a difference in interaction with valence (Study 2); however, there is no such indication about thematic and episodic frames.

Apart from offering evidence that support for EU membership moderates the effect of opportunity from immigration on European civic identity (confirming the EU as the nucleus for the civic worldview), there are also some indications that belief about the importance of Christianity for being European increases the positive impact of risk frames on cultural identity (Study 3). This evokes the discourse of right-wing populists on the continent, who increasingly make a white, Christian Europe a reference point in their antagonism to immigrants as the horizontal enemy of the true people (Orban, 2016). If media feed hostility to immigration and reinforce the populist mindset among citizens, even in countries aspiring for EU membership like Macedonia, this could potentially have grave implications for the future of European politics.

This paper is not without deficiencies. Apriori conclusions about European identity were flawed: in all three studies the dimensions obtained empirically were inconsistent with the theoretically established ones. Most telling is the emergence of what we labeled ‘pragmatic’ identity, reflecting neither cultural nor civic identification, but simply the desire for the benefits offered by EU membership. While this possibly indicates that the measures used by Bruter (2003)

are somewhat outdated, it also attests to the difference that conducting this research in a non-EU country makes. As Macedonian citizens support EU membership mostly for sociotropic reasons (see case contextualization section), confounding the Europe and the EU can lead to mixed meanings and their manifestations. Accordingly, in the third study we find an ‘ethnic’ component that is separate from cultural identity, as it invokes European indigeneity rather than culture. Such nuances should be dedicated more attention in another study, where they would represent an advancement rather than a puzzle.

The above problems are circumvented here by adapting measurements on national identity (Reijerse et al., 2013) to the European for the sake of greater robustness, but even if these yield more consistent results, they can only be seen as an imperfect measure which requires theoretical refinement. With regards to the issue of measurement strategy, partisanship and ideology were controlled for through randomization, but they could also moderate the relationship, as could immigration attitudes. Any future study building on this one should especially include this measure, given the centrality of immigration to both European identity and media framing. Finally, while the experimental method is convenient for establishing causal relationships, research looking to identify more long term patterns in identity fluctuations as the consequence of media exposure should employ longitudinal panel studies, with measurements of actual news exposure.

Yet, the short term identity shifts are exactly what this paper has set out to do: discovering how ideas of belonging to a European civilization and its boundaries are affected by media is a major step towards explaining the dynamics of European integration, especially with a view to the populist rhetoric about ‘the European people’ and ‘the Muslim immigrant invaders’.

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CONCLUSION

The salience of immigration in European politics has been increasing for decades, and finally culminated in the last years, with the emergence of the so-called migrant crisis in Europe, characterized by an unprecedented mass movement of people in the globalized era. Even before these developments, scholars have already extensively debated the meanings and implications of migration for Europe (Lahav, 2004); after its eruption, the crisis has emphasized the urgent need for more comprehensive study of the phenomenon.

While the approaches to researching migration in social sciences are numerous, this dissertation employs the topic from a specific communication perspective, firmly placed within the study of populism. As the number of refugees from the devastating conflicts in the Middle East, and that of individuals trying to escape poverty on the African continent has rapidly increased in recent times, so has the focus of the media on the migrant crisis. Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) have identified the major news frames in the coverage of the crisis: security problem, potential for criminality and welfare burden. These frames separately all portray migration as a bad thing, and together they make it an existential threat. The main interest of this dissertation is how such media representations of migration could affect public attitudes, as a confirmed precursor of policies (Huysmans, 2006).

Arriving from the presupposition that a systematized collection of attitudes on politics and policies represents an individual's political worldview, the fundamental objective of this dissertation was to delineate the process of attitudinal shifts resulting from exposure to migration frames in the media, in a way that would reveal a coherent pattern in the development of a distinct populist modality on the European continent. Through the reification of the individual conceptualizations of *institutions*, *authority* and *identity*, three elements that represent the backbone of political belief systems, I have postulated a link between framing and priming processes, and an emerging thick right-wing populist ideology, whose dimensions correspond with those three elements. Labeled 'illiberal-transformative populism', this newly developing ideology originates from (and currently thrives in) postcommunist Eastern Europe, where the institutional conditions for its cultivation are favorable. However, its largely universal nature makes it possible for it to spill over also to the

West, as its ultimate objective is to reimagine and transform the continental order based on the widely accepted post-World War liberal democratic doctrine, to a distinctly illiberal mass society. In my view, the three dimensions of this illiberal-transformative populist mindset which represent the three elements outlined above, and which can be affected by migration news, are: (1) skepticism about mainstream media, (2) support for the expansion of executive powers, and (3) an emerging cultural Europeanism. By placing these elements into a media effects model, I contribute to populism literature, not only through demonstrating the centrality of migration in the media for populist movements, but also by constructing an overarching framework that explains the mutation and expansion of populist ideas in Europe.

Main findings

The integration the building blocks of this dissertation into the final comprehensive model followed a quasi-exploratory logic, yet one pertaining to an overarching theoretical argument: through the psychological mechanisms of framing and priming in the context of migration, media alter citizens' considerations with regards to media trust, support of presidential powers and European identity, in a way that facilitates their convergence into a compact and integrated 'illiberal-transformative populist' mindset, where before was a collection of separate and inconsistent attitudes. First, based on the discontent from mainstream media's coverage of the migrant crisis on from both sides on the ideological spectrum, but mostly right-wing factions (Otto & Köhler, 2018), this dissertation finds that citizens, and especially partisans, see news frames on immigration as biased (Chapter 1). Right-wing party supporters exposed to frames presenting migrants as victims tend to see such content as more biased in their favor than left-wing partisans, which is relevant to the argument that media are perceived as hostile to 'the people' - a fundamental populist hallmark - when they are sympathetic to migrants (Dostal, 2015). Adding to this finding, there are some indications that such perception of biased migration reporting is in fact generalized on the opinion of the media as a whole, with this pattern of distrust becoming especially prominent as citizens become more ideologically extreme towards the right wing. However, tests do not confirm elaboration likelihood as the cognitive path for making these conclusions, which suggests alternative explanations are needed to pinpoint the exact mechanism of how the belief about media fairness dissipates.

In Chapter 2, I found that the more immigrants are perceived as a symbolic threat, the more individuals are also supportive of a more empowered president. Perception of immigrants as realistic threat, however, is not linked to such support. While the peak of an anti-migrant campaign in Macedonia at the time of the experiment heavily contributed to the absence of the expected effects of priming realistic and symbolic threat, perceived negative impact on culture and the feeling of the host culture being in danger from immigrants was still positively associated with the support for stronger veto powers and less limitations to army use on the behalf of the president, even after controlling for partisanship and ideology. Indeed, this might suggest that the expected effects might have already occurred outside of the experimental setting. Citizens who felt culturally threatened by migrants were also more supportive of a presidential system instead of a parliamentary one, but those who displayed strong authoritarian traits were likely to support stronger presidents anyway, even when they perceived the migrant threat to be low, suggesting a link between individual authoritarianism and preferences for the concentration of power. All these findings point to an established tendency of perceived threat going hand in hand with the desire for strong and personalized leadership, as one of the defining characteristics of right-wing populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014). Beyond that, the chapter weighs in the debate about whether it is cultural backlash or economic anxieties that feed populist sentiment (Inglehart & Norris, 2016), by offering evidence in favour of the former.

Finally, Chapter 3 finds that framing immigration as a risk for Europe contributes to a stronger feeling of European cultural identity. Adding to this, one of the experiments of the last chapter revealed that among individuals exposed to the risk frame, those who believe being Christian is very important for being European had significantly stronger cultural identity than those for whom it is not important, further evoking the idea of a Fortress Europe based on civilizational boundaries with Islam. While doubts about the robustness of these findings remain, given the lack of corroboration in the chapter's repeated experiments, there are at least substantive indications which lend support to what Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) describe as a populist conception of European identity, drawing boundaries between 'Europe' and the 'other', especially in the context of politicized religion. Whether a manifestation of ethnic pan-nationalism (Westle & Segatti, 2016) or 'integralism' of the socially marginalized (Holmes, 2000), this phenomenon, captured by the slogan 'Europe for Europeans', serves as a rallying point for the populist supporters of an illiberal political project.

Together, these findings provide support to the media effects paradigm as a major factor in the forming of political attitudes, while also demonstrating its limits in different contexts. As Bechtel et al. (2014) assert, framing effects are far from universal, as they depend on the source credibility, the strength of the message and competitiveness of the environment, issue importance and sequence of messaging. There are factors within this complex dynamic due to which the combinations of valenced, equivalence and thematic/episodic frames (such as those in Chapter 3) were not applicable to audience's cognitive schemata in the given context, and this mismatch resulted with the failure to activate hypothesized considerations. Yet, aside from these additional insights in (the absence of) framing processes, a sizeable portion of this dissertation's findings shows that the mediatization of migration does seem to facilitate a crystallization of an ideational profile whose nexus consists of populist and illiberal tendencies, which was this research project's key objective.

