An Enquiry Concerning the Ideational Relationship Between Liberal Democracy and Populism in the European Union

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Abstract

Across the West, many liberal democracies are put under pressure by the rise of populist movements. This development affects well-established democracies, such as the UK or the US, as well as comparatively young democracies, such as Hungary or Poland, and occurs across the left-right political spectrum. Given this, populism has come to receive increasing scholarly attention. Focussing on populism in the EU, this thesis contributes to the thus growing body of knowledge by offering a novel view on the ideational relationship between populism and liberal democracy at the nexus between abstract theoretical assessments and down-to-the-ground empirical analyses. For this purpose, a bi-partite argument providing a map of populism's ideological contestations to liberal democracy is employed, which synthesises a political-theoretical analysis of concepts with a qualitative analysis of party discourses. The thesis is divided into three parts: In the first part, I provide the theoretical setup by depicting liberal democracy and populism (viewed through the ideational approach) and by theoretically establishing populism as being necessarily ideationally anti-liberal-democratic. In the second part, I engage in a content analysis of contemporary populist party discourse and shed light on populism's current state. To safeguard the relevance of the cases selected for the content analysis, parties must have entered national parliaments (and securing at least 5% of the votes). Then, parties must score high regarding their populist attitudes based on the ideational definition of populism to qualify for selection. The latter is established through computer-based quantitative content analysis of party manifestos. Of the high scoring parties respectively low scoring parties a main sample and a control sample are selected, so that the samples cover different areas of the EU as well different party families. Having established those, I qualitatively analyse the content of the annual speeches of party leaders at party assemblies between 2015 and 2020. My approach to analysing the ideational dimension thereof is inspired by the Analytical Discourse Evaluation, a philosophical method of discourse analysis

specifically developed to extract implicit assumptions from political discourse. For the task at hand, I amend this method to be suited for analyses of political speeches, which cover different subjects and areas. In the third part, I combine both analyses into an overarching narrative about the relationship between populism in the EU and liberal democracy, review a both prominent and rare case of populism leading a government (the PiS party in Poland) through the analytical lens thus developed and discuss the implications of the findings.

Keywords

Authoritarianism, Autocracy, Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Ideational Dimension, Ideology, Liberal Democracy, Populism

To Marie-Theres, the love of my life.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

1. Introduction and Review

Populism is a multi-facetted phenomenon. It spans over a vast field of political areas and emerges in different states across continents at different periods of time. And when it emerges, it often entails different political convictions, carries different practical implications, and is promoted by different political agents – on the left and right, in- and outside of parliaments. Without much surprise, research to the puzzling nature of populism has also come to take quite different forms and contents. Importantly, this also includes characterisations of populism's relationship to liberal democracy. Is populism an illness of liberal democracy, is it a cause or a symptom, does it carry a constructive or destructive force? On this, amongst other things, there is much disagreement. Considering such contested grounds, the present thesis offers a novel perspective on populism's relationship to liberal democracy, which brings different approaches on the matter in conversation with each other by filling in the gap between a) theoretical and empirical analyses and b) ideational yet abstract analyses of populism and concrete analyses of particular populist movements.

In the remainder of this introduction, I first motivate the research project by reflecting on the challenges populism poses to liberal democracy, then review the field of populism research and locate this thesis within the field, and lastly provide a roadmap of the thesis.

1.1. Populism as a Challenger of Liberal Democracy

In the West, liberal democracy is the dominant state form. Liberal democracy is characterised by the rule of law, the separation of powers, extensive individual rights and representative democracy, and has developed over the last few centuries in the course of European state formation. While in their early years, politics setting the preconditions of what later became known as liberal democracy have not always been victorious (see Gould 1999), at least by the end of the 20th century liberal democracy has prevailed in the (then) Western world.

World War I resulted in the demise of the major non-democratic monarchies in Europe, World War II ended with the defeat of the major fascist or national-socialist forces, and the fall of the iron curtain led to the collapse of the socialist Eastern bloc. After the upheavals of the 20th century, it seemed that, eventually, liberal democracy has triumphed over its competitors. Perhaps most prominently, this speculation has been expressed by Francis Fukuyama, who, in an article (1989) preceding his seminal book *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama 1992/2006), speculated that the collapse of the Soviet Union might be "not just the end of the Cold War […] but [...] the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama 1989: 4).[1]

Recently, however, the pillars of liberal democracy are being shaken by hostile forces, which are gaining ground in the political landscape of Europe, one of the birthplaces of liberal democracy. Here, perhaps the most comprehensive contestation liberal democracies face from within is populism: In the last two decades, manifold populist movements were founded or have been (re-)invigorated, many of which institutionalised themselves, entered regional and national parliaments, and in some cases even governments, and thus over time have become well established political forces (Van Hauwaert et al. 2019: 128).[2]

It needs to be noted that populism[3] is by no means a novel phenomenon. As early as the 19th century, when the label "populist" originated with political movements in Europe and North America, populist movements have been politically active. Prominent early examples include: the *People's Party* in the USA, which was the first movement to be self- and other-

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[1] It needs to be added, though, that the conclusion at which Fukuyama arrives in the end regarding the sustainable spread of liberal democracy throughout the world is much more nuanced and less optimistic.

[2] This invigoration of populist movements in the European Union might be linked to a wider anti-liberal-democratic trend worldwide and transferable lessons regarding the one might be learned from the analysis of the other. In any case, the nature of any such connections between populism in liberal democracies on the one hand and other anti-liberal-democratic developments, be they in- or outside of liberal democracies, on the other hand is in itself an important research project, which I, however, do not pursue in this thesis.

[3] As with many complex political terms, there are different definitions of populism. While I discuss my use of the term and the definition I adopt at a later point in more detail, I refer here to populism as gravitating around certain ideas, specifically the idea of "the people" which need to be advocated for against "the elite". Populist movements, then, are political movements, which rely on such ideas.

described in English as being populist (cf. Houwen 2013: 39) and which glorified rural workers (Goodwyn 1976) and campaigned against the financial establishment and the political elites in the capital, who were accused of acting on special interests (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 3); the *Narodniki* in Imperial Russia (see Venturi 1960; Walicki 1969), who idealised the traditional rural institutions of Russia (Venturi 1960) and sought to mobilise the rural population "into overthrowing the Tsarist regime" (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 3); or the *Boulangists* in France (for a retrospective categorisation see e.g. Hermet 2001, 2013), who advocated the workers and sought to replace the parliamentary political system of their time, which was accused of being interveined with monarchist elements and disconnected from the people, with a more radical plebiscitary republican system (Passmore 2012; Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 4, citing Betz forthcoming).

Reviewing those and other examples one finds that certain themes of populist insurgency emerge throughout modern history. Those include, most prominently, the endorsement of a "true" people (historically often common people in rural areas), which were assumed to be morally superior (virtuous or dutiful) yet disadvantaged. This "true" people were put in contrast to the perceived political and societal establishment, which was perpetuating those disadvantages and whose political legitimacy and therefore authority was rejected. Subsequently, populist projects often coincided with demands for political decision-making processes being conducted in a way which is more responsive to the direct will of this "true" people (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 4).

The crux of populism and possibly the very reason why on the one hand populism continues to (re-)emerge in liberal democracies and why on the other hand liberal democracies struggle so much with its overcoming, even though it seems that liberal democracy's major competitors were largely unsuccessful, is that unlike (other) worldviews challenging ideas appertaining to liberal democracy – be it, historically, conservatism and socialism, or, more

generally, any form of authoritarianism or collectivism – populism seems to be intrinsically linked to them. That is, populism and central ideas appertaining to liberal democracy co-originate from some shared ideas, namely the idea of political representation of the citizenry as well as it being the ultimate source of political authority. In this sense, populism touches upon themes which are older than the movements presented above, namely the very questions of the legitimacy of political authority and sovereignty, particularly popular sovereignty.

While I will elaborate this in more detail at a later point in the introduction as well as in the chapters 2 and 3, whereas both, populist political visions and liberal democracy, are linked by a commitment to the idea of popular sovereignty, they diverge over the constituency of the people as well as over what form of political organisation popular sovereignty implies. That is, through the ideational lens of liberal democracy, the people are principally a heterogenous assembly of individuals with potentially diverging interests, beliefs, and conceptions of the good, which does not possess true agency or an identifiable unified will and can therefore realise its sovereignty only indirectly through the mediation by representatives, who can wield concrete power on their behalf (e.g., cf. Hont 1994a: 185; Ochoa Espejo 2011; Yack 2001). This leads liberal democracies to adopt some sort of representative democracy as a form of political decision making and a mechanism for power allocation. In contrast, populist views on popular sovereignty seem to conceive of the people in a more homogenous way. This leads populists to urge that popular sovereignty must take a direct form, commonly rejecting both representative structures as well as constraints on the scope of permissible state action. Hence, from the basic idea that political entities are created by the people and that their authorities therefore are "responsive" to those, both, ideas appertaining to liberal democracy as well as populist considerations, arise. Note that as such certain core ideas thereof can be traced back well beyond the republicanisation of states into times of monarchic rule (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 2 f.; see also Sabbadini 2016), when in the process of the formation of modern

states beginning in 16th century Europe the modern understanding of sovereignty as "the doctrine that there is and ought to be only one *final* source of political authority" (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 13 f., my emphasis) arose (see Hont 1994a: 178 ff.).

Whereas in the past the label "populist" was often used by populist agents to describe themselves and thus was not predisposed to a negative understanding, it has come to yield a negative connotation, which is nowadays often, although not exclusively,[4] used in a pejorative way (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 3). Concretely, it is, amongst other things, associated with undermining well-established political structures and principles as well as with manipulative and dishonest politics driven by the electorate becoming increasingly emotionalised. Effects of those contestations can be openly observed where populist movements and ideas get a hold on liberal democratic political systems and public discourses. They include the erosion of public institutions, the polarisation and radicalisation of the public discourse, the division of the citizenry, among many more aspects, which undermine liberal values or politics (for issues which are associated with populism, see, e.g., Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017b: part III).

Although there is dispute over the nature of those contestations – e.g., whether they point to general political problems, and therefore are political challenges the solution of which ultimately strengthens liberal democracy, or existential threats dematerialising its very foundation – those contestations are widespread amongst liberal democracies. Populism affects old democracies, such as the USA and the UK, as well as newer ones, such as Poland and Hungary, occurs on both sides of the political spectrum (e.g. Podemos in Spain on the left wing, the National Front in France on the right wing and the Five Star Movement in Italy somewhere in between), and on every continent.[5] While this thesis is particularly concerned with

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[4] For example, see the reinterpretation of the populist label as also yielding some positive aspects in the historical accounts of Goodwyn 1976; and Postel 2007.

[5] This has been explicated in the handbook of Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (2017b). See concretely for populism in Africa Resnick 2014, 2017; for populism in Australia and New Zealand Moffitt 2017; for populism in East Asia Hellmann 2017; for populism in India Jaffrelot and Tillin 2017; for populism in Latin America de la Torre 2017; for populism in Post-Soviet States March 2017a.

13

contemporary populist movements in the European Union (which will be explained in more detail later in this introduction), that needs to be kept in mind in order to capture the scale of the rise of populism.

Here, when analysing the impact of populism on liberal democracies, it needs to be stressed that the contestations populism poses are not exhausted by politics alone. This can be easily understood by considering the overall nature of liberal democracy. As will be depicted in chapter 2 (and explained more briefly in this chapter's subsection on the structure of the thesis), liberal democracy, as a political system, also has an ideational dimension which embeds its legal system, institutions, etc. When talking about the contestations populist movements pose, it is helpful to not let this dimension – in addition to the other lines of confrontation – go untouched, as it helps to explain why and how populists challenge liberal democratic institutions, constitutions, and political norms. As will be argued, populist projects, to varying degrees and with varying explicitness, reject or at least contest the very principles – as well as their ideational presuppositions – on which liberal democracies are based.

The importance of this ideational dimension of populism and subsequently the contestations to liberal democracy with which this dimension coincides should not be underestimated. This can be most poignantly described in terms of the meaningfulness that ideas (and ideals) provide to political practice. As Isaiah Berlin (2013/1969) observed in his grand studies on *Liberty*, ideas and practical politics (or, in his words, "social forces") have a certain co-dependency, if one wants both to be instantiated in an adequate and effective way. That is, whereas political ideas fail to materialise, if they are not carried by social forces who adhere to them, the latter, lacking purpose and guidelines, remain "blind and undirected", if they are not informed by political ideas (Berlin 2013/1969: 168). Through providing such purposes or guidelines, political ideas can be constructive and contribute to reaching specific ends. For example, in post-communist countries, most prominently in Russia, ideology

endorsed by the state contributes to political stabilisation and maintenance of power by supplementing formal power with a positive relationship of the citizenry to it (Appel 2004; Chen 2009; Hanson 2010). From this, then, the potential influence ideas have on practical politics becomes clear. So does the extent of calamity, which can materialise if dangerous ideas are incorporated in political practice. "[P]hilosophical concepts nurtured in the stillness of a professor's study could destroy a civilisation" (referring to Heinrich Heine, Berlin 2013/1969: 167) – a verdict which in the light of the political havocs of the 20th century appears to be once again confirmed. Hence, there is good reason to track the ideas populists incorporate in their political projects.

This thesis focuses on this very ideational dimension of populism. Specifically, I am interested in the contestations which the philosophical-ideological commitments or premises presupposed in the political discourse of contemporary populist movements in the EU pose to liberal democracies. The aim of this thesis is to generate a map of the ideational dimension of populist movements, which is put into relation to the challenged ideational principles appertaining (the varieties of) liberal democracies. This way, I seek to both increase the understanding of populism as well as the understanding of the challenges liberal democracies in the EU face. In the next subsection, I elaborate on the existing research on populism, identify trends as well as general deficiencies of the debate, and explain how the thesis contributes to the closing of a research gap and therefore generates a novel contribution to the field. Thereafter, in the third section, I provide a preview of my approach.

1.2. Research on Populism and Research Agenda

In this subsection, an overview is provided over the existing research body on populism as well as how and why the project of this thesis fits in and generates an important contribution to the body of knowledge in an as of now under-theorised aspect of the field. I first provide a brief

overview over the history of the field and then depict the state of the art my thesis draws from and seeks to contribute to.

Given the actuality and the scale of impact populism has on existing political orders, it is not surprising that, recently, populism has come under increased scholarly scrutiny, especially in the political sciences. That is not to say, however, that research on populism as such is new and has no antecedents which go back more than the last two to three decades. As Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (2017a) note in the introduction to their seminal handbook (2017b), populist streams of thought and movements had been the subject of scholarly attention throughout the second half of the 20th century. In fact, research outputs on populism have continued to increase numerically substantially ever since the 1950s (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser 2017a: 12, fig. 1.1). Moreover, even in the early years of the field, populism research spread over and drew from various disciplines in the social sciences and was driven by both conceptual work (see for early work, for example, Dahl 1956; Kornhauser 1959; Shils 1956) as well as by regional or national studies (see, for example and in addition to the historical cases cited in the last subsection, for populism in the first half of the 20th century in Latin America, amongst others, Cardoso and Faletto 1969; and for an analysis of the Greek PASOK in the 70s Mouzelis 1978), although until the 60s the bulk of research on populism was constituted by single country studies (Mudde 2017) (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 5 ff.).

Beside the increasing dominance of political science in the research of populism since the 1980s (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 6), there is one important trend – or, as we will see, attempt – in this history of academic research on populism which can be identified. That is the endeavour to de-fragmentise the until then conceptually largely unconnected research body. This attempt found its first major expression in Ionescu and Gellner's (1969) multi-regional and interdisciplinary edited volume and was followed by Canovan (1981), whose analysis for the first time engaged in a conceptual unification of separate instantiations of

populism, yet failed to trace them back "to a single core" (Canovan 1981: 298) and instead produced a typology which distinguished between seven forms of populism. And although the reinvigoration of populism in the 90s, especially in Europe and South America, raised new questions, particularly on the relationship between populism and democracy, and in doing so sparked new projects within the field (see, e.g., Carrión 2006; O'Donnell 1994; Panizza 2000; Weyland 1993), references to populism until today remain, as Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (2017a) observe, often opaque. The reason for this is that many scholars, when referring to populism, either use the term in an unclear manner or do not define it at all. Importantly, this is not so much due to the absence of clearcut conceptualisations but rather due to the preference of scholars to not employ them and in doing so fix their own understanding of the phenomenon (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 12, fig. 1.3).

At the same time, however, research on populism undoubtedly continues to mature. This can be seen not only by the variety of methodological approaches employed (cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 13, fig. 1.4) but also by attempts to address populism in contexts outside of the traditionally dominating regions of Europe and South America, of which some even engage in cross-regional analyses (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 13). To summarise the development of the field: Although clear concepts are still – and deliberately – often not employed, the tendency is towards increasing theoretisation and multidisciplinarity as well as global and cross-regional analyses. This thesis both draws from as well as attempts to contribute to this development.

There are now four major types of approaches towards the definition of populism (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a). Firstly, there are *ideational approaches*, which define populism through the reference to certain ideas, usually through some sort of reference to the people and, in contrast thereto, the elite (e.g., Abts and Rummens 2007; Hawkins 2009; Mudde 2004, 2017; Müller 2016; Rooduijn 2013; Rovira Kaltwasser 2014; Stanley 2008). Secondly, there are

socio-cultural approaches, which define populism as a relational concept between the people and a leader, which is essentially concerned with the formation of identity (Ostiguy 2017). Thirdly, there are *political-strategic approaches*, which define populism "as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers" (Weyland 2001: 14; see also Weyland 2017). Fourthly and lastly, there are *economic approaches*, which define populism through the endorsement of a particular type of economic policies (see most prominently Dornbusch and Edwards 1991; also Acemoglu et al. 2013).[6]

Of those four approaches, economic are the most controversial and therefore the least used ones (proponents of all the other three approaches yield strong concerns against economic framings of populism cf. Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 13 f.; see for critiques Mudde 2017; Ostiguy 2017; Weyland 2017). In contrast, ideational approaches have grown in popularity and now constitute the most widely used (although not entirely uncontested) type of approach. Apart from accounts which explicitly articulate an ideational approach, there are also many accounts which implicitly endorse an ideational understanding of populism or at least entail substantial ideational elements (cf. Mudde 2017).[7]

In the course of this thesis, I, too, will rely on an ideational understanding of populism, which will be introduced in more detail in the next subsection. I do so not because it is the most widely used approach, although this undoubtedly seems favourable in itself. Instead, I rely on an ideational understanding of populism because it fits the particular research project at hand. As Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (cf. 2017a: 14) stress, every one of the approaches above puts its analytic emphasis on different aspects of populism. Since the project of this thesis is concerned

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[6] Note that there are also voices which object any of the dominant approaches (e.g. Pappas 2019). While I will not engage in an exhaustive discussion thereon, Pappas (2019) critique of the ideational approach adopted in this thesis as well as the diverging specifics of his account will be addressed later on.

[7] According to Mudde (2017), those can be traced back to the very beginning of research on populism (see Craven 1896; McCormick 1898; Platt 1896).

with populism's ideational relationship to liberal democracy, it seems plausible to base the analysis on an ideational understanding of the phenomenon, too.

There are different competing views on populism, with especially analyses stretching over conceptual work and empirical investigations often failing to properly communicate with each other. Against this background, the unique contribution of this thesis is that it offers a novel view on the ideational relationship between populism and liberal democracy at the nexus between abstract theoretical assessments and down-to-the-ground empirical analyses. For this purpose, the thesis, relying on a mixed-methods approach, develops a bi-partite argument, which synthesises a political-theoretical analysis of concepts with a quantitative case-selection process and a qualitative analysis of party discourses, and embeds them into a general narrative of the relationship between populism and liberal democracy. As a side-product of this endeavour, the thesis also contributes to the development of the Analytical Discourse Evaluation, the method selected for the point of departure for the qualitative analysis of party speeches, as a method capable of analysing political discourses across different political areas, topics, and arguments.

Most analyses of populism gravitate around definitions of populist agents and policies, explorations of how and why populist movements have been successful in pursuing political power, and what they do, including historical, legal, sociological and psychological explanations and analyses (see, for example, most recently for the case of Poland Sadurski 2019). There is either very umbrella-levelled conceptual work or case studies which focus on causal explanations, sociological aspects or policies of particular populist movements. While those movements have been described, analysed and compared on several levels, no substantial work has been provided so far on their *specific* ideational characteristics. Hence, there is a research gap that concerns the ideational dimension of contemporary populist movements (in general, and in the EU in particular). By filling this gap, my thesis promotes a better

understanding of both, particular populist movements on the one hand and of the overarching project of populism, especially its ideational dimension, on the other.

Concretely, I strive to provide an analysis of the ideational dimension of populism in the contemporary EU. Apart from good availability of relevant data, this region is selected because it has, besides Latin America, seen the biggest populist developments in recent history, is politically, culturally, traditionally and economically homogenic enough to warrant a promising joint analysis of different populist movements in the region's states (see the next section for more details), and is the region where, overall, liberal democracy is arguably most advanced.[8] In doing so, I intend to shed light on: 1) the ideational rationale of contemporary populist doctrines (including their justifications, values etc.), which often are implicitly included, but rarely systematically explicated in political discourse; 2) the relation of those ideas to each other; 3) the relation of those ideas to the basic principles of liberal democracy, especially whether and how those are challenged by populist ideas. Through this a map of ideational contestations to the ideational principles of liberal democracy shall be generated.

By analysing contemporary populism this way, I want to contribute to the formation of successful public policies which are concerned with populist developments in liberal democracies. Since a proper understanding of a political movement also requires a profound understanding of the worldview it endorses, the ability of governmental organs to react to political challenger projects, which are informed by particular ideas, is necessitated by a proper understanding of those same ideas. Therefore, effective policies concerning current populist developments require a deep understanding of the ideational facets of contemporary populism. As such, the contribution of this thesis is both theoretical and practical as it aims to generate knowledge which is of use for both academics and policy makers.

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[8] Note that, while in this thesis I focus on the EU, a similar project could also be fruitfully conducted for populist movements in Latin America or other regions.

There has been some substantial research on particular (relatively) newly emerging populist trends and movements in the recent past across the left-right political spectrum (in addition to the ones above, for example, Albertazzi and Vampa 2021; Albertazzi and Zulianello 2021; Berlet and Lyons 2000; March 2017b; Mudde 2016; Ramiro and Gomez 2016; Sadurski 2019, Wodak et al. 2013). This thesis then not only supplements such works on specific movements by illuminating a novel aspect of their ideational foundations but also puts them into a context with each other and with the basic principles of liberal democracy. As such, the analysis aspires to be both sensitive to and to provide insights of specific cases of populist movements in different countries, as well as to contribute to the understanding of the overarching phenomenon of populism.

1.3. Roadmap of the Thesis

My working hypothesis is that political movements in general, and contemporary populist movements in particular, operate on ideational premises which are not (always) made explicit when expressing political positionings and creating political discourse. That is, political demands, having a normative dimension, often either rely on or imply commitments corresponding to particular *Weltanschauungen*. For example, the political demand to restrict migration due to concerns for public safety might be grounded in the assumption that people of certain backgrounds are inherently more criminal than others and this might be traced back to fundamental assumptions about human nature, agency and value. Note that, in some cases, such premises might be kept secret deliberately, whereas in others, those who operate on them might be not always aware of them.

Generally, my approach to the analysis of the ideational relationship between liberal democracy and populism, as it exists in the EU today, is conducted through a bi-partite argument, which is constructed in three main steps. The first step provides a conceptual analysis of the general relationship between populism and liberal democracy. In doing so, I firstly

propose a framing of liberal democracy, which later serves as the basis to which the results of the content analysis are related. Secondly, I elaborate on populism by introducing my definition of the phenomenon. This definition is also used in the second part of the bi-partite argument as the basis for selecting cases. With those notions in hand, I, thirdly, make an analytical argument for why populism, as it is understood on this approach, necessarily yields ideational potentialities comprehensively opposed to liberal democracy. Through this, a conflict of populism with liberal democracy is established on a conceptual level. The second step, then, conducts a content analytical scrutiny of the doctrines of contemporary populist movements in the EU. This empirical investigation establishes a snapshot of the current ideational reality, including contestations of liberal democracy, found amongst European parties. The third step, lastly, completes the bi-partite argument by bringing both parts, the argument from theory developed in the first step and the argument from the empirical investigation developed in the second step, together, and reviews a prominent case of populism in government by exemplarily using the bi-partite argument as an analytical lens. Finally, I close with reflections on the implications of the analysis.

Concretely, I proceed as follows: For any analysis on the relationship of populism to liberal democracy, it will be necessary to frame liberal democracy to begin with. This is, because (contemporary) populism can be considered as both a *reaction* to, and yet also as *emerging from within*, liberal democracies as they are prevailing in Western societies after World War II. When I speak of *reaction* I thus refer to an empirical cause-effect relationship between the liberal-democratic political status quo and the emergence of its populist contestants.

I begin my depiction by emphasising that liberal democracy is both 1) a particular historical entity, which has emerged during the last few centuries following several political transformation processes in Europe, and 2) a particular conception of the state, which is

informed by certain ideational principles, and guides the political reality of modern politics that populists contest. Of course, such a framing is not exhaustive, but it does not need to be so long as it serves the modelling purpose. Since in my case the modelling purpose is the identification of contestations posed on the ideational level by contemporary populism (in the EU) to liberal democracies, my depiction focuses on 2) and discusses 1) only in order to provide a better understanding of 2).

Adopting a historically informed approach and amongst others borrowing from the conceptualisations provided by Hont (1994a, 2005) and Dunn (1994, 2019), I identify liberal democracy as being based on specific configurations of two main concepts: a) the *rule of law*, which informs *how* political authority may be exercised (the liberal pillar), and b) *popular sovereignty*, which informs *who* has or may wield political authority (the democratic pillar). In liberal democracies, a) and b) jointly limit and channel political authority, secure a strong and free standing of the individual, and also render liberal democracy highly compatible with a market based, capitalist economic system.

Regarding the former, I distinguish the rule of law from the rule of individual persons and rule through law (Krygier 2015; Rosenfeld 2001), and stress that, in liberal democracies, the rule of law not only has formal components (such as the separation of powers, MacCormick 1984: 69), i.e. procedural principles which the use of political power must comply to in order to ensure that the law truly equally applies to all, but also substantial components (Krygier 2015). I emphasise that while a merely formal understanding of the rule of law does not necessitate a liberal democracy, it is the substantive understanding thereof which renders the rule of law a pillar of liberal democracy, because in liberal democracies it enshrines fundamental individual rights, which introduce not just formal but also contentual constraints to the reach and the use of political authority (e.g., Galston 2018a).

To be sure, liberal democracies equip individuals with an extensive, albeit varying across states, set of liberty rights (including property rights, civil rights, political rights, and human rights). This substantive commitment of liberal-democratic rule of law distinguishes it from other state forms, which adopt diverging values, and has found its expression in different national traditions of rule of law, such as the German *Rechtsstaat*, the French *État de droit*, the Italian *Stato di diritto*, or the Spanish *Estado de Derecho*. Note that whereas those grant formal equality to the citizens, they still allow for substantial material inequality and therefore render liberal democracy compatible with a capitalist economic system (see Cunningham 2002; Hont 2005; Sagar 2018).

Regarding the latter, I will establish that in liberal democracies the people are sovereign, i.e., are the sole possessors of the final political authority over the whole territory of the state (see for the modern notion of sovereignty Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 13 f.). That is, in contrast to pre-modern states, where no entity existed that possessed meaningful, final political authority over the whole of the state's territory (see for this divided authority Hont 1994a: 173 ff.), there is such an entity and, in contrast to absolutist states, that entity is not a monarch but the people.[9]

Here, what characterises popular sovereignty as presupposed in the conception of liberal democracy and distinguishes it from other understandings, is that the people are understood as a heterogeneous and not as a homogenous entity, since the people are composed of individuals whose beliefs and interests are not necessarily congruent. Because of this, they lack an in a meaningful sense identifiable unified will (Ochoa Espejo 2011) and therefore agency, meaning that their sovereignty can only be indirectly realised through mediation (cf. Hont 1994a: 185): the people hold constituent, yet not governmental sovereignty (Dunn 1994; Yack 2001). In

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[9] Note that, in this regard, popular sovereignty has been historically tied to nation-states.

liberal democracies, this is mediated through the democratic election of representatives, which are thereby legitimised in wielding political power.

Note that by participating in those mediating democratic processes, the individuals do both: pursue their self-interests (especially given the material inequality liberal democracies allow) on the one hand and cooperate on the other hand, and this presupposes some sort of sociability of the individuals (see Hont 1994a: 192 f.). Cooperation in the processes set out by liberal democracy then is realised, because liberal democracies do well in adapting to the conditions of modernity and through this are able to provide relative security and prosperity to its constituents (cf. Dunn 1994: 207).

After concluding this framing of liberal democracy, I turn to the depiction of populism. I begin by providing a brief historical overview and emphasise that populist movements appeared in Europe and the Americas starting with the 19th century at several points in history following mass democracy and social unrest. Thereafter, I provide a brief overview of the research field on populism and identify the ideational approach to defining the phenomenon as the most adequate for my purposes. I then introduce the ideational approach in more detail and, following the account of Mudde (2004), identify as a general characteristic feature of populist doctrines a *people-centric* and an *anti-elitist* attitude, which, as Müller (2016) points out, also renders them anti-pluralist.

While this observation is made on a general level and as such does not tell us much about the concrete premises of particular populist positionings, drawing from the ideational approach nevertheless serves two purposes. (1) The ideational approach is, in the empirical part of the thesis, used as one of the grounds for selecting cases. (2) Based on this framing, I provide a theoretical argument according to which populism, ideationally understood, necessarily yields anti-liberal-democratic potential.

Here, I will argue that populism is radically collectivistic and therefore necessarily in conflict with both pillars of liberal democracy. Loosely borrowing from Eric Voegelin's account of totalitarian ideologies[10] (1993/1938), I establish this by arguing that populism's appeal to "the people" a) potentially overrides all other normative considerations, b) has, because of its anti-pluralism, anti-egalitarian implications, and c) enables populist agents to act unchecked and unilaterally decide the statuses of others.

In light of this, I suggest that eventual qualitative differences between totalitarian ideologies and populism in liberal democracies are contingent and not categorical. Populism might be politically less radical and softer in practice (initially relying on and to some extent restricted by liberal-democratic structures), but its logic points in the same direction as its totalitarian siblings, namely into autocratic rule. In other words, populism's rejection of the liberal pillar of liberal democracy ultimately renders it in conflict with its democratic pillar as well. Thus, both pillars of liberal democracy are threatened by populist challengers.

Only once this groundwork has first been laid will contemporary populism be scrutinised. To do so, I will depart from cases of socio-political arrangements in liberal democracies, of which populism took hold. In contrast to other ideologies at odds with liberal democracy, which emerged outside of liberal democracy and yet at the same time as a reaction to it (for example, see for the Russian case Anderson 2016; Horvath 2016; Stepanova 2015), contemporary populism relies on certain liberal-democratic structures to instantiate itself and thus can in a sense not be found fully outside of contexts providing those. Furthermore, to ensure sufficient comparability of the cases, I restrict my analysis to regions of relative similarity regarding the political system, tradition, culture and economic performance. As a consequence, I examine contemporary populist movements in the EU's member states.[11]

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[10] Voegelin speaks of „political religions".
[11] Because the UK has been an EU member state for the most part of the selected time period (2015-2019), it is included in the basic population as well.