Complimentary findings

To clarify the above relationships, this research draws not only on insight from populism and communication literature, but also several other fields in social science, to which it simultaneously contributes. In the process of conducting this research, I used auxiliary theories and concepts which not only served to support and explain the main research question, but have also yielded advances with regards to those very theories and concepts. The finding that anti-immigrant sentiment is associated with preferences for increased veto powers, army control and unilateral policy implementation by the president (Chapter 2) has major implications for theory of institutionalism, which often overlooks public opinion as a source of legitimation for institutional designs (Reeves & Rogowski, 2015). Elements of psychology permeate the dissertation as a whole, as it should be, given the aspiration for causal inferences in researching individual opinions. Motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006) is why citizens align with preferred parties to reject incongruent frames as the work of biased media (Chapter 1), while negative emotions are identified as the mediating factor in the relationship between valenced framing and European cultural identity (Chapter 3). Finally, in conceptualizing European identity, the three dimensions that emerge of the factor analysis (civic, cultural and 'pragmatic' identity) constitute an addition to both identity theory and literature on European integration, given the particularity of EU candidate states, which are hardly investigated

in these two fields. This is common for all chapters - the very choice of the research case (Macedonia) offers a new perspective through the contextual shift it creates, as findings sometimes correspond with those from studies conducted in the West (such as in the case of ideological differences in support of presidential powers in Chapter 2), and sometimes diverge (the emergence of pragmatic European identity that looks at Europeanness in instrumental fashion, in Chapter 3). All these findings underscore the cross-disciplinary approach of this dissertation, emphasizing the interrelatedness of seemingly distant concepts in social sciences.

Finally, some innovations made by this dissertation are also methodological, as its consistent utilization of different experimental designs offers a glimpse into both the possibilities and limitations of experiments in social science. While Slothuus (2016) uses a factorial design in showing how reputation-based pretreatment affects experimental findings about the impact of party cues, I pair arguments on immigration with implicit party positions, in a public arena where little is known about either (Chapter 1). The effect of the party-supplied arguments compared to the cue-absent ones not only shows the importance of party endorsements, but also the often overlooked applicability of non-factorial/asymmetric (ex. 2+2) designs. However, the potential of factorial designs is at full display in the 2x2x2 unique combination of different families of frames as stimulus for testing media effects on European identity (Chapter 3), demonstrating the flexibility of experimental designs. Both Chapter 1 and 3 also corroborate Druckman and Kam's (2011) argument about the validity of using students as experimental subjects: the multiple studies with both representative and student samples yielding similar results confirm that depending on the context, students can provide the generalizability of experimental findings. On the other hand, sometimes the lack of effects can also reveal important issues in experimental designs and force the search for alternative explanations, such as that issue familiarity due to the saturation of the media environment with migration news content (as well as skepticism of the public broadcasting service) can hamper treatment procedures and outcomes (Chapter 2).

In this dissertation the experimental method is confirmed as the preferred method for finding causal relationships regarding media effects (Druckman & Leeper, 2012). As such, the experiments that make up this dissertation are simultaneously the means and the end, as they provide both the epistemological and ontological foundation of the research. Without the experiment, the hypotheses posited in this dissertation would be extremely difficult to either confirm or disconfirm. Fine tuning the designs not only allowed that, but also revealed several intricacies about the method itself.

Beyond all this however, the eclectic nature of this dissertation, exemplified by the wide ranging implications of its findings, ultimately converges into a novel perspective on populism, as a collection of individual attitudes that express a sweeping ideology.

Demand-side populism in political communication

In the opening paragraphs I stated that this dissertation finds its conceptual origin and analytical point of departure in the relationship between two major political phenomena in recent times: the migration crisis and populism. Yet, none of the empirical chapters deals explicitly with any existing populist operationalizations. This is because the term by itself in general refers to the simple appeal to the virtuous people as antagonistic to evil elites, according to the definition most frequently used by scholars (Mudde, 2004). As such, it has been mostly used as a catchphrase to describe political actors that invoke this principle in their behaviour. However, Stanley (2008) argues that the application of such ‘thin’ definition to all these actors fails to capture much of the depth of the phenomenon. While the understanding of populism as a thin ideology which can only complement others serves as a basis to analyze the political arena, its minimal character allows for the lumping various of its manifestations into the same category. In addition, in this view, thickness of populism cannot be achieved without its combination with other ideologies. In contrast, it follows from my studies that a thick populist ideology could exist, as it ‘evolves’ from the thin one, independently from its combination with traditional ideologies. Based on the findings of this dissertation, I argue here that this thick populist ideology is only one evolutionary strain of the populist phenomenon, and that the way to reify a particular strain is to first identify the elements which together create it, in a bottom-up fashion.

Crucially, it needs to be said that the foundation this strain of populist ideology is based on, and therefore shares many of the characteristics, is that of the populist radical right (Mudde, 2007). Scholarship has firmly established the immigration issue as providing the ‘master frame’ of right wing populist parties (Rydgren, 2005), as the exclusion of out-groups from the idea of the homogenous people plays perfectly into the core tenet of populist ideology (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). However, as already intimated, the scope taken here on immigration is not from the perspective of real-world (unmediated) events or situations, institutional policies or public attitudes, rather in terms of its representations in the media. A large volume of literature focuses on news

coverage of immigration, with a significant part dedicated to its impact on various individual attitudes, especially those on immigration (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Bos et al., 2016; Van Klingeren et al., 2015). In this dissertation, the aim was not to replicate these findings, but to extend their substantial meaning to a related field: the one of right-wing populism. Therefore, instead of showing once again that negative portrayals of immigrants will inevitably result with negative attitudes on immigration, as many before have done, I have taken this as already confirmed assumption, and proceeded immediately to test the direct implications of those negative portrayals on another set of attitudes, which based on existing research are inherent to this thick populist ideology.

There are two key takeaways from the above. First, the focus of this dissertation is on the demand side of populism, rather than on the supply side - that of populist actors like parties and leaders. As the research on the latter has been predominant in the field, addressing individual populist positions has become more pertinent in recent times (Akkerman, Jacobs & Zaslove, 2016). Second, since the perspectives on immigration and populism are unified here in an experimental test of a causal relationship regarding media effects on citizens, this dissertation must be placed in populist political communication literature. According to De Vreese et al. (2018), ‘populist *ideas* must be communicated discursively to achieve the communicator’s goals and the intended effects on the *audience*’ (p. 3). Arriving from this principle, authors like Wirz et al. (2018) have investigated how populist content affects immigration attitudes. However, given the complex dynamic between the media environment and the public, the reverse is just as possible: that immigration content affects populist attitudes. This would be consistent with Slater’s (2015) seminal ‘reinforcing spirals’ model, and would also underscore the interchangeability between messages and opinions in the context of migration and populism. Guided by the key postulate of populist political communication, according to which populism is a discursive phenomenon, I have employed the framework of media effects studies to further knowledge about the nature of demand-side populism, through its decomposition into three components.

Dimensions of the thick right-wing populism

Which are then, finally, these components of the thick populist ideology, why have they been selected as the subjects of analysis, and how is immigration coverage affecting them? They

correspond with Mudde's (2010) three key features of populist radical right ideology: (1) populism, (2) authoritarianism and (3) nativism. According to Mudde, the first one signifies the distrust of democratic institutions and the perception of elite corruption. In the context of the migrant crisis, and a diversified, increasingly participatory media environment, I find a suitable proxy for these institutions to be traditional mainstream media. Right-wing movements have long accused media of exhibiting 'liberal bias' (Lee, 2005). With the escalation of the refugee crisis, this criticism has turned into outright rejection of the media establishment's favorable reporting on migrants as the manipulative work of an elite-controlled 'lying press' (Otto & Köhler, 2018). This dissertation succeeds in establishing a causal line between framing immigrants as a victim or threat when respective parties (liberal versus conservative) endorse these frames, and perceptions of biased content among partisans, operationalized as the hostile media effect (Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985). Moreover, this perception of bias translates further into decreasing trust in media overall, especially for individuals on the right side of the ideological scale. These results indicate that media as institutions could be seeing their role in democratic societies diminish as a result of how they are perceived to cover immigration by citizens.

The second feature of the PRR is authoritarianism, the belief in a strictly ordered society where infringements of authority are to be punished severely (Mudde, 2007). Previous studies have shown that authoritarian predispositions are activated in the presence of perceived threat (Feldman & Stenner, 1997). As the association of migration with social breakdown has provided this threat to members of society, I posed a question: how far are these members willing to go in changing the institutional system to ensure this threat is removed, and what kind of threat will make them want to change it further, symbolic or realistic? I found that citizens who believe immigrants are a cultural threat want a system with institutions more strongly equipped to enact stifling measures; that is to say, a president with greater discrete powers and less constrained by checks and balances. According to the findings of this dissertation, in the context of fear from the deterioration of cultural cohesion, citizens not only want political functionaries to be strong, but they want institutional design that enables them to be strong.

Finally, the third feature of the populist radical right ideology is nativism, signifying the idea that non-native elements are fundamentally damaging to the nation-state (Mudde, 2007). While nationalism is one of the core tenets of the PRR, recently right-wing leaders in Europe have begun referring to a common European culture that is under threat from non-European immigrants and

especially Muslims (Mudde, 2015). Such rhetoric is built upon ideas of differentialist racism, according to which protection of the indigenous culture, customs and way of life is of paramount importance (Betz, 2003). However, the presence of a ‘common foe’ facilitates the projection of these ideas to a pan-European population; as Fligstein (2008: 253) has acknowledged, ‘European identity which seems to have taken hold in many places is not one that emphasizes tolerance and enlightenment, but racial, ethnic and religious differences between people who are thought of as Europeans and those who are others’. This dissertation reveals that framing immigrants as a risk for Europe increases cultural Europeanness, and that for individuals who believe Christianity is important for being European this effect is stronger, confirming the above elite-originated projection is at least in part permeating citizens attitudes.

What is common for all these findings is the tendency of established tenets of right-wing populist ideology to evolve into more extreme versions of themselves. What used to be distrust for political institutions is now beginning to spill over into distrust of those delivering information about them: the media. What used to be a permissive consensus for separation of powers, where preferences for stronger politicians may have prevailed, now seems to be willingness to adjust the system itself so to have less obstacles for stronger politicians to act. What used to be a ‘heartland’ based on the nation state, now may be becoming one based on European autochtony and Christian tradition. This indicates a consolidation of the right-wing populist movement’s worldviews that goes beyond recycling traditional ideologies with only a broad and vague populist undertone as a constant. Instead, this dissertation shows that attitudes associated with known dimensions of the ‘populist zeitgeist’ are spiralling from within the existing framework of thin populism, rendered thick by exposure to immigration in the media.

The simultaneous proliferation of separate layers of political reality in an increasingly populist direction - as a result of immigration news content - is unlikely to be a coincidence, thus providing further indication of this transformation of populism as a coherent, sweeping phenomenon. Given the ‘pathological normalcy’ of populist ideas in democratic societies (Mudde, 2010), this cannot represent a surprising finding; yet, to date, there has not been an attempt to verify this process on the three fundamental layers on which contemporary politics is played out: institutions, authority and identity. The proxies used as outcome variables in this dissertation achieve that to a satisfactory level, showing tentatively that media could be one of the driving forces behind the process, through the way their coverage of immigration is processed.

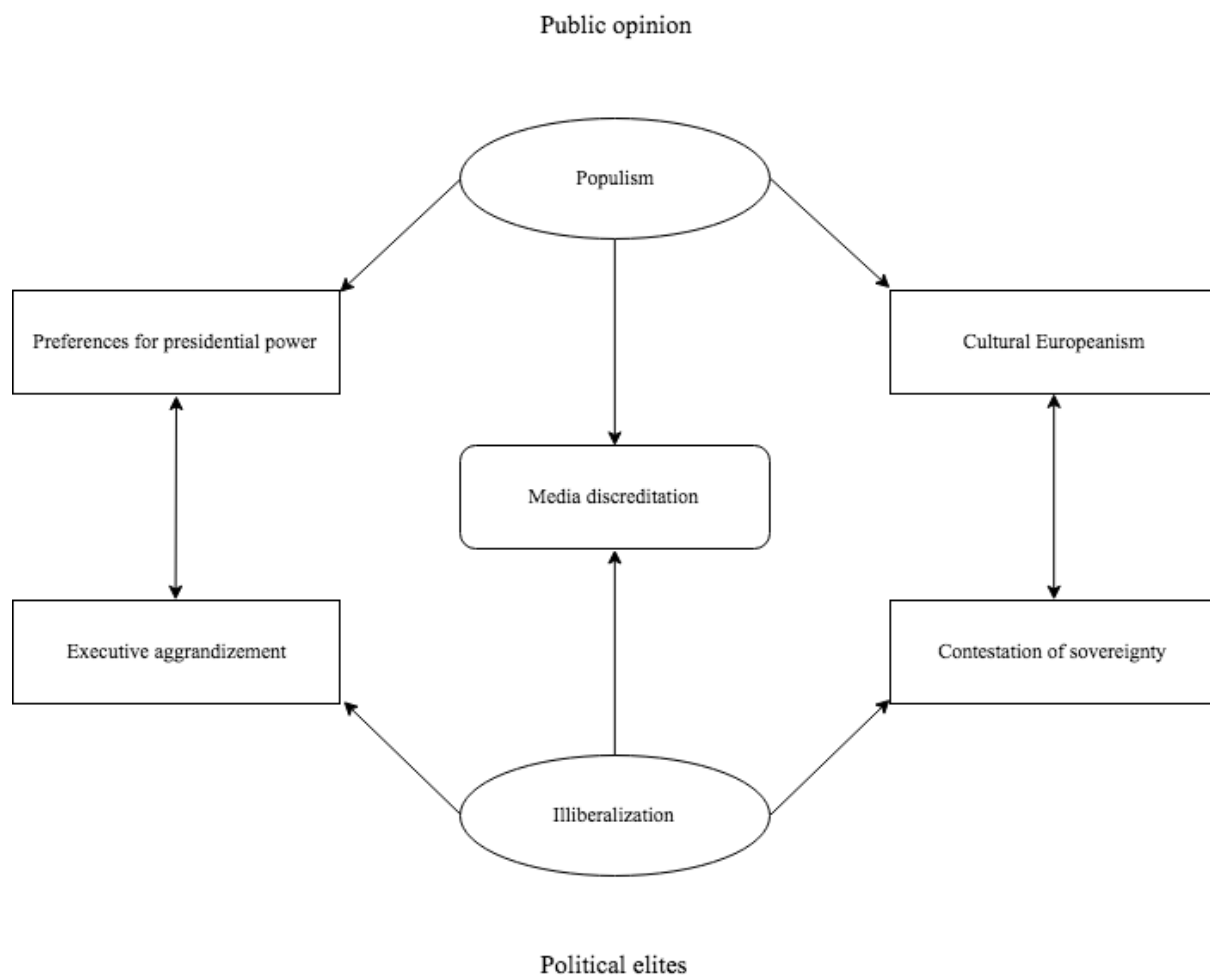
Implications of the populist transformation: illiberal transformation

The biggest implication of this transformation of populism is that it creates an ever-more tangible impetus to transform society by its model. Although by definition this model is an illiberal one (Kriesi, 2014), if these illiberal tendencies are intentionally cultivated through migration coverage with a greater objective than simple electoral gains, the impact on political systems can be far reaching. Smilov and Krastev (2008) have captured this possibility, by distinguishing between ‘soft’ populism, as a challenge to the existing system of representation and mainly to the party system, and ‘hard’ populism, challenging some of the fundamental principles of liberal democracy. Building on the latter, I label this phenomenon to more accurately reflect its nature as *illiberal-transformative* populism. Victor Orbán’s discourse on European identity, while denouncing critical media in the country, as a stepping stone towards shutting them down altogether (Zalan, 2016), combined with his openly expressed ambition to build an illiberal democracy in Hungary, renders Smilov and Krastev’s distinction highly relevant, and calling for further conceptual development. Thus, the focus shifts to the process of Orbán’s ideology trickling down to citizens, facilitated by a continuous anti-immigrant media campaign, while his brand of evolved right-wing populism makes a strong claim for social and political reorganization on both national and continental level, with a legitimacy afforded by its ideological expansion and solidification.