In particular, I select movements from those which pass two consecutive criteria. Firstly, to qualify as cases for the main analysis, movements need to pass an impact threshold. This is on the one hand to limit the empirical analysis to a manageable size and on the other to ensure that the cases selected are relevant, i.e., have sufficient impact on the political system at hand, such that it is warranted to categorise them as contestations or challengers to liberal democracy. For this reason, only populist movements which entered national parliaments and secured at least 5% of votes are included in the analysis.[12]

Setting the threshold at this level also has the benefit that those movements that made it into national parliaments have sufficiently consolidated and institutionalised themselves and therefore have adopted a form of hierarchy, which produces "official" statements and positionings. Given that the analysis is aiming at the identification of ideational premises existing in populist doctrines, this seems particularly favourable, since the opposite, i.e., dynamically and spontaneously expressed positions as commonly found in movements of low hierarchical and organisational level (such as grassroots movements), gives rise to the epistemic problem of identifying what the doctrine, from which ideational characteristics could be extracted, in question even is. Since here the subjects of analysis are the ideational characteristics of populist doctrines and not what people, who endorse populist movements, actually believe, avoiding this issue seems vital. Of course, both the ideational and the psychological dimension of populist movements may very well be interconnected, but any such interconnection is not trivial and not prima facie inferable. To avoid getting caught up in this issue, I therefore restrict my approach solely to textual analysis of official positionings of populist movements.[13]

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[12] Furthermore, through this regional parties are effectively excluded from the analysis, and the criteria for case selection are homogenised in terms of the necessary impact of populist movements, since manifold countries have electoral thresholds and not considering them would distort the case selection.

[13] That said, for future research, it might be of interest to complementarity approach the topic from a social research perspective, scrutinising the beliefs or opinions of voters who endorse populist parties.

Movements, which passed the first criterion, then, need to qualify as populist on the grounds of the ideational approach introduced above. This is evaluated through a computer-based quantitative content analysis of the most recent manifestos or party programmes of the movements, who passed the first criterion. Using a computer-based approach allows us to screen large volumes of text efficiently and party manifestos or programmes are a readily available (see, for example, Volkens et al. 2019), official positioning source of good comparability. Here, I will utilise the approach of Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) to rank the movements from low to high in terms of their populist attitude and extend it in order to cover the cases of my analysis.

Roodijn and Pauwels designed a dictionary, composed of vocabulary signalling anti-elitist attitudes in political texts (concretely: party manifestos and election programmes), which, statistically, can be considered a valid and reliable indicator for populist attitudes. That is, relying on an ideational understanding of populism, populism is on this approach taken to be characterised by two main properties: anti-elitism and people-centrism (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1273). But in contrast to anti-elitism, people-centric attitudes can effectively not be directly identified through the utilisation of a people-centric vocabulary, i.e. through individual words. The reason for this is that, as the authors emphasise, such an approach cannot distinguish between contexts, over which the people-centric association of such vocabularies varies (e.g. "us" or "we" can refer either to the people, which would be taken to indicate people-centrism, or to the party or movement, which would not signal people-centric attitudes) (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1275). Here, relying solely on a dictionary of vocabulary signalling anti-elitist attitudes is sufficient for the identification of populist attitudes, because those are a good indicator for people-centrism but not vice versa (cf. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1276-1278).

Rooduijn and Pauwels' own analysis distinguishes between anti-elitist core vocabulary, which is context-independent, and anti-elitist vocabulary, which varies over languages (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1283). In order to homogenise the testing grounds on the one hand and in doing so simplify the analysis on the other hand, I solely rely on the core vocabulary,[14] which is expanded to cover all official languages of EU member states. After allocating the score of populist attitudes of all movements which passed the first criterion, then, I select a sample of high scoring ones as well as a control sample of low scoring ones for the main analysis.

After the cases have been selected, the thesis methodically engages with qualitative content analysis. I adopt a qualitative approach at this stage in contrast to the former, because this main analysis is supposed to explore ideational characteristics of populist movements. As Bengtsson (2016: 10) put it: "In qualitative content analysis, data are represented in words and themes, which makes it possible to draw some interpretation of the results" rather than in quantitative terms of frequencies and percentages. The latter were suitable to denote degrees of populist attitudes at the stage of case selection, but now would be inadequate instruments for the identification of ideas.

The textual ground for this analysis consists of the speeches party leaders held at yearly party assemblies between the years 2015 and 2019. Whereas at the former stage manifestos served as the textual source, because they allowed for good quantitative comparison, I use those particular speeches here, because they, in contrast to manifestos which extensively cover different policy fields, can be considered much more condensed and open normative positionings Thus, they seem a particularly favourable basis for my explorative project.

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[14] Rooduijn and Pauwels suggest that subsets (in their case: halves) of the dictionary still indicate respective attitudes sufficiently well (cf. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1279).

My approach to qualitative content analysis is inspired by the *Analytical Discourse Evaluation* (ADE), a philosophical method developed by Teun J. Dekker to disperse the obscurity of political discourse by making its (often implicit) premises, conclusions, and logical structure of arguments explicit (Dekker 2013a, 2013b). ADE, as laid out by Dekker, consists of three main steps: 1) the gathering of discourse (in my case: political statements representative of a populist doctrine), 2) the translation of this data into the structure of a philosophical argument such that the implicit logical structure, i.e. the premises and how premises relate to the conclusions, is made explicit, and 3) the formal (not contentual) evaluation of this structure. The ADE is chosen as the methodological point of departure for the qualitative analysis because it makes it possible to identify ideas as well as their interconnections in an explorative manner. It thus enables the extraction of ideas from political discourse on a level which allows to connect to both, conceptual analyses as well as more rigorous empirical (qualitative and quantitative) investigations.

Here, I speak of 'inspired', because the discourse under scrutiny during my empirical investigation does not track arguments around certain topics between different speakers but rather features monologic comprehensive political positionings (the party leaders' speeches). This necessitates proceeding differently. To nonetheless identify the argumentative or justificatory relations between different statements, I dissect the speeches into statements relating to values, criticisms and demands (and own achievements). Those three types of statements in a sense approximate the structure of arguments, since they allow inferring the justificatory relationships within the speeches (e.g., due to a certain value commitment, a data is viewed as problematic, and a certain course of action demanded or a course of action taken by the party in the past lauded).[15]

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[15] It should also be noted that, by engaging in the analytic enterprise thus described, I do not commit myself to a particular view out of the many possible views on the mechanisms operating in discourses (see, e.g., Gee 1999).

Moreover, in contrast to the evaluation of the soundness of the argumentative structure brought to light by the ADE, my analysis remains solely descriptive. Instead of evaluating arguments or establishing the correctness or wrongness (or even plausibility) of particular positions, it is declaredly preoccupied with identifying those positions and characterising the relationships between them, whilst abstaining from evaluative or normative judgement.

I first analyse all cases of the main and the control sample independently and thereafter engage in an intra- and inter-sample comparison. The results of the discourse analysis show that contemporary populism features a continuum of positions. More specifically, the argument from the empirical investigation exploratively sketches out the spectrum-like, composed and multidimensional character of populism as it exists in the EU today.[16] This supplements the conceptual space of contestations drawn by the argument from theory with a map of ideational commitments populist parties have in the contemporary EU, including the relation of those commitments to liberal democracy.

In the last part, then, the bi-partite argument is completed by connecting both parts, the argument from theory and the argument from the empirical investigation, to each other. To do that, I first discuss the findings of part I and II in relation to existing characterisations of populism and then specify the differences and similarities both parts yield concerning the ideational contestations populism poses to liberal democracy. Against this background, I establish both parts of the argument as being complementary to each other and as drawing a comprehensive picture of the anti-liberal-democratic character of populism. Centrally, the bi-partite argument suggests that a tension exists between populism and liberal democracy which, ideationally, cannot be overcome. There is no inherent ideational quality of populism itself which would set constraints for how far into authoritarianism – and thus away from liberal

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[16] The results of the empirical investigation also support the characterisation of populism as a generally "thin" ideology, i.e. as not generating its own substantial commitments, but instead attaching itself to established "full" ideologies, from which those are then imported (Stanley 2008).

democracy – populism may slide. Hence, such constraints must come from somewhere else, be it the full ideologies, to which a specific instantiation of populism finds itself attached, institutional checks, or strategical-instrumental self-moderation.

After the – so far fully ideational – bi-partite argument is completed, I exemplarily apply it as an analytical lens to a prominent case of populist action. This serves the purpose of making the characterisation of populism provided by the bi-partite argument more plausible on the one hand, and of demonstrating how the bi-partite argument can constitute a useful tool for reviewing the practical political workings of populism on the other. As a case-study, Law and Justice (PiS), the governing party in Poland, is selected. The reason for this selection is that PiS is a typical and, by EU-standards, fairly extreme populist party, and, at the same time, one of only few populist parties in member states of the EU, which managed to both, head a government and rule for a considerable period, so that it is possible to meaningfully engage with its actions over time. To properly engage with the case, a stand-alone chapter is dedicated to it.

The thesis closes with a summary of the results, reflections on the implications of the bi-partite argument and with an outlook on what routes future research, which is concerned with populism and its relationship to liberal democracy, may take. In this sense, I hope that the thesis both contributes to enlarging the understanding of populism and sparks new developments in the field.

Part I:

The Argument from Theory

2. Liberal Democracy

2.1. Introduction

This chapter elucidates the ideational dimension of the political vision liberal democracy denotes. In doing so, it frames liberal democracy for the subsequent analysis of populism, in particular for the theoretical assessment of populism's relation to liberal democracy in chapter 3 and the exploration of the discourse analysis' results in part II. The material discussed in course of the chapter is thus arranged to fulfil the function.

As has been stressed in chapter 1, I hold that the ideational dimension of populism, as a challenger of liberal democracy, cannot be adequately captured without first understanding the central principles of liberal democracy against which it has arisen. To serve this purpose, in this chapter I first reflect on how liberal democracy can be adequately framed in the context of this research project and then depict its constituting principles and their appertaining ideas. I take those to be particular interpretations of rule of law on the one hand and of popular sovereignty on the other hand.

2.2. How to Frame Liberal Democracy?

Liberal[17] democracy is a product of a set of similar paths of development that a group of states (at first: of the West) have taken during the last few centuries. Although the outer perimeters thereof are blurry, a core can be identified. This core is both a political entity, which is the

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[17] The label "liberal" has its roots in the Latin liber (free) (von Mises 2005: ix). However, it was only in 1799 that the label found its way into political vocabulary, when Napoleon Bonaparte issued a proclamation declaring his seizure of power, speaking of "[l]es idées [...] libérales", which were later explicated by the journal L'Ami des Lois as being associated with political and religious tolerance, and respectively beneficent institutions (Sauvigny 1970: 151 f.). In the 19th century, then, the label began to be used to describe certain movements calling for political reforms in Europe (cf. Gould 1999: 1), starting with proponents of the constitution in Spain, who were in opposition to a reinstalment of absolutist monarchy (Göhler 1999: 12; Sauvigny 1970: 150-153). Before this political use, the word libéral was employed solely as an adjective with two (non-political) meanings: "that which is worthy of a free man, for example, *education libérale* and *arts libéraux*; and that which shows a generous disposition, freely giving and openhanded, for example, *un maître libéral* and *un don libéral*" (Sauvigny 1970: 150 f., emphasis in the original; see also in Littré 1968 the entry for 'Libéral').

result of a historical process, and, at the same time, a conception of the state, which serves as an ideational foundation to the politics of liberal democracies.

In my analysis, I am more interested in liberal democracy's conceptual dimension, for it is the conception of the state which captures the ideas challenged by populist projects on an ideational level. This notwithstanding, I concede that such conceptions can hardly be fully understood – and reviewed from within an appropriate context – without also taking into account precisely their historical origin. This holds true even though historical depictions involve interpretations and there are multitudinous ways to approach the development of liberal-democratic statehood (e.g., when it began and ended, reasons for its development, its intellectual predecessors and entourage etc.).

In the depiction that follows, I largely (albeit not exclusively) borrow from the accounts of Istvan Hont and John Dunn, whose analyses I take to converge on a shared (and adequate) understanding of liberal democracy. That is, I take "the dominant state form of the second half of the twentieth century" to be what Hont identified as a "representative republic embedded in commercial society" (Hont 1994a: 201) essentially referring to the same entity as Dunn's "bourgeois liberal republic" (Dunn 1994: 214). In the following, I will refer to this conception of the state simply as *liberal democracy*.

Both accounts are used, because they provide a view on liberal democracy which, meeting the foregoing desideratum, fruitfully combines both – an assessment of the ideational qualities of liberal democracy as well as of its practical-historical emergence, in other words: of ideas in application with their real, material implications. Due to this, they can be used to construct a frame for liberal democracy, which allows to adequately engage with populism in the context of the research enterprise this thesis denotes.

I take it that from those approaches the following characteristic properties can be inferred, which render liberal democracy a distinct and unique conception of the state: A rule of law,

which sets both procedural and contentual constraints on the use of political authority (in what follows: the liberal pillar), combined with indirect popular sovereignty, which is moderated through the means of representative democracy (in what follows: the democratic pillar).[18] Whereas rule of law provides guidelines for *how* authority may be exercised, popular sovereignty informs about *who* holds authority.[19] Jointly, both pillars limit and channel political power and, in doing so, on the one hand secure the relatively strong standing individuals enjoy in such political systems and on the other hand render liberal democracies highly compatible with a market based, capitalist economy. In what follows, I engage in a detailed elucidation of those pillars of liberal democracy.

2.3. The Rule of Law in Liberal Democracies

The rule of law marks what Dunn (1994: 207) has referred to as the "legal character" liberal democracies. That is, in liberal democracies, political authority is exercised through (the creation and enforcement of) written laws, which apply equally to all. By binding the power political authorities can wield to law on the one hand and by indiscriminately including the authorities themselves into the sphere the law regulates on the other hand, the rule of law sets limits to political authority and, ideally, prevents its arbitrary use (cf. Krygier 2015: 781). In

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[18] It should be noted that those two pillars harmonise with the notions many other scholars have provided. For example, Alan Ware (1992: 131) identified as the six characteristic features of liberal democracy its connection to "nationalism; its development from capitalism; its claims to protect the civil liberties of the individual; the crucial role assigned to the election of key public officials; institutionalization in the political system; and the cooperation between liberal democracies for the greater part of their existence." Similarly, William A. Galston holds that liberal democracy "rests on the republican principle, takes constitutional form, and incorporates the civic egalitarianism and majoritarian principles of democracy. At the same time, it accepts and enforces the liberal principle that the legitimate scope of public power is limited, which entails some constraints on or divergences from majoritarian decision making" (Galston 2018a: 11).

[19] Note that this characterisation resides in the well-established, albeit not uncontested, "two-strand" understanding of liberal democracy (Canovan 2004: 244; cf. also Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 195). As Canovan put it, this approach holds that "modern liberal democracy is an uneasy combination of two fundamentally different sets of principles, liberal on the one hand and populist/democratic on the other. 'Liberalism' is concerned with individual rights, universal principles and the rule of law, and is typically expressed in a written constitution; whereas the 'democratic' strand is concerned with the sovereign will of the people, understood as unqualified majority rule and typically expressed through referendums" (Canovan 2004: 244). In contrast to other proponents of this approach, however, I refrain from making claims about (and subsequently am less committed to a particular understanding of) the general relationship between both strands or pillars, i.e., whether they are co-existent, whether one is prior to or necessitated by the other, and whether or in how far both are in harmony or tension.

this sense, rule of law can be considered the very "negation of arbitrary government" (Sellers 2014: 8). As such, it historically diverges from *rule of individual persons*[20], i.e., the "unrestrained and potentially arbitrary personal rule by an unconstrained and perhaps unpredictable ruler" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1313). That said, rule *through* law does not imply rule *of* law – exercising political authority through law does not on its own prevent the rule of individual persons. As Rosenfeld notes (2001: 1313): "[...] even rule through law amounts to the 'rule of men,' if the law can be changed unilaterally and arbitrarily, if it is largely ignored, or if the ruler and his or her associates consistently remain above the law."

Tyranny may commence where law ends (Locke 1988/1690: 400), but the inverse is not generally true. Laws alone do not prevent tyranny, since the rule *of* law additionally needs effective mechanisms that ensure that the laws effectively apply to all (including the political authorities). This, in turn, requires a separation of powers, which prevents the concentration of power in the hands of a single entity that cannot effectively be restrained.[21] Given this qualification, the rule of law demarcates an ideal for the use of laws regarding political authority: instead of just being a way of exercising political power, laws ought "to contribute to articulating, channelling, constraining, and informing – rather than merely serving – such exercise" (Krygier 2015: 780).

Note that this requirement for political practice to comply to the rule of law does not imply a particular form of government. The rule of law, as long as it does not collapse into the rule of individual persons (through law), is in principle compatible with a variety of governmental forms, be they individual- (e.g. monarchic), group- (e.g. aristocratic) or collective-based (e.g. democratic) (e.g., cf. Hont, 2005: 396; see Sagar 2018: 492).

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[20] Historically, this *rule of men* can be contrasted with the *imperium legum* (cf. Rosenfeld 2001: 1313; Sellers 2014: 4 f.).

[21] Note that, as with most institutional arrangements once they are incorporated into practice, there are different forms of the separation of powers that can be encountered in different states (see, e.g., Ackerman 2000).

While this brief introduction to the rule of law quite clearly shows what the rule of law is not, i.e., what it is supposed to prevent, it leaves open what principles actually satisfy the rule of law. There are several understandings of what exactly the rule of law implies, and subsequently both conceptual as well as historical-political differences in interpreting the requirements of the rule of law exist. In the remainder of this section, I discuss those variations and identify what the defining characteristics of the rule of law, as it prevails in liberal democracies, are.

2.3.1. Formal vs. Substantive Conceptions of Rule of Law

Despite the central role rule of law plays in liberal democracy, it is not a novel concept of our day and age. Indeed, the first emergence of the idea of rule of law can be traced back to the ancients and has experienced a revival in the Middle Ages, before finding its way into modernity (see Tamanaha 2004). That said, my presentation of conceptual variations is for the purposes of this chapter confined to those understandings of rule of law which are directly relevant for the conceptual elucidation of liberal democracy. Here, two understandings of rule of law can be distinguished: a thin (or formal) conception that understands the rule of law in a narrow sense, and a thick (or substantive) conception that understands the rule of law in a wide sense.[22]

As those labels indicate, the former understanding of the rule of law is exhausted by procedural principles that guide the application of law and exercise of political authority. Essentially, this understanding of the rule of law is confined to the minimal requirements ensuring against the rule of law's collapse into the rule of individual persons through law. Rosenfeld holds that this at the very least requires "fairly generalized rule through law; a

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[22] In distinguishing between those two understandings of the rule of law I do not intend to contradict Richard H. Fallon (1997: 5) in stressing that, in constitutional discourse, four ideal-types ("(i) historicist, (ii) formalist, (iii) Legal Process, and (iv) substantive") can be distinguished as models of rule of law. Those distinctions seem to aim at something else, however, namely at the exact relation of legal texts to legal practice, and not, at least not primarily, at the general relation of law to political authority on which my depiction puts its emphasis.

substantial amount of legal predictability (through generally applicable, published, and largely prospective laws); a significant separation between the legislative and the adjudicative function; and widespread adherence to the principle that no one is above the law" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1313).

There have, however, been manifold different proposals to what formal principles should be considered requirements of the rule of law in its narrow sense (see, e.g., Fuller 1969; Hart 1967; Raz 1979; Walker 1988). While those proposals differ slightly,[23] they essentially limit themselves to formal principles or procedures that must be met for a legal regime to qualify as being based on the rule of law. Yet, they do not prescribe any particular content that the law should have. That is, as long as certain procedural requirements are met, the thin version of the rule of law is satisfied, and this does not tell us anything about what the set of laws to which this label applies actually includes.

The main difference of the thick conception of the rule of law to its thin variant is that the thick conception is also concerned with the content of law and not just with it meeting particular procedural criteria.[24] Its legal vision is more positive than the thin conception's: Whereas on the thin conception law and corresponding legal institutions mainly serve as protective mechanisms against the abuse of political power, the thick conception is moreover concerned with the realisation of particular values (cf. Selznick 1992: 174, 1999: 26 f.; also Krygier 2015: 783). In contrast to a solely procedural understanding, on which a legal regime meeting the demands of rule of law does not yield a verdict on the legal regime's moral virtue (cf. Fallon 1997: 2) or commitments, then, on the substantial understanding the rule of law is

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[23] I believe that one important reason for this are the different conclusions scholars draw about the empirical mechanisms of legal regimes.
[24] With reference to the German legal tradition, this difference between the thin and thick variant of rule of law can be explicated by the former's focus on the *Rechtsform* (i.e., the form laws take) and the latter's extended focus on the *Rechtsinhalt* (the content laws have).

bound to the endorsement of certain moral ideals, which political authority ought to bring about or at the very least respect and which the law incorporates.

As Tamanaha (cf. 2004: 1 ff.) observes, there is broad support (or at least expression of appreciation) for some version of the rule of law even outside of liberal democracy. Given the distinction between a formal and a substantial understanding of the rule of law, an explanation thereof can be provided and, in doing so, the exact relation of rule of law to liberal democracy can be narrowed down. It seems that what is characteristic for liberal democracy and what sets it apart from other state forms is that it relies on a particular version of the substantive understanding of rule of law. On this particular understanding, liberal values are introduced to formal principles of the use of political authority. This sets liberal democracy apart from both: states which also rely on a thick understanding of the rule of law, but, instead of liberal values, endorse other values, and states which rely only on a thin understanding of the rule of law that leave the allocation of values to political processes external to the rule of law. Here, when I speak of liberal values, I mean an extensive set of individual rights that liberal democracies legally enshrine and seek to protect respectively realise, which notably includes property, civil, political, and human rights. Before turning to a more detailed characterisation, however, more needs to be said on the relation of the thick conception of the rule of law to liberal democracies.

3.2. National Traditions of Liberal Rule of Law

Whilst an exhaustive elucidation of the historical development and relationship of both understandings is beyond the scope of this thesis, in an important sense the thick understanding can be considered an amendment of rule of law in the light of perceived insufficiencies of a merely formal conception. This can be vividly illustrated by the development of different national traditions of (substantial understandings of) the rule of law in liberal democracies, in particular the German *Rechtsstaat* and the French *État de droit*.

The *Rechtsstaat* is often considered the German version of the conception labelled rule of law in the Anglo-American tradition and can be roughly translated into English as "state rule through law" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1318 f.). Despite intellectually emerging from Kant's theory of state, its incorporation into German law in the nineteenth century, especially after the manifestation of the German Kaiserreich, was in large parts positivistic[25]. That is, the *Rechtsstaat*, in the way it was politically realised in the legal regime of Bismarck's Germany, was essentially concerned with "issues of form rather than substance" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1319; on this see also Grote 1999). It provided protection to citizens through the state rule's mandatory compliance to legal procedures (cf. Rosenfeld 2001: 1326) yet was wary of granting individuals non-procedural fundamental rights.

This had several reasons, which cannot be exhaustively discussed here, but an important one is related to the position of the citizenry in German politics of that time. In Germany, the 1848 bourgeois revolution's defeat led to an increasing disregard of substantive fundamental rights by the authorities, that the revolutionaries sought to enshrine politically and legally (cf. Grote 1999: 285-288; see also Rosenfeld 2001: 1324 f.). At the same time, monarchical power constantly grew in light of successes of the German (or Prussian) military machinery. Together with the outcome of the failed revolution, this resulted in a weak position of the bourgeoisie (Rosenfeld 2001: 1325). Thus, the positivist *Rechtsstaat* can be safely considered the result of the attempt to limit, if not substantively than at least formally, the political power the German state (or any of its parts) could wield against its citizens (Rosenfeld 2001: 1325 f.; see also Jacobson and Schlink 2000: 5 f.).[26]

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[25] While there are different understandings of legal positivism, I take those to intersect on the position that legal norms are separate from their merit (see, e.g., Austin 1995/1832: 157), although the German school of the 19th century, basing itself not on the British empiricist tradition but on German idealism, following Kelsen also held that legal norms were separate from facts as well (see e.g., Kelsen 1960).

[26] "The positivist theory of the law of the state viewed state institutions above all from the viewpoint of limits. The lawmaking power of the Reichstag was limited by the Bundesrat, but, at the same time, the power of the monarchic administration to interfere with the freedom and property of citizens was limited by the requirement of statutory authorization." (Jacobson and Schlink 2000: 6).

Note that this positivist notion of *Rechtsstaat*, despite its confinement to *Rechtsform*, in contrast to previous notions of the legitimacy of political authority, already allowed the state apparatus to exercise its political authority (through law) independently of the endorsement of or reliance on a particular conception of the good (cf. Rosenfeld 2001: 1320).[27]

After the Reich's collapse in World War I, substantive fundamental rights were enshrined in the newly founded Weimar Republic's constitution, yet, as the Republic fell, those changes failed to last (cf. Rosenfeld 2001: 1327). It was only after the defeat of the Nazi regime and the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany that fundamental rights were sustainably implemented in the liberal-democratic conception of the *Rechtsstaat*. Formed in light of the experiences of the horrors of Nazi rule (and the legal preconditions that made it possible) the modern *Rechtsstaat* seeks to constitutionally secure fundamental values gravitating around the status of individuals (e.g., the protection of human dignity famously being declared the supreme task of all state institutions in the Basic Law's article 1). On the modern notion of *Rechtsstaat*, individuals enjoy broad political and civil rights which are substantive, coincide with particular ideals the state's institutions ought to promote (e.g., welfare or democracy) and impose side constraints on formal legal procedures, and this is informed by the conclusion that formal procedures on their own are insufficient to provide justice (cf. Rosenfeld 2001: 1328 f.; see also Kommers 1997: 36 ff.).

Similarly, the French *État de droit* (literally translated from the German *Rechtsstaat*), was conceptualised in France following World War I and institutionalised after World War II as an attempt to supplement and at the same time place constraints on the proceduralist *État légal*. The *État légal* can in English be roughly translated as "democratic state rule through law" and is, gravitating around parliamentary democracy and the legislature's authority, what

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[27] As Rosenfeld points out (Rosenfeld 2001: 1320, fn. 53), the compatibility of the later *Rechtsstaat* with a plurality of conceptions of the good was subject of the critique articulated by Carl Schmitt (see Schmitt 2000: 297-299).

most approximates the positivist *Rechtsstaat* in the French legal tradition. Departing from the positivist notion of *Rechtsstaat*, adapting it to the French context, and, in doing so, transforming it substantively, the *État de droit* can thus be more accurately described as the "constitutional state as legal guarantor of fundamental rights" rather than just "state rule through law". As such, the *État de droit*'s aim is to prevent potential "infringements stemming from law made by parliament" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1330; see Chevallier 1999), thus putting contentual constraints on procedural principles.

Note that, in contrast to the umbrella concept of rule of law and the *Rechtsstaat*, the *État de droit* is specifically concerned with fundamental rights and their legal extension rather than with the law in its entirety. Fundamental rights are considered as having binding legal power and it is the mission of the *État de droit* to enforce that by checking the legislature (more specifically, the parliament). This, in turn, requires a "constitutional review of parliamentary laws" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1331; De Malberg 1920: 490 ff.), thus "balanc[ing] the *État légal* with the protections afforded by the *État de droit*" (Rosenfeld 2001: 1333).

Hence, the implementation of the *État de droit* is motivated by the insight that to ensure the individuals' enjoyment of fundamental rights those need to be meaningfully *legally* (constitutionally) enshrined and protected. In the French case, that meant to supplement the rule of law in a narrow sense, as it was already practiced and guaranteed by French parliamentary democracy, with a legal regime that is specifically concerned with protecting those values.

Whereas the German *Rechtsstaat* and the French *État de droit* have conceptual differences and were formed against the background of different national legal and political realities and traditions, they share an important commitment. That is, both converge on the idea

that certain fundamental values cannot be left to the contingency of politics[28] and therefore need to also be legally upheld and realised (be it by restricting the scope of or channelling the authority of the government or the legislature). It is this sense, then, in which (liberal-democratic) thick understandings of the rule of law evolved from its thin variant.

2.3.3. The Substantive Core of Liberal-Democratic Rule of Law

This depiction of the evolution of substantive rule of law conceptions from their formal predecessors (exemplified by the German and French traditions) helps to narrow down the core of the liberal-democratic rule of law. As urged above, it is a thick conception of rule of law that is characteristic for liberal democracies.[29] Yet, as the foregoing subsection indicated, this does not mean that there is *the* liberal-democratic version of rule of law. Instead, different national traditions can be distinguished, such as rule of law in the Anglo-American tradition(s), the German *Rechtsstaat*, the French *État de droit*, the Italian *Stato di diritto*, or the Spanish *Estado de Derecho*. While I cannot engage in a detailed study of the different conceptions' diversions and congruences here, those conceptions share a core commitment to fundamental (substantive) individual rights, which they, one way or another, seek to realise or protect. In what follows, I will hence refer to liberal-democratic rule of law conceptions simply as liberal-democratic rule of law.

So, what is this core of liberal-democratic rule of law, the *Rechtsinhalt* that in liberal democracies binds political authority beyond procedural principles? Liberal-democratic rule of law provides a comprehensive set of fundamental rights to individuals, which are distinctively informed by a commitment to the value of individual liberty.[30] As Tamanaha (cf. 2004: 34 ff.)

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[28] In France, for example, fundamental rights were politically protected since the 1789 Declaration, but not legally. Hence, the *legal* protection was the supplement the *État de droit* meant to provide (Rosenfeld 2001: 1333).

[29] This holds even though the thin conception of the rule of law has been favoured by many modern analytical jurists (Krygier 2015: 783)

[30] It is also this commitment that distinguishes liberal rule of law from rule of law in its pre-liberal understandings (Greek, Roman, medieval) (Tamanaha 2004: 33). Of course, liberty itself is an essentially contested concept and I will illustrate the variety of understandings of liberty, as well as the quite different political realities they inform, later on.

points out, there are several ways in which liberal-democratic rule of law (and liberal democracy more generally) pays respect to individual liberty. Therefore, it is reasonable to subdivide this set of fundamental rights along the lines of their different domains.[31]

There are several approaches to categorise those, which I cannot exhaustively discuss, yet I think that at the very least it can be distinguished between property rights, civil rights, political rights (cf. Mukand and Rodrik 2020: 766), and human rights (Dunn 1994: 217). I cannot provide a list of all fundamental rights protected by liberal-democratic rule of law here, because they differ across jurisdictions. Nonetheless, it should once more be emphasised that those individual rights do not just set legal constraints to the use of authority, whoever wields it (government, parliament etc.), but also project a more positive vision that the state ought to realise: that individuals are free and can, in a relevant sense, "live their lives as they please" (Dunn 1994: 207; see also Dunn 1990).