A very similar illiberal swerve finding its roots in the deepened populist ideology is also happening in Poland. As Bustikova and Guasti (2017) assert, such illiberal swerve occurs under two conditions: *executive aggrandizement* (reducing checks and balances through attacks on the independent judiciary and media) and *contestation of sovereignty* (the self-perception of a polity to be under threat, whether real or manufactured). This dissertation analyzes the public attitudes which underline the process, but without recognizing the ruling elites’ role in orchestrating it, the picture would not be complete. If the above two conditions of the illiberal swerve originate from political actors, it can be surmised that the preferences for stronger presidential power sustain executive aggrandizement, and the discursive construction of European people opposed to EU elites follows the contestation of sovereignty. Figure 4.1 visually represents this dynamic: simultaneously as elites pursue illiberalization through the two mechanisms described by Bustikova and Guasti, this process reflects on individual-level populism (which is the part this dissertation focuses on), as the two

corresponding elements are activated to support the process from below. Put simply, elite illiberalism breeds populist citizens, and individual-level populism reinforces illiberal elites. The role of media is essential in maintaining this feedback loop, giving further support to the argument that illiberal-transformative populism should be approached from a communication perspective, as it is in this dissertation. If the public perceives media as not working in the interest of the people (for which this dissertation offers empirican evidence), that can be used as a pretext for attacks by political actors, ranging from public criticism, through soft coercion, to institutional regulations, all aimed at transforming the media landscape (Simon & Rácz, 2017). Such elite-based attacks not only further amplify the anti-immigrant message through media they manage to coopt (Nolan, 2018), but they also serve as a vindication of public opinion about critical media being the enemy of the people (see Simoska, Atanasov & Cvetanova, 2011), justifying potential future actions, and so the spiral continues.

Figure 4.1. Framework of the intersection between dimensions of individual-level populism and political actors' illiberal features yielding illiberal-transformative populism



If the fusion between populism and illiberalism is generating a functioning ideology for both political actors and citizens, this is the model according to which such an ideology would enact itself. Jost, Federico and Napier (2009) argue that ideology is crystallized through top-down processes, where political attitudes are acquired through exposure to bundles constructed by political elites, and bottom-up processes, where underlying psychological needs and motives influence individuals' receptiveness to certain positions. In this dissertation, the latter (also called the functional substructure of an ideology) has been tackled. However, in order to empirically confirm this model, the discursive superstructure, which guides political judgement in a top-down schematic fashion and is transmitted from the elites, needs to be investigated too. This is the first priority for future research emerging from this dissertation: if populist politicians feel empowered enough to produce this transformation with the public behind them, the institutional factors that determine this transformation need to be explained. I elaborate shortly on how to achieve this in the next and final section on this chapter.

Limitations and directions for future research

Like Hungary, the case study of this dissertation - Macedonia - is also an Eastern European postcommunist country with a poor record in the rule of law and institutional development, moreover one ruled by a right-wing populist party in the last decade. Kriesi (2014) points to the low level of institutionalization of the party systems in Eastern Europe as providing a general opportunity for the rise of populist challengers, a view corroborated by a range of scholars (Rovira Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2015; Rupnik, 2016). While the dissatisfaction with democratic performance is a general prerequisite for populist support, in the case of Eastern Europe it is combined with weaker perception of legitimacy of the system, as the transition from communism to Western-style democracy has not fulfilled citizens' expectations (Kriesi, 2014). In this situation, there is a greater openness to another system change, channeled through the populist worldview whose dimensions are covered in this dissertation. The most immediate follow up to this dissertation's research in the future should be to investigate whether the level of party system institutionalization in Eastern Europe enables the transformative populist force to flourish, and whether this type of populism further deteriorates party system institutionalization. This can be achieved by checking the link

between the three elements of illiberal-transformative populism, and partisan dealignment and institutional distrust, in a cross-national context with a longitudinal research design.

Such an approach would indirectly account for the top-down source of illiberal-transformative populism, by assessing the impact of social-historical contingencies on the successful diffusion of illiberal and populist ideas. Beyond this, in order to achieve substantial empirical validation of the construct as it is conceptualized here on an individual level, the relationship between its three components - media skepticism, presidential preferences and European cultural identity - and conventional measurements of ideology on the left-right scale needs to be clarified. Demonstrating its independence from traditional ideologies would confirm illiberal-transformative populism's thick ideological nature. Furthermore, it is crucial that it is established how these components correspond with existing conceptualizations of populist attitudes in literature (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove, 2014) and how they predict voting for populist parties. Finally, evaluating the association between the components and indicators of support for illiberal democracy (Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007), can help determine the extent of how much illiberalism trickles down from elite to citizens. There is clearly still a long way to go in systematizing this theory.

Despite its findings, this dissertation is not without limitations, both in terms of its premise and implementation. The dependent variables are selected as intuitive proxies capturing the three fundamental aspects of political life and the populist features corresponding to them, but they might not be the perfect ones, nor the only ones. The findings from the experimental studies have been decidedly mixed, as several hypotheses haven't been confirmed with different samples or with modified measurements. Beyond replication issues with the motivated reasoning and general media skepticism hypotheses between experiments, Chapter 1 has not been able to show that elaboration likelihood is the mechanism through which people decide that an incongruent frame is also biased. It is quite conceivable for this to be a conceptual design error, as the ELM framework can not simply be plugged into theory of framing effects, given the different mechanisms of both information processing models. Similarly, potentially outdated theory-driven conceptualizations of European identity in Chapter 3 to a large degree misrepresented reality in the particular time and place, and affected the measurement and inferences. In addition, the numerous inconsistencies about how the opportunity frame affects these conceptions, and various interpretations of what European Union policy responses mean for identity when presented via equivalence frames

suggests a potentially flawed application of framing theory. Finally, Chapter 2 has failed to even provide evidence of a priming effect, instead having to rely on correlational analysis to demonstrate the link between cultural threat and support for presidential powers. While the saturation of migration news in that period factors in this outcome, the manipulation failure due to which respondents did not distinguish between the cultural and economic threat of the migration issue would suggest that even greater meticulousness should be involved in the stimulus design.

Many of the failures to confirm the hypotheses could have a contextual source (e.g. inexperience with online surveys, pretreatment effects, social desirability bias etc.), but in general they are most likely to be a result of the relatively common deficiencies of experimental methodology hampering external validity: single country case study and small sample size. Many of the effects found are inconsistent across different samples characterized by a small N, while the lack of cross-national confirmation pushes many of the inferences towards the realm of speculation instead of generalization. Beyond increasing sample size, reducing attrition and adding country cases, using a different method could also provide additional, more systematic account of media content and news exposure (linkage analysis), or would document long term changes in individual attitudes (panel data). However, the tradeoff would include a much greater expense in time and resources. A bigger issue with this research design and model is internal validity. The question ‘do we actually measure populism’ becomes even more relevant in the context of a fractured paradigm, where academic disagreements about the meaning of the concept are exacerbated by its watering down through frequent inaccurate use in the public sphere. It should be stressed that the findings of this dissertation are insufficient to assert that the definition of populism as a thin ideology now obsolete. While thin populism is the base for this Eastern European originated, right-wing inspired thick populism, it is my no means inevitable that the latter will replace the earlier conceptualization. As stressed earlier, illiberal-transformative populism is only a mutated strain of the original concept,

which has ‘infected’ citizens in Eastern European countries due to the specific underlying circumstances in these societies.³⁸

Whether this brand of populism pioneered by the Eastern Europeans could permeate the West remains to be seen; while there the institutional stability acts as a buffer against elite illiberal projects, increasing voter volatility and party fragmentation (Pellikaan, De Lange & Van Der Meer, 2018) allows for the emergence of populist political actors which exhibit illiberal tendencies when in power. An example is Italy’s internal affairs minister Matteo Salvini from the rebranded Lega Nord, who repeatedly bypassed institutional procedures in dealing with the ‘migrant threat’ he himself dramatized (Sorgi, 2018), fulfilling Bustikova and Guasti’s illiberalization conditions. The fact that his popularity among voters increased after this gambit demonstrates how illiberal-transformative populism’s ideas are capable of proliferating given their psychological underpinnings.

Final conclusion

While most Western European populist actors have so far fallen short of explicitly setting goals of illiberalization, further electoral advances could tempt them into embracing illiberal-transformative populism as means of bridging ideology and governance, something their thin populism as a mere discursive or strategic tool was not capable of doing on its own. The spirit of illiberal-transformative populism resonates easily with citizens because it promises a redemption of democracy (Canovan, 1999) in which the people - all the (European) people - will reject the migrant-welcoming workings of the opaque Brussels bureaucracy, as well as their media lackeys, and will have their will enacted through an institutionally empowered leader. Thus, the illiberal-transformative populism does not propose a retreat to the national per se, but a projection of the

³⁸ Indeed, while there are similarities to other strains, such as Donald Trump’s populist style (especially with regards to media), there are also important differences; for example, American populist supporters do not fulfill any conditions for an expanding definition of the people, nor would they dare support the dismantling of the checks and balances, like Europeans from postcommunist underinstitutionalized societies. Unlike the West, these societies are also mostly ethnically homogenous, rendering them more susceptible to anti-immigration sentiments, and hold weaker post-materialist values than Westerners, resulting with greater indifference towards transgressions against liberal institutions like judicial independence (Sierakowski, 2018). All this is without even considering the interaction between populism and left-wing ideology, which is also on the rise (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

national to the supranational, or more accurately, a illiberal transformation of the supranational, executed by a populist project corresponding with the public's populist beliefs.