There are a few things to note here. As was already hinted by the depiction of the *Rechtsstaat*, liberal rule of law's positive vision is concerned with the right, but remains neutral regarding a vision of the good, say a particular way of life that individuals should follow. This is important and, despite other similarities, is one of the main aspects distinguishing liberal democracy from republican conceptions of the state. Historical republican conceptions of the state envision a common good shared between all members of the polity and promoted by the state. In contrast, liberal-democratic rule of law commits itself to a vision of the right or justice (individual rights as "guarantees provided by law and state institutions" (Sagar 2018: 484)) that enable individuals to strive for their "own vision of the good" (Tamanaha 2004: 41) but does not dictate how those individual paths through life should be formed. This absence of a commitment to a particular conception of the good on the liberal democratic conception of the

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[31] Tamanaha (2004: 34 f., emphasis in the original), for example, distinguishes between the "*political liberty*" of engaging in democracy, the "*legal liberty*" of being free if one does not interfere with the law, and the "*personal liberty*" of an inviolable sphere of personal rights.

state will re-emerge in the liberal-democratic understanding of popular sovereignty, as we shall see below.

Furthermore, since those rights equally apply to all, liberal-democratic rule of law provides formal equality, i.e. equality before the law, to all citizens.[32] Yet, despite some resources often being redistributed in respect to welfare rights, this formal equality does not translate into material or economic equality.[33] On the contrary: liberal democracy, especially through the property rights it provides, allows for some substantial degree of material inequality. This renders liberal democracy highly compatible with a capitalist economy (see, e.g., Hont 2005: 92 f.; see also Sagar 2018: 484, 487; Cunningham 2002: 42 ff.).

According to Dunn, this is one of the very reasons why, in historical perspective, liberal democracies (or, more precisely, their predecessors) succeeded, and their (past) rivals did not. In allowing for material inequality and at the same time guaranteeing formal equality regarding both procedural and substantive rights, liberal democracy considered the economic conditions of modernity (e.g., industrialisation, division of labour, individualisation of preferences and interests etc.). By doing so, it was able to provide freedom, security and prosperity to its citizens (amongst other things) more effectively (cf. Dunn 1994: 207 ff.; for the history of failure of conceptions of state endorsing more substantial equality see Dunn 2019: chapter 3), while remedying some material inequality through welfare provisions, when necessary (cf. Judt 2008: 10; see also Sagar 2018: 489).

Of course, the exact relation of liberal democracy to this combination of formal equality and material inequality differs across states. For example, manifold European countries are known for the (at least by comparison) significant amount of redistribution of wealth they conduct, say, in the context of their welfare provisions through taxation. In contrast, other

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[32] This is the sense in which equality before the law as provided by rule of law should be understood (cf. O'Donnell 2004: 33).

[33] This is exemplified by the US, where equality before the law is protected, yet, at the same time, in parts significant material inequality in both wealth and income is accepted (cf. Dunn 2019: 103).

liberal democracies such as the US are known for their rather low levels of redistribution and thus a state endorsed tendency to accept by comparison high levels of material inequality. However, this is a matter of degree not of kind, and we can understand all liberal democracies as nonetheless falling somewhere along this spectrum.

2.4. Popular Sovereignty in Liberal Democracies

In the previous section, I have, referring to rule of law, depicted *how* political authority is exercised in liberal democracies. In contrast, this subsection is concerned with popular sovereignty and therefore with the question of *who* the bearer(s) of authority in liberal democracies are.

In liberal democracies, the people are sovereign, that is they possess the final political authority (sovereignty). Since political entities are created by the people, those in power must ultimately be "responsive" to the people (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a: 2). Yet, in light of the people's composition, i.e., being a group of individuals, this raises several questions regarding the concrete meaning of popular sovereignty. To answer those questions and thereby clarify liberal democracy's notion of popular sovereignty (and the conception of the people this presupposes), considering the conceptual history of sovereignty is mandatory. Following Hont (cf. 1994a: 171), I believe that here a historically informed perspective is important, because it provides a context, which illuminates aspects which would not be covered by a purely analytical scrutiny of the concepts involved.

2.4.1. The History of Modern Sovereignty

The history of sovereignty in its modern understanding is tied to the development of modern states, which has its origin in the creation of nation-states in Europe. Beginning in the 16th and 17th century, this "grand process of unification" led over time to a significant enlargement of the territorial boundaries of states and, subsequently, resulted in a substantial reduction of

independent territorial units (Hont 1994a: 178).[34] In this process, which according to Hont was also concerned with establishing which rights to territory different communities have (Hont 1994a: 173), three stages of unification can be distinguished:

> "The *first* is the creation of early modern composite states under the leadership of a single dynasty, but without administrative and institutional unification. The *second* is the institutionalization of modern sovereignty in its modern monarchical form, known as the rise of 'absolutism'. The *third* is the transformation of monarchical absolutism into the popular absolutism of the sovereignty of the 'nation', usually described as the birth of the modern representative republic (which may still have a monarch as the highest public servant of the nation)." (Hont 1994a: 179, emphasis in the original)

In the course of this process, territories unified, institutional and administrative structures homogenised and political authority centralised, transforming the very meaning of sovereignty along the way. During the second stage, when absolutist monarchies developed and the divided sovereignty of previous times was unified in the person of a monarch, who held the entirety of final authority over the whole polity (usually a large-scale territorial state), the modern *understanding* of sovereignty emerged as "the doctrine that there is and ought to be only one *final* source of political authority" (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 13 f., my emphasis). Yet, only in the third stage did this unified sovereignty shift its *bearer* from a monarch to the people as a whole. Just as monarchical sovereignty had replaced divided sovereignty, popular sovereignty has replaced monarchical sovereignty. Note that the changes facilitated by the political adaptation of popular sovereignty can in a sense be understood as attempts at rendering the political order more egalitarian, for under popular sovereignty no "individual or group can claim political authority as a proprietary right" (Yack 2001: 518).

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[34] Whereas there have been ca. 500 "more or less independent political units" in the year 1500 there have been only ca. 25 by the year 1900 (Tilly 1975: 15).

Here, it must be emphasised that the particular notion of popular sovereignty, on which liberal democracy relies, is embedded in this particular organisational and institutional reality of politics: A large-scale, relatively populous state, which is characterised by relatively centralised institutional structures, the reach of which covers the whole of its territory. Importantly, the sovereign people need to be understood in this context as well, namely as being composed of "all of a territory's legal inhabitants" (Yack 2001: 519).[35]

2.4.2. The Liberal-Democratic Notion of Popular Sovereignty

While holding that neither an individual person (e.g. the monarch) nor an exclusive group of persons (e.g. the aristocracy) but the people as a whole possess the final political authority has an intuitive clarity, the exact meaning of popular sovereignty requires further clarification (cf. Hont 1994a: 194). After all, the idea of popular sovereignty combines a unified final authority over the whole polity (sovereignty) with a divided bearer of this authority (the people). In the cases of divided sovereignty and monarchical sovereignty the matter seemed rather clear: either several entities held sovereignty (or sovereignty in certain matters) over several territories (or parts of a territory) or one entity held the entirety of sovereignty over the whole territory. In any case, where was a concrete entity who could be identified as wielding the political power springing from its sovereignty. But in what sense can the people, given their composition of a multitude of individual persons, be considered a political agent in the first place? In how far can they be sovereign let alone exercise their sovereignty (cf. Hont 1994a: 185 f.)? The answer given to those questions adopted by liberal democracy is: they cannot, at least not directly.

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[35] While in the next subsection I will in more detail elaborate on the people, it needs to be stressed that the people are conceptually similar to but in important parts differ from the *nation*. They are similar insofar as both are "imagined communities" of "distant individuals" instead of close, actual physically delineated majority groups. But they differ in that they are communities imagined over different boundaries: Whereas the nation is imagined as a community of individuals separated in time (yet tied together by a common origin or way of living) the people are a community of individuals separated in space (yet tied together by residing in a particular territory) (Yack 2001: 520 f.).

It can easily be observed that "the people", understood as the entirety of a territory's population, are not homogenous, since the persons, of which the people are composed, are individuals with diverging physical and psychical properties and capabilities, attitudes, beliefs, plans of life and interests.[36] This lack of uniformity of the people, which is even further exacerbated by the conditions of modernity (e.g. division of labour and its social, political, cultural and economic consequences), was recognised relatively early on in the process of the formation of modern states.

As Habermas (cf. 1997: 44 f.) emphasised, Rousseau (2002), in proposing his theory of political organisation, was precisely aware of the non-homogenous character of modern societies. Rousseau's solution to the question of how sovereignty of a heterogenous people could be realised, however, differs from the one that liberal-democratic conceptions of the state endorse. To get a better understanding of the latter, it is important to understand why the former is rejected by liberal-democratic conceptions.

Rousseau's solution to the sovereignty of a heterogenous people was to introduce his idea of the general will. According to this approach, then, the people's sovereignty is enacted through the operations of the general will, which is, by democratically arranging society in a way that preserves the social liberty of all individuals, always right, and as such renders the sovereignty of the people unlimited and direct. On liberal-democratic accounts, both of those properties ascribed to popular sovereignty on a Rousseauian account are rejected, in parts on normative grounds and in parts on epistemic-metaphysical grounds.[37]

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[36] This list could very likely be continued.

[37] Note that, historically, the gravitational pull of the French Revolution produced and facilitated both answers (the liberal understanding of popular sovereignty articulated by Sieyes and its competing vision politically endorsed by Robespierre and his Jacobin fellows). The very political conflict which feeds into the populist attack on liberal democracy can be understood in light of those competing visions of popular sovereignty and its corollaries, as will be discussed in chapter 3's subsection on the conceptual relation of populism to liberal democracy.

On normative grounds, Rousseauian popular sovereignty (and by implication the assumption that the general will never errs) is rejected in terms of its governmental unlimitedness, because it is incompatible with fundamental individual rights *legally* secured by liberal-democratic rule of law (see last section) beyond the contingencies of political concessions. In liberal democracies, fundamental individual rights lie beyond the reach of political authority, even if it is the people holding this authority (for an early analysis of the necessity to limit the reach of majoritarian decisions, see Tocqueville 2002/1835).

On epistemic-metaphysical grounds, Rousseauian popular sovereignty is rejected in terms of its directness which relies on some sort of unification of will. On the one hand, a unified will is considered metaphysically opaque and, on the other hand, the unification of will is considered epistemically inaccurate since the people (and their will) "as a collection of individuals is always indeterminate" (Ochoa Espejo 2011: 136). The people are an imagined rather than an actual community (cf. Yack 2001: 520 f.; for the notion of an *imagined community* see Anderson 2006/1983). Popular sovereignty, then, cannot be realised through the allocation of the people's will on liberal-democratic grounds, for the people and their will cannot be aggregated (see, e.g., Ochoa Espejo 2011). Without will, however, the people lack agency, and this means that their sovereignty cannot be wielded directly.

Thus, popular sovereignty is not analogous to, say, monarchical sovereignty, where a monarch wields concrete power, since the people on the liberal-democratic understanding do not exercise their sovereignty directly (because they cannot do so in a meaningful sense). Instead, they exercise their sovereignty only indirectly. For this, however, "the relationship between the people and sovereignty must be mediated" (Hont 1994a: 185) through an entity which can concretely wield the authority lying dormant in the people's sovereignty in the people's stead. With this, a qualification to the liberal-democratic understanding of popular

sovereignty can be made by introducing the distinction between what Yack labelled *constituent sovereignty* and *governmental sovereignty*:

> "[...] a distinction between the power to establish or disestablish forms of government and the powers delegated to actual rulers. The former, the constituent power, is unlimited and always remains with the people [...]. The latter, the governmental or constituted power, is limited to those powers delegated by the people to their rulers, whoever they may be."
> (Yack 2001: 519)

This distinction between constituent sovereignty and governmental sovereignty allows the reconciliation of the unified sovereignty of the people with their heterogeneous character. The heterogeneous people can now be understood as being sovereign in the former but not in the latter sense, for which a unification of will no longer needs to be assumed (see Ochoa Espejo 2011). The people's constitutional sovereignty is then, in contrast to governmental sovereignty, "purely notional in practice [...] and in no real sense a matter of *agency*" (Dunn 1994: 206, emphasis in the original).

There are a few things to note here. For one, the distinction allows us to more precisely distinguish the framing of the people entailed in the popular sovereignty in its modern, liberal-democratic understanding from other conceptions of the people as a large group of individuals in a territory commonly encountered in intellectual and political history. That is, the sovereign people of liberal democracy differ from both the *plebs* and the *demos*. In contrast to the *plebs*, the people are composed of all legal inhabitants of a territory and, in contrast to the *demos*, the people hold no governmental but only constituent sovereignty (Yack 2001: 521 f.).

Furthermore, endorsing popular sovereignty solely in its constituent understanding in a sense means departing from an "*overly concrete reading of the principle of popular sovereignty*" and instead endorsing a procedural approach (Habermas 1997: 47 f., emphasis in the original; see also Ochoa Espejo 2011), since the process of mediation now comes to the

fore. Such a process may be fallible (its outputs may be not right, in contrast to Rousseau's general will) (cf. Ochoa Espejo 2011: 186), but without its affirmation no legitimacy can be awarded to entities wielding political power. As will be explained in the next subsection, this leads liberal democracy to adopt representative democracy as a form of political decision making and power allocation.

2.4.3. Representative Democracy

In the last subsection, I concluded that, in liberal democracies, the people possess constituent but not governmental sovereignty and therefore (can and do) exercise their sovereignty only indirectly mediated by representatives. While this in itself does not necessitate a particular mode of representation (see Yack 2001: 519), it is in liberal democracies usually processed through representative democracy. That is, in liberal democracies, citizens periodically elect representatives for a fixed duration of time by a form of majority vote. The mandates that representatives thereby receive are *free*: representatives are bound by the rule of law but are otherwise, in contrast to political systems relying on imperative mandates, not compelled to comply to the wills or interests of the electorate.[38] Here, beside its organisational function of authority allocation, representative democracy also serves the normative function of legitimising[39] the thus distributed political authority. Moreover, it arguably contributes to a more efficient politico-economic organisation, since it allows coping with the conditions of modern societal organisation under which "the work of legislation requires full-time attention" (Beetham 1992: 47).

While historically different answers have been provided as to who is eligible to participate in elections, in modern liberal democracies usually the whole adult citizenry is enfranchised, irrespective of the citizens' group characteristics (sex, gender, orientation,

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[38] Though there of course are politico-strategic reasons to facilitate the interests of the electorate and moral reasons to comply to the expectations of those who put their trust in oneself.

[39] See for a compatible account of legitimacy of political power, e.g., Buchanan 2002: 703.

religion, political views, economic class etc.) (see Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 5). This notwithstanding, the full legal age may be defined differently, on different governmental levels different age thresholds might be in place, and disagreements exist on the criteria of acquiring citizenship, the democratic rights of non-citizens and the conditions under which democratic rights may be forfeited (see Dunn 2019: 137 f.).

Liberal democracies' overall reliance on representative democracy, however, does not in practice translate to a uniform mode of electing representatives or organising political institutions (see for an overview of differences in terms of political organisation in liberal democracies, e.g., Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 49 ff.). For example, liberal demcoracies differ on the duration of terms and the principles of counting votes and distributing mandates (e.g. "first past the post" in the UK vs. single transferable vote in Ireland vs. mixed-member proportional representation in Germany); on the design of the executive branch and its interconnection with the legislature (e.g. presidential system in the US vs. semi-presidential system in France vs. parliamentary system in Germany vs. (the unique) directorial system in Switzerland); and on the federal structures they accommodate. Furthermore, some liberal democracies, despite overall being structured by representative democracy, locally feature direct-democratic elements, such as referenda or plebiscites (Switzerland is perhaps the most vivid example).

Regardless of those differences, the outputs of any such process must, in liberal-democratic conceptions of the state, conform to the fundamental individual rights secured within the rule of law. Hence, fundamental individual rights not only protect individuals from overreaching state interventions but also from results of majoritarian processes (Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987: 5 f.). As has been noted in the previous subsection, it is this governmental application in which sense the sovereignty that the people possess is, although final, limited.

2.4.4. Societal Presuppositions of Liberal Democracy

So far, I have presented how popular sovereignty historically emerged and how it informs political structures and processes that liberal democracies endorse. Yet something is missing. We have learned that the people are sovereign yet heteronomous and thus can only exercise their sovereignty indirectly, since they are separate entities with diverging interests and beliefs, and their will generally does not unify. For this reason, in liberal democracies sovereignty is mediated through democratically elected representatives – liberal democracies are structured by representative democracy. But if the people have diverging interests and beliefs, if their will can never unify and if, as has been elucidated in the previous section, liberal democracies do not assume a particular vision of the good, what reason is there to expect that the institutional arrangements and principles of liberal democracies are followed? In other words, how can the individualistic approach to the people and the fact that liberal democracies allow material inequality which leads to competitiveness between individuals be reconciled with liberal democracy's reliance on those individuals' cooperation?

In the intellectual historical scholarship, those questions have been answered by emphasising the *commercial sociability* of individuals (see Hont 1994a: 192 f., 1994b: 60-72): Individuals are set apart by their interests, beliefs, ways of life etc., but this does not imply that they do not freely cooperate. Human nature is considered not principally unsociable so that individuals very well may cooperate and form social bonds, given the right conditions.

The individuals' sociability is 'commercial', because it is recognised that those conditions relate to the advantages of engaging in the socioeconomic structures states provide. Even though individuals compete against each other, they engage in cooperation for utility reasons and while such social bonds might be weaker than those of genuine affection, they are sufficiently strong to ensure cooperation of large groups, if they contribute to their material needs through "the reciprocal exchange of utilities" (Hont 2005: 40, see also 39 ff.; see also

Sagar 2018: 484). Given this, individuals are considered to (politically, socially and economically) cooperate in contexts of liberal democracies, and in doing so fill the processes of popular sovereignty's mediation with life, because liberal democracies provide conditions under which cooperation is advantageous.

In the last section, I emphasised that liberal-democratic rule of law allows for material inequality in the face of formal equality, noting that this promotes competition between individuals. But, in accommodating the conditions of modernity, liberal democracies are also in a historically unique position of providing for what Dunn describes as "the political requirements for modern human flourishing – for living securely and prosperously in an intensely commercialised society within a dynamic world economy" (Dunn 1994: 207). It is this capability of liberal democracies which makes cooperation of individuals a justified and indeed now empirically well-founded expectation even in the absence of a homogeneous people or a common good.

In other words: Methodological individualism and a heterogeneous approach to the people are compatible with social cooperation and a participatory approach to centralised government. If cooperation is advantageous, individuals are expected to cooperate – and liberal democracies indeed are assumed to provide conditions under which cooperation is advantageous.

2.5. Conclusion

It is time to bring together what has been said so far. Liberal democracy was portrayed as gravitating around two main principles: the rule of law, which tells about *how* political authority may be wielded, and popular sovereignty, which tells about *who* holds political authority. Jointly, liberal democracy's interpretation of these principles renders it a unique conception of the state.

Liberal-democratic rule of law combines a procedural commitment to political authority being wielded through law equally applying to all, with an endorsement of substantive fundamental rights individuals possess, which put side constraints on permissible actions of state organs. Moreover, in liberal democracies, the people are sovereign, i.e., possess the final political authority. However, liberal-democratic popular sovereignty recognises their heterogeneous composition and subsequently acknowledges that the people can exercise their sovereignty only indirectly, for they are not united and possess no agency absent the institutions of the state itself. Hence, in liberal democracy, the people hold constituent but not governmental sovereignty. This, in turn, requires mediating mechanisms enabling representation, for which liberal democracies adopt (different forms of) representative democracy.

If those are the pillars of liberal democracy, what can be inferred from them about what populist projects contest? If anything, it is the following: 1) a methodological commitment to individualism; 2) a normative commitment to a high moral status of individuals, which is taken to be best expressed by the provision of formal equal rights in a rule of law framework held merely on the basis of citizenship, invoking no further claims about group membership or conceptions of the good. Liberal democracy acknowledges the diversity of individuals as well as the fundamental importance of freedom, and subsequently grants them comprehensive rights, which secure them against mistreatment, allow them to participate politically, and enable them to freely follow their individual life plans. Consequently, in liberal democracies, political power is always limited and does not force particular ways of life on the individuals – limitations of their rights are always in need of a justification and collective goods, especially those which do not translate to individual goods, are considered suspicious.[40]

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[40] In this chapter, the characteristics of liberal democracy were mostly analysed within the boundaries of the state. To this it may be added that in political reality there is a tendency of liberal democracies towards free commerce and globalisation. Even though this, as the very composition of real existing states, is not determined on conceptual

In the next chapter, I will argue that it is this vision of a society gravitating around fundamental rights of individuals (and its organisational implications) which populism ideationally contests. To provide a brief preview: populist projects, departing from homogenous and non-inclusive conceptions of the people, reject the indirectness of liberal-democratic popular sovereignty. They seek to dismantle both the procedural aspect of liberal-democratic rule of law, as well as its commitment to fundamental individual rights, on the one hand, and the processes of representative democracy, on the other. I will argue that populism's collectivistic approach not only is detrimental to liberal democracy's commitment to individual fundamental rights but furthermore that this, together with populism's homogenous vision of the people in the face of their actual indeterminacy, undermines the very democratic pillar populists claim strengthen yet deem inadequate in liberal democracies.

In short: populism is either ultimately necessarily self-defeating; or populism is less about rendering political decision making directly responsive to the people and more about facilitating the political power of its proponents. This leads to an irony: populism is a reaction emerging from within liberal democracy, but precisely because of this, in attacking liberal democracy in the way it does, populism threatens not only to undermine liberal-democratic institutions, but in the process reveals itself as necessarily incoherent. In attacking the complex practical and intellectual settlement between competing demands that liberal democracy is itself a solution to, populism draws on some parts of that solution in order to attack it, but then is unable to replace the synthesis it is attacking with something more coherent. This in turn helps to explain why populism eventually comes to make common cause with genuinely authoritarian politics, as a solution to the incoherence it has unleashed.

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grounds, it can be seen that the restriction of arbitrary state power combined with strong individual rights can be harmonised not just with cooperation within but also across national borders.

3. Populism

3.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, a framing of liberal democracy has been provided as a prerequisite for the analysis of populist contestations. In doing so, I have identified a particular configuration of the rule of law and popular sovereignty realised through representative democracy as the core of liberal democracy. In this chapter, I will frame populism.

Besides promoting the general understanding of populism, this chapter serves two main purposes. Firstly, based on this definition, this chapter develops the first part of the bi-partite argument, the argument from theory, by providing an assessment of the conceptual relationship between populism and liberal democracy. The space of contestations between populism and liberal democracy which this opens later also comes to guide the lines of demarcation of the second, empirical part of the bi-partite argument, the argument from the empirical investigation, in chapter 6. Secondly, since the definition of populism introduced here fits the modelling purposes of the empirical investigation, cases for the empirical analysis are selected based on it in chapter 4.

I proceed as follows: Firstly, I briefly provide an overview of the history of populist movements, of explanations for their recent invigoration and of the observable consequences of this invigoration. Secondly, I propose a definition of populism that is based on an ideational approach to the phenomenon. Thirdly, departing from this definition, I argue that populism is anti-liberal (rejecting the first pillar of liberal democracy), anti-democratic (rejecting the second pillar of liberal democracy), radical in its use of authority and yields far-reaching implications beyond the political. This puts populism in a comprehensive and multidimensional conflict with the principles of liberal democracy.

3.2. The Continuation of Populist Invigoration

As has been highlighted in the introduction, populism is not a novel phenomenon – movements carrying the populist label (e.g., Narodniki in Russia, the People's Party in the US, the Boulangists in France) have been active in Europe and the Americas since the 19th century. Even though those particular movements failed to establish themselves as distinct political forces in the long run,[41] they exemplify a continuation of populist invigoration whose recent manifestation in the European Union is the research subject of this thesis (for a historical overview of populist movements in different parts of the world, see, e.g., Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 21-41).

While providing an exhaustive overview of the development of populist movements would clearly extend the scope of this section, I would nonetheless like to briefly depict 1) some important aspects facilitating the recent re-emergence of populism in Europe, as well as 2) the impact those developments make on their host political orders.

3.2.1. The Causes and Effects of Recent Populist Invigorations in Europe

Manifold explanations on the rise of populist movements have been provided, including historical, sociological, psychological, philosophical or economic analyses. While evidently the historical contexts of different populist movements differ greatly,[42] on a general level some similarities emerge, which roughly gravitate around perceived losses of status (say, cultural or economic) within mass society. In the rest of this subsection, I elucidate those general explanations of the populist surge in late 20th and early 21st century Europe.

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[41] This is not to say that populist movements have not made long lasting impacts on the politics of their host countries. Indeed, they have and what Mudde has labelled the *populist Zeitgeist* in contemporary Europe, which will be addressed later on in this subsection, is an exemplification of exactly that (see Mudde 2004). Still, at least as of now, populist movements in the past have (with some notable exceptions, e.g., the Peronist Justicialist Party in Argentina) mostly failed to create a concrete political party that could prevail over time.

[42] For example, the Narodniki in the 19th century agrarian state of Imperial Russia vs. Right-Wing populist movements in the 21st century industrialised welfare states of Scandinavia.

Here, several, in parts complementary, analyses have been employed. Overall, there seems to be some evidence that a substantial decrease in terms of living standards or economic prospects in the majority society in conjunction with increasing material inequality (for a comparison of Gini coefficients in Western Europe, see Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: Figure 5.3) is one facilitating aspect of populist invigorations in today's Europe (see, e.g., Eatwell and Goodwin 2018; for the inconclusive of evidence though see Mounk 2014: 29 f.). This connection holds regardless of the populist movement's position on the left-right continuum. This growing inequality is, of course, not freestanding as it is one of the direct consequences that markets bring about (cf. Galston 2018b: chapter 8).

The success of populist movements, however, is not merely caused by a growing inequality (in combination with adjacent perceptions of decline, such as, say, traditions), but also by the failure or perceived failure of established political authorities to adequately respond to those issues. As Albertazzi and McDonnell put it in the introduction to their edited volume on populist movements in Western Europe (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008b), the recent rise of populism in Europe can be considered:

> "a reaction to the failure of traditional parties to respond adequately in the eyes of the electorate to a series of phenomena such as economic and cultural globalization, the speed and direction of European integration, immigration, the decline of ideologies and class politics, exposure of elite corruption, etc." (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008a: 1)

In particular, it has been argued that this inadequacy is substantially connected to the demise of traditional parties[43] in light of changes to the practices of democratic discourse (cf.

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[43] So called *Volksparteien* (Eng.: people's parties), i.e., parties which do not claim to represent or speak for the entirety (or the true core) of *the people* but strive to be accessible beyond the membership to a particular interest or social group (in contrast to, say, classical worker's parties of the early 20th century), have been especially affected by this development.

Mastropaolo 2008: e.g., 38 ff.). This, of course, only moves the question from why populism has surged to why mainstream parties have declined.

Here, scholars have suggested that this decline has been triggered by particular discursive practices those parties (and with them the political establishment) have embarked on in light of multitudinous pressing problems. Mouffe (2005), for example, argued that the rise of right-wing populism in the European Union is facilitated by so-called "consensus politics" of the mainstream parties (Mouffe 2005: 60), i.e., seeking consensus at the expense of genuine political discourse between contrasting positions (Mouffe 2005: 51, 55). This form of politics, then, has led to a moralistic turn in political discourse, i.e., reducing political discourse to a moral dichotomy between rightly endorsing the consensus or wrongly rejecting it, and, according to Mouffe, therefore a depoliticised politics (cf. Mouffe 2005: 56 ff.). This, in turn, promoted the rise of populist challengers, which, by rejecting the political consensus and established discursive norms, were attested a moral deficiency by mainstream parties. This allowed them to establish themselves as a viable alternative to a calcified political discourse that was needed to overcome the issues that could not be addressed or resolved by this blockade.

In the course of this development, other changes to the democratic discourse and practice played a role. Here, Arditi (2005) emphasised the role of so-called audience democracy, i.e., the presentation to the public not primarily through parliamentary debates but through a more direct, individually scalable form of political communication with the electorate. Populists benefitted from audience democracy because it allowed them to wield their influence on the public in a way that is less dependent on their parliamentary power. In this context, the role of the media has been put under scrutiny, thus establishing that, overall, populist movements benefit from common media practices of today (see Mazzoleni 2008).

This short depiction of explanatory approaches to the contemporary rise of populist movements in Europe's liberal democracies remains necessarily incomplete and thus shows only some important causal aspects of the complex socio-political phenomena that have contributed to their invigoration. Nevertheless, it highlights that populists thrive on the perceived inability of mainstream political agents to provide satisfiable solutions to perceivably urgent problems of parts of the electorate to which they present themselves as a more capable alternative. As we will see later in this chapter, this follows the very logic of populist ideas.

It is suspected that this rise of populism is connected to multitudinous negative socio-political effects. Unsurprisingly, the populist label presently bears a mostly negative connotation (cf. Comaroff 2011: 100).[44] Several analyses have been employed to bring both, populist activity's impact on political systems as well as the inner mechanisms thereof, to light (see, e.g., Albertazzi and McDonell 2008b for country case studies, and Panizza 2005 for project case studies). There is much that could be said on those cases but two things particularly stand out that I would like to emphasise. Firstly, populist movements, in particular their actions once they find themselves in political power, have notable (detrimental) effects on governance. That is, they, overall, facilitate clientelism, the erosion of institutions and partisan changes to the constitution (e.g., the recent attack on the Polish constitution by the PiS government, see for a detailed account Sadurski 2019, or chapter 8 of this thesis). Secondly, the surge of populism, which, as was argued, is embedded in overall challenges to established liberal-democratic traditions and agents, led to what Mudde (2004) labelled the *populist Zeitgeist*. That is, not only have populist movements manifested and entered parliaments or governments etc., moreover this rise of populism affects the discursive practices of non-populist parties.

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[44] This can perhaps be contrasted with, say, some 19th century movements, and is the case despite some contemporary agents endorsing and seeking to positively reframe the populist label (e.g., Mark Rutte in the Netherlands).

According to Mudde, those adopted a rhetoric and ideas that increasingly resemble that of their populist challengers.

From this, then, the political contestation of populist invigoration to liberal-democratic political systems becomes evident. The recent wave of populism in Europe followed, enhances and (feeds back into) changes in the political culture of Western states. Departing from the claim of providing alternative solutions to urgent contemporary issues, populist activities pose several detrimental effects on their host systems. In the process thereof, populists endorse and uphold a particular set of ideas. In the following section, I introduce a definition of populism that is based on those distinct ideas and thereafter argue that those very ideas stand in a complete and irresolvable conflict with liberal democracy.

3.3. Defining Populism

As should be evident by now and as scholars, who increasingly turn to populism as a research subject (cf. Verbeek and Zaslove 2019: 2, Figure 1), tirelessly repeat to the degree of meta-commentary (for example, see Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 2 for the essentially contested nature of populism), populism is a diverse phenomenon and movements, politics and ideas associated with this label vary in many ways. Subsequently, the populist label is, in particular in politics, often employed in a diverse and somewhat arbitrary manner, sometimes as no more than a *Kampfbegriff* used for derogatory purposes (cf., e.g., Kaidatzis 2018: 1; Voßkuhle 2018: 119 f.).

That said, adequately framing the phenomenon is of high importance to the research agenda of this thesis. On the one hand, since the thesis is concerned with the ideational relationship between populism and liberal democracy, the framing should be capable of providing information about this dimension. On the other hand, the cases for the empirical investigation must not be selected ad hoc – otherwise, if it is not based on clear conceptual criteria, the whole analysis risks severe impairment.

In the following, therefore, I introduce the ideational definition of populism, which defines populism through a particular set of ideas and which I regard to provide the most appropriate framing for this thesis' research agenda. Before I engage in its depiction, however, it should be emphasised that, as Verbeek and Zaslove point out, while there are different conceptualisations of populism in the academic debate, which sometimes seem as differences "between irreconcilable camps", the different definitions of populism should rather be understood as complementary conceptualisations. By shedding light on different aspects of the phenomenon, they may, ideally, "lead to different, yet relevant and sometimes related, research questions" (Verbeek and Zaslove 2019: 5).

In my case, this means that simply because I employ a definition capturing populism's ideational content this does not imply that I do not believe that populism is also characterised along other dimensions (such as, say, particular discursive practices or the common features of populist leadership). Indeed, I very much think it is, and to understand the phenomenon in its multidimensionality those dimensions certainly need to be considered. I employ the ideational definition because it characterises populism on the same dimension as this thesis' research subject (populism's ideational relationship to liberal democracy). That said, in the course of this chapter it will become evident that populism's ideational definiens is connected to and has effects on other dimensions as well.

3.3.1. Ideational Definition of Populism

As noted in chapter 1, the ideational approach to populism seeks to define populism through its reference to specific ideas. While populism has often been associated with particular ideas in scholarly debates, the first and still most influential formal definition of populism in terms of ideas has been proposed by Cas Mudde as recently as 2004. Mudde defines populism:

"as *an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that*

politics should be an expression of the volonté générale *(general will) of the people.*"

(Mudde 2004: 543, emphasis in the original)

According to this definition, populists are agents who seek to (or claim to seek to) act in the name of the will of *the people*, which they take to adhere to in contrast to *the elite*, which, rather than realising the will of the people, follows its own special interests. On those positions, then, the people are assumed to form one homogenous block with an identifiable interest and will arising therefrom, and the elite another, such that the interests of the elite diverge from those of the (true) people. Assuming that political decisions ought to be responsive to the will of the people, the elite are considered illegitimate, since they allegedly act in their own rather than in the people's interest.[45] Note that this distinction between *the people* and *the elite* "is moral and not situational". Because of this, populists, through supposed compliance to the demands of the moral authority of the popular will, can be in power without counting themselves to the (corrupt) elite (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 12).

But who are the people and the elite? The advantage of Mudde's minimal definition is that for understanding the general ideas of populism those labels need not be specified – and indeed cannot be specified without excluding cases. For example, in some cases, the people may be roughly framed through class whereas in others it might be done through nationality. In any case, the people are not to be understood as an actual group of people, but instead are always an imagined community. As will be argued later, while this in a sense is a necessary feature of the notion's employment and in so far is not specific to populism, populism uses this characteristic strategically to delegitimise others (groups as well as other political agents), to reach power and to render itself untouchable by control mechanisms. Before turning to the conceptual elucidation of the populist notions of the people and the elites, however, it needs to

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[45] It is in light of this that populist groups often present themselves as *movements* (or *fronts* or *foundations*), even if some of them are parties (Müller 2016: 37; Wolkenstein 2019: 339).

be pointed out that, as this versatility of populist concepts might suggest, Mudde understands populism not as a full ideology:

> "Though populism is a distinct ideology, it does not possess 'the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency' as, for example, socialism or liberalism. Populism is only a 'thin-centred ideology', exhibiting 'a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts'. The core concept of populism is obviously 'the people'; in a sense, even the concept of 'the elite' takes its identity from it (being its opposite, its nemesis). As a thin-centred ideology, populism can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism." (Mudde 2004: 544)

If this characterisation of populism as a thin-centred ideology is accurate, the advantage of Mudde's minimal definition becomes even more evident, as it is able to capture the unique essence of populist ideas without being too narrow (say, by restricting it to ties with some but not with other full ideologies). Thus, adopting an ideational approach, in particular in its minimal version put forward by Mudde, seems methodologically advantageous. It avoids employing the term as a *Kampfbegriff* on the one hand and the term being too vague and hence applying to everyone or no one on the other hand (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 1). In doing so, the ideational approach is, amongst other things, more capable than others to account for populism's ideological malleability as well as the wide range of different entities associated with the populist label (cf. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 19 f.), since it "deliberately avoids conceiving of populism in terms of *specific* social bases, economic programmes, issues and electorates" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008a: 3, my emphasis).[46]

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[46] In particular, as Rovira Kaltwasser (2012: 194 f.) points out, the application of Mudde's minimal approach is not restricted to xenophobic or far right parties.

Furthermore, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser stress, a definition of populism is only adequate if it 1) can distinguish populism from non-populism (also cf. Laclau 2005a: 32) and 2) this non-populism exists/can be identified. Mudde's minimal definition meets those requirements. It indicates that, thus conceived, populism's opposite concepts *per definitionem* are elitism (because populism is anti-elitist), pluralism (because of populism's homogenous understanding of the people) and by extension also clientelism (because of populism's people-centrism and its focus on the general will of the people) (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 7 f.).

Note here that Mudde's minimal definition is not the only presently available ideational approach. Müller (2016), for example, put his own framing forward, which departs from Mudde's two conditions (anti-elitism, people-centrism) by adding anti-pluralism to ani-elitism (cf. Müller 2016: 2 f.). Müller is right – populism is anti-pluralistic. However, this, as the foregoing paragraph suggested, already follows from Mudde's minimal definition, given the homogenous understandings of the people (and the elite) his criteria are predicated on. The merit of Müller's amendment to the minimal definition, then, is that it explicated populism's anti-pluralism. That said, for the purposes of case selection through computer-based quantitative content analysis, I will adopt Mudde's criteria, because they can be better (and easier)[47] operationalised than anti-pluralism. For the theoretical argument reflecting populism's conceptual relation to liberal democracy, its anti-pluralism will be nevertheless considered.

Of course, Mudde's account has not remained uncontested. Paris Aslanidis (2016), for example, argues that, through its reliance on Freeden's (1996, 1998, 2001) framework of ideologies,[48] Mudde's approach overall lacks coherence and consistency and thus creates

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[47] That is, since populism's anti-pluralism is sealed in its understanding of the concepts of the people and their (general) will, and the elite, it cannot be easily identified through quantitative analysis at the word-level. Instead, the qualitative discourse analysis in part II will likely bring this anti-pluralism in its concrete manifestations in populist movements in the EU to light.
[48] See Rovira Kaltwasser (2012: 195; 2014: 478) for the elucidation of the roots of Mudde's minimal definition of populism in the work of Freeden.

unnecessary problems for conceptual work on populism. Instead, Aslanidis, following Ernesto Laclau, suggests understanding populism through its reference to the people and the antagonistic logic of discourse it follows (Aslanidis 2016: 97).

I cannot elucidate the details of this critique and provide a full scrutiny of Freeden's framework here. Instead, it suffices to emphasise that – even if Aslanidis' methodological and conceptual concerns are warranted and, in itself, Freeden's framework leans towards incoherence and inconsistency (which is not obvious by any means) – understanding populism primarily through a set of ideas does neither formally necessitate the reliance on the notions of thin or full ideology nor understanding populism as an ideology in the first place.

Hence, I do not regard Aslanidis' critique as impairing the usefulness of an ideational understanding of populism. In fact, while populism certainly often adopts a specific discursive logic, this very logic can be far better understood if firstly the ideas it facilitates are pointed out, for they provide explanatory grounds to several other aspects. As Verbeek and Zaslove have emphasised, in utilising "the notion of thin-centred ideology, we can ignore opportunism, we can allow for strategy [...], we can study voters, politicians, movements as well as parties" (Verbeek and Zaslove 2019: 6).

Another critique of the ideational approach worth discussing was put forward by Pappas in his seminal comparative study (Pappas 2019).[49] One of Pappas' key criticisms can be summarised as follows: populism, defined through the ideational approach presented above, 1) does not feature meaningful – or correctly constructed – opposite concepts, and, in parts because of that, 2) fails to properly distinguish between populist and non-populist cases.

Regarding the opposite concepts, Pappas holds that a) "elitism" is irrelevant as a distinguishing factor, because it factually plays no role in today's politics, neither as a distinct

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[49] In fact, Pappas presents a critique of aall major approaches, which define populism based on a particular aspect, be it ideology, discourse, style etc. (see Pappas 2019: 24 ff.).

party type nor as a group of ideas (Pappas 2019: 29), and b) "pluralism" is wrongly identified due to an incorrect synonymy of "anti-pluralism" with "monism", so that a more fitting opposite concept would be "manyness" (Pappas 2019: 30). Regarding the ideational approach's ability to distinguish between populist and non-populist cases, Pappas argues that, since the opposing concepts are dysfunctional and almost all political parties express some sort of favourable opinion of the people (Pappas 2019: 27 f.), it would ultimately likely be the case that quite different types of political agents, such as Hitler or Mussolini, would have to be erroneously classified as populist (Pappas 2019: 65 f.).

While discussing the entirety of his in many ways insightful account is outside of the scope of this thesis, I believe that the points above misrepresent the ideational approach and, hence, effectively fail. First, the critique of "elitism" and "pluralism" is misguided because it misrepresents the content these concepts are meant to capture. Regarding "elitism", it is not about elitist parties or elitist ideas in the sense discussed by Pappas, but, instead, about the basic belief that a differentiated society necessitates the existence of certain positions which are filled with competence or expertise, that those come into existence with society (and the market economy) becoming more complex and that this is not a bad thing, but a precondition of the effectiveness of their operations. Elitism in this sense may be part of the concepts Pappas discussed, the inclusion the other way around, however, does not follow. Regarding "pluralism", in turn, it is less about there being many instead of only one set of ideas (or one agent bringing those about), but rather about the commitment that the existing "manyness" is legitimate and has a right to exist under conditions of equality and fairness. Populists may want to arrive at a polity where only one set of ideas (the purported people's will) and one political agent committed to them (themselves) exist, but the reason for this is the rejection of the other ideas' and agents' legitimacy. Due to this, pluralism remains better suited than "manyness" as an opposite concept.

Finally, Pappas' critique that the ideational approach tends to misclassify does not pay due respect to the particularities of the approach as presented above. That is, and as will be one of the guiding factors to be considered throughout the thesis, populism under the ideational approach can be present to a greater or lesser degree and be jointly present with other sets of ideas (cf. thin-centred vs. full ideology). It is not a Boolean property. Accordingly, to stay with Pappas' example, the claim that Hitler would be misclassified as populist cannot be left standing. First, it would need to be pointed out that we are talking about the extent to which Hitler could be considered populist, not about a yes or no. The answer to this is strictly empirical and would have to be carefully investigated, particularly given the position of power and the totalitarian character of Nazi regime. Second, it needs to be reiterated that, even though this contradicts Pappas' definition of populism as democratic illiberalism (Pappas 2019: 3),[50] populism, on the ideational approach, can principally coexist with other ideologies, including authoritarian ones. Just because a political agent is classified as a fascist or a National Socialist, does not mean that this agent is not *also* populist (to some degree at least). This is surely not always (and perhaps only very rarely) the case, but ultimately an empirical question, too. In any case, the all-applicableness of the people-centrism Pappas criticises dissolves by the latest once the property is actually operationalised and agents evaluated based on this operationalised concept in ways adequate to the specificities of the cases under analysis.

To summarise, on the ideational definition of populism adopted in this chapter, populism is understood through its endorsement of a particular set of ideas, which are anti-elitist and people-centric, and conceptually based on a homogenous understanding of the people, an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite, which is not part of the people, and the former's moral superiority over the latter. Departing therefrom, populists hold that political

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[50] I return to discussing Pappas' view on the relationship of populism to democracy and authoritarianism in part III of the thesis.

decisions should be made in a way that complies to the will of the people and not to that of elites. Conceptually flexible, populism can be adopted from different ideological standpoints and thus arises across the left-right political spectrum with subsequently varying contentual identifications of who the people and the elites are.

Based on this understanding of populism, I will argue in the next section that populism is incompatible with liberal democracy as it stands in irresolvable tension with (and thus potentially threatens) both of its pillars, i.e., liberal-democratic rule of law and popular sovereignty expressed through representative democracy. In turn, it yields radical political potentialities, and is far-reaching, covering dimensions of social organisation beyond the political.

3.4. The Relation of Populism to Liberal Democracy

In the following, I will scrutinise the conceptual relation of populism, framed through the ideational approach, to liberal democracy.

The common wisdom is that "populism is essentially democratic, but at odds with *liberal* democracy" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 81). That is, populism rejects, to a degree, the liberal pillar of liberal democracy, yet only to even more strongly emphasise its democratic pillar. It accepts popular sovereignty and democracy, but rejects liberal value commitments and the rule of law (cf. Galston 2018a: 11; see for this characterisation of populism, e.g., Plattner 2010: 87).

Regarding the latter, then, it is commonly held that, while there are some tensions between populism and democracy and the former can damage the latter, there is also important improvement potential. Indeed, populism is often portrayed as some sort of reaction to deficiencies in the political culture of liberal democracies, which result in the decrease of trust in political elites and growing resentment or disinterest in politics altogether, thus damaging the liveliness of democracy. By addressing those deficiencies, populism can, some hold, lead

to a revival of democratic spirits. Plattner (2010: 88), for example, suggested that populism can take a constructive role by preventing an overemphasis of the first, liberal pillar of liberal democracy at the costs of its democratic elements through a sort of "'wake-up call' to elites and public officials". Similarly, Laclau (2005b) argued that populism can facilitate democratisation through the inclusion of previously excluded groups.

Against this backdrop, as Verbeek and Zaslove point out, populism, being a challenger to prevailing elites, is often identified with "*anti-incumbent*, *anti-establishment*, and/or *anti-mainstream*" tendencies, yet is usually not linked to "anti-system" aspirations per se (Verbeek and Zaslove 2019: 6, emphasis in the original). It is considered "an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 116; for a *definition* of populism as democratic illiberalism, see Pappas 2019).[51] This is also the perspective populists seek to be viewed from, presenting "themselves not as threats to Western European democracy, but as its saviours" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008a: 2) by returning the power back to the people.

This story is certainly plausible, but is it also true? Here, doubt is warranted. If populism is essentially democratic, albeit illiberal, why does its manifestation in political systems have lasting detrimental effects on democracy? For example, as can be extrapolated from the literature reviewed in Daly (2019), there is some evidence that populist activities in politics are facilitating a democratic decay; Carothers and Samet-Marram (2015), and Mounk (2018) have more generally argued that the very model of liberal democracy is decaying; Ruth-Lovell et al. concluded their empirical integrated study of the effects of populism in government on democracy with the suggestion that while "populist governments tend to erode the level of the electoral, liberal and deliberative model of democracy" there is no "positive relationship of

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[51] Relatedly, see also Wolkenstein (2019) who seeks to harbour populism's positive effects while limiting its negative impact on liberal democracy by constructing an ethics for populism, which is supposed to render it compatible with liberal democracy.

populist-led governments with respect to egalitarian or participatory aspects of democracy" (Ruth-Lovell et al. 2019: 24);[52] and Andreas Voßkuhle (2018: 122 ff.), former president of the German constitutional court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), has argued that populism is in conflict with the very notion of democracy enshrined in the German constitution (*Grundgesetz*).[53]

I argue that this is because populism is essentially incompatible with liberal democracy as such: populism's potential for improvement in terms of democracy is highly contingent, and only mediated, but is not a core property of populism. In the remainder of this section, I argue from a conceptual analysis that, quite to the contrary, populism not just rejects liberal democracy's liberal pillar but that it also *necessarily undermines democracy*. That is: populism is *at its core* anti-democratic, even though in the course of populist discourse entering politics some side effects of it might be *instrumentally* beneficial to democracy, and notwithstanding the fact that populist politicians themselves typically claim the mantle of democratic legitimacy. In this sense, populism is a comprehensive contestation to both pillars of liberal democracy.

I first elaborate why populism is anti-liberal in the sense that it is incompatible with and rejects liberal-democratic rule of law and thereafter argue that, against this background, populism results in anti-democratic tendencies. Thereafter, through an engagement with the work of Eric Voegelin, I argue that populism is structurally similar to totalitarian ideologies and hence leaves the door open for extreme political measures. I close by reflecting on the

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[52] Subsequently, the authors suggest "that the consequence of populist governments is not a decoupling of liberalism and democracy. Rather, what we are seeing under some populist governments is a decline of liberalism, deliberation and the electoral core of democracy. At the same time, populist governments do not live up to their promise of substantially improving and rejuvenating democracy as indicated by the absence of positive changes on the democracy indices" (Ruth-Lovell et al. 2019: 24).

[53] See furthermore Ginsburg et al. (2018: 241) for an overview of norms both left- and right-wing populists have parted with.

multidimensional scope of populism's implications, in particular considering the social and economic dimension of liberal democracy.

Note that, while I argue that populism's anti-liberal character is a reason for its ultimately anti-democratic character, this does not presuppose the assumption of a particular relation between liberal democracy's liberal and democratic pillar. Hence, I refrain from taking a stance on whether both pillars are co-existent, or whether the one is prior to and a condition of the other (or vice versa), or whether both are independent of each other. Instead, it suffices for my purposes in this chapter to establish that, whatever both pillars' general relation to each other, in light of populism's specific ideational properties, populism's rejection of the liberal pillar coincides with and, in a sense, facilitates its anti-democratic quality.

3.4.1. Populism as Anti-Liberal

It has been noted in the previous subsection that, according to the mainstream view on populism, populism rejects liberal democracy's liberal pillar as an illegitimate constraint on democracy. In what follows, I seek to provide an in-depth analysis of populism's anti-liberal stance. In particular, I trace this back to populism's core properties of people-centrism and anti-elitism and to the notions of the people which operate in populist ideational systems.

Populism's rejection of liberal democracy's first pillar of (liberal) rule of law occurs on two levels. On the first level, populism rejects the very concept of rule *of* law (and not rule *by* law) as an independent control mechanism that binds politics procedurally or contentually. To understand this nature, it is best to start at populism's main commitment: that the highest good is the will of the people, to which politics must respond. According to the populist reading, this implies that, as Rovira Kaltwasser put it, "once 'the people' have spoken, nothing should constrain the implementation of its will" (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 195). Because of this, populism rejects the rule of law, for it takes it to illegitimately constrain democracy in its populist understanding, and with it the realisation of the popular will (cf. Galston 2018a: 11).

After all, rule of law – in whatever meaningful sense – introduces constraints to the permissible range of action of political authorities (whatever their composition). These, at the very least, include procedural principles that authorities must comply with as well as effective control mechanisms, such as the separation of powers, which lie beyond the authorities' immediate reach.

It should be noted that this stance also has a moral extension, which in a sense relates to the Rousseauian idea of the infallibility of the general will touched upon in chapter 2. Similarly, the populist assumption of the unquestioned moral superiority of the people (cf. Mudde 2004: 543 f.; Müller 2016: 19 f.) and, subsequently, the moral authority of anything that reflects that will and is in turn imbued with corresponding authority render constraints to democratic procedures that would realise this will not only illegitimate, but also unnecessary. In other words, if the will of the people is always morally virtuous, then constraints thereto are at best unnecessary and at worst morally vile. Considering populism's anti-elitist attitude, alleging that established political authorities act to further special interests and thus against the will of the people, means in turn that the populist critique of liberal democracy openly endorses the latter alternative. (I return to the assumed moral authority of the will of the people in my discussion of populism's anti-democratic character below.)

There is, however, a deeper level of the populist rejection of liberal rule of law which goes beyond the rule of law simpliciter. This second level is directed specifically at the *liberal* understanding of the rule of law, i.e. contentual constraints of the rule of law being informed by (liberal) values associated with individual rights. This second level of rejection is also linked to the supreme value of the popular will, but more specifically is rooted in populism's particular understanding of *the people*.

There are several understandings of the people that can be encountered in political traditions. Here, three are of particular interest: the people as *citizens*, the people as a *nation*,

and the people as a *class*. Of those three understandings, the latter two are exclusionary and hence only the first one compatible with liberal democracy (cf. Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008a: 15 f.). After all, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, the people of liberal democracy are not only constituted by the entirety of citizens (cf. Galston 2018a: 11) but furthermore enjoy genuine and equal individual rights as citizens or human beings. Of course, the boundary problem, i.e., the question who belongs to the people (cf. Wolkenstein 2019: 334; see also Whelan 1983), is not resolved by this notion of the people. Hence, it continues to exist in liberal democracies, yet is relocated to formal (i.e., legally defined and therefore amendable) criteria of citizenship with some individual rights being independent of membership of the citizenry altogether.

In contrast, the "line between those who belong to the people and those who don't" is supposedly very clearly drawn by populists (Wolkenstein 2019: 334; see also Rovira Kaltwasser 2014: 479 ff.) by reference to a non-legal, more intimate notion of the people. This notion is based on a (presumed) mutual belonging, often incorporating elements from class, nation or other assumed substantial grounds of cultural, economic or historical similarity. In doing so, the populist notion of the people is both homogenous and exclusive, and thus incompatible with liberal values and subsequently with liberal rule of law, as it contravenes the equal provisions and application those demand.

On the one hand, the populist notion of the people is homogenous, because it assumes that, based on that relevant characteristic, the individuals constituting the people are essentially a group with the same (or sufficiently similar) interests and wills, deduced from the mutual belonging to the same category. Note that this contrasts with the liberal-democratic notion of the people because the formal criteria of citizenship do not assert a homogeneity of interests etc.

On the other hand, the populist notion of the people, whatever the concrete category of belonging it relies on, is exclusive because the people's construction in terms of a particular deep, pre-legal similarity not only clearly contrasts with groups not belonging to it, but also does not provide an entry point. That is, if one does not belong to the people, since one lacks (or has forfeited) the relevant identificatory property, affiliation with the people is permanently out of reach. Entry points, like naturalisation on the liberal-democratic notion, do not exist, for this would mean the alteration of one's historical, economic, social and cultural origins, which on the populist view is impossible.

Following this logic, then, it is not surprising that populism is based on a dichotomous distinction of the populace between those who do and those who do not belong to the people, whereby the latter are irredeemably identified as the elites and aliens (cf. Galston 2018a: 11 f.; see also Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008a: 5 for the people vs. elites from above and associated others from below). This, then, according to the populist logic, "implies that some parts of the population, because they are not really part of the people, [...] may [...] be excluded from equal citizenship" (Galston 2018a: 12). As a consequence, "rising political actors are beginning to question key liberal-democratic principles such as the rule of law, freedom of the press, and minority rights" (Galston 2018a: 8 f.), more generally individual rights (e.g., Mastropaolo 2008: 33), and yield corrosive effects on human rights (see Alston 2017).

This is the reason why populism is necessarily incompatible with liberal democracy's pillar of liberal rule of law. If the people are the central entity, institutional boundaries to the expression of their will are illegitimate. Moreover, if a part of the populace does not truly belong to the people, then not only is rule of law as such to be rejected but so is the very idea of them having genuine individual rights. After all, either someone belongs to the people and her interests are, because of the people's homogeneity, already reflected in the popular will or

someone does not, in which case providing rights to that individual would restrict the scope of the authority of the popular will and thus be illegitimate.

In democratically organised states, there is always a delicate relationship between majority will and individual liberty (cf. Plattner 2010: 83 ff.), which are expressed in liberal democracy's two pillars.[54] On liberal-democratic accounts, weighing this relationship is a continuous political task – through democratic procedures on the one hand and the reflection of what values and principles the rule of law ought to secure on the other. Potential tensions notwithstanding, the consensus of liberal democracy is that both pillars are indispensable. For populism, however, the (alleged) tension between the two pillars is unilaterally resolved by an absolute elevation of the popular will – individual liberty, and its legal guarantees through the formal equality rule of law provides, vanishes to a contingent status.

Populism rejects liberal-democratic rule of law by scraping legal equality through the rejection of individual rights. In rejecting any constraints to the popular will and in distributing rights not on the basis of personhood, but on the basis of belonging to "the people", populism not only rejects liberal rule of law but departs from liberal democracy's citizenship focused individualistic creed altogether. In short: populism is inherently collectivistic[55] in nature, for value is distributed from the collective value of the popular will. It is this very collectivistic commitment to a homogenous people and the superordinate authority of their will which renders populism in deep conflict with liberal democracy.

From this alone, however, it does not immediately become clear that populism is also anti-democratic and hence rejects liberal democracy's second pillar, too. Showing this is the task of the next subsection.

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[54] Mouffe (2005: 52 f.), for example, argued that those two are at an irresolvable tension. This is also clearly the populist view.
[55] Note that I use the label collectivistic (as the opposite of individualistic) to describe the fact that for populism moral status and rights are distributed "top-down" from a collective entity (the people) to the individual, qua the individual's belonging to this entity on which the status of the individual is conditioned. In contrast, in liberal democracies, individuals enjoy genuine individual rights.

3.4.2. Populism as Anti-Democratic

So far, it has been argued that populism is at odds with the first pillar of liberal democracy –
the rule of law in general and its liberal contentual commitments in particular. This by itself is
in line with the mainstream wisdom that populism poses a contestation to *liberal* democracy,
but not to democracy as such. Thus, it might be said that populism's corrosive effect on liberal
rule of law does not transmit to democracy because it is rejected precisely to alleviate
(allegedly) illegitimate constraints to democratic practices, which would otherwise risk being
unable to adequately relate to the popular will. Indeed, Plattner, for example, has emphasised
that, given solely the anti-liberal perspective of populism, as it has been depicted in the previous
subsection, "[p]opulism remains democratic in the majoritarian sense, in that it justifies itself
as the agent and the embodiment of the people as a whole—excluding, of course, the corrupt
and privileged elite and its agents" (Plattner 2010: 88). In what follows, I will argue that this
view is wrong and that populism does not simply reject liberal rule of law and otherwise
remains committed to democracy (say, a majoritarian democracy without limits to democratic
decision making such as minority rights etc.), but that it has inherent anti-democratic
tendencies, which are facilitated by its anti-liberal character.

The classic view on the populist challenge to democratic structures is that populism wants
politics to respond more directly to the popular will and, in order to do so, dismantle
representative structures which constitute the mode of democracy usually found in liberal
democracies. Without those, elites, who do not adequately respond to the people's general will,
are no longer in the way of the realisation of the people' sovereignty – or so the story goes.

Here, the focus needs to be put again on the populist notion of the people, albeit on
another characteristic thereof. That is, the story of a sovereign people, who directly bring their
will about through majoritarian democratic action, assumes the existence of a concrete group
of individuals of which the people consist, i.e. an overwhelming "flesh and blood" majority of

the populace sharing some sort of relevant identificatory characteristics. But, as has been noted, the people to which populism refers are not an actual group of existing individuals (cf., e.g., Comaroff 2011: 102, referring to Rancière et al. 2001: Thesis 5). More precisely, populism relies on the revelation of an identity when it constructs the people, which not only is exclusive and homogenous, as the last subsection has argued, but also imagined. Müller has identified the people's imagined character with the assumption of its moral superiority:

> "Populism, I suggest, is a particular *moralistic imagination of politics*, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified—but, I shall argue, ultimately fictional-people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior." (Müller 2016: 19 f., emphasis in the original, see also fn. 26)

In doing so, populism constructs the people not politically or programmatically. The people are not real existing individuals with particular properties but an imagined community of pure moral status, which shares those properties but is not limited in terms of their contingency in the actual populace.

It is by moving the construction of the people to the area of imagination how the notion of the people can remain coherent in its assumption of the people's homogeneity. The people to which populism refers are thus "neither real nor all-inclusive, but [...] a mythical constructed sub-set of the whole population" (Mudde 2004: 546). Real individuals are, of course, not homogenous, even if they share some identity properties. However, the people to whom populism refers are – and this is precisely because they are not constructed from real individuals but from a hypothetical, imagined community, and thus in a construction process during which individual characteristics are dissolved. The moral distinction between the people and the elite or associated others, then, is based on this assumed identity as well and not on a moral evaluation of the behaviour or beliefs of real agents, as Mudde correctly observed in his reflections on populism's minimal ideational definition:

"Populism is moralistic rather than programmatic. Essential to the discourse of the populist is the *normative* distinction between 'the elite' and 'the people', not the empirical difference in behaviour or attitudes. Populism presents a Manichean outlook, in which there are only friends and foes. Opponents are not just people with different priorities and values, they are *evil*! Consequently, compromise is impossible, as it 'corrupts' the purity." (Mudde 2004: 544, emphasis in the original)

This imagined exclusive nature of a homogenous people with moral superiority instrumentally plays a role in populism's anti-democratic character. As has been noted before, the notion of the people is *always* constructed. If *any* political agent speaks of the people, the agent does not just speak of some group of individuals but constructs the group based on a certain understanding of what is characteristic or important for the persons which are meant to be denoted by such a notion. It, too, is not untypical that in political discourse political agents frame the people so that the own political demands and the presupposed view of the people are in harmony. This way, political action is justified, and the voters are meant to obtain a feeling of their matters being cared for. What is different with the populist notion of the people is that it is on the one hand strategically employed to categorically delegitimise other political agents, render oneself immune to critique and withdraw oneself from the reach of control mechanisms, and that on the other hand the notion's construction supports this strategical deployment, since the notion is morally laden with a clear distinction between good and evil.

It is easy to see how the populist notion of the people supports the delegitimisation of other political agents in general, and competitors and critics in particular. The populist a priori links oneself to the will of the people and hence, through the advocacy for the will of the people, presents oneself to always be on the right side, to always act it the interests of the people and thus to always be legitimate. By contrast, other political agents are linked to the elite (or others not belonging to the people) and subsequently to the promotion of interests conflicting with

those of the people. Therefore, the political activity of others, and specifically them wielding political power, checking or criticising the populist, is framed as illegitimate. It is important to note that this delegitimisation is employed categorically and not based on actual political disagreement – to reiterate Mudde's words from above, the populist modus operandi in this sense is not "programmatic" (Mudde 2004: 544). By this means, populists establish their own moral superiority over other political agents (who, similarly, remain "indeterminate at a structural level" (Reyes 2005: 106)), defend themselves against critique, and justify their actions, whatever those may be. Under such conditions, political deliberation to identify a sensible course for political action no longer plays a role, since it is replaced by a moral assertion, one-sidedly and strategically employed by the populist.

Now, it may seem that in a democratic structure such a strategy must necessarily be limited in situations where the popular vote (or, to a less impactful degree, polls) suggests that the populist enjoys less support than others. However, in such situations, too, the same strategy, albeit adjusted to these unfavourable conditions, is employed. That is, where election or poll results suggest that populist parties or their demands are not supported by the electorate (or less supported than their competitors), the populist moves the claim of (alleged) popular support – after all, an indicator of being aligned to the popular interest – to a locus unreachable by any practical evaluation. That is, in such situations, populists simply claim that a "silent majority" supports them (cf. Müller 2016: 27). And for this precisely the fact that the people always are constructed is utilised, as it is pointed out that the persons who voted, were polled etc. are not the majority of, or are not part of the true people out there.