How are democratic institutions supposed to respond to this challenge? Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart (2015) identify a range of *internal* (mainstream political parties, civil society organizations, constitutional courts and media) and *external* (transnational civil society, international federations of political parties, foreign governments and supranational institutions) actors in this dynamic. The findings of this dissertation might indicate that media and the European institutional design weigh heavily regarding illiberal-transformative populism. According to these findings, the core root that needs to be addressed is more than anything else, the coverage of the migrant crisis. This is in line with Mudde (2010), who advocates denying populist actors the increase of salience of issues they own, such as immigration. Yet, in a society characterized a highly selective media diet driven by social networks like Facebook and Twitter, coupled with tight media control by populists in power, this is a massive challenge. The way immigration attitudes as shaped by news affect concrete feelings for institutions like media, preferences for power concentration and widening understanding of 'who are the people' indicates a qualitative and quantitative metastasis of populism. With its eclectic approach, this dissertation manages to create bridges between disciplines, which can help understand how the mediatization of the migrant crisis acts as a catalyst for a proto-ideology in an increasingly post-ideological era, stemming from right-wing ideas and the minimal juxtaposition between the people and the elite.

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APPENDICES - CHAPTER 1

Appendix A1

Stimulus content

Humanitarian frame (SDSM endorsement)

Migrant crisis not over yet: War victims seeking refuge in Macedonia

According to sources in the Macedonian ministry of internal affairs, we have not seen the end of the migrant situation on the Balkans yet, despite the significantly lowered intensity of the situation on the southern border with Greece in the recent period. Since the agreement between EU and Turkey in March 2016 to close the so called Balkan route and the subsequent dislocation of the Idomeni camp, the border-crossing is functioning normally; however, according to high-ranking officers on the border, people from the conflict areas in the Middle East continue to reach Macedonia.

- “Almost every day we encounter migrants on the border” - a Macedonian border patrol officer who wishes to be anonymous has told us. “Yesterday we have taken a group of Syrian refugees into custody near Gevgelija. They were all young people, who survived the siege of Aleppo and experienced violence and exploitation in Turkey, where they have been held in a camp of poor conditions. We sheltered them and gave them medical care and food in the border facilities, but we have strict orders to not allow them into the country” - reveals the policeman.

According to the UNHCR, these people have the right to seek asylum in European countries, as victims of a conflict. Most migrants from the war zone have lost their homes and spent their last money on the attempt to reach Western Europe in order to seek protection, but due to the agreement between the EU and Turkey and the strong enforcement on borders on the Balkans, they are not allowed to proceed and request asylum. However, if some decide to apply for asylum in Macedonia in order to avoid being deported back to Turkey and live in inhumane conditions, there should be a possibility for a temporary stay in the well-equipped border shelters built two years ago at the peak of the crisis.

(From the ruling party VMRO they declined to comment, but a representative of the opposition SDSM supports this position.)

- “As a democratic country, we have a responsibility that is defined by the Geneva convention in cases like these. As people, we have moral and civilizational obligation to show compassion to refugees who are exhausted, traumatized and practically helpless. The new government needs to pay more attention to what

is happening on the border and implement a more humane asylum policy for people who fit the conditions for it, that would reflect the hospitality and solidarity of Macedonian people” - states Vladimir Petrov, deputy director of the Macedonian office of Medecins sans Frontieres (Damjan Mancevski, MP of the Social Democrats), who we asked about the future developments in the migrant crisis.

Most of the migrants that were staying in the transit centers at border crossings Tabanovce and Gevgelija in the last year have already been transported to Greece, according to the readmission procedure agreed between Macedonia and the European Union in September 2016, which is the basis of current policy. The transfer of people is arranged after positive response from the Greek side for their acceptance, at a time and place designated by Greek officials, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informs.

Threat frame (VMRO endorsement)

Migrant crisis not over yet: Unidentified foreigners still illegally entering Macedonia

According to sources in the Macedonian ministry of internal affairs, we have not seen the end of the migrant situation on the Balkan route yet, despite the significantly lowered intensity of the situation on the southern border with Greece in the recent period. Since the agreement between EU and Turkey in March 2016 to close the so called Balkan route and the subsequent dislocation of the Idomeni camp, the border-crossing is functioning normally; however, according to high-ranking officers on the border, people from the conflict areas in the Middle East continue to reach Macedonia.

- “Almost every day we encounter migrants on the border” - a Macedonian border patrol officer who wishes to be anonymous has told us. “Yesterday we have taken into custody a group of adult men, who said they want to reach Germany for economic reasons, but some had forged passports and we can’t exclude that they have participated in military activities in their countries. Those that slip through the border are illegally in the country and we can’t predict their actions. We are too understaffed to catch everybody” - reveals the policeman.

According to experts in the Macedonian Center for Security Studies, due to the diverting of resources from the Macedonian border forces to other divisions, the control over the southern border has been weakened. The raising of the fences on the border one year ago have made the crossings more dangerous, but not

impossible. It appears the agreement between the EU and Turkey is not enough: human smugglers are still finding transit routes, accompanied by foreigners with suspicious background. Macedonian border forces are faced with a difficult choice - if they do not capture the migrants, they could pose a threat to security, if they do, they are put in detention centers until readmission, causing further strain on the state's budget.

(From the opposition party SDSM they declined to comment, but a representative of the ruling VMRO agrees with the assessment.)

- “As a sovereign country we must first ensure the safety of our citizens. After the deal with Turkey, we reduced the number of patrols on the border, but if our institutions do not stay alert, we risk the repeat of what happened in Paris, Nice and Berlin, possibly even in our country. At the same time, we can't afford to fill the camps again and turn into another migrant parking site, which would be a source of crime and cultural shock to the locals. The new government needs to pay more attention to what is happening on the border, boost enforcement and implement a quicker deportation system, instead of rely on the agreement with the EU. This would also deter any potential Jihadists” - states Vladimir Petrov, deputy director at MCSS (Ilija Dimovski, MP from VMRO), who we asked about the future developments in the migrant crisis.

Most of the migrants that were staying in the transit centers at border crossings Tabanovce and Gevgelija in the last year have already been transported to Greece, according to the readmission procedure agreed between Macedonia and the European Union in September 2016, which is the basis of current policy. The transfer of people is arranged after positive response from the Greek side for their acceptance, at a time and place designated by Greek officials, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informs.

Appendix B1

Stimulus example - Visual appearance of the victim frame with Socialdemocrat endorsement.

03/04/2017 | Маркетинг | За нас

Локално

Точни и вистинити информации

Македонија | Бизнес | Глобално | Анализи | Спорт | Сцена | Магазин | Хроника

Актуелно | Рама: Во Црна Гора се чувствувам како во Албанија

Почетна / Актуелно / Мигрантската криза се уште не е завршена: Жртви на воените конфликти бараат спас во Македонија

МИГРАНТСКАТА КРИЗА СЕ УШТЕ НЕ Е ЗАВРШЕНА: ЖРТВИ НА ВОЕНИТЕ КОНФЛИКТИ БАРААТ СПАС ВО МАКЕДОНИЈА

01/04/2017 21:51

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Според извори во Министерството за внатрешни работи, крајот на ситуацијата со мигрантите на Балканот се уште не е догледен, и покрај значително намалениот интензитет на преминување на јужната граница со Грција во последниот период, во однос на претходната година. По договорот меѓу ЕУ и Турција во март минатата година да се затвори таканаречената Балканска рута и последователната дислокација на кампот Идомени, граничните премини функционираат нормално. Сепак, според високорангирани службеници на границата, лица од конфликтните зони на Блискиот Исток продолжуваат да пристигнуваат во Македонија.

- "Скоро секој ден среќаваме мигранти на границата" - тврди припадник на граничната патрола кој побара да остана анонимен. "Вчера приведовме неколку бегалци од Сирија во близина на Гевгелија. Сите беа млади луѓе кои ја преживеале опсадата на Алепо и се соочиле со насилство и експлоатација во Турција, каде биле држени во импровизиран камп. Ги згриживме и им дадовме храна и лекарска нега во објектите на границата, но имаме строги наредби да не им дозволуваме влез во земјата" - открива полицаецот.

Според УНХЦР, овие луѓе имаат право да побараат азил на европскиот континент, како жртви на воен конфликт. Повеќето мигранти од воените зони ги имаат изгубено нивните домови и ги потрошиле последните пари во обид да стигнат до Западна Европа, каде бараат засолниште, но поради договорот меѓу ЕУ и Турција и силното обезбедување на балканските граници, не им е дозволено да продолжат и да побараат заштита. Но ако некои од нив решат да побараат азил во Македонија за да не бидат депортирани назад во нехуманите услови во Турција, би можело да постои можност за привремен престој во добро опремените гранични објекти, изградени пред две години при врвот на кризата.