Here, explanations of why this true majority remains silent are readily available to the populists, as they can always be somehow tied to the distinction between the powerful, but morally bad elite and the virtuous but suffering people. For example, they may claim that the elite and its afficionados disadvantage active supporters of the populists and thus intimidate the

people to the extent that they are forced into remaining silent to not be penalised.[56] They could also complain that the elite and its collaborating media have alienated the people from their true self and hence disabled them from perceiving what actually is in their own interest. In any case, populists may hold that "*virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions*" (Wiles 1969: 166, emphasis in the original; see also Arditi 2005: 74), but this overwhelming albeit silent majority does not correspond to actual majoritarian decision making when it becomes inconvenient.

In light of this, the claim that populism seeks to render democracy more directly connected to the popular will needs to be revisited. Since populism employs the notion of the people strategically and considers indicators of popular opinion only where it is beneficial, its favourability of direct democracy is not earnest, and flexible. Populists may demand referenda or plebiscites and use their results, if they support their narratives, but may otherwise fall back to the "silent majority" line of defence, where those do not turn out as they hoped. It is hence not surprising that the populist commitment to direct democratic elements fades quickly once populist parties manage to secure positions of power (see Müller 2016). In other words, the legitimacy of political authority is practically rendered independent of whether democracy is representative or direct in structure, but instead is answered by whether the populist is supported or opposed, and this can be claimed without direct conceptual incoherence, because the people are (always) constructed in the first place. If some democratic decision yields results favourable to the populists, they claim that the people have spoken, but, if not, the decision is reduced to the expression of the mere sum of the wills of some concrete persons, which does not truly represent that of the people.

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[56] In fact, in the qualitative content analysis that follows, it has been observed that populist parties employ this theme that they and their supporters are unfairly treated by the establishment (see Appendix 3).

The foregoing elaborations yield consequences which render populism decidedly corrosive to democracy. Firstly, because the main reference point of political legitimacy is the hypothetical will of an imagined community of moral superiority, the criteria for the legitimacy of political action is moved from the complex level of political debate and reality to the level of a particular and narrow conception of morality which draws bright line distinctions between those who are deemed on the right or the wrong side of any disagreement. This level of morality, however, is perfectly clear, since the homogenous construction of the people knows no variations. Subsequently, political debate and democratic deliberation become obsolete at best, and actively immoral and indeed treacherous at worst.

Secondly, departing from this idea that morally demanded political actions are self-evident, populists, by their own definition of acting according to the will of the people, claim to adequately respond to those demands. They contrast themselves with other political agents, who, instead of endorsing the populist agenda, engage in political deliberation etc., are delegitimised as corrupted elites, who do not adequately respond to the general will against their better knowledge. After all, what should be done is presented as obvious by populists, and as the choice is ultimately a moral one, those who do not do what morality dictates must, *ipso facto*, themselves be morally compromised, and all of their action *ipso facto* suspect.

Consequently, populists do not tolerate any sort of opposition or disagreement. The notion of the people is strategically employed to mark any disagreement to them (presented as the obvious will of the people) as illegitimate by the very fact of the disagreement. In combination with populism's rejection of the rule of law and limitations to the scope of political authority (provided that it is directed by the will of the people), populism implies that those, who through opposition or disagreement to them have been identified as elements alien to the true people, have essentially forfeited their moral status and thus must be excluded from political involvement. Legal protections are redundant or illegitimate and those who act against

the supreme popular will rightly receive the full scope of retaliation, without the protection of both procedural and contential individual rights (which are themselves an illegitimate constraint on the will of the people).

In separating the populace into two heteronomous groups (the people vs. elites) and in radicalising the permissible scope of political intervention against those who do not belong to the people (i.e., those who oppose the populists or who the populists disfavour), populism is one of the starkest manifestations of the friend-enemy distinction put forward by Carl Schmitt. Hence, it is no surprise that Voßkuhle (2018: 122), for example, identifies as the central source of conflict between populism and the German *Rechtsstaat* this very populist idea that there is an absolute, self-evident moral truth that populists, through consultation of an imagined monolithic people, identify and bring about. Via this assumption, populists place themselves, and in turn their use of political authority, outside of any demands for discursive justification, which usually frame political deliberation in liberal democracies.[57]

This is not to say that populism necessarily equals the political radicality of autocracy: Populism, at least in opposition, calls for plebiscitary democratic elements to be strengthened, and in its political actions often relies at least on some sort of institutional structures associated with liberal democracy. But, as the next subsection establishes, this is a contingency which is due to the resilience of liberal democratic structures and institutions,[58] rather than due to the logic behind populism's political vision.

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[57] Note that the culmination of populism in this idea incompatible with democracy is facilitated by and based on several properties which on their own already suggest the departure from established visions of liberal democracy. Those properties include, beside the absolute truth, the homogeneity of the people, an identification instead of representation, an obscure (moralistic) call instead of a free political mandate, as well as *Gleichschaltung* instead of effective opposition (Voßkuhle 2018: 122 ff.).

[58] For example, Ruth-Lovell et al. suggest in their recent analysis that "more mature democracies are less prone to the deteriorating effects of populist rule" (Ruth-Lovell et al. 2019: 24).

3.4.3. Populism as Radical

To see populism's far reaching potential regarding the use of political authority, the mechanism of the framing populism puts forward needs to be considered. Here, the similarities between populism and ideational appendages encountered in totalitarian regimes are of particular interest. To motivate this comparison, first a few words need to be said on totalitarianism and its relationship with ideology.

Totalitarianism is widely considered a type of political system, in which all power is held by a single authority, which is itself outside of any control, and where no threshold to the reach of the authority's power exists, neither in scope nor in scale.[59] Understood this way, totalitarianism is commonly distinguished from (mere) authoritarianism in the group of autocratic (i.e. non-democratic) political systems. In contrast to totalitarianism, in authoritarianism the authority is mainly concerned with the conservation of its political rule and hence seeks to deprive the populace "of a voice in politics" (Pipes 1993: 272), yet does otherwise not strive for control over every aspect of social life beyond the political (Loewenstein 1957; Linz 1985, 2000; Merkel 1999; Pipes 1993).[60]

While different analyses exist regarding the detailed characteristics of totalitarian systems (see, e.g., Arendt 1958; Aron 1968; Bracher 1976; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956; Linz 2000; Merkel 1999; Pipes 1993),[61] there is common agreement that ideology employed by the

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[59] The term was first used by the Italian liberal opposition politician Giovanni Amendola in 1923 to criticise the rule of Mussolini (Merkel 1999: 44; Petersen 1995: 104; Pipes 1993: 243). Carl Schmitt (2015/1932) provided a legal dimension appertaining to a totalitarian system.

[60] Note that, here, this distinction between types of political systems refers to totalitarianism and authoritarianism as ideal types. In reality, totalitarianism, as an extreme sub type of autocratic systems, can be quite difficult to distinguish from authoritarianism (cf. Merkel 1999: 54). If political systems were to be put on a continuum depending on the specifics of the political rule characteristic for them, full democracy and totalitarianism could be considered as poles or endpoints of the continuum, with defunct democracy and authoritarianism being located between these poles (cf. Merkel 1999: 33; Sartori 1992: 203).

[61] For example, whereas Merkel (1999: 25) defines totalitarianism based on six criteria (legitimation of rule, access to rule, monopoly of rule, structure of rule, claim to rule and ways of rule), Graf Kielmansegg (1974: 324), in a rather minimal manner, puts merely three criteria forward (the monopolistic concentration of power in a central authority, the unlimited scope of the authority's power, and the unlimited scale of the authority's power to sanction), even though both depart from a critique of Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956), whose account they deem too rigid and hence unable to properly describe or explain changes of the political system.

ruling authority plays an important role in them. Although it is contested to what extent the ideologies employed by authorities give rise to genuine (ideological) goals of their own (see, e.g., Arendt 1958 vs. Graf Kielmansegg 1974),[62] it has been frequently pointed out that ideology serves important instrumental purposes in totalitarian systems (Arendt 1958; Bracher 1976; Linz 2000; Merkel 1999; Pipes 1993; Popper 1945). I speak of totalitarian ideologies to describe such official, comprehensive ideologies employed by authorities in totalitarian states.

Here, the core function of totalitarian ideologies can be considered that they are used to rule the individuals "from within" (Arendt 1958: 325; cf. also Popper 1945: 57), and so ultimately to facilitate control over all aspects of the social life. Whereas coercion and terror are included in the repertoire of totalitarians to dominate the populace from outside, ideology is specifically employed to alter their thoughts, morals, actions (Merkel 1999: 45) and, in a sense even perception of reality.[63] Through this, the totalitarian authority, on the one hand, can give itself the illusion (from the individuals' perspective: reality) of legitimacy (including the power it holds and the actions it makes, cf., e.g., Merkel 1999: 28; Aron 1968). On the other, ideology allows the authority to more effective organise (Arendt 1958: 308) and mobilise (Linz 2000: 164) the masses for whatever goal it decides. Individual rights and freedoms, as any other conceivable constraints to the power of the totalitarian authority, are abolished (Merkel 1999: 63; cf. also Aron 1968; Friedrich and Brzezisnki 1956; Graf Kielmansegg 1974). It is noteworthy that those restrictions, or the very totalitarian control, is encapsulated in a future-orientation of totalitarian ideologies: all action performed by the authority and all adversities the populace faces are necessary to bring about a bright future (cf. Merkel 1999: 64; Pipes 1993: 286; see also Arendt, 1958; Popper 1945). The ideology employed presents the authority as infallible and puts forth "answers to all questions of private and public life" (Merkel 1999:

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[62] The question whether ideology in totalitarian systems plays only an instrumental role or gives rise to goals which are ends in themselves can remain unanswered here.
[63] In contrast to rule from outside by direct coercion.

271). In the process of this, (intrinsic) support of the masses is generated (Pipes 1993: 262), and the (false) perception of the individuals' connection to the authority and "total immersion in the community" the authority heads and administers is promoted (Pipes 1993: 271), [64] thus fully embedding the individual in the whole (whose one and only infallible arbiter is the authority).

The claim put forth in this subsection is that populism is, ideationally understood, structurally similar to totalitarian ideologies. Here, it is important to emphasise that structurally similar does not mean equal. It is not argued that populism *is* a totalitarian ideology. This would on the one hand conceptually constitute a false equivalence, since populism was in the foregoing elucidation presented as a thin-centred ideology whereas totalitarian ideologies, following the accounts above, are comprehensive and in this sense full ideologies. And on the other hand, it would suggest that every and all populists seek to abolish democracy and establish a totalitarian rule. Likewise, it is not argued that totalitarian ideologies are always populist. My claim here is much more modest. That is, I argue that populism follows the same logic, which, under the right (or better: wrong) circumstances may allow populists to (ideologically) break very far away from democracy into autocratic territory, and that the distance they may thus traverse is not restricted by ideational properties of populism (ideological constraints) but only by external factors, such as the agents' full ideology, institutional resilience, public sentiments etc.

The comparison between populism and totalitarian ideologies is motivated by both, the similarities of the function ideology plays for those putting it forward (the populist or the totalitarian authority) as well as by the ideational properties coinciding with or originating therefrom. As to the function, it has been elucidated how both populists and totalitarians use

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[64] According to Pipes, in this respect ideology plays a similar role as mass spectacles orchestrated by the authorities (Pipes 1993: 271).

ideology to delegitimise others, frame themselves as the only truly legitimate political force, and withdraw themselves from any control mechanisms. As to the ideational properties of those ideologies coinciding with this, both populism and totalitarian ideologies are rendered anti-plural, and frame the populace as a single, monolithic community, in whose interest they act and outside of which no legitimate agency exists. Of course, the position within the political system proponents of totalitarian ideologies hold (i.e., totalitarian rulers in totalitarian systems),[65] as well as the extent to which they are able and willing to span their control over the entirety of the polity, including the measures employed for this purpose, differs strongly from those of populists in liberal democracies. Nonetheless – or, perhaps, even more so – the structural similarities between both groups of ideologies are striking and warrant a closer examination.

For this closer examination, it is helpful to consult the work of Eric Voegelin, in particular his seminal work *Die Politischen Religionen* (the political religions) (Voegelin 1993/1938), which he originally put forward to provide an ideational analysis of totalitarianism and through this explain the rise of Nazism (see Voegelin 1993/1938: 5 ff.). The work of Voegelin is considered relevant and thus used as an analytical lens, because it draws attention to distinct ideational characteristics of certain forms of collectivism, which, in light of the preceding analysis, some traits of populism appear to resemble. Note that, while Voegelin, as to the approach taken, engages in a historical-ideational analysis of its own kind that in this sense expands the body of knowledge on totalitarianism, the characteristics of totalitarianism and totalitarian ideologies it produces harmonise well with the assessments of other authors presented above. While providing a comprehensive depiction of Voegelin's analysis of

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[65] Note that the sum of totalitarian ideologies, which exist or existed in history, is quite small, with the most prominent cases being National Socialism, Stalinism, and (Italian) Fascism. As pointed out by Pipes (1993: 278), those three differed not so much regarding their use of "different philosophies" but rather due to tactical amendments made to those in light if "contrasting social, economic, and cultural conditions in which the three had to operate".

totalitarianism would unduly extend the scope of this subsection, a skeletal outline of his ideas can be utilised for this section's project.

Voegelin begins his analysis from a genealogical perspective on modern states, which he takes to consist of a transition from a non-closed hierarchically structured society to a less statutory segregated closed one on the one hand and from one whose supreme authority is derived from transcendental grace to one where political authority is this-worldly on the other hand. Concretely, he emphasises two archetypal stages of this development (in Europe) that need to be considered to explain the specifics of totalitarianism. Firstly, the premodern feudal order based on the Christian ecclesia, which is, without strict external boundaries, organised in estates that reflect the top-down distribution of divine legitimacy (the pope and emperor at the top, aristocracy in the middle, peasantry at the bottom), whereby the source of this legitimacy is of celestial descent (cf. Voegelin 1993/1938: 31); secondly, the modern, absolutist Hobbesian commonwealth (see Hobbes 1965/1651), where, in terms of authority, no demarcation lines exist in the body of the populace, but only between the sovereign, who holds all the authority and represents the commonwealth, and the rest of the externally closed citizenry which is subjected thereto (cf. Voegelin 1993/1938: 43 ff.). Voegelin identifies, then, as the originating point of totalitarianism a de-transcendalisation of the source of political authority against the background of absolutist Hobbesian structures (cf. Voegelin 1993/1938: 49 ff.).

Totalitarianism, according to Voegelin, largely resembles the Hobbesian commonwealth, however with one crucial difference: its mythical source of political authority is no longer transcendental, but this-worldly. It no longer focuses on or is related to the thought of otherworldly rupture, but instead locates its idea of salvation on earthly grounds (cf. Voegelin

1993/1938: 38 ff.). The examples of Stalinism and Nazism reflect this.[66] Whereas the former is based on a mythical notion of class and the promise of salvation in a post-revolutionary class-less society, the latter is based on a mythical notion of the nation and the promise of post-war salvation in a nativist utopia of the German people. This similarity to religion is, then, what leads Voegelin to speak of totalitarian ideologies as political religions. Like "real" religion, they have a mythical core and an apocalyptic vision of rupture, however, in contrast to religion, this core is immanent and not transcendent. To prevent confusions, particularly when comparing totalitarian ideologies to populism in what follows, it must be noted that, in this sense, "political religion" is just a special term introduced by Voegelin to emphasise that totalitarian ideologies include a mythical notion and promise of salvation, which, albeit immanently, resemble traits otherwise found in (real) religions. In other words, to use non-Voegelin's terms, political religions are not religions, but ideologies with particular traits, so that the subsequent comparison to populism does not endeavour comparing an ideology to a religion but two ideologies (or types of ideologies) with each other.[67]

Both totalitarian idedologies are strictly this-worldly. However, their source of value remains mythical in the sense that it is an imagined and idealised construction, which does not reflect and cannot be captured by "flesh and blood". As a consequence, similarly to the way priests interpret divine revelation, totalitarians interpret their mythical source. The difference between those is that in the latter case the interpretation of the source necessarily remains exclusively and arbitrarily with the totalitarians. It is not based on a predefined code of belief which is accessible (and understandable) by others independently of the totalitarians themselves. Therefore, totalitarians claim to be the only legitimate instance of political

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[66] In them, as in Italian fascism, Voegelin identifies elements of the Christian-theological tradition of the apocalypse of the Reich (Voegelin 1993/1938: 41).

[67] Sartori (1995: 550), for example, lists ideology-religion as one of the criteria on his influential checklist for elements of totalitarian systems.

authority, for only they adequately reflect (and can reflect) the revelation of the source, which is absolute (cf. Voegelin 1993/1938: 55 ff.).

The populace in totalitarianism's mode of governing, in contrast to the premodern ecclesia, does not feature subsequent differentiation in terms of authority. All authority lies with the totalitarian leadership, and the rest of the populace is, in relation to the framing of the source, viewed as a homogenous bloc (the pure nation of Nazism, the postcapitalist homo novus of Stalinism). Individuals, then, are either part of this political community or not and this is a) a dichotomous distinction, which is not grounded on (though may correlate with) empirical characteristics but on a constructed virtue in light of the mythical source, and b) imposed by the authority on a friend-enemy basis not allowing neutrality or deviance. Thus totalitarians, as the label adequately reflects, not only hold all valid claims to political authority but also cover the entirety of the state in all its domains by their discourse. Totalitarians yield all power, interpret the source of this power and unilaterally judge upon others, leaving no room for evasion, contestation or alternative sources of legitimate decision-making.

Given this, it becomes clear in what way populism resembles totalitarian ideologies' radical nature. Similarly to totalitarians, populists, qua the very construction of their own identity against the background of an imagined division between the people and the elite (and possibly also assorted aliens), put themselves in a position from which they claim to be the only legitimate political agents capable of exercising genuine authority. From this position, they tend to act unchecked and yield political authority at will, since they can always tie it back to an alleged realisation of the will of the people, which, again, they are the only ones to interpret and which is the only source of legitimate authority. As a consequence, populism's appeal to "the people" a) overrides all other considerations (be they moral, political or other), b) enables populist agents to act unchecked and unilaterally decide the statuses of others, thus turning the rule of law into the rule of populists through law, and c) results in the abolishment

of political equality along the demarcation lines of the distinction between the homogenous people and the others (elites and aliens), who no longer have a genuine political status.

Moreover, populism resembles its totalitarian siblings in its promise of this-worldly salvation. This populist salvation promise consists of nothing less than the solution of all major political problems and often gravitates around the idea of returning to an (imagined) past, where the pure people can (once again) live free and in harmony, unbothered by alien elements which are responsible for those problems.[68] Analogously to its religious counterpart, the populist vision of salvation, too, necessarily remains a distant vision, unreached by concrete political means, because the very notions it relies on are not constructed on programmatic but on moral grounds held as a matter of faith.

Hence, even though it is widely held that populism, in contrast to Nazism or Stalinism, is a thin ideology, it features all the characteristic elements of a political religion that Voegelin identified. The source of its core value (the popular will) is mythical and populists reject all restrictions to their own political agency by referencing their presumed endorsement thereof. In light of this, there is reason to believe that qualitative differences between totalitarian ideologies and contemporary populism in liberal democracies are not categorical, but contingent on external factors, such as strategic considerations, and thus not due to populism's sincere commitment to democracy (cf. Müller 2016: 49 f.). Since populism often arises in liberal democratic contexts on the structures of which it on the one hand relies on for its political formation and on the other hand is restricted by, populism is usually less radical in its claims and softer in its political practice. That notwithstanding, its logic points in the same direction as its totalitarian siblings: seizure of all political institutions and autocratic rule. It is in this

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[68] See in this context also Taggart's notion of the populist *heartland* (see Taggart 2000).

sense in that populism can be considered a threat to liberal democracies from within (cf. Müller 2016: 6).[69]

Evidence of this can be found in the political output of populists who have succeeded in entering governments in leading positions. Here the constitutional changes populists conduct when in power stand out especially. According to Landau, those serve "three core functions: deconstructing the existing political regime, serving as an ideological critique that promises to overcome flaws in the prior constitutional order, and *consolidating power in the hands of the populist leadership*" (Landau 2018: 522, my emphasis). In other words, populism's endorsement of direct democratic instruments – respectively direct manifestations of popular will – during its time in opposition vanishes when populists switch from opposition to government (Müller 2016: 62 f.; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 93). This illustrates the logic of populism which is detached from any real endorsement by actual people.

A prominent example of this can be found in the changes to the Hungarian constitution that Fidesz has facilitated after entering government in 2011, which have been initiated through a controversial referendum and contributed to the dismantlement of liberal democracy in Hungary ever since (see Müller 2016: 64 ff.), and the constitutional takeover of PiS in Poland (see Sadurski 2019), which is discussed in more detail in chapter 8. Populists want, and as a matter of fact bring about, many of the same things conventional autocrats do (eliminate pluralism, strengthen their own political position etc.), albeit in a more open manner supposedly justified by claiming to as a matter of fact enact the popular will (cf. Müller 2016: 4).

As this digression sought to emphasise, populism not only features ideas that are in irresolvable tension with both pillars of liberal democracy (as has been argued in subsections

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[69] Hence, I disagree with Eatwell and Goodwin (2018), who correctly identified important characteristics of fascism (holistic nation, new man, authoritarian third way), yet, by relying on a historical comparison of political traditions, failed to identify the similarities between populism and totalitarian ideologies and therefore with fascism.

3.4.1. and 3.4.2.) but moreover also follows a logic that has autocratic tendencies. This road to autocracy has been demarcated by reliance on Voegelin's notion of political religion, which allowed identifying structural similarities between populism and totalitarian ideologies. The next subsection concludes by reflecting on the comprehensiveness of the contestations populism poses for liberal democracies, in particular on the consequences of its view on societal and economic assumptions.

3.4.4. Populism as Multidimensional

In the course of the last three subsections, it was established that populism radically rejects liberal democracy as a form of political organisation. However, it needs to be emphasised that those contestations, as political as they are, are not freestanding. The political sphere is closely interconnected with other spheres guiding the lives of individuals in a society. Hence, the rigorous populist rejection of liberal democracy's two pillars has implications beyond its immediate subject of application and can be most vividly illustrated in regards to societal assumptions and the economic system.

To see this, it is helpful to recapitulate the societal presuppositions of liberal democracy elaborated in the last chapter. Liberal democracies, it has been argued, derive the expectation of social cooperation on which they (if not to say all forms of political organisation to some degree) rely, from the assumption of the commercial sociability of the populace. The people, assumed as a heterogeneous sum of individuals, engage in social cooperation not because of uniform interests, beliefs, or identities but – despite those differences – because of the mutual advantage which comes with social cooperation in a market-based society.

A market economy is assumed to be advantageous for cooperating individuals because it adequately reflects the state of affairs which have materialised following the advent of Western modernity and the industrial revolution. To be able to participate therein, formal equality, as provided by liberal democracy's first pillar of liberal rule of law, is essential. This is the case,

because formal equality, which permits a substantial degree of material inequality, enables active commercial competition within the populace and hence allows to realise one's interests under the conditions of freedom. In other words: In liberal democracies, it is assumed that the individuals compete for their material welfare with each other under the law applying equally to all (formal equality) even at the risks associated with such activity because of the overall benefits they receive from doing so (realising interests, legal security etc.).

Both aspects of this socio-economic dimension of liberal democracy, i.e. commercial sociability and a market-based economy, are contested by populism's rejection of liberal democracy's two pillars. The reason for this lies in both populism's notion of the people as well as its implications for political organisation. From the populist perspective, social cooperation is rendered substantially different from its idea in liberal democracies.

On the one hand, the cooperation of a homogenous people can no longer be understood as commercial but must be comprehensive. The populist people do not (merely) cooperate because of the instrumental value of cooperation in a capitalist society under the conditions of modernity. Instead, they cooperate on the basis of mutually shared identity and value commitments. This is, after all, the very way the people are constructed in populism.

On the other hand, this cooperation is, similar to the very notion of the people, necessarily exclusive: Following the strict populist distinction between the people and the elite respectively associated aliens, meaningful cooperation can only occur within one bloc (the people or the elite/aliens), because both groups feature interests, values, beliefs, and an identity which does not coincide outside the group but is coherent within. Hence, the lines of cooperation follow group distinction. Because of this, however, social cooperation does not cover the entirety of society.

This, in turn, has implications for market-based modes of economic organisation by which liberal democracies are structured. Not only do individuals not engage in social and

economic cooperation across society – they do not stand on formally equal grounds to begin with. As a consequence, the basis of commercial society breaks apart. Individuals do not engage in free, competitive commercial activity on the grounds of their (individual) interests across society and, even if they did, they could not do so under conditions necessary for it (formal, legally secured equality). Populism might not be troubled by material inequality within "the people" but it certainly is troubled by formal equality between the "true" people and other groups.

Of course, this brief illustration of the impact that populism's ideational vision has on the socio-economic presuppositions of liberal democracy is brief and inexhaustive. Nonetheless, it makes plausible the scope of populism's rejection of liberal democracy that transcends politics and reaches well into its social and economic dimensions. Departing from this, populism is thus not only *anti-liberal* (subsection 3.4.1.), *anti-democratic* (subsection 3.4.2.) and *radical* (subsection 3.4.3.) but also, as this subsection has emphasised, *multidimensional* in the scope of its implications.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, populism has been introduced based on the minimal ideational definition as being a) people-centric and b) anti-elitist against the background of a homogeneous and excluding notion of the people.

Departing from this understanding, it has been argued, through a conceptual analysis, that populism substantially challenges liberal democracy. 1) Populism is anti-liberal in the sense that it rejects liberal rule of law providing formal equality to citizens irrespectively of particular group membership as it considers that an illegitimate restriction to popular sovereignty and moreover does not accept individual rights. 2) Populism is anti-democratic because it utilises the inevitably constructed nature of "the people" to deligitimise others, to render itself immune from critique, and to decouple the legitimacy of its own agency from any

unfavourable popular opinions or electoral results. Because of 1) and 2), populism rejects both pillars of liberal democracy. However, the story does not end there. As has been argued utilising Voegelin's notion of political religion, populism is also 3) radical in its potential implications, since it has a structural similarity with totalitarian ideologies that allows populism to yield political power arbitrarily and without restriction. Moreover, the implications of the populist vision are not restricted to politics. Populism is also 4) multidimensional as it has implications beyond the political, including the social and economic dimensions of societal organisation.

With this in mind, it is now time to leave behind the first part of the bi-partite argument, the argument from theory, and move to the second part, the argument from empirical investigation.

Part II:

The Argument from Empirical Investigation

4. Case Selection

4.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, the ideational definition of populism has been introduced, which defines populism through a joint appeal to a) people-centrism and b) anti-elitism. In this chapter, based on this definition, the cases of populist movements will be selected for the empirical investigation, the second part of the bi-partite argument.

To do so, I will employ a computer-based, quantitative content analysis of recent manifestos or election programmes of parties residing in national parliaments (the first chamber in bicameral parliaments). The analysis is informed by the approach delineated by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011). I use party manifestos as textual grounds of case selection because they are easily accessible, allow for efficient analysis and, due to their structural and contextual similarities, can be overall well compared with each other.

The approach employed by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) is not the only one dedicated to the quantitative measurement of populism (e.g., Bernhard and Kriesi 2019; Cranmer 2011; Franzmann 2014; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Manucci and Weber 2017). That said, it is used here because it produces results fairly similar to classical "manual" characterisations and at the same time is, comparatively, resource-efficient. Consequently, it provides a solid basis for case selection without diverting resources from the main analysis at the centre of the thesis.

Note that formalising the case selection by using any formal definitory criteria may unavoidably result in prominent cases being excluded from the selection. While this is certainly not favourable, I believe that it is more favourable than the alternative, namely an arbitrary selection of cases based on intuition, prima-facie plausibility or practical uses of the label "populist". Given that the employment of clearly fixed and explicit definitions is one deficiency

of a substantial part of populism research, I consider it more important avoiding the same mistake, even if it, to an extent, limits the analysis in other ways.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I present the original approach to computer-based quantitative content analysis of populist attitudes put forward by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011). Subsequently, this approach is discussed and adjusted for the purposes of this thesis' case selection process. Thereafter, I present the results my analysis produced and the cases for the main and the control sample I selected on the basis thereof. Finally, I close with discussing the disadvantages and limits of using this approach as well as possible ways future research could take using computer-based quantitative content analysis of populist attitudes.

4.2. Quantitative Content Analysis of Political Attitudes

There exist different approaches to the quantitative content analysis of political texts. Here, a traditional method of quantitatively analysing texts for their political attitudes (in this context: populist attitudes) consists of manually analysing each paragraph as the relevant semantic unit and ascribe values to the text at hand based on the results thereof. The advantage of this method is that, by setting the relevant textual unit at the paragraph (and not at the word or sentence) level, the semantic context of statements can be taken into account, thus presumably promoting the precision of the analysis. However, doing so for long or many texts is extensively time-consuming and cost inefficient. With this in mind, Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) elaborate on using computer-based quantitative content analysis as an alternative (or supplement) to this traditional approach.

4.2.1. Original Approach by Rooduijn and Pauwels

Rooduijn and Pauwels suggest basing the analysis on the semantic unit of the single word, which is associated with particular attitudes based on a pre-defined dictionary. Using a suitable computer programme, then, the share of the vocabulary signalling a particular attitude of the

total sum of words is calculated and the ranking of different texts in terms of their score derived this way. Concretely, the authors are concerned with populist attitudes of European parties, for which a selection of their party manifestos or election programmes is analysed (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011).

To do so, the authors created a multi-language dictionary of vocabulary signalling anti-elitist attitudes. The dictionary focusses on anti-elitism, because the approach codifies populism according to the ideational definition, for which anti-elitism and people-centrism are both considered necessary and jointly sufficient criteria (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1273). Hence, in theory, testing for populist attitudes would imply testing for anti-elitism and people-centrism. However, as the authors note, people-centrism cannot (or at least not without extensive effort) be measured with reliance on the semantic unit of the single word. This can be exemplified by the words "we", "our" and "us". These could either refer to the people, which would indicate people-centrism, or to the party itself, which would not indicate people-centrism. From those words alone, it cannot be identified which of those alternatives holds (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1275). As the authors argue, however, this is not an obstacle for the computer-based quantitative content analysis of populist attitudes, because anti-elitism reliably serves as an indicator for people-centrism, while the reverse is not true. Hence, it can be well-used as an indicator of populism (cf. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1276-1278).

The dictionary Rooduijn and Pauwels created (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1283, APPENDIX B) is divided into separate language-categories and lists vocabulary categorised into two groups: core-vocabulary on the one hand and context-sensitive vocabulary on the other. The difference is that whereas the meaning of core-vocabulary remains stable across languages, the latter is language-specific so that translation in different languages does not preserve its contextual meaning. In the original study of Rooduijn and Pauwels, the languages Dutch, English, German and Italian were included (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1283,

APPENDIX B). Moreover, the authors analysed several manifestos belonging to a single party, thus, in a sense, including a historical perspective on the use of anti-elitist vocabulary (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1282 f., APPENDIX A).

As for the nature of the results, Rooduijn and Pauwels' analysis assigned a percentual score which expressed the share of anti-elitist vocabulary to the parties' programmes (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1277). Beside their methodological exemplificatory value, the results interestingly suggest that while some parties commonly labelled populist (such as the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV)) indeed use anti-elitist vocabulary disproportionately often, other parties often referred to as populist do not (most prominently the German left-wing party Die Linke (Eng.: "the Left"; back then: PDS)). This demonstrates the different uses of the populist label: the use on the grounds of specific properties of the target entity, and the use as a *Kampfbegriff*.

The authors emphasise that, overall, the ranking of the manifestos by their score correlates with the results of a classical manual content-analysis (see Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1277, FIGURE 1). Thus, since statistically there is evidence that the method is both reasonably reliable and valid, it indeed can be well-utilised as an alternative approach to quantitative content analysis of political attitudes, in particular for large texts. Furthermore, it has been argued that, statistically, the results remain sufficiently robust even if only a subset of the full dictionary is used (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1279).

Because of this, I decided to utilise Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) computer-based quantitative approach. That said, given the specific requirements arising from my overall research project and their implications for an adequate case selection, I adjusted their approach to my needs. Those adjustments, as well as how I proceeded, are presented in the next subsection.

4.2.2. Adjusted Approach to Computer-Based Content Analysis

As has been elucidated in the previous subsection, the computer-based approach to quantitative content analysis put forward by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) is a highly efficient method when comparing many texts or analysing long texts. Nonetheless, for the specific purpose of this thesis on the one hand and for the specific textual grounds of its case selection on the other, a few adjustments to the original approach were made.

The first adjustment concerns the scope of the dictionary used. As, in contrast to Rooduijn and Pauwels, the argument from empirical investigation is concerned with populist movements across the EU and hence ought to consider parties in all member states during case selection, the dictionary was expanded to cover all official languages of EU member states. Thus, the adjusted dictionary (see Appendix 1) covers the following languages (languages covered by the original dictionary of Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011: 1283) are in italics): Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, *Dutch*, *English*, Estonian, Finnish, French, Greek, *German*, Hungarian, Irish, *Italian*, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish.

Secondly, in contrast to the original dictionary, my dictionary is composed of core-vocabularies only and hence does not include context-sensitive vocabulary. Beyond efficiency considerations, the rationale behind this decision is to increase the comparability of different language sets and thus the consistency of the results. That is, while the cardinality of the core-dictionary varies to some degree across languages as well (say, due to changing suffixes or variations in declinations etc.), it does not increase the variety of meanings covered by those terms, since those remain stable and are merely represented differently in different languages. This is different, however, for context-sensitive vocabulary, since different meanings are conveyed by it so that not only the cardinality of the set varies but also that of the meanings it refers to. For example, whereas in Rooduijn and Pauwels' context-sensitive vocabulary English

includes only the entries "establishm*" and "ruling*", Dutch includes "establishm*", "heersend*" (the equivalents to the English terms) but furthermore also "capitul*", "kapitul*", "kaste*", "leugen*", "lieg*" which are not covered in English (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1283: APPENDIX B). Since it can be expected that similar discrepancies yield for the languages to which the adjusted dictionary was extended and identifying context-sensitive vocabulary is generally not easy, my adjusted dictionary is restricted to core-vocabulary. Note that, because the dictionary-based process was shown to be sufficiently robust across subsets of the full dictionary (cf. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011: 1279), excluding context-sensitive vocabulary can be assumed to not impede the analysis.

The third adjustment concerns the analysis' textual grounds or, more precisely, the nature of the document sample. As Rooduijn and Pauwels, I used party manifestos and election programmes. However, in contrast to the original analysis, I did not select different manifestos for the same party, but only considered a single manifesto per party in the investigation. Hence, my sample is only vertical and not horizontal. Note that, wherever possible, I sought to locate the selected manifestos or election programmes within the sample period of the main analysis (between 2015 and 2019). Due to availability and accessibility reasons, though, some election programmes from this period could not be retrieved and thus the programmes selected in their stead lie outside of this period. In such cases, the temporal difference has been kept as small as possible.

Fourthly and lastly, the ranking of the parties' anti-elitist attitudes was not realised through a comparison of their share of anti-elitist vocabulary. The reason for this is that doing so does neglect the embeddedness of political discourse and of populist contributions to this discourse. That is, populist contestations, on the level of party manifestos for national elections, are posed and relate to the respective national discourse. Because of this, a direct comparison of shares of anti-elitist vocabulary does not provide a meaningful orientation to the overall

degree of the anti-elitist (and hence presumably populist) attitude. After all, national discourses generally differ in terms of their standards, motifs and established language. Not considering those differences distorts the results and thus impedes a meaningful case selection. In particular, doing so would not account for the *populist Zeitgeist* Mudde (2004) observed, i.e., the tendency of mainstream, non-populist parties to adopt more populist language in the face of populist challengers. This leads to there being more or less populist discourses without necessarily being more or less populist parties/activities. Hence, if the shares were taken to directly reflect the party's attitudes, certain regions would be severely over- and others underrepresented (cf. Appendix 2: column D). For example, of the parties covered by the analysis, a disproportional amount of those within the top decile of shares falls into Central and Eastern Europe (in particular, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia).[70] If the shares were the main criteria of ranking for case selection, almost no other countries would even be considered.

Thus, because the shares do not account for differences between national discourses, they are not a *directly* suitable selection criteria. Instead, to account for those variations of national discourses and in doing so to consider the relation of parties to their competitors, the shares were first normalised and then rated. The normalisation was done through dividing them by the national median on the one hand and the national average on the other hand. The rating categories are (see Appendix 2):

- low (0): average-score < 0,5 OR median-score < 0,5
- moderately low (1): 0,5 <= average-score AND 0,5 <= median-score AND (average-score < 1 OR median-score < 1)

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[70] For example, the average share for Germany is merely 0,000260 whereas it is 0,003034 in Lithuania. This is a difference of a whole order of magnitude.

- moderately high (2): 1 <= average-score AND 1 <= median-score AND (average-score < 1,5 OR median-score < 1,5)

- high (3): 1,5 <= median-score AND 1,5 <= median-score

Here, it should be noted that, as will be elucidated in more detail in the subsequent subsection, those ratings were not used as sufficient selection criteria. That is, selection has not been directly demanded based on the parties being above a certain threshold (or below a certain threshold for the control sample). Instead, the ratings should be considered necessary minimal criteria for being selected. They warrant that the selected parties qualify as populist according to the ideational definition proposed in chapter 3 (or as non-populist for the control sample). That said, selecting cases solely based on their rating does not ensure a meaningful and informative overall sample.

The case selection criteria are employed to warrant a systematic and theoretically informed selection of populist parties. But there are further desiderata concerning the sample of the main analysis. The sample should not only be composed of presumably populist movements (or non-populist movements for the control sample). It should also a) cover different kinds of populist agents and b) cover mainstream party types sufficiently well. Simply selecting, say, the highest rated and lowest rated parties would hence fail to meet a) and b). Yet, meeting a) and b) is vital to ensure a meaningful ground of analysis for identifying the ideational dimension of European populism.

Therefore, cases are selected through a two-step process, of which the first step is statistical and the second manual. Firstly, cases for the main sample are qualified on the basis their rating. Secondly, a manual selection is employed of those high scoring parties to ensure an adequately diverse sample. The process for the control sample is conducted analogously. The cases are selected so that both main and control cases are pair-wise based in the same national contexts (see next section). Here, the cases of the main sample had to yield a high

rating, which translates to them using anti-elitist vocabulary at least 50% more often than others in their national arena. The cases of the control sample had to yield a low or moderately low rating, which translates to them using anti-elitist vocabulary less often than others in their national arena.[71]

Moreover, the reliability of the statistical analysis decreases with the size of the textual basis. Subsequently, for shorter texts, cases easier turn into outliners and disproportionally affect the score and, although to a lesser degree, the normalised rankings. Since the total sample could not feature all high and low scoring parties anyway, but rather is supposed to adequately qualify based on the desiderata delineated above, there was reason to make sure that those cases are relatively reliable. Thus, parties have been excluded from the second step of the case selection analysis, whose manifesto falls below a length of 5000 words (see for the adjusted universe Appendix 2: columns K and L).

The majority of the considered party manifestos and election programmes were retrieved from the Database of the Manifesto Project. The Manifesto Project is a research enterprise seeking to catalogue party manifestos since 1945 for potential analyses and is located at the Berlin Social Science Center (see Volkens et al. 2019). Generally, the most recent country sets were used, though at times where single parties were not listed I had to opt for externally localised manifestos. This came at the cost of potential time-difference between the manifestos (see for discussion of the general issues of time-difference and availability in the case selection section 4 of this chapter).

Following Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011), those manifestos were analysed with the adjusted dictionary of anti-elitist vocabulary using the open-source programme Yoshicoder. Yoshicoder is a resource-economical, easily accessible programme, which allows the storage of different dictionaries and documents as well as multi-document analysis using a single

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[71] Preferably less than half thereof, though this could not always be achieved for the pairwise selection.

language-specific dictionary in terms of frequencies and shares. Yoshicoder supports all character coding standards relevant for the purposes of this analysis.

The next section presents the results which could be achieved using the computer-based approach adjusted by the aforementioned aspects.

4.3. Results

The complete results of the computer-based analysis can be found in Appendix 2. Here, from the overall results several interesting observations can be made. Some of them had an influence on the cases selected for the subsequent qualitative analysis and will be briefly presented and discussed in this section.

As has been already noted in the discussion leading to the adjustments of Rooduijn and Pauwels' original approach, different national levels of the use of anti-elitist vocabulary emerge across party lines. Hence, without further ado, the national discourse is a better predictor of the use of anti-elitist vocabulary than the actual party type. This led to the decision to normalise the results by considering the national levels (median and average) when allocating a meaningful rating. While here I am not further pursuing to elucidate the reasons for this phenomenon, several potential aspects could play a role in explaining it, such as: the general national political culture, particular national political situations,[72] or specific characteristics of languages[73].

Moreover, substantial variances in the length of the retrieved manifestos and election programmes could be identified. Those reach from merely 257 words in the 2017 programme of the Dutch Party of Freedom to 333081 words in the 2019 programme of the Belgian Socialist Party (PS). This exemplifies different national traditions of campaigning before elections and

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[72] For example, a reason for a relatively high national level of anti-elitist vocabulary across all parties in the United Kingdom in the year 2019 could be the back then pending decision on the UK's exit of the European Union (Brexit).
[73] For example, some languages vary in terms of words springing from the same radical and other linguistic specifics so that the dictionary entries might in some languages be found more often than in others.

has an influence on the reliability of the results. Because of this, cases with lengths under 5000 words were not further considered for case selection purposes.

Interestingly, of those parties rating high, some parties indeed correspond to the common, non-theoretical use of the label populist, whereas in other cases the high scores relate to parties generally not associated with populism (e.g., the French Republic Forwards! or the Pirate Party Luxembourg). This can be explained through the challenger-nature of those parties, which relies on anti-elitist sentiments, however, beyond that does not feature a people-centric attitude. Since the dictionary is based on anti-elitist vocabulary, those cases could not be systematically excluded in the computer-based analysis, even though anti-elitism overall is a good indicator of populist attitudes.

In contrast, some parties often labelled populist in the public discourse did not yield a high rating. The Alternative for Germany, for example, a presumably right-wing-populist party, obtained only a moderately high rating, scoring only slightly above the national average and median. Similar observations were already made in Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011: 1277, FIGURE 1) original analysis and could have entirely different reasons, which cannot be identified on the grounds of this analysis (e.g., genuinely wrong ascriptions vs. strategical moderation to appeal the mainstream electorate). Here, Hungary yielded particularly interesting results, since it featured a *prima facie* reversed scenario. That is, both Fidesz-KDNP, a party typically (and for good reasons) labelled as highly populist, as well as the Movement for a Better Hungary, Fidesz' far-right competitor, scored relatively low, whereas all opposition parties scored relatively high, regardless of their party family. This might reflect an adaptation to Fidesz' governmental position on the one and the degree of challenger-attitudes present in opposition parties on the other hand, although this can ultimately not be answered here. Consequently, Fidesz-KDNP could not been in good conscience selected for the main analysis.

Finally, whereas some of the highest rated parties include those commonly located at the (far) right-wing (such as the Belgian Flemish Interest or the Austrian Freedom Party) some parties usually located at the (far) left have high ratings as well (such as the Dutch Socialist Party or the Swedish Left Party). In contrast, established traditional party types (e.g., Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals) overall rate low or moderately low, which further sharpens the contrast between the main sample and the control sample.

Based on the results of the analysis (see Appendix 2), the following cases were selected for the main analysis (see Table 1):

Country	Main Sample	Control Sample
Austria	Austrian Freedom Party 1)	Austrian Social Democratic Party 6)
Belgium	Flemish Interest 1)	Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats 7)
Ireland	We Ourselves 2)	Family of the Irish 6)
Netherlands	Socialist Party 2)	Green Party 8)
Poland	Law and Justice 1)	Civic Platform 5)
Spain	Citizens 3)	People's Party 5)
Sweden	Left Party 2)	Liberals 7)
Legend: 1) right-wing populist, 2) left-wing populist, 3) populist (other), 4) challenger, 5) Christian/conservative, 6) social democrat, 7) liberal, 8) green		

Table 1: Selected Cases for the Main Content Analysis

Beyond those parties meeting the definitory criteria (high rating for the main sample, low or moderately low rating for the control sample), they were selected to cover a, relatively to the overall sample size, broad variety of party families and European regions. This was important to enable drawing a more comprehensive picture of populist ideational characteristics and their relation to established liberal democracies in the empirical investigation. More precisely, the presumably populist movements in the main sample are supposed to reflect the range of

different parties subsumed under this label. In turn, the control sample is supposed to provide a contrast to the most established and frequently encountered presumably non-populist party families.

Here, the main sample covers presumably populist parties both of the right-wing and left-wing. In contrast, the control sample, borrowing from Ennser's (2012: 158) typology of party families, covers the party families Christian/Conservative Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals and Greens. While there are different ways with different level of detail of how European party families can be framed (see, for example, in contrast to Ennser 2012, the more compartmentalised typology put forward by Camia and Caramani 2012), I think this family framing and selection is adequate for the purpose at hand, because it contrasts different positions well without being only non-exhaustively coverable by a control sample of the given size.

Moreover, the party-pairs of the main and control sample, beyond the aforementioned considerations, were selected to reflect different regions of the European Union. In particular, although the majority of the selected countries are located in Central Europe (Austria, Belgium, Netherlands), the total sample also stretches to Eastern Europe (Poland), Western Europe (Ireland), Southern Europe (Spain) and Northern Europe (Sweden).

Hence, in spite of the relatively small size of the total sample, which is due to the exploratory nature of the empirical investigation, the selection is diverse enough to serve as an interesting ground for a meaningful analysis in what follows.

4.4. Reliability

The rating was assessed for its intra-coder reliability (stability). Following Krippendorff, intra-coder reliability is understood "as the extent to which a measuring or coding procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (Krippendorff 2004: 215). This is realised via a test-retest design, which would, typically, involve revisiting the data, repeating the coding, and comparing

the results of this coding (retest) with the results of the original coding (test) (Krippendorff 2004: 215). However, as Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011: 1278) already noted in their original analysis, a computer-based quantitative content analysis will always yield the same results when applied to the same text. To account for this, I have, instead of revisiting the manifestos used for the original analysis, used other manifestos of the parties. The manifestos selected for the retest were the temporary closest ones. Based on availability in the Manifesto Project Database at the time of the retest, those were in some cases older and in some cases younger than the ones of the test (see Table 2 below). With these, the reliability has been tested for the parties of the main and the control sample. The following results were obtained:

Party	Manifesto	Share/nat. average	Share/nat. median	Rating
We Ourselves	2011	0,77	0,79	1
Familiy of the Irish	2011	1,34	1,37	2
Flemish Interest	2014	2,24	3,76	3
OFLD	2014	0,36	0,60	0
Austrian Freedom Party	2019	1,79	1,62	3
Austrian Social Demoratic Party	2019	0,75	0,68	1
Green Party	2011	0,3	0,56	0
Socialist Party	2011	3,16	5,74	3
Civic Platform	2019	0,84	1,00	1
Law and Justice	2019	0,50	0,60	1
Citizens	2016	1,53	1,85	3
People's Party	2016	0,82	1,00	1
Left Party	2014	2,30	4,51	3
Liberals	2014	0,57	1,11	1

Table 2: Retest Results of the Computer-Based Content Analysis

To measure the reliability of the rating, Krippendorff's alpha (α) was calculated. A result of $\alpha = 0,691$ was obtained. Falling between 0,667 and 0,800, this should, according to Krippendorff, be used "only for drawing tentative conclusions" (Krippendorff 2004: 241). Here, it is safe to assume that the temporal difference of at least one full legislative period between the test- and the retest-manifestos had a negative impact on the reliability of the results. That is, the retest-manifestos were presented against a potentially quite different political situation (including

both political issues and the parties' position in the political arena), which, amongst other things, is likely to have affected their content. In Poland, for example, Law and Justice was attempting a re-election after a very controversial legislation period in 2019, so that its lower rating may be due to the party seeking to present itself as more moderate.[74]

Against this background, the results are considered stable enough to warrant using them for case selection purposes, as, here, the conclusions drawn from the rating are not taken to be more than preliminary. After all, the entire case selection process (of which considering the rating comprised just the first threshold) was only realised to guard the samples against arbitrariness by ensuring that they are informed by an operationalised definition of populism – before embarking in a more substantial assessment of the parties' positionings in the qualitative content analysis that followed.

4.5. Limits and Future Research

Before turning to the qualitative analysis, some of the obstacles and limits of the case selection process depicted in this chapter need to be emphasised. The first issue concerns the texts on the ground of which the computer-based analysis was conducted. The comparability of the different cases can be assumed to have been affected by the unavailability of some texts. For example, no party manifestos of Maltese parties could be retrieved whatsoever. Moreover, of those manifestos that could be retrieved, variances in publication date could also have affected the results, since party manifestos at different times are located in and reply to different political contexts. Whereas general differences in national discourses were identified as a reason to normalise the scores, variations in time, especially in the light of political events with an international scope, could not be accounted for by these adjustments. While, ideally, all

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[74] Note that the obtained α value is in parts only slightly below the inter-tester reliability Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011: 1278) had obtained for the manual coding, against which their computer-based approach was evaluated (the manual coding resulted in a cross-national reliability of α = 0.70 for anti-elitism).

manifestos would stem from the same year, this criterion in practice can never be fully met, because of asynchronous national election cycles in the context of which manifestos or election programmes are usually published. Controlling this potential effect was outside the scope of this chapter but could be done by splitting the analysed parties into different cohorts and thus tracing the effects of diverging publication times.

Furthermore, different political cultures and language characteristics could affect the outcome of the computer-based analysis beyond what normalising the shares could amend. Similarly, as, for example, the scores of the Hungarian Fidesz-KDNP suggest (whereas, in contrast, the scores of the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) do not), it might influence the results whether (populist) parties are in opposition or in government. Elucidating this relationship lies outside of the scope of this analysis, even if that might mean to preventively exclude cases from the main analysis, which are indeed highly populist.

Finally, although, as Rooduijn and Pawels (2011) emphasised, anti-elitism overall serves as a good indicator for people-centrism and thus for populism, there is no systematic way to exclude false-positives, i.e., parties which express anti-elitist but no people-centric and hence no populist attitudes. This is, for example, true for several challenger parties. On the level of the computer-based first part of the case selection process, there no way of excluding those cases. This exclusion, then, is located exclusively in the manual second step of the process, where less clear definitional guidelines can be systematically employed.

In future analyses, those factors could be methodologically further reflected. Apart from that, additional analyses could extend the work done in this chapter horizontally and consider changes of anti-elitist attitudes over time.

5. Methodological Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis

5.1. Aim of the Analysis

The aim of the following qualitative content analysis is to identify and make explicit the ideational commitments of populist movements. In doing so, specifically the commitments on which political demands are premised or which are included in wielding them, yet which rarely are openly communicated, are brought to light. Based thereon, it can be assessed in how far contemporary populist movements in the EU ideationally contest liberal democracy, beyond day-to-day disagreements with established, mainstream politics.

In contrast to the case selection, the analysis is qualitative, because it is not as such interested in frequencies and statistical connections but rather in a deep and detailed analysis of the meaning of political statements, including what (and how) ideas are included in populist positionings. Since such a highly detailed analysis comes with a limited sample size, it can only be non-exhaustive and explorative.

Of course, all cases – as all political parties – are unique in the sense that they have a history, tradition and membership composition of their own and are embedded in a specific national context. Nonetheless, departing from the informed case selection described in the foregoing chapter, there is reason to expect that certain similarities (or contrasts in regard to the control sample) will emerge. Those demarcation lines will enable a categorisation of contemporary populist ideas as well as a better understanding of their relationship with liberal democracy.

5.2. Object of Analysis

The object of the analysis consists of speeches held by party leaders at party assemblies located at the national level between the years 2015 and 2019. The investigation period is set between

2015 and 2019, because it is plausible to conceive of this time as a contextually similar time structure, where certain themes dominated, and which has was not significantly dominated by characteristics of previous or subsequent intervals. That is, whereas in the previous period the financial crisis of 2008 and its effects on the European economy were a major issue of concern, in the time between 2015 and 2019 migration, mostly from the MENA region, to Europe as well as the Brexit and EU affairs (e.g., the EU's internal integration and its relation to external agents) stood out. The period following 2019, in turn, gravitated around the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes of the US-American presidency. Of course, any such separation of time intervals should not be overstressed since political issues and events do not cease to exist and co-inhabit political debate at different times. Still, the temporal markers of the 2015 so-called refugee crisis in the EU and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 demarcate nonarbitrary start- and endpoints for my speech samples.

I selected speeches held at national party congresses to increase the comparability of speeches across parties and to filter regional affairs. However, not all parties hold such congresses on a fixed regular basis, the organisational traditions and nomenclatures of parties differ and recordings are publicly available not of all congresses even where those are held. Hence, in some cases party leader speeches at other national level party events were included in the sample, such as programme conferences, national conventions, and other similar events. What all those speeches have in common is that they targeted an internal party audience rather than political peers of competing parties or the wider public. The reason for restricting the samples to speeches of that kind is that those can be most plausibly expected to constitute an authentic expression of political commitments, as they are mostly self-concerned and unfiltered (in contrast to positionings targeting an external audience, such as election programmes or public debates). Moreover, they are normatively condensed and do not extensively cover a wide field of politics in a rather technical manner, say, the way election programmes do.

For the reasons stated in the previous paragraph, not for all parties the same number of speeches could be retrieved. Yet, except for the Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats in Belgium at least two speeches could be retrieved for all parties (see Appendix 3 for the sources and Appendix 4 for a catalogue of all speeches included in the main and control sample). The speeches were transcribed to text using speech recognition programmes (MS Word, Google Docs) and thereafter automatically translated into English (using MS Word, Google Docs and DeepL).

5.3. Analytical Discourse Evaluation

To accomplish the goals set out above, my analysis is inspired by and borrows its analytical perspective from the Analytic Discourse Evaluation.[75] The ADE is chosen as the methodological point of departure for the qualitative analysis, because it allows the identification of ideas as well as of their interconnections in an explorative manner. It thus enables the extraction of ideas from political discourse on a level which makes it possible to connect to both, conceptual analyses as well as more rigorous empirical (qualitative and quantitative) investigations. Before elaborating on how this is processed in the specific scenario of my project, some information shall be provided on the ADE.

The ADE was introduced by Teun Dekker (see 2013b: 11 ff.) to discern the vagueness of political discourse and in doing so contribute to a more transparent political communication and informed decision making. The problem ADE targets is, as Dekker puts it, that in politics "foggy discourse makes it difficult to explain in coherent and clear terms why a certain course of action was taken" (Dekker 2013b: 14). Thus, Dekker defines ADE as follows:

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[75] I say *inspired* and *borrows* because, while the aim of the ADE aligns well with the purpose of my analysis, analysing speeches cannot fruitfully follow the same structure as contributions to political debates (more on this in the next section).

"Analytical Discourse Evaluation […] proposes a way to take political discourse, as it may be found in actual politics, and transform it into precise, clear and wellstructured [sic!] arguments as they might be found in analytical philosophy. These arguments can then be systematically and rigorously evaluated in a way that the original discourse could not. […] [O]ne looks at actual political discourse […] and tries to express the arguments made in those discussions in the language of analytical philosophy. Once this has been achieved, it is possible to systematically and rigorously evaluate those arguments, in a way that is not possible without such a reconstruction. As such there are three distinct steps in the process: the gathering and processing of political discourse, the reconstruction of the central arguments in that discourse, and the evaluation of the resulting arguments." (Dekker 2013b: 14 f.)

According to Dekker, the ADE can principally be applied to political issues and debates of all sorts, if there is "substantial political debate" (Dekker 2013b: 15). Therefore, it provides a versatile tool of content analysis. For example, whereas Dekker himself applied the ADE to the question what can justify top wages in the public sector (Dekker 2013a), it was also applied to women quota in management by Brües (2013), to the German parliamentary debate on mandatory COVID-19 vaccination by Kaya and Kopshteyn (2022), and, in a sense as a meta-reflection, to the question whether ADE should be employed by liberal democratic societies by van Steen (2013).

For the application of the ADE, Dekker emphasises the importance of being aware of the time framing used and the cases selected, e.g., an in-depth case study of a single case vs. several cases etc. (cf. Dekker 2013b: 15 f.), "to get a more general perspective of the types of arguments typically used" Dekker 2013b: 16).[76] After the frame has been set, the relevant discourse for

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[76] Note that this is reflected in my sample being deliberately restricted to a specific document type (party leader speech), setting (internal party assembly) and temporal context (the years 2015-2019).

the argument at hand is collected (Dekker 2013b: 16). Thereafter, the discourse is transformed into an argumentative structure:

> "At its most basic level, an argument consists of a series of premises or statements that, via logical entailment, support a particular conclusion. Hence the basic idea behind the process of reconstructing political discourse into philosophical argumentation is that one must fit that discourse onto an argumentative structure, by distilling it into a series of unambiguous premises that deductively lead to a conclusion." (Dekker 2013b: 16)

Here, regarding his approach to arguments, Dekker relies on the framework devised by Stephen Toulmin (2003), which distinguishes between an argument's claim, warrant, data, verifiers and backings:

> "Any argument has a Claim, the eventual conclusion of the argument, the thing it is an argument for. Following logical convention, such Claims must be supported by 2 further premises: the Data, which is the purported reason for the Claim, and the Warrant, which explains why the Data is a reason for the Claim. […] [T]he Data and Warrant are themselves Claims, and need to be supported by further argumentation. The supporting argumentation for the Data is referred to as the Verifiers, while Warrants are supported by Backing. […] In this fashion, an argument may be written down as a series of premises in a hierarchical pattern. Such a pattern can be presented graphically, or as a number of syllogisms indicating their role in the overall argument." (Dekker 2013b: 17)

Mapping the discourse onto this structure to identify the relationship of statements in political discourse is achieved through reflecting which parts of the discourse serve which function in the above-described structure (Dekker 2013b: 17). As Dekker emphasises, doing this always coincides with interpretation (Dekker 2013b: 16) – "[a]fter all, if the discourse contained defined premises, one would not need to undertake a philosophical reconstruction" (Dekker 2013b: 17 f.).

To account for this, Dekker introduces two constraints which guide the application of the ADE: the fidelity constraint and the quality constraint (Dekker 2013: 16). The fidelity constraint is used to eliminate interpretations which the debate contributor reasonably could not have intended, say, because it is "incompatible with the discourse" the texts operate in. In contrast, the quality constraint is used to select the interpretation from the pool of reasonable interpretations qualified by the fidelity constraint, which "is most likely to be favorably evaluated" (Dekker 2013b: 18). Note that applying both constraints is itself an interpretative endeavour, for which there is no step-for-step instruction. Moreover, even with both constraints the interpretation process is not straight forward, since in political discourse premises in argumentative structures are frequently not made explicit. For inserting those missing premises during the argumentative reconstruction process, the quality constraint plays an important role (Dekker 2013b: 18).

But what qualitative criteria should be relied on in doing so? According to Dekker, here, a distinction between different types of premises needs to be introduced – descriptive premises on the one and normative premises on the other hand. Depending on what sort of premise is the subject of the reconstructive enterprise, different qualitative criteria ought to be employed. For the evaluation of descriptive premises, Dekker suggests using scientific research. In contrast, regarding normative premises, something he calls reasonable citizen standards should be relied on. Whereas the former amounts to controlling whether a premise can be considered a fact, the latter, in short, involves "ask[ing] whether those premises are acceptable to the political culture in which the argument features" (Dekker 2013b: 19).

Since every data or warrant can itself be understood as a previously established or implicitly assumed claim, the argumentative structure can be iterated backwards, entering a deeper layer at each iteration respectively. This way, a tree-structure can be obtained, which, departing from the outputs of discourse, identifies its underlying ideas. Note that formally this

iteration would amount to a regress ad infinitum, because every premise could be understood as a claim, for which a more fundamental premise could be found or logically presupposed. Thus, when applying the ADE in practice, one needs to conceive certain premises as fundamental for the debate so that, after reaching them, the reconstructive enterprise is ended. Here, Dekker suggests stopping the iteration when the least controversial premises supporting the original claim are reached. Of course, it should be noted here that controversiality itself is subject to the quality constraint. Hence, while stopping the iteration at that point provides a non-arbitrary criterion, it nonetheless remains not a straightforward enterprise.

After the reconstruction process is completed, the obtained argumentative structure can be evaluated using formal logic. This way, deficiencies of arguments put forward in political debate can be identified and good arguments can be discerned from bad ones. Beyond clarification of the discourse, this can contribute to a better-informed political deliberation and decision making.

5.4. Methodical Adjustments

As powerful ADE as a method of qualitative content analysis is, to realise its analytic perspective in the project at hand adjustments need to be made. The reason lies in the nature of the texts around which my analysis gravitates in conjuncture with the results I seek to obtain.

Recall the following: the ADE is originally employed to analyse political discourse and identify and evaluate arguments included wherein. The speeches analysed, however, differ in several regards from ordinary political debate. Firstly, they are not dialectical but monological. Even though they are, of course, embedded in a larger political context, they are not a direct response to other positionings but, contrary to debates alternating between several contributors, uninterrupted and in this particular sense freestanding contributions of a single orator.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, they are not monothematic. Whereas arguments in political debates are concerned with a specific issue, the textual sources at hand

do not focus on a single topic or field. Instead, they feature a prolonged statement of a single contributor that, albeit condensed and less technical than debate contributions or election programmes, covers different topics with varying extensiveness in an importantly interconnected way. The texts hence need to be translated into a form that allows to adequately relate to the different themes they address, which after all, might very well be dispersed over different discourses. This also means that rather than simply gravitating around the identification of different argumentative structures regarding the same topic, the analytical approach employed must operate across topics.

Thirdly and lastly, in classical ADE the identified structure of ideas is used to evaluate the quality of different arguments in a debate, explain why a certain option should be preferred and thus promote informed political deliberation and decision making. In my case, however, the content analysis is strictly used to identify ideational commitments and their connections without further making judgements of the soundness of the analysed position. In this sense, the project at hand is not normative or evaluative but descriptive. For this reason, my approach does not follow the ADE's last, evaluative step.