Од владејачката ВМРО-ДПМНЕ одбија да коментираат, но претставник на опозициската СДСМ се согласува со ваквата позиција.

- "Како демократска држава, имаме должност дефинирана од Женевската конвенција во вакви случаи. Како луѓе, имаме морална и цивилизациска обврска да покажеме сочувство кон бегалци кои се истошени, трауматизирани и во основа беспомошни. Новата влада треба да обрне повеќе внимание на тоа што се случува на границата и да имплементира по хумана политика на азил за оние кои ги исполнуваат условите за тоа, онака каква што би ги одразувала гостопримството и солидарноста на македонскиот народ" - вели Дамјан Манчевски, пратеник од Социјалдемократите, кого го контактиравме за изјава во врска со идниот развој на ситуацијата со мигрантите.

Повеќето од мигрантите кои престојувале во транзитните центри на граничните премини Табановце и Гевгелија во последната година веќе се префрлени во Грција, според процедурата за реадмисија меѓу Македонија и Европската Унија од септември минатата година, на која се основани актуелните мерки. Трансферот на лицата е организиран по добивање на позитивен одговор од грчка страна за нивно прифаќање, во време и место одредено од грчките служби, соопштува МВР.

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Попладне
Што се крие зад најновиот маневар на Ахмети – министерските местата не може да се напуштат, додека не се распадне сегашната влада?

Серија
Хаос во Лондон – протести и контрапротести

Слични содржини



Рама: Во Црна Гора се чувствувам како во Албанија
03/04/2017 18:37



Пратениците денеска свршија со конститутивната – утре пак!
03/04/2017 18:14



Не е точно дека тој ме чекал да го примам пред канцеларија, но точно е дека соработката беше нарушена поради неговите дилови со ВМРО ДПМНЕ
03/04/2017 17:59

Migrant attitudes measures

Beliefs about migration

1. In general terms, what would you say about the number of migrants who enter our country?
2. To what extent do you think Macedonia should allow migrants to come and live here?
3. I would prefer migration in our country to be...
4. I would support an immigration policy that allows ... immigrants
5. Is Macedonia made a worse or better place to live by migrants coming here?
6. Are Macedonia's crime problems made worse or better by migrants coming here?

Threat perception

1. I am afraid of increasing violence and vandalism in Macedonian society by migrants
2. These days I am afraid that Macedonian culture is threatened by migrants
3. I am afraid that economic prospects of Macedonian society will get worse because of migrants
4. Migrants create a strain on social services
5. The government has allowed illegal immigration to get out of control

The response: support for punitive policies

1. The total number of immigrants coming to Macedonia should be reduced Government should increase efforts to prevent illegal immigration
2. Government should increase efforts to deport illegal immigrants
3. I would support increased spending to secure our borders
4. I would support government spending for deportation of illegal immigrants

Appendix C1

Effects of Migrant Attitudes dimensions on Semantic differential.

Semantic differential	All	Victim	Threat
	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>
Intercept	6.33 (.41)***	6.33*** (.56)	6.40 (5.44)***
MigrantOpinion T1	-.12 (.94)	-1.26 (1.33)	.72 (1.23)
Threat T1	-.48 (.86)	.20 (1.20)	-1.23 (1.14)
Policy T1	-1.81 (1.16)	-.15 (1.57)	-3.22 (1.59)**
R2	.08	.04	.19
N	96	47	49

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Effects of Frame Dummies on Perception of General bias with Partisanship moderator

Migrant Bias T2	Full model
	<i>B (SE)</i>
Intercept	2.23 (.77)**
Age	.09 (.11)
Sex	-.18 (.20)
Education	-.14 (.15)
Ideology	.18 (.09)**
Migrant Bias T1	.38 (.08)***
Party ID	-.60 (.78)
Propensity	.47 (.58)
Feeling Leader	-1.36 (1.11)
Feeling Supporters	-.01 (1.22)
Victim	.38 (.27)
Threat	-.25 (.26)
Victim x Party cue	-.27 (.27)
Threat x Party cue	.67 (.28)**
Victim x Party cue x Party ID	-1.36 (3.19)
Threat x Party cue x Party ID	.41 (1.57)
Victim x Party cue x Propensity	-3.98 (2.35)*
Threat x Party cue x Propensity	1.38 (1.19)
Victim x Party cue x Feeling Leader	2.84 (2.17)
Threat x Party cue x Feeling Leader	4.73 (2.57)
Victim x Party cue x Feeling Supporters	.71 (3.00)
Threat x Party cue x Feeling Supporters	-6.59 (2.63)**
R2	0.43
N	131

Note. Entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

APPENDICES - CHAPTER 2

Appendix A2

Example of stimulus material for perceived realistic threat.

The image shows a screenshot of the MPT (Macedonian Public Television) website. The top navigation bar includes the MPT logo and various menu items like 'ВЕСТИ', 'ПРОГРАМА', 'СЕРИИ', 'СПОРТ', and 'MPT PLAY'. Below the navigation, there is a main news article titled 'Мигрантите претставуваат закана за економијата, тврдат лидерите на иницијативата "Будење"'. The article text discusses the economic risks of migration and mentions a petition against migrant housing. To the right of the article, there are promotional banners for 'БИЗНИС 365' and 'Наскоро на МТВ-нова сезона „Пет плус Фамилија“'. Below the article, there is a section titled 'ИГРАНА ПРОГРАМА' with a grid of program thumbnails including 'КАМЕЛЕОН', 'МРАЧНА ВОДА', and 'ЦРНО ИЛИ БЕЛО'. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with contact information and social media links.

Мигрантите претставуваат закана за економијата, тврдат лидерите на иницијативата "Будење"

18.10.2017 09:18

Вработување, социјална помош и криминал се реални ризици при потенцијална интеграција на мигранти

Share 0 | Me се допаѓа 0 | Tweet

Петницијата против можната изградба на станови за мигранти во Македонија се одвива "исклучително успешно", соопштуваат од граѓанската иницијатива "Будење". Лидерите на кампањата изјавија дека повеќе од пет илјади потписи се веќе собрани во општина Аеродром, каде се шлекулираше дека ќе биде подигнат станбен комплекс за сместување на мигранти, бегалци и баратели на азил од Блискиот Исток, заглавени на Балканската мигрантска рута. Од иницијативата велат дека ќе продолжат да собираат поддршка за нивната кауза, потсетувајќи на искуството од 2015 и кулминацијата на мигрантскиот проток, како јасен сигнал на можните опасности од интеграција на мигрантите.

"Мигрантите кои доаѓаат ќе имаат потреба од вработувања во различни сфери од локалната економија" - вели Александар Пановски, еден од основачите на иницијативата. "Локалната власт не е во состојба да ги покрие трошоците за нивното вложување и затоа граѓаните ќе подлежат на дополнителни оданочувања. Покрај тоа, на краток и среден рок на мигрантите ќе им биде потребна финансиска помош и особено здравствена грижа. Сосема е возможно во нивните земји да биле изложени на заразни болести. Да не зборуваме за беззаконието на Блискиот Исток, кое го зголемува ризикот за насилно и криминално однесување, како што видовме на јужната граница пред две години" - предупредува Пановски.

Засега, владата демантира дека постојат планови за мигранти да бидат населувани во Македонија, иако неодамна во јавноста беше објавен документ со име "Национална стратегија за интеграција на мигранти и странци". Во интервју за ТВ Нова, министерката за труд и социјална политика Тања Царовска изјави дека стратегијата е само продолжение на таа од претходната влада, во согласност со меѓународните обврски.

Миле Ристевски

Вести Спорт Забава МТВ on Demand Програма Емисии Филмови Серии Инфо Маркетинг Радио ТВ

Контакт

МРТ МРТ МРТ МРТ

Македонско радио 1 | Македонско радио 2 | Македонско радио 3

Сателитска фреквенција на МТВ
Нова фреквенција 10215 MHz
Поларизација: хоризонтална
Симболрајт 27500 Фил: пет цвстани
Сателит: hot bird 6 (10 степени east)

Appendix B2

Measurements of threat perception (manipulation check)• **Economic**

1. Migrants take jobs vs. create jobs, 10-point scale agree-disagree (*MigrantJobsImpact*)
2. Migrants would strain social services, 7-point scale agree-disagree (*MigrantStrainServices*)
3. Economic perspectives would get worse, 7-point scale agree-disagree (*MigrantEconPerspective*)

• **Symbolic**

1. Culture would be threatened vs. enriched as an impact of migrants, 10 point scale agree-disagree (*MigrantCultureImpact*)
2. Migrants would threaten Macedonian culture, 7 point scale agree-disagree (*MigrantCultureThreat*)

APPENDICES - CHAPTER 3

Appendix A3

European identity items (by order in questionnaire):

Does being a citizen of the European Union for you mean:

1. A shared European heritage [cultural1]
2. The right to vote in the European Parliament elections. [civic1]
3. Common institutions [civic2]
4. A common European history [cultural2]
5. A common European flag, European anthem, European passport. [civic3]
6. The right to travel to another EU country without passing through customs. [civic4]
7. The right to travel to another EU country without having to show your passport/ID. [civic5]
8. Some common ideals [cultural3]
9. To be a member of the European family [cultural4]

(all Agree-Disagree 5 point likert scale)

[civic6] Citizens from all the countries of the European Union have had a common ‘European’ passport on which both the name of their country and ‘European Union’ is written. Do you think that this is a good thing? (Please, choose ONE ONLY)

1. Yes, a very good thing.
2. Yes, a rather good thing.

3. It does not matter at all.
4. No, a rather bad thing.
5. No, a very bad thing.

[cultural5] Some say that inspite of their numerous differences, Europeans share a ‘common heritage’ that makes them slightly closer to one another than they are to, say, Japanese or Chilean people. Do you . . . ? (Please, choose ONE ONLY)

1. Strongly disagree with this view.
2. Somewhat disagree with this view.
3. Neither agree nor disagree with this view/I do not know.
4. Somewhat agree with this view.
5. Strongly agree with this view.