To account for the first two differences of the texts at hand, I consider it justified to extract the ideas included in those positionings by developing them in text-form rather than sequencing them into separate arguments and present those in a formal argumentative structure borrowed from logic. This way, while underlying assumptions and ideas can be identified from the positionings as well, it is more visibly possible to track how different ideas belong to each other. It thus allows to account for the different, intertwined arguments present in the speeches and the presence and implications of the same ideas on different dimensions (say, political, economic, social). Given that the goal of the analysis, in contrast to classical ADE, is not to evaluate arguments but to identify and understand ideas, I consider proceeding in text-form to serve the research purpose at hand better than a stricter formalised approach.

Another reason for not employing a formal logical analysis of the texts is that doing so across texts (which, after all, do not belong to the same debate) risks losing track of the appropriate degree of abstraction (i.e., how far the backwards-iteration process should go), since the positionings across parties differ in various regards. This however would hinder the later systematisation, where the ideas included in the different parties' positionings are related to each other. Hence, on the level of single parties, over-formalisation should be avoided.

Here, when I suggest analysing the speeches in text-form, I mean to proceed as follows: Initially the speech will be scanned for statements, which express political positions. That is, not all statements are equally of interest for my analysis, because not all gravitate around or inform about political positionings and therefore do not relate to the ideational dimension of populism as such. For example, many statements relate to previous election results or simply express greetings to the participants of an event. While analysing such statements might be of interest for other research questions, they seem not to be relevant for identifying the ideational commitments of populist agents in the EU. Thus, they are disregarded.

What counts as a single statement, including where it begins and ends, does not emerge directly from the text/speech but always involves a decision of the analyst. In general, statements have been discerned based on the identified appertaining main unit of meaning. In some cases, the same unit of meaning can spread over a multitude of sentences whereas in others it may be limited to a subclause or even just an expression of a few words.

For the process of dissecting the speeches into distinct statements, NVivo, a widely known software for qualitative content research, was used. For every party under scrutiny, a document holding all transcribed speeches was created:

Figure 1: List of Documents (NVivo)

To separate the texts into distinct statements related to political positionings, the texts were read, and the identified statements marked as nodes. In doing so, every statement received a unique number, which was the reference point to handle the statement in subsequent steps of the analysis.

Figure 2: List of Nodes (NVivo)

In the next step, the statements identified this way were discerned into different statement types, which inform about the role of the statement in the overall argumentative structure underlying the speeches under scrutiny (I return to this point after presenting the categories employed). Concretely, statements were distinguished in statements about *values*, statements about *issues* (identified in virtue of those values) and statements about political *demands* (respectively *accomplishments*, which are suggested to overcome those issues in away, which realises those

values). Based on these three statement categories, the statements identified for every party were assigned to three corresponding sub-nodes in NVivo.

Figure 3: Example of Sub-Nodes (NVivo)

As statements about values, statements were categorised, where the parties did neither employ critiques of concrete states of affairs nor expressed demands for concrete political measures or states of affairs to be brought about, but instead made abstract, mostly normative, expressions about the world. Those provide information about the foundational configuration of the parties positionings. In general, statements were considered as statements about values, if they were concerned with either of the following:[77]

- a reference to ideologies or intellectual traditions, such as liberalism, socialism, nationalism, feminism, or humanism

- a reference to moral values, such as justice, fairness, equality, or solidarity

- a commitment to the importance of particular social, economic, or political arrangements including institutions, processes, agents, welfare or infrastructural provisions, and forms of societal organisation and interaction

- an opinion about the importance (or unimportance) of a particular group of people or the interests of a particular group of people

- an opinion about the ontology of particular groups

- a characterisation of virtues the parties consider to be desirable or non-desirable, of political agents or other groups of people

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[77] This list is not exhaustive since specifics vary from case to case.

As statements about issues, statements were categorised, which were concerned with concrete problems perceived by the parties. Amongst other things, this most centrally included:

- critiques of other political parties, persons, or groups

- critiques of political, social, or economic groups, such as immigrants, wealthy people, (international) organisations

- critiques of specific social, economic, or political arrangements or realities

- critiques of governmental action, inaction, or legislation

- critiques of the media

- critiques of welfare or infrastructural provisions, specifically provisions perceived as inadequate or being granted to the wrong persons

- problematisations of (the consequences of) large-scale events, such as climate change or globalisation

As statements about demands, statements were categorised, where the parties proposed that certain political actions be done (or halted) or certain state of affairs be brought about or remediated. Amongst other things, this most centrally included:

- that welfare or infrastructural provisions are improved, including pensions, social housing, education, health care

- that certain groups of persons are treated differently (both better or worse) by politics

- that wages are increased, investments made, or jobs created

- that reforms are made, or laws be introduced, changed or abolished

- that taxes are changed, either increased or decreased (for specific groups), new taxes introduced or existing abolished

- that the government changes its course of action or its priorities

- that the media, political parties or other social or political groups behave differently

- that specific developments, events or state of affairs are prioritised or handled (differently), such as digitisation, globalisation, climate change, immigration

Regarding statements about demands, statements about *achievements* were considered to constitute a special case. That is, in contrast to other statements about demands, statements about achievements are not prospective but retrospective. Instead of telling what *should be done*, the parties review what of the things that are desirable they *already have done*.

About this categorisation, a few more things must be said. First, some statements were composed of characteristics of more than one of these categories. In such cases, they were included in all relevant sub-nodes. Second, some statements yielded implicit content, which was made explicit for the analysis. To make content explicit, it was reflected what implications statements yielded in the discursive frame created by the parties. This, of course, always involves a degree of interpretation, for which the interpretative principles of the ADE served as guidelines. Both aspects can be demonstrated by reviewing the following statement of the Belgian party Flemish Interest, which is part of the main sample:

> "70% of the Antwerp children are not Belgian. In two generations, the mayor of Antwerp
>
> will be Turk, Moroccan, or Black with curly hair." (Van Grieken 2019)[78]

On the one hand, this statement was categorised as a statement about issues. Flemish Interest takes an issue with what it considers to be the consequences of immigration and the appertaining demographic change. On the other hand, however, the statement was also categorised as a statement about values. This was done, because the statement also informs about the party's understanding of the (Flemish) people, whose interests it claims to hold in

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[78] This and all following examples were translated from their original language by automatic means and manually polished for presentational purposes.

high regard. More precisely, in this statement, Flemish Interest creates a contrast between being Belgian and being a Muslim or person of colour. Following this statement, the latter are excluded from the former due to ethnic factors and this has been noted and reflected on in the analysis (see Appendix 3, sections 2.1).

Third, reviewing one statement can provide information or additional meaning to other statements and thus help making parts of the overall ideas included in the parties' positionings more accessible. This, too, can be demonstrated by revisiting the example from above. Flemish Interest repeatedly holds that it cares about "the common" people and that their interests take priority above anything else:

> "We stand up for the common man and woman in the street […]." (Van Grieken 2016)

> "We can take our future into our own hands […] and above all finally ensure that our people come first." (Van Grieken 2019)

If we review those statements in light of the aforementioned example (or by other similar statements Flemish Interest makes against immigrants, refugees or Muslims), it becomes clear that indeed the party has a very clear view about the ontology of the "common man and woman in the street" and the people those comprise (see Appendix 3, section 2.1). This can help not only to identify implicit assumptions and ideas but also to make them more concrete, since the implicit assumptions for one and the same claim (say, that the people should be more cared about by politics) might look very differently for different parties. Due to this, for the systematisation of the results obtained this way, both the identified ideas in themselves but also their relation to each other were of interest.
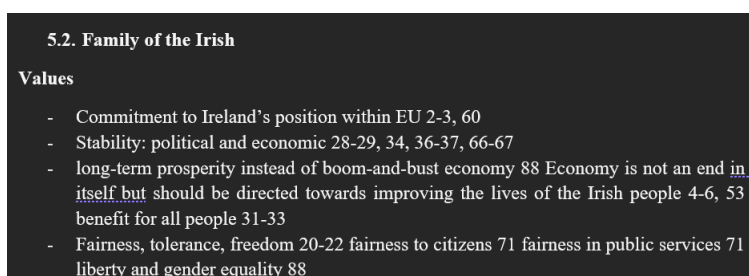
Fourth, all three categories of statements, notwithstanding their normative weight, also frequently contained descriptive components, which provided the substance or background

information on which the normative evaluation materialised. Consider the following example by the Austrian Freedom Party (included in the main sample):

"In Lower Austria, one of our offices was set on fire by a person with subsidiary protection status – and they [the political mainstream] basically said 'the Nazis burned it down themselves'." (Hofer 2019).

In this statement about issues, the Austrian Freedom Party uses the descriptive information that an incendiary attack on one of the party's sites has occurred as a point of departure to criticise the political establishment for their alleged double-standards and bias towards to party (see Appendix 3, section 1.2). Note that these descriptive components, as all parts of the discursive frame employed by the parties, sometimes remained implicit (for example, where the descriptive component can be assumed to be common knowledge for the audience, which needs not be outspoken).

After all statements were categorised this way, the next step of the analysis involved removing redundancies and repetitions to reduce the speeches to their essential content. To do so, the sub-nodes were reviewed and grouped into statements carrying the same or sufficiently similar meaning, and summarised accordingly (see Figure 4 below for an example). The subsequent analysis then was performed on these revised summaries.

> **5.2. Family of the Irish**
> **Values**
> - Commitment to Ireland's position within EU 2-3, 60
> - Stability: political and economic 28-29, 34, 36-37, 66-67
> - long-term prosperity instead of boom-and-bust economy 88 Economy is not an end in itself but should be directed towards improving the lives of the Irish people 4-6, 53 benefit for all people 31-33
> - Fairness, tolerance, freedom 20-22 fairness to citizens 71 fairness in public services 71 liberty and gender equality 88

Figure 4: Extract of the Revised Summary of the Family of the Irish

As already pointed out, the distinction between value, issue and demand statements was employed, because it captures the argumentative structure as it is encountered in the speeches

covered by the analysis. Value statements inform about what is good, important and desirable, and set the normative foundation, upon which the rest of the argumentative structure unfolds. Note that herein also lies the tacit understanding that if an action, state of affairs or anything else violates these values, then this is bad and worthy of critique. Issue statements, then, evaluate the states of affairs encountered by the parties against the background of this normative foundation and carry judgements about what is bad and disagreeable. This, too, is accompanied by an ever-present assumption, namely that if something is bad, then it should be remedied. Finally, demand statements entail conclusions about what should be done, based on these issues identified against the background of the initial value foundation. The descriptive components of all three statement types provide additional data to the normative components.

It has been previously explained that the discourses included in the analysis (the speeches of party leaders held at national party congresses) are considered complex, in the sense that they are multi-topic discourses, in which different arguments for different purposes are employed in an often implicit and frequently intertwined way. Due to this property, the classical ADE approach to identifying the argumentative structure of discourse cannot fruitfully be realised, since the ADE is mostly concerned with and limited to analyses of single-topic discourses.[79] This practical limitation is circumvented by diverting Toulmin's argumentative structure to the proposed interconnection of value, issue, and demand statements. This alternative allows to identify implicit information and argumentative logic from the speeches. At the same time, it pays due respect to their complex character, which can only be adequately represented in analysis when scrutinising the discourse as a whole. Figure 5 demonstrates how the adjusted approach can be mapped to Toulmin's model used in the classical ADE:

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[79] For example, the discourse analysed by Kaya and Kopshteyn (2022) was fully enclosed by the topic of COVID-19 vaccination. All arguments yielded in this discourse culminated in conclusions about whether COVID-19 vaccination should become mandatory or not (and, if yes, in what form).
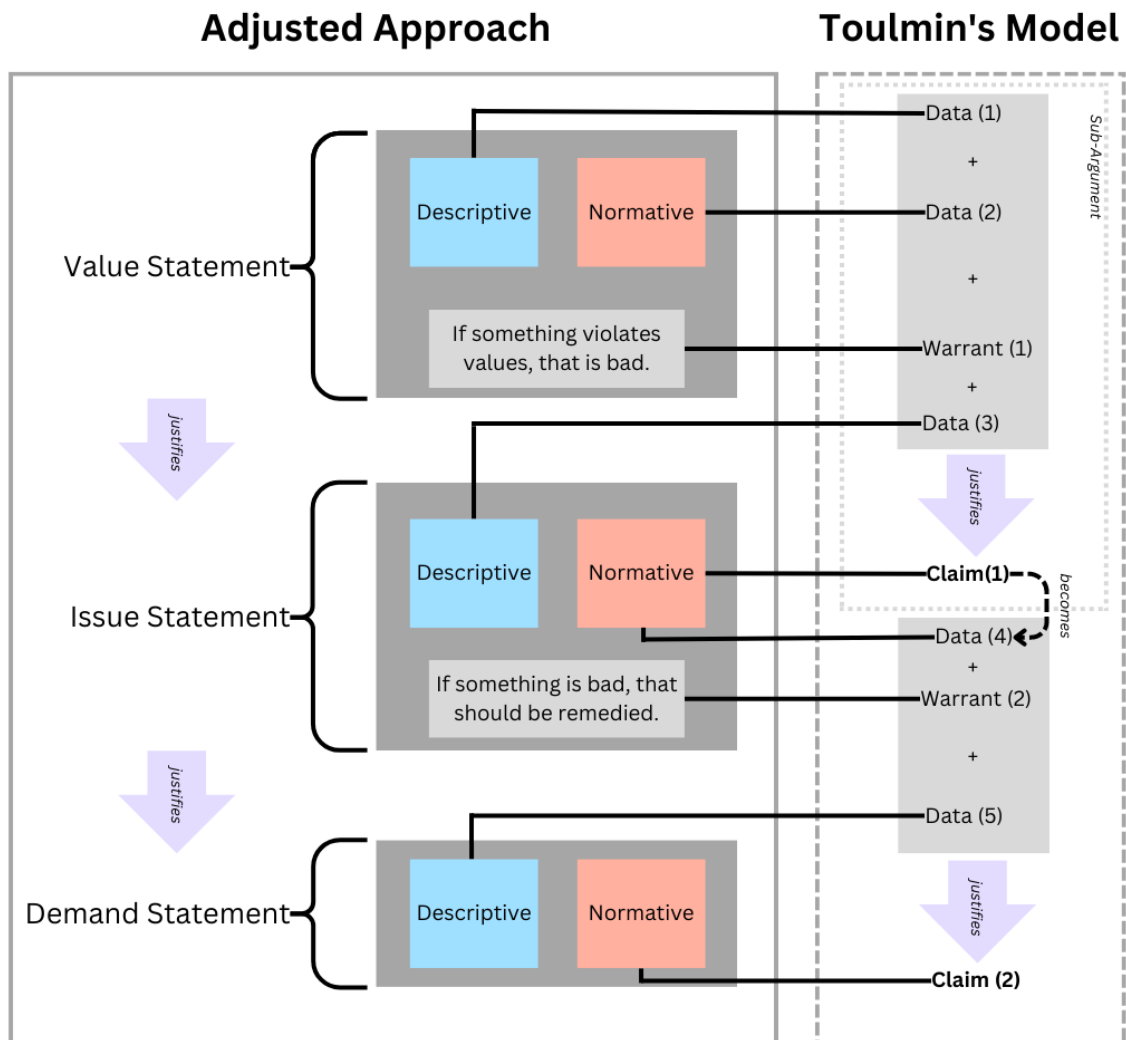
Figure 5: Mapping of the Adjusted Classification to Toulmin's Model Used in ADE

Apart from this amendment paired with the text-form the analysis takes, however, the mode of operation of my adjusted analysis remains fairly similar to the classical ADE (excluding its last evaluative step). Discourse is gathered, the claims made by a party are identified from this discourse, and the argumentative structure, into which those claims are embedded, is made explicit and reflected upon. The interpretative work involved in this also remains guided by ADE's fidelity constraint and quality constraint (Dekker 2013: 16).

For each party, the process of reconstruction began with an analysis of the value statements and then subsequently moved to their issue and demand statements. Put differently, the analysis first established the most basic premises and then moved along the argumentative path arising from those (cf. the structure of the individual party analyses in Appendix 3). Jointly discussing statements within a statement category before moving to the next, on the one hand, contributed to meeting the demands of the fidelity and quality constraints, and, on the other, allowed to more effectively consider the informative influences the different claims had on each other.

With all this in mind, it is important to emphasise that, when analysing the speeches, the context needs to be kept in mind. That is, despite all differences that were brought to light, they were identified from a heap of similarities of intention, purpose, and types of argument. The reason for that is, in a sense, trivial but nonetheless should be noted: the source material are speeches of party leaders held at internal party venues in their official function as political figures. In doing so, all parties and subsequently all speeches overall share some political goals, such as faring well during elections, entering, or defending governmental positions and realising the own political visions. Hence, it is unsurprising that amongst all parties some common tropes were found, such that they stress the importance of their own political visions, praise themselves and criticise their political competitors. Given this, it was, beside identifying implicit meaning in statements, one of the challenges of the successive analysis to identify the specifics under conditions of contextual similarity (and often contentual relatedness).

5.5. Preliminary Remarks

As will become evident, there are differences in what populist and non-populist parties demand. But, and perhaps more strikingly so, the major differences between populist and non-populist parties amount more to *how* things are justified rather than to *what* things are demanded. This is because those justifications provide deeper insights into the populist ideational dimension,

and also because they link different demands together, thus making patterns visible which distinguish them from the so-called political mainstream. Interestingly enough, there is a strong homogeneity of commitments across different speeches of single parties across all parties, both in the main and in the control sample, even though the textual grounds differ in length and hence, amongst other things, in the variety of specific matters addressed.

While it is for the section after the analysis to summarise the results and reflect on structures arising therefrom, a brief foreshadowing can be given here. As will become evident, the specifics of populist commitment vary and can, to some extent, be linked to dominant (full) ideologies, most often some sort of traditionalism or nationalism on the right side and some sort of socialism on the left side of the political spectrum, and coincide with the framing of the people through the lens of nation or class and the elites in rather cultural or rather economic terms. However – and this reaffirms the rationale behind engaging in an analysis of the ideational premises of particular parties in addition to a general conceptual analysis of populism – they are often more nuanced that the link to any such ideology by itself would imply.

On the one hand, both the construction of the people and the elite as well as the value commitments arising along the way in some cases vary regarding their points of emphasis. For example, while the Austrian Freedom Party more strongly focusses on culture, the Flemish Interest more strongly focusses on a presumed racial dimension of the Flemish people, and the Polish Law and Justice on a mutual historical origin. Even though all three elements are, to a degree, present in the framing of the people of all three parties, some aspects are featured more prominently than others.

On the other hand, notions such as class or nation vary themselves and thus feature different constitutive properties. Referring to the previous example again, whereas both the Austrian Freedom Party and Law and Justice frame the people through a culturally and historically homogenous notion of nation, Law and Justice nonetheless emphasises some

135

differences in the people which it seeks to alleviate (in particular, it stresses that there is economic inequality across regions and sectors etc. and advocates for more equality) whereas the Austrian Freedom Party does not. Moreover, not all populist parties share the same commitments to the same degree. This leads some of them to be closer to mainstream parties and, by extension, to be in less tension with the principles of liberal democracy than others. This confirms the prognosis that a continuum of populist thought can be demarcated, which can only be identified through an analysis of the concrete populist manifestations, since their specifics cannot be deduced from the overarching concepts related to the populist label, such as people-centrism, anti-elitism and anti-pluralism.

Overall, it will become evident that the following holds: Although not all populist parties share the same degree of ideas incompatible to liberal democracy, in all parties of the main sample could ideas and interconnections between them be identified, which cannot in the same way be found in the parties of the control sample. And while some populist parties are closer to the mainstream and some mainstream parties are closer to populist parties than others, distinct ideational properties of populist parties can be identified which are decisively different from that of their non-populist competitors.

6. Joint Content Analysis

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the ideational specifics populist parties expressed in their discourse is scrutinised. From those, a characterisation of contemporary populism in the party systems of the European Union's member states is obtained.

I proceed as follows: Based on the parties' individual content analyses, which can be consulted in-depth in the appendix, I elucidate the similarities and differences between those parties. This is first done for the similarities and differences *within* the main and the control sample and thereafter for similarities and differences *between* the samples. Against this background, I turn to the discussion of what, if anything, is unique to the ideas of populist parties and hence can be considered a characteristic property (or group of properties) non-populist parties tend to miss. After discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis from a methodical perspective, the chapter closes with an assessment of the anti-liberal and anti-democratic character of contemporary populism in the EU as it emerged in the empirical investigation.

6.2. Comparison of the Parties' Discourses

In this section, the similarities and differences of the parties' discourses within and in between the main and control sample are discussed. The reason for comparing the discourses both within and in between samples is that this provides additional information otherwise lost. Hence, proceeding this way contributes to a better understanding of similarities and differences encountered in any such comparison.

To recall, the main sample includes the Austrian Freedom Party (Austria), Flemish Interest (Belgium), the Socialist Party (Netherlands), the Left Party (Sweden), Law and Justice (Poland), We Ourselves (Ireland), and Citizens (Spain). In turn, the control sample includes the

Social Democratic Party of Austria (Austria), Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Belgium), GreenLeft (Netherlands), Liberals (Sweden), Civic Platform (Poland), Family of the Irish (Ireland), and the People's Party (Spain).

Due to the nature of the data at hand (and the very mode of analysis) such a comparison necessarily involves an explorative comparison of common patterns for which full coherence cannot be realised. That is, all trends and systematisation endeavours notwithstanding, noteworthy exceptions as well as special cases exist, the unique traits of which cannot be fully dissolved in course of the process.

6.2.1. Main Sample

6.2.1.1. Differences Between the Main Sample Parties

There is a plethora of noteworthy differences found in the main sample parties' discourse covered by the investigation. Perhaps most obviously, the parties differ regarding their position of what is often considered the political left-right spectrum.[80] This should not be disregarded – even though the left-right spectrum itself is a blurry notion and, as the ensuing comparison of both samples suggests, the importance of the location on this spectrum alone should certainly not be overemphasised.

The perimeters of those differences are set by the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest on the right-wing and by the Left Party and the Socialist Party on the left-wing. Whereas the former two's discourse heavily focussed on such topics as immigration, patriotism

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[80] Here, I loosely follow the view of Knapp and Wright (2006), who hold that "class is the single most common factor dividing Left from Right in West European political systems, with the former seeking social justice through redistributive social and economic intervention by the state, and the latter committed to defending capitalism and private property (and, it would argue, prosperity) against the threats thus posed" (Knapp and Wright 2006: 6). More concretely, in what follows, I consider parties rather leaning to the left whose positions are informed by progressivist stances on culture or immigration and redistributionist stances on the economy, and parties rather leaning to the right whose positions are informed by conservative stances on culture or immigration and economic stances not endorsing redistribution as in itself desirable.

and the nation and its culture,[81] the discourse of the latter two heavily focussed on such topics as economic inequality and (re-)distribution.[82]

The other parties of the main sample can be considered to fall somewhere in between. Amongst those, Law and Justice leans towards the right as it overall focusses on matters of national sovereignty, patriotism, the native culture and so on.[83] However, in comparison to the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest, Law and Justice more strongly emphasises matters of inequality as well as the adequacy of welfare and infrastructural provisions and public services.[84]

We Ourselves, in turn, in a sense features the opposite case. That is, the party overall leans leftwards as We Ourselves is, beside the unique matter of Irish unification, concerned with matters of economic (in-)equality and their corollaries.[85] However, in contrast to the Left Party and the Socialist Party, We Ourselves also refers to the Irish people as a cultural-historical nation, breaking with the pure class narrative put forward by those parties and moving the party (slightly) more to the right.[86]

These differences are hardly surprising. After all, the main sample was specifically selected so that a possibly wide array of different parties meeting the operationalised ideational definition is included into the analysis.

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[81] E.g.: "We are the true Austrian patriots and representants of the Austrian self-determination." (Strache 2017); "For this open-door policy, the people pay – the ordinary people in our cities and municipalities – a sky-high price in the form of crime." (Van Grieken 2018).

[82] E.g.: "Sweden was for a long time one of the world's most equal countries, but we all know that something has happened in recent decades, inequality has increased more here than in any other analogue country." (Sjöstedt 2018); "We do not resign ourselves to the growing inequality here in the Netherlands and around the world." (Roemer 2015).

[83] E.g.: "We will have to decide on a social catastrophe. […] I am talking about immigrants who today are flooding Europe with their forced relocation." (Kaczynski 2017).

[84] E.g.: "Solidarity is about equal opportunities, equalisation of the standard of living between different regions, between the city and the countryside, between different social groups. Of course, there will always be differences, but in Poland they are huge and destructive to this society and we must make efforts to reduce them." (Kaczynski 2016).

[85] E.g.: "The homelessness crisis, the health crisis or the crisis of living which many families are enduring […] the inequality in our society is deepening." (Adams 2016).

[86] E.g.: "Ireland must be inclusive […] and it must be welcoming to all sections of our people." (Adams 2016).

Furthermore, albeit not unrelated to the parties' dispersion across the left-right continuum, the notions of the people, to which the main sample parties directly or indirectly refer, vary. While those show strong similarities in some regard, which distinguish them from those of the control sample parties and which are hence discussed in more detail later in this chapter, it can be observed that the parties which more strongly lean to the left tend to load the people with the meaning of class whereas those leaning to the right tend to load it with the meaning of nation.

It is important to emphasise that no party provided an explicit (and exhaustive) definition of its notion of the people. However, contextual references can be made both from the framing when using the notion as well as from the overall narrative employed by the parties. Here, when I refer to nation, I mean a framing of the people through a – mostly unspecified – shared origin in terms of culture, history and (at least in the case of Flemish Interest) ethnical similarities, which in those cases is assumed to constitute the native majority of the state (in the case of Flemish Interest: the region of Flanders; in the case of We Ourselves: the island of Ireland). In contrast, people as class frames the people through the belonging to a particular socio-economic group, assumed to constitute the (economically ordinary) majority of the state's populace.

The former notion is most vividly employed by the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest and the latter by the Left Party and the Socialist Party.[87] Law and Justice refers to the people as a nation as well.[88] However, it also incorporates an idea of economic equality (as the economic extension of its vision of comprehensive equality amongst the Poles),[89] which is not

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[87] For example, compare "The Islam has never been part of our history and our culture, and it never will be part of our history and our culture." (Hofer 2019) or "The ordinary Fleming […] has enough of having to bear the consequences of mass immigration and Islamisation." (Van Grieken 2018) vs. "The Swedish right cannot think of anything better than to make the already poor even poorer by lowering their wages and raising their rents." (Sjöstedt 2016) or "With the right-wing cabinet, now there is another tax plan that further widens the income gap, that gives the highest incomes the most benefit. […] We make the difference of giving the tax break not to the highest earners, but to eradicate poverty. A millionaire tax and a fair wealth tax are just enough to solve the poverty amongst the children at once." (Roemer 2015).

[88] E.g., "Poles are a community of spiritual and material dimensions." (Kaczynski 2017).

[89] E.g., "I think the most important is equality and the issue of freedom – equality above all, equality before the law as equals, equality of opportunities. Equality is the right to a dignified life." (Kaczynski 2019).

found within the discourse of the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest and which is similar to that of the Left Party and Socialist Party. The notion employed by We Ourselves, in contrast, largely gravitates around economic matters in a similar way as that of the Left Party and the Socialist Party.[90] Yet, it also includes references to the (Irish) people's history and identity not found in the discourse of the former two.

In comparison to the other main sample parties, the notion of the people employed by Citizens can in a sense be considered a special case. The party repeatedly stresses that it is concerned with the Spaniards as the entirety of citizenry, hence taking citizenship as the main (perhaps sole) category for inclusion into the people.[91] Nonetheless, Citizens also makes references which seem, at least in addition thereto, to presuppose particular class properties. Those differ from those employed by the main sample parties on the left in so far as Citizens refers to the working, law abiding middle class as the target beneficiary of its policies.[92]

It can further be observed that the notions of the people not only differ in terms of their overall composition but also in terms of their points of evocation. By this I mean that, depending on what areas of politics or what sort of issues are addressed, different aspects or notions of the people are emphasised by some of the parties. While this can be only implicitly reconstructed from a limited sum of statements covered by the investigation, it can particularly be observed for We Ourselves and Citizens, i.e., parties, which feature a somewhat mixed notion of the people. Law and Justice, in contrast, differs from those two as its notion of the people does not alternate between different notions depending on the area of evocation but instead essentially amounts to nation albeit *enriched* with class properties, which is a

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[90] E.g., "A third of our children live in consistent poverty. Public money, which should be used to end the scandal of patients lying on trolleys, which should be used to house our citizens, to create jobs, is instead being used to repay private bank debt." (Adams 2015).

[91] E.g., "I am from Barcelona, I am Catalan, I am Spanish, and I am European and that is not a merit. […] Spain has to guarantee the union of all Spaniards but also a diverse and united Spain." (Rivera 2015); "The nation is ultimately the citizens." (Rivera 2016).

[92] E.g., "Call me crazy but I think you have to work for those who comply, you have to work for those who pay taxes, you have to work for those who comply with the laws, you have to work for those who pay us the paycheck." (Rivera 2015).

consequence of the party's idea of comprehensive equality amongst the Poles. While this equality is assumed or strived for across dimensions (say, culture, economy, society, religion) its content does not vary across those dimensions in the way it does for the other two parties.

We Ourselves discusses the people predominantly from a class perspective when addressing economic matters or internal affairs of Ireland yet introduces categories known from the people as a nation (such as a shared history) when discussing foreign affairs (particularly the matter of Irish unification and relations to the UK or the EU).[93] Citizens, in contrast, largely refers to the people as equivalent to the citizenry. However, when discussing economic issues, Citizens frames the people through what could be considered a class lens, as it emphasises that it is doing politics for the working, law abiding middle class.[94]

Analogously to the notions of the people, the notions of the people's adversaries follow a similar spectrum-like dispersal. The Austrian Freedom Party and the Flemish Interest identify as the main threats for the wellbeing of the people forces which they assume to, say, contest the national culture and draw funds away from the (genuine) people (the nation). To those forces, both parties count immigrants and refugees, its political party competitors as well as (in the case of the Austrian Freedom Party explicitly) EU institutions. Whereas the former are considered to unduly benefit from welfare and infrastructural provisions and, specifically in the case of Muslim immigrants from the MENA region, to damage the national culture and replace it with their own (including the proliferation of Islam), the latter are considered to facilitate or fail to halt these developments, to illegitimately benefit from the situation and, in some cases, to weaken national sovereignty.[95]

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[93] E.g., "A genuine republic would not tolerate […] that the interests of its own citizens are trumped by those of the EU imperialists." (Adams 2016).

[94] Note that what has been said above only informs about the type of the notion of the people and not about its degree, i.e., how far, if it all, it differs from the notion of the people found amongst non-populist parties. Since reflecting on this will require to take into consideration the control sample as well, matters of degree will be discussed in the section concerned with the comparison between samples.