[cultural6] Would you say that you feel closer to fellow Europeans than, say, to Chinese, Indian, or American people? (Please, choose ONE ONLY)

1. Yes, strongly.
2. Yes, to some extent.
3. I do not know.
4. No, not really.
5. No, not at all.

ROBUSTNESS measures

Cultural

To what extent do you consider the following personal characteristics and points of view to be important in order to regard someone as a European? To what extent do you consider it important that . . .

- 1) that person has European ancestors?
- 2) that person was born in Europe?
- 3) that person cherishes the traditional lifestyle of Europeans?

To what extent do you consider it important that a European person . . .

- 4) helps to protect the European culture against too rapid changes?
- 5) passes on the European culture to the next generations?

Civic

To what extent do you consider it important that a European person . . .

- 1) agrees that “being European” has nothing to do with origin or cultural background, but only with the extent to which someone actively participates in European societies?
- 2) accepts that members of all cultural groups may participate in the political process, where societal rules are developed?
- 3) agrees that someone who legally settles in Europe and who follows all basic rules, must receive the same rights as a European citizen?
- 4) agrees that origin or cultural background *cannot* be reasons to deny someone European citizenship?

5) For me European citizenship is something that is attainable to anyone who legally settles in an EU member state, who adheres to the legal rules and actively participates in society.

Appendix B3

*Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis**Study 1: Bruter (2003) items*

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue
	4.11	1.27	1.08
Item	22.2%	17.1%	14.5%
% squared loadings (after rotation) Cum. 53.88%			
Civic1 Right to vote in EU parliament elections	.836	.122	-.040
Civic2 Common institutions	.671	.153	-.025
Civic3 Common flag, anthem and passport	.329	.493	.239
Civic4 Right to travel without borders	.059	.741	.150
Civic5 Right to travel without passports	.105	.753	-.022
Civic6 EU passport is a good thing	.120	.500	.462
Cultural1 Shared European heritage	.682	.067	.273
Cultural2 Common history	.573	.059	.382
Cultural3 Common ideals	.473	.051	.105
Cultural4 Being a member of the European family	.589	.409	.323
Cultural5 European heritage makes Europeans feel closer	.106	.073	.832
Cultural6 Feeling closer to fellow Europeans than to others	.095	.137	.648

Study 1: Reijerse et al. (2013) items

	Factor 1	Factor 2
	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue
	3.09	2.66
Item	30.30%	27.30%
% squared loadings (after rotation) Cum. 57.60%		
Civic1 To actively participate in European societies	.740	-.048
Civic2 That all cultural groups participate in the political process	.699	.046
Civic3 If legally settled in Europe and follows basic rules should enjoy all the rights	.735	.112
Civic4 Heritage should not be the reason to deny citizenship	.736	.036
Civic5 EU citizenship should be available to anyone who adheres the rules and participates in society	.756	-.033
Cultural1 To have European ancestors	-.325	.699
Cultural2 To be born in Europe	-.273	.696
Cultural3 To cherish traditional European lifestyle	.115	.793
Cultural4 To protect European culture from changes	.241	.763
Cultural5 To pass European culture to next generations	.300	.725

Study 2: Bruter (2003) items

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue
	4.95	1.39	1.09
Item	24.6%	20.3%	17.1%
% squared loadings (after rotation) Cum. 62.02%			
Civic1 Right to vote in EU parliament elections	.590	.282	.168
Civic2 Common institutions	.434	.345	.130
Civic3 Common flag, anthem and passport	.537	.307	.292
Civic4 Right to travel without borders	.082	.876	.176
Civic5 Right to travel without passports	.184	.822	.014
Civic6 EU passport is a good thing	.139	.549	.397
Cultural1 Shared European heritage	.776	.083	.186
Cultural2 Common history	.863	.024	.068
Cultural3 Common ideals	.587	.326	.268
Cultural4 Being a member of the European family	.324	.365	.427
Cultural5 European heritage makes Europeans feel closer	.280	.054	.759
Cultural6 Feeling closer to fellow Europeans than to others	.143	.001	.850

Study 2: Reijerse et al. (2013) items

	Factor 1	Factor 2
	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue
	3.27	2.58
Item	31.11%	27.38%
% squared loadings (after rotation) Cum. 58.59%		
Civic1 To actively participate in European societies	.718	.037
Civic2 That all cultural groups participate in the political process	.756	.091
Civic3 If legally settled in Europe and follows basic rules should enjoy all the rights	.816	.098
Civic4 Heritage should not be the reason to deny citizenship	.750	.013
Civic5 EU citizenship should be available to anyone who adheres the rules and participates in society	.738	-.070
Cultural1 To have European ancestors	-.251	.735
Cultural2 To be born in Europe	-.169	.729
Cultural3 To cherish traditional European lifestyle	.094	.815
Cultural4 To protect European culture from changes	.290	.654
Cultural5 To pass European culture to next generations	.269	.742

Study 3: Reijerse et al. (2003) items

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue	Eigenvalue
	4.07	2.63	1.05
Item	33.98%	26.51%	17.07%
% squared loadings (after rotation) Cum. 77.56%			
Civic1 To actively participate in European societies	.628	-.121	.045
Civic2 That all cultural groups participate in the political process	.804	.231	.024
Civic3 If legally settled in Europe and follows basic rules should enjoy all the rights	.894	.154	-.104
Civic4 Heritage should not be the reason to deny citizenship	.865	.094	-.140
Civic5 EU citizenship should be available to anyone who adheres the rules and participates in society	.854	.140	-.070
Cultural1 To have European ancestors	-.047	.401	.791
Cultural2 To be born in Europe	-.094	.219	.845
Cultural3 To cherish traditional European lifestyle	.144	.838	.312
Cultural4 To protect European culture from changes	.160	.894	.141
Cultural5 To pass European culture to next generations	.151	.906	.159

Appendix C3

*Stimulus content***Opportunity-Accept**

In the last years, migration became a challenge not only for nation states, but a collective, European level issue. A debate organized by the European democracy forum in Zagreb, which included some of the top academics and professionals in the field of migration, as well as members of the general public, sometimes led to heated discussions regarding the phenomenon.

In the end however, the general consensus among the participants has been encouraging: immigration can be a great opportunity for Europe. The majority supported the view that immigration can provide enrichment for the culture, by injecting new artistic and intellectual life into society. Learning about different cultures and traditions can be a great advantage for European citizens, diversity can guarantee a more prosperous society, have been some of the comments at the forum.

According to these views, such cultural benefits would also positively reflect on the democratic system, as immigrants become active part of the public sphere and seek more inclusive representation through the institutions. Many of the speakers believe that the appeal of democracy is what draws immigrants to Europe, as they come from societies where the rule of law is weak and the freedom of speech is nonexistent, while here they participate in civic life and thus increase pluralism.

Representatives of the European Commission were also present at the debate, underlining the importance of public opinion in formulating European Union migration policies like asylum rules. According to Eurostat, in 2017 EU member states have accepted a total of only 19 percent of the asylum applications.

Risk-Reject

In the last years, migration became a challenge not only for nation states, but a collective, European level issue. A debate organized by the European democracy forum in Zagreb, which included some

of the top academics and professionals in the field of migration, as well as members of the general public, sometimes led to heated discussions regarding the phenomenon.

In the end however, the general consensus among the participants has been warning: immigration is a great risk for Europe. The majority supported the view that immigration can undermine traditional culture, by creating ethnic enclaves in society. Having groups that do not want to integrate can be a great disadvantage for European citizens, as this leads to crime and security threats, have been some of the comments at the forum.

According to these views, such cultural drawbacks would also negatively reflect on the democratic system, as immigrants are likely to question the legitimacy of the institutions and refuse to participate in the public sphere. Many of the speakers believe that a lack of experience with democracy in immigrants' countries has led to a distrust of democratic principles among them, which could lead to them not fulfilling their civic duties.

Representatives of the European Commission were also present at the debate, underlining the importance of public opinion in formulating European Union migration policies like asylum rules. According to Eurostat, in 2017 EU member states have rejected a total of 81 percent of the asylum applications.

Opportunity-Reject

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Representatives of the European Commission were also present at the debate, underlining the importance of public opinion in formulating European Union migration policies like asylum rules. According to Eurostat, in 2017 EU member states have accepted a total of only 19 percent of the asylum applications.

Control (Study 1)

In the last years, migration became a challenge not only for nation states, but a collective, European level issue. A debate organized by the European democracy forum in Berlin, which included some of the top academics and professionals in the field of migration, as well as members of the general public, sometimes led to heated discussions regarding the phenomenon.

Participants were analyzing different aspects of immigration, with many diverse perspectives offered on both the positive and negative consequences of it. The main topics were about the cultural and economic impact of immigration, but also about the implications which immigration has to democracy and political participation.

The organizers stated that there has been plenty of productive discussion on the day of the debate, and that they were surprised by the turnout, adding that they hope to organize the event regularly in the future.

Summary

Understanding the advances of right-wing populist parties in elections around Europe has been one of the major challenges in political science in recent times. As this populist surge has coincided with a vast increase of migration flows towards Europe, culminating with the refugee crisis sparked by the Syrian civil war, many have concluded that it was the anti-immigrant rhetoric emphasizing threats to the economy, culture and security that pushed voters towards the populist radical right. However, this rhetoric did not come only from political actors. With their reporting on the migrant crisis, media have also influenced citizens' political attitudes. This dissertation seeks to illuminate this process, with its conceptual framework drawing from the framing effects paradigm in political communication.

However, its ultimate purpose is not to explain individuals' voting patterns, but the evolution of their entire general political worldview towards a populist mindset, as the precursor to any electoral behaviour in support of populist parties. It achieves that by looking at how exposure to migration news affects three fundamental aspects of political life on a micro-level: institutions, authority and identity. These three constitutive elements of political reality for citizens are operationalized in the three empirical chapters of this dissertation through proxies which capture the underpinnings of the populist zeitgeist in Europe: skepticism towards media, preferences for increased executive power, and cultural Europeanism. Through a consistent application of experimental methodology, I find evidence that the intensity of these outcomes increases when subjects are exposed to news frames of migrants, or if they already hold anti-immigrant sentiment in the case of executive preferences.

Taken separately, these findings indicate that migration in the media does solidify reasoning associated with the populist foundations. Together, however, they reveal a dynamic of growing symbiosis between thin, demand-level populism and elite driven illiberal tendencies; a symbiosis whose transformation into a coherent ideology aims for transformation of society itself to the illiberal model. Analyzing Macedonia as a case study, due to its specific (dis)similarities with countries where the illiberal-transformative populist movement originates, is the first step towards identifying a potentially sweeping phenomenon.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Het begrijpen van de vorderingen van rechts populistische partijen in Europa is een van de hoofduitdagingen van deze tijd. Deze populistische golf valt samen met een toename van migratie stromen naar Europa, en bereikte een hoogtepunt met de vluchtelingen crisis veroorzaakt door de Syrische burgeroorlog. Velen hebben geconcludeerd dat anti-immigratie retoriek die dreigingen voor de economie, cultuur en veiligheid benadrukt kiezers naar populistisch radicaal rechts duwt. Echter, deze retoriek kwam niet alleen van politieke actoren. De media hebben door hun verslaggeving over de vluchtelingen-crisis ook een invloed gehad op de politieke opvattingen van burgers. Dit proefschrift wil dit proces blootleggen, met een conceptueel kader gebaseerd op het ‘media effecten paradigma’ in de politieke communicatie.

Het uiteindelijke doel is echter niet om individuele stempatronen te verklaren, maar dit proefschrift wil juist de evolutie van het gehele politieke wereldbeeld richting een populistische houding, als een voorloper op electoraal gedrag ten behoeve van populistische partijen verklaren. Het laat zien hoe blootstelling tot migratie nieuws drie fundamentele aspecten van het politieke leven op microniveau beïnvloedt: instituties, autoriteit en identiteit. Deze drie elementen van de politieke realiteit voor burgers zijn geoperationaliseerd door middel van proxies die de populistische tijdsgeest in Europa dekken in de drie empirische hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift: scepticisme richting media, voorkeuren voor toenemende bestuurlijke macht, en cultureel *Europeanisme*. Door het consistent toepassen van experimentele methodologie, laat ik zien dat de intensiteit voor deze uitkomsten toeneemt wanneer subjecten blootgesteld zijn aan nieuws frames van migranten, of als zij al anti-migranten sentiment hadden in het geval van bestuurlijke voorkeuren.

Los van elkaar, laten deze bevindingen zien dat redeneringen geassocieerd met populistische grondslagen verhard worden door migratie frames in de media. Samen, echter, laten zij een dynamiek van een groeiende symbiose tussen dun, *demand-level* populisme en door elite gedreven illeberale nijgingen. Een symbiose wiens transformatie naar een coherente ideologie erop gericht is de samenleving te veranderen naar een illiberal model. Het analyseren van Macedonië als case studie is een eerste stap naar het identificeren van een potentieel ingrijpend fenomeen, door zijn specifieke gelijkenissen en verschillen met landen waar illiberale-transformatieve populistische beweging zijn oorsprong vindt.

Sommario italiano

Il tentativo di comprendere l'avanzata dei partiti populistici di destra alle elezioni in giro per l'Europa è stato una delle sfide più difficili per la scienza politica negli ultimi tempi. Dove questa impennata populista ha coinciso con un esteso aumento dei flussi migratori verso l'Europa, culminati con la crisi dei rifugiati scatenata dalla guerra civile siriana, sono stati in molti a concludere che ad aver spinto i cittadini verso la destra radicale e populista sia stata la retorica che vede l'immigrazione come una minaccia verso l'economia, la cultura e la sicurezza nazionale. Tuttavia, responsabili di questo discorso non solo soltanto gli attori politici. Attraverso la copertura della crisi dei migranti, anche i media hanno influenzato le opinioni dei cittadini. Questo lavoro di tesi mira a chiarire tale processo, attraverso un quadro concettuale che attinge dal paradigma degli effetti mediatici all'interno della comunicazione politica. Il suo fine ultimo è però di spiegare non i modelli di voto degli individui, quanto l'evoluzione della loro visione politica generale verso una mentalità populista, come precursore di qualsiasi comportamento elettorale a sostegno dei partiti populistici. Ciò viene fatto attraverso l'analisi di come l'esposizione mediatica alle notizie sui migranti impatta i tre aspetti fondamentali della vita politica a livello micro: le istituzioni, l'autorità e l'identità. Nei tre capitoli empirici di questa tesi, questi tre elementi costitutivi della realtà politica dei cittadini sono operationalizzati attraverso variabili che catturano le basi dello spirito populista in Europa: la sfiducia verso i media, la preferenza per un maggiore potere esecutivo, e l'europesismo su base culturale. Tramite una solida applicazione della metodologia sperimentale, si riscontra che l'intensità di queste tendenze aumenta quanto più i soggetti sono esposti a "frame" mediatici sui migranti, oppure quanto più già possiedono sentimenti negativi verso i migranti, soprattutto nel caso delle proprie preferenze riguardo il potere esecutivo.

Presi separatamente, questi esiti indicano che il tema della migrazione nei media in effetti solidifica un ragionamento associato con le basi populiste. Presi invece insieme, essi rivelano una dinamica di simbiosi crescente tra un populismo sottile e 'domandato' e le tendenze illiberali operate dalla classe dirigente; una simbiosi la cui trasformazione in una ideologia coerente punta alla trasformazione della società stessa nella direzione di un modello illiberale. L'analisi della Macedonia come caso di studio, date le sue specifiche somiglianze e diversità rispetto ai paesi dove il movimento 'trasformativo' populista illiberale ha origine, è il primo passo verso l'identificazione di un fenomeno potenzialmente generalizzato.

Acknowledgements on authorship

INTRODUCTION

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Conceptual development: all authors. Writing manuscript: IB.

Chapter 1. THE PERCEIVED BIAS OF MIGRATION COVERAGE

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Chapter 2. PRIMING MIGRATION THREAT AND THE PUBLIC PREFERENCES TOWARDS EXECUTIVE POWERS

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Chapter 3. THE CONTINGENT EUROPEANISM

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CONCLUSION

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