[95] E.g., "We are true patriots whereas others are false ones.", "We have an abuse of the system for the guaranteed minimum income […] because everyone from any country receives it without having worked any hours while at

In contrast, the Left Party and the Socialist Party identify as the main culprits stripping the people of the provisions they are due economic elites and their party competitors. The former group's interests are in a sense considered to be directly opposed to those of the economically ordinary people. And the latter are accused of, on the one hand, being responsible for economic legislation biased in favour of the wealthy and for failing to resolve this injustice and, on the other, of themselves being complicit with this development or intertwined with the wealthy and thus benefitting therefrom.

Once again, Law and Justice and We Ourselves can be understood to fall somewhere in between those two archetypical delineations. Law and Justice leans more closely to the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest; and We Ourselves leans more closely to the Left Party and the Socialist Party. However, in comparison to the notion of the people, the forces both parties identify essentially resemble those of the two parties with which both have more similarities.

That is, Law and Justice also identifies refugees, particularly Muslim refugees, as threats to Polish culture and way of life, accuses the EU of facilitating this development and to damage Polish sovereignty, and its national party competitors of conjoining therein and of damaging the Polish state and society. We Ourselves, in turn, largely follows the narrative of the economic elites benefitting at the expense of the people and the economy being biased in their favour, with its party competitors being complicit therein or failing to alleviate that situation. Against the background of the Irish situation, i.e., the division of the island into Northern

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the same time our pensioners are left hanging.", "There are mosques where violent sermons of hate take place, where recruiting [for terror organisations] takes place. But, instead of being dissolved or banned, nothing happens." (Strache 2017); "It is our country and we do not want to give up our values." (Hofer 2019); "Flanders is ours […] the Flanders of the ordinary Fleming." (Van Grieken 2018); "70% of the Antwerp children are not Belgian. In two generations, the mayor of Antwerp will be Turk, Moroccan or Black with curly hair.", "We can take our future into our own hands […] and above all finally ensure that our people come first." (Van Grieken 2019).

Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, We Ourselves moreover associates the latter with maintaining the status quo thus preventing (or not actively striving for) Irish unification.[96]

Regarding "enemies", too, Citizens constitutes a special case. The party neither identifies economic elites nor foreign cultural influences and their alleged advocates as the main forces acting against the interests of the people. More precisely, no single agent or group of agents fully fitting this category could be named based on the party's discourse in the first place. While Citizens criticises the government for bad politics (failed economic policies, inefficient administration etc.) and identifies Catalan separatism as a threat to the unity of the state, the party does not intertwine the actions of both and subsequently does not collapse the issues it identifies to the sole wrongdoing of those.[97]

Here, it is important to note that the parties' critique often overlaps, because it collapses various issues to the intended actions of particular groups. This holds notwithstanding that, depending on whether the parties' notion of the people is closer to nation or to class, they approach the obstacles identified as threat to the interests of the people from different directions.[98]

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[96] E.g., "The establishment parties […] refused to socialise the wealth but they have no problem socialising the debt." (Adams 2015); "A genuine republic would not tolerate disadvantage in any quality, or corruption and scandals […] It has a different set of core values from the elites who wrong this island." (Adams 2017); "The [governmental party's] leadership has little interest in Irish unity." (Adams 2016); "The Irish government and all who say that now is not the time to speak of unity are wrong." (McDonald 2019).

[97] E.g., "In Catalonia, we don't have thrown in the towel. We want to keep fighting to reform this country. The solution is not to divide Catalans into good and bad. The solution is not to vote for independence every year or every two years. The solution is to bring this country in order.", "The separatist way is a dead way. It is finished and only carries division and confrontation.", "For 30 years the PP weighs [down on Spain]. […] The old politics that has done good things in the past is unable to renew itself, is unable to reform, does neither have free nor clean hands to change this country." (Rivera 2016); "With corruption, the current model of labour, the school failure, and wrong decisions of the Government when it comes to investing money, yes, with all that we are the third economy in Europe. Imagine what Spain could be like if we improve our labour market, if we make an educational revolution, if we do not interfere with our companies, and if we take weights off the working middle class." (Rivera 2017).

[98] I.e., Flemish Interest and the Austrian Freedom Party emphasise contestations to what they conceive the national culture, and the Left Party and Socialist Party emphasise the financial elites as bending the economy to suit their interests at the expense of the ordinary people.

6.2.1.2. Similarities Between the Main Sample Parties

The differences depicted in the previous subsection notwithstanding, there are important similarities shared by most of the main sample parties. For one, the main sample parties (again, with the noteworthy exception of Citizens) link most if not all issues they observe to one single development for which a group of agents is considered responsible. While there are various issues identified by the parties, those are effectively reduced to a single cause and its appertaining factors.

Here, two root issues can particularly be identified to which the parties refer depending on their position on the left-right spectrum. On the right, those are cultural changes predominantly, though not exclusively, associated with immigration from majority-Muslim.[99] On the left, this is an approach to the economy alternatively labelled neoliberalism, bourgeois politics or Thatcherism.[100] While both root issues differ in terms of their characteristics and area of occurrence (the physical relocation of humans and a cultural change vs. an economic approach and a distributive tendency induced thereby), their appertaining factors or side effects are comprehensive and include various, if not all, issues identified by the parties.

Another important similarity of the main sample parties, with the exception of Citizens, concerns the agents or group of agents held responsible for those root issues and hence for

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[99] E.g., "The Islam is not a part of Austria." (Strache 2017); "A party is needed which opposes the complete change of our Christian occident.", "52% of the Vienna pupils do not speak German at home. Mohammed is the third-most popular Name in Vienna.", "School children are taught the importance of the duty to die for Allah." (Hofer 2019); "The multicultural dream still remains a multicultural nightmare. We were assured that those asylum seekers would be paying our pensions. Today we know better. The vast majority of those people do not contribute a penny. […]. It is high time to make a radical change with this. The so-called centre-right government, however, continues with its open migration plan. The borders remain wide open and at the same time we, the indigenous people, make amends on everything. When it comes to our way of life, that so-called enrichment means […] in all areas – economically, culturally, socially – as the Flemings know only too well, that always an adaption is required from us, never the other way around." (Van Grieken 2016); "The ordinary Fleming […] has enough of having to bear the consequences of mass immigration and Islamisation." (Van Grieken 2018); "Emigrants […] changing the shape of life in Poland" (Kaczynski 2015); "We will have to decide on a social catastrophe. […] I am talking about immigrants who today are flooding Europe with their forced relocation." (Kaczynski 2017).

[100] E.g., "Thatcherism protects the projects of big business." (Adams 2017); "Holes have arisen after 8 years of bourgeois politics, with growing gaps and shrinking resources for welfare building." (Sjöstedt 2015); "The politics of recent year has not come out of the sky at all, it is not a natural phenomenon, it is a logical consequence of an ideological vision. A vision, about the human image, a vision of society. Over the last 30 years, the neoliberal vision prevailed." (Roemer 2017).

acting against the popular interest. While, analogously to the root issues, there are differences amongst those (say, immigrants, cultural deviants and their allies on the one, and financial elites and their beneficiaries on the other hand), they across the left-right spectrum include governmental agents and party competitors considered complicit therein, say by acting in the interests of immigrants or the wealthy or by failing to meaningfully engage with those issues, as well as what is considered the mainstream media.[101]

Moreover, those agents are reflected solely through their presumed connection to those root issues. During this subsuming enterprise, the existing differences between them (say, in terms of political performance or positionings) are considered irrelevant or are neglected. Only their alleged connection to the root issue is taken to be relevant and hence emphasised in the discourse. Since only the connections to the root issues are considered relevant and the same are attested to all political competitors, the main sample parties lament the interchangeability of politics as all other parties, in one way or another, contribute to the development at the heart of the people's problems.[102]

More precisely, a common theme employed by the main sample parties in this context is the allegation that other parties are one of the following: either directly promoting the issue at hand or only half-heartedly, ineffectively, or incompetently taking actions against those. In the case of the parties on the right, the former is framed as left politics promoting immigration and

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[101] E.g., "We are true patriots while others are false ones.", "[The other parties] publicly demand things and then, when it is time to vote, change their minds and vote against what they have previously demanded or deface the decisive contents so much that nothing comes out of it in the end.", "[…] as is often reported by many media outlets in a distorted and knowingly false way.", "The media wants to make forgotten what positions have been taken in the past." (Strache 2017); "Our opponents […] [had] support of the dominant part of the media" (Kaczynski 2016); "Media has little pluralism and we should restore it in its entirety." (Kaczynski 2017); "There are those who [presumably the other parties, my comment] want to take away from us the freedom of opinion, the freedom of expression, the freedom of conscience and the freedom of religion." (Kaczynski 2019); "Flemish interest will always and everywhere continue to arise, because everywhere all over Europe the population is revolting against the politically correct Elite. In Europe, the population is tired of it because they have a different opinion everywhere." (Van Grieken 2016); "There is persistent fake news from this government on the best cameras" (Van Grieken 2018); "[there is] a tsunami of negative campaigning by some of our opponents and from sections of the media." (Adams 2016).

[102] E.g., "Who is in power does not really make any difference. They are interchangeable and all have the same disease. They take power, disappear behind doors and promise things like 'snow in the sun'." (Van Grieken 2016).

the decline of local culture, and the latter as conservatism, which claims to take those issues seriously but remains inauthentic in doing so (thus being not truly but only seemingly patriotic). In the case of the parties on the left, the former is framed as neoliberal or bourgeois politics promoting the interests of the rich and the primacy of the market over politics, and the latter as parties who are left by name only, i.e., who fail to engage in truly left politics or even support the government's neoliberal course of action.

From this framing, the main sample parties commonly infer judgements about their competitors' character. That is, other parties are criticised for a lack of authenticity, honesty, and competence. This contrasts with the main sample parties' emphasis – of varying repetition – of their own virtues in this regard. In other words, whereas all other parties are framed so that those are either actively promoting issues detrimental to the wellbeing of the people or, due to insincerity or incompetence, fail to curb those issues, the main sample parties stress that they – and they alone – remain both truly committed to tackling these issues as well as competent in achieving this. This way, the parties present themselves as the only agent that provides a desirable and real alternative to the rest.[103]

It is also in this context that the main sample parties more on the right-wing of the political spectrum (Austrian Freedom Party, Flemish Interest, Law and Justice; but also We Ourselves) lament that the political mainstream as well as the mainstream media collude against them and treat them unfairly in the political arena. Since others are connected to one of the root issues and only the main sample parties stand up to them by advocating the interests of the people, the others join forces to prevent the main sample parties from unfolding their politics. This plotting against the main sample parties allegedly includes, for example, unfair

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[103] E.g., "We are […] sincere and honest, and driven by an incredible pace." (Van Grieken 2016); "This is what distinguishes us from the other parties – one can rely on us.", "We are the credible political force." (Strache 2017); "We have a fundamental principle, which is: competence and honesty." (Kaczynski 2016); "Law and Justice has proven in these three years but also in 2005-2007 that it can govern and rule honestly and reliably." (Kaczynski 2018).

media coverage and lies, a lack of cooperation in the political arena as well as the employment of double standards regarding their treatment of the party.[104]

The mode of critique employed by the main sample parties about the agents identified this way is both comprehensive and absolute. It is comprehensive in the sense that it spreads to almost all issues identified by the parties. And it is absolute in so far as it leads to the full rejection of the agents addressed. The connection to the identified core issue is taking lexical priority over and hence leads to the neglection of all other aspects of their political output or positionings.

A side effect of this mode of critique is that the parties' discourse remains essentially devoid of technicalities, particularly when discussing the deteriorating provisions of welfare, infrastructure or public services. That is, because most issues identified are implicitly or explicitly linked to the core issues through allegation and not through analysis, the conditions which led to their materialisation equally remain not discussed. Analogously, the solutions required for their alleviation are not argued for, since the evidence from which they would be concluded is already presupposed in the construction of the case (all issues coming together at a core for which clearly identifiable agents are fully to blame).

Moreover, as the states of affairs discussed by most main sample parties are so clearly constructed, no questions regarding the right course of political action remain. As the issues and their perpetrators are clearly and comprehensively identified, so is the solution thereto. While this point should not be overemphasised as the texts considered have been political speeches and not academic treatises or policy papers, the subtle presence of this trend is evident when comparing the main sample to the control sample.[105]

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[104] E.g., „Our offices in Lower Austria were put on fire by a person enjoying subsidiary protection. But it is claimed that 'the Nazis have put it on fire themselves'. Unbelievable! Have you heard of any protest, by the President or anyone else?" (Hofer 2019).

[105] In contrast to the main sample, the control sample parties on few occasions provide some, by comparison, elaborated analyses of the causal connection of issues and causes and, at times, leave the solutions necessary to curb those issues open to be found.

Finally, the main sample parties, albeit to varying degrees addressed in the inter-sample comparison, show important similarities regarding their perspective on the people. It has been stressed in the previous subsection that the parties frame the people from decisively different, though sometimes intersecting, perspectives. That notwithstanding, their perspectives on the people show similarities in their relation to the entirety of both the state's populace as well as the citizenry.

More precisely, those similarities concern the question who does and who does not belong to the people. With both, nation and class, belonging to the people – and hence the group the interests of which the parties consider taking priority and thus claim to advocate – is grounded in pre- or extra-legal criteria not exhausted by, and potentially contrary to one's citizenship.[106]

In the former case, Law and Justice, the Austrian Freedom Party and Flemish Interest effectively limit the people to persons who meet their constitutive criteria of being Polish, Austrian or Flemish. For those, in turn, a shared history, religion, culture and ethnical origin appears to be considered mandatory. Framed like this, immigrants (especially Muslim immigrants) can never *really*, i.e., beyond mere citizenship, acquire the status of belonging to the people, because this would entail changing their origin and hence be precluded from the very setup of the notion.

In the latter case, the Socialist Party, the Left Party and (as discussed later, to a lesser degree) We Ourselves frame the people so that the wealthy are contrasted with and subsequently excluded from the, economically ordinary, people. Of course, wealth and income can change and are distributed severely unequally even amongst individuals of the same profession. This, however, is not addressed by the parties. Instead, groups are identified who,

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[106] While the main sample parties never explicitly define the people or its inclusionary criteria, their perspectives on the matter can nonetheless be inferred and partially reconstructed from their positionings, as was elaborated in the individual analyses.

according to the parties, belong to the wealthy and thus, by implication, not to the ordinary people.

Whereas the matter of transition from the non-people to the people is, implicitly but effectively, excluded on the perspective that the people are a nation, it is fully left unaddressed and both groups being treated as stable over time (in terms of their composition, behaviour and interests) by the parties whose understanding of the people is informed by a class notion. In contrast, while the departure from the people in a narrow sense is not discussed, on both archetypical perspectives it appears to be considered possible that some persons or groups break with the people, perhaps beyond repair. That is, even putting aside that, according to the left main sample parties, politics is intertwined with and hence unduly influenced by the wealthy, with the exception of Citizens all main sample parties seem to hold that their competitors have departed so far from the people that they are facilitating the interests of the non-people. Consequently, political action is demanded as needing to be directed against the non-people and them alike.

Finally, before moving on to comparing the parties of the control sample, it needs to be pointed out that the notions of the people employed or borrowed from by most main sample parties assume an array of interests and preferences they consider to be held by the members of the people. While there is insufficient evidence to get to the bottom of this on the basis of the discourse covered by the investigation, and it is indeed common practice in politics to present one's positionings as enjoying public support, it may (as will be discussed in the characterisation-section later on in the chapter) very well indicate the instrumentalisation of what has been identified as a (homogenous and moralised) construction of the people in a shared imaginary, as elaborated in chapter 3.

6.2.2. Control Sample

6.2.2.1. Differences Between the Control Sample Parties

Similarly to the parties of the main sample, differences exist in the control sample regarding the parties' position on the left-right continuum. Here, too, this is no surprise but rather reaffirms the correct estimation of the parties' positionings during case selection. That is, whereas the Social Democratic Party of Austria, Green Left and Family of the Irish are generally located on the left, the People's Party, Liberals, Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats, and Civic Platform are generally located on the right of the political spectrum. Note that I speak of 'generally' because neither one of the control sample parties is, in comparison to the main sample, located on the end points of the left-right continuum.

As a consequence, the parties also differ regarding the focus of their discourse in terms of values committed to, issues identified, and desirable political action called for. For example, the parties on the left more strongly problematise perceived economic inequality of wealth or income.[107] However, those discursive emphases are by no means disjunct. The parties across the control sample often address similar issues such as the quality of public services, economic performance, as well as climate change and the handling of migration.[108]

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[107] E.g., "According to the national bank, the distribution of wealth in our country is so that 55% own as much as 95%." (Kern 2016); "[It] must be our joint goal to adjust our phantasy, our shaping and our political action so that the life of Jasmin and her children [a case study discussed during the speech, my comment] becomes better and significantly more just.", "The social-democratic force of justice, of distributive justice, of social justice and also of performative justice – part of our DNA for 130 years.", "Our values, our ideas, our political answers have only one goal: to make your life easier and significantly more just." (Rendi-Wagner 2018); "People deserve an economy that works for all of us and not just for fraudulent parasites." (Klaver 2016); "A CEO already earns in two days what the average employee earns in the whole year. […] I want you to enter a conversation […] about reducing the pay gap. [There should be] a requirement that if a salary increase is higher than that of the employees, then the employees shall have a right to veto." (Klaver 2019).

[108] E.g., "The climate change will become a big societal challenge.", "We have to think internationally. We must be solidary, since we know that the migration we observe these days, of course, is something which is connected to our own politics." (Kern 2016); "It has always been our task, no: our destiny, to improve the life conditions of people in this country." (Rendi-Wagner 2018); "We should separate them [asylum seekers] from economic migration and on this, with other European countries, develop a system. But when it comes to asylum seekers it is our duty to help people, to provide a decent reception for everyone who seeks asylum in this free country." (Rutten 2016); "Climate challenge is the biggest global challenge of our time." (Björklund 2016); "The obligations of this mandate are not only addressed to the governing party but to all of us. We are called to […] bring more prosperity and more well-being to the Spaniards", "We believe in freedom, in equality, in sovereignty as they are invoked by the constitution.", "[W]e have a reliable and safe country with […] demanding environmental rules."

6.2.2.2. Similarities Between the Control Sample Parties

Some of the similarities the control sample parties featured concern the status of persons within the polity and, linked thereto, the very notion of the people employed. That is, several control sample parties not only commit themselves to individual rights (for example, in the discourse under scrutiny, it is referred to human rights, citizen rights, basic rights, minority rights and refugee rights)[109] – as do some of the main sample parties, too (explicitly: Socialist Party and We Ourselves).[110] They also locate the people in this context as the sum of the persons in possession of the respective state's citizenship. Put differently, the notion of the people is, in good approximation, used essentially equivalently to the citizenry. Here I speak only of "essentially" equivalent, since (minor) elements of nation or class can also be found in the control sample parties' discourse.[111]

(Rajoy 2017); "The forced era of new taxes and new changes is over. The 2015 budget was the first in seven years to give people a modest increase in their take home income. My commitment to you this evening is that tax cuts to reward hard work and enterprise will continue in the next budget and in future budgets.", "[I]mproving the lives of the Irish people is at the very heart of that plan because, you see, for us the economy is not an end in itself. We want to build a strong economy so that we can invest in you the people […]." (Kenny 2015); "Make the lives of Poles easier" (Kopacz 2015); "The centre of our policy as Civic Platform has been and always will be the man and the community that he created. […] Necessary reforms are only a tool, a tool that we know how to use to help people to develop and enjoy life, on the basis of respect for the law and mutual respect." (Schetyna 2016).

[109] E.g., "We have forced through basic rights, the freedom of assembly. We have realised the right to vote and the right to vote for women.", "We avow that we only work together with parties, which are willing to respect minorities as well as human rights and the human dignity." (Kern 2016); "The liberal story is of rights and obligations: that is basic rights and obligations." (Rutten 2016); "We are talking about the rights of Spaniards, which is not a small thing. And the first of all those rights is the right to decide what we want Spain to be. It is not a right only a part of the Spaniards has, but one that all of them have, and no one can deprive any Spaniard of that right to decide on their future." (Rajoy 2018); "Human rights and the right of asylum should be safeguarded.", "The conviction of everyone's right to freedom […] is the driving force behind liberals' struggle." (Björklund 2015).

[110] E.g., "[Prime Minister] Mark Rutte hides a new reality that is indeed an overt attack on all of us, on everything that we value from our social rights to our wages to our welfare state […]." (Marijnissen 2018); "A different European Union, a social EU based on citizen rights." (Adams 2016); "If the British governments don't have a credible acceptable proposal, if they cannot demonstrate how they will avoid a hard border to protect the Good Friday Agreement and citizen rights, then the Irish government must call them out.", "[The] new Ireland that we seek honours each citizen equally, respects identity and culture, is rooted in civil and human rights." (McDonald 2018).

[111] E.g., "Imagine that the political script is no longer written by lobbyists of large companies […]. [T]hen we can be allies of progressive green entrepreneurs, we can be the inspiration for the volunteers of social organisations, we can be the link between the Muslim mother and the construction worker, the father, the teacher and the professor. We can give a voice […]." (Klaver 2016); "Spaniards today have not invented the Spanish nation. We have inherited it with a [history] of centuries. [A]nyone who understands the coat of arms of Spain realizes that we were not born this morning, we are a sovereign nation and not [just] because the Constitution of 1978 says so." (Rajoy 2018).

For example, Civic Platform evokes some ideas of Polishness supervening on citizenship, as it discusses Polishness in the context of Christian values and links it to openness, solidarity and (some form of) patriotism.[112] And Family of the Irish discusses the entirety of the Irish people in both the Republic of Ireland as well as in Northern Ireland – even though this accreditation is conducted on grounds of citizenship in the first place rather than on the grounds of "blood and soil".[113] In contrast, both the Green Left and the Social Democratic Party of Austria strongly address economic inequality and employ a critique of economic policies (and presumably responsible institutions) identified with neoliberalism.[114] Those remain relatively insignificant, however, because they do not lead to the parties revising their overarching framing of the people but rather are an expression of their political focus.

Another similarity amongst the parties of the control sample concerns several aspects of the critiques they employ regarding issues as well as agents considered responsible for them. While the parties' critiques cover several areas (economy, social affairs, international affairs etc.), they all refrain from collapsing the facilitating factors into a single cause. Instead, issues are addressed against the background of different, though at times overlapping, causes. This, on the one hand, necessitates the parties to engage with the matters at hand on a somewhat elaborated level. On the other hand, on some occasions it leads them to consternate that lasting solutions to some of those developments (such as migration/multiculturalism, digitalisation, globalisation, or climate change) are yet to be found.[115]

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[112] E.g., "Polishness is not authoritarianism. […] Polishness is a community of free people. Polishness is not fear. Its values are such as openness and solidarity. True Christian Polishness is not fearful nationalism, it is responsible subjective patriotism." (Schetyna 2017).

[113] E.g., "We've negotiated a deal that protects our jobs, protects our economy, defends the rights and freedoms of Irish citizens North and South." (Varadkar 2018).

[114] E.g., "A project [i.e., the EU] that once begun with the credo 'There must never again be war in Europe' has been hijacked by neoliberalism." (Kern 2016); "People deserve an economy that works for all of us and not just for fraudulent parasites." (Klaver 2016).

[115] E.g., "We have the world's highest taxes on labour and it is unfortunate, because work is the basis of the entire welfare society. The main points of our tax reform are, of course, very sharp tax cuts on jobs. But let me also be clear: We will, for the foreseeable future, not be able to lower the overall tax burden. Elderly care, judiciary, defence, integration are examples of commitments that will require more resources in the future and if we are

The lack of a root cause on the control sample parties' issue analyses also has implications for the identification of agents responsible for the issues criticised, since no specific social, political or economic group (or association of groups) is exclusively and exhaustively blamed for them. While the government, if the party itself is not participating therein, is blamed for providing bad or ineffective solutions to those challenges, and some party competitors moreover are considered as engaging in bad politics for the country (say, the Catalan separationists, the far right in Austria, Belgium or the Netherlands, Law and Justice in Poland and both the far left and the far right in Sweden),[116] those critiques are not all-encompassing. They are not directed against all other competitors but limited to particular issues discussed against the background of *particular* political output.

This, of course, does not mean that all control sample parties in all cases analyse in depth the causal interconnection of issues and their originating conditions and only criticise agents to the degree those are taken to be responsible for them.[117] Nonetheless, their critiques are usually tied to particular observations such as a policy decision or political motionlessness.

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going to make big tax cuts on work – which we should do – they must be funded with tax increases on other things, mainly on consumption and environmental degradation." (Björklund 2016); "One needs to ask the right questions. The right questions are: How do we want to define paid work in the future, what shall our attitude towards volunteer work be in the future […]. However, we must also think about how we want to distribute work, when paid work becomes less." (Kern 2016).

[116] E.g., „We must work to rebuild the internal cohesion in Catalonia which was irresponsibly destroyed by years of separatism." (Rajoy 2017); "The result is that we witness the radicalisation of the political landscape, that we see the rise of right-wing populism not just in Austria but in entire Europe." (Kern 2016); "The parties of the left, or even worse, they have a different solution […]. We know, those kinds of policies will bring us back on the road to recession." (Varadkar 2018); "[There is] a new political polarization. A right-wing party has made strong progress and the Left Party's influence over Swedish politics has never been stronger than now. All these forces that are on the rise in the world – Islamist extremists, Russian nationalists, Chinese communists, right- and left-wing populists in the world and in Europe – have one thing in common: they abhor liberal ideas, because liberal ideas are the strongest counterforce against extremism that man has ever invented." (Björklund 2015); "In the last four years, Poles could repeatedly find out that [PiS party leader] Kaczynski's people went into politics solely for power and money." (Schetyna 2019).

[117] Some statements remain rather broad and unspecified, for example the Social Democratic Party of Austria's critique of the EU as engaging in neoliberal politics.

6.2.3. Comparison Between Samples

6.2.3.1. Similarities Between the Parties of Both Samples

To reiterate, both samples unsurprisingly stretch across the left-right political spectrum. Note that, as will be discussed in the difference section, in contrast to the main sample, the control sample appears to evade the areas close to the poles of the spectrum and instead is more closely dispersed around its centre.

Connectedly, it is not surprising that the discourse employed by the main and the control sample parties overlaps regarding some value commitments made and issues addressed, since the similarities of the parties in terms of content captured by the individual analyses largely correspond to similar directions on the left-right political spectrum. That is, several parties across both samples, for example, commit themselves to promoting the wellbeing of the people, equality or freedom, criticise insufficient wage levels as well as inadequate welfare or infrastructural provisions and public services and demand improvements thereof.

For both samples, those similarities without much surprise also extend to the critique of political competitors and to self-praise. On the one hand, it is widely criticised that the government facilitates or fails to resolve pressing issues and that other party competitors lack competence or proactivity to successfully conduct positive changes.[118] On the other hand, the parties of both samples present themselves as having what it takes to resolve those issues. In this context, most[119] parties of both samples – in parts including those who never have been in government – also elaborate on their own presumed political accomplishments, albeit in different length and frequency. Those reach, for example, from laws passed and policies implemented while in government, over influences on other parties and the government to the mobilisation of the electorate.

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[118] Though, as will be seen in the next subsection, the precise content and narrative of those critiques in parts substantially differs between the samples.

[119] The only exception to this is the Flemish Interest, which, in the discourse covered by the investigation, has not stressed a single achievement.

This, too, is not surprising if one considers the textual grounds covered by the investigation: publicly available speeches held by party leaders (mostly) at national party events. While the specifics of those events vary, both across states and parties, and the samples cover both parties in governmental responsibility and in opposition, all speakers head political parties who strive to obtain or remain in governmental power. Since all countries within the samples are democracies, they need to present themselves as a more attractive choice than their competitors. The discourse employed by the parties follows this rationale.

Note also that some sentiments against the EU exist in both samples. While Law and Justice, the Austrian Freedom Party and We Ourselves of the main sample criticise the EU for its alleged infringement of Polish, Austrian or Irish national sovereignty,[120] the Socialist Party of the main sample as well as the Social Democratic Party of Austria of the control sample criticise the EU for its so-called neoliberal politics.[121] As with anti-EU sentiments, some sort of endorsement of the EU is also present within the discourse of parties from both samples. That is, Law and Justice, Citizens as well as We Ourselves of the main sample and the Social Democratic Party of Austria, the People's Party, Family of the Irish, Liberals and Civic Platform of the control sample express an endorsement of or some form of positive view on the EU.[122]

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[120] In the case of Ireland, this critique is closely tied to the EU's economic response following the financial crisis of 2008.

[121] E.g., "Corrupt and bureaucratic sector in Brussels." (Strache 2017); "We are going to work hard for another Europe, where not Brussels dictates but where there is no place for the European Commission, a European army or the prosecutor's office." (Roemer 2017); "We were attacked in the European Parliament […]. This time, […] it was said that we do not have the right to be sovereign." (Kaczynski 2016); "A genuine republic would not tolerate […] that the interests of its own citizens are trumped by those of the EU imperialists." (Adams 2016); "A project that once begun with the credo 'There must never again be war in Europe' has been hijacked by neoliberalism." (Kern 2016).

[122] It should be noted that both We Ourselves and the Social Democratic Party of Austria, contrary to their critique of the EU's economic policies, generally express favourable opinions towards the EU. In case of We Ourselves, this is made dependent upon the right conditions being in place. E.g., "We want a Union of Nations, we want a Union where the principle of subsidiarity really applies, we want a Union of Europe rich in diversity of cultures, of civilisation-achievements in individual Nations." (Kaczynski 2016); "Our foreign policy is based on certain pillars. The pillars are two: This first is the European Union because, after all, it is a matter of military security, of economic security, of energy security." (Kaczynski 2017); "[We] believe in a different European Union, a social EU based on citizens' rights and equality. We will be campaigning for a strong vote against Brexit. The

6.2.3.2. Differences Between the Parties of Both Samples

As important as those similarities may be, there are outweighing substantial differences between the main and the control sample. Those differences concern different aspects of the discourse covered by the investigation and can be found in both the content of the parties' positionings as well as – to the degree that both can be separated from each other – the way positionings are presented and narratives constructed. There are many ways in what order those differences could be presented. As I believe it to be central to an understanding of how populist parties differ from non-populist parties in their discourse, the following discussion will begin with elucidating a notion in one way or another central for parties within both samples: the people.

As previously elaborated, the parties of the control sample employ an understanding of the people which is, in good approximation, equivalent to the notion of the citizenry. While at some points particular background assumptions thereon emerge in some of the control parties' discourse, those remain brief occurrences not superseding the idea that it is the sum of all citizens for the wellbeing of which politics should strive. Even though the parties on some occasion assume support for political measures within the people, they refrain from ascribing particular identificatory criteria to members of the people beyond being in possession of the citizenship. To the contrary, quite often they emphasise the diversity of the people regarding political views, religion, sexual orientation, age or wealth etc.

This is not the case for the main sample. Despite the overall consensus within both samples that politics must strive for the wellbeing of the people, the parties of the main sample

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imposition of border controls and economic barriers is not in the interest of the people of this island." (Adams 2016); "We are in favour of the European project." (Rivera 2015); "If you look at Brexit and the reaction of the young people: They have realised that their chances and future lie in the European project. To restore it must be our mission." (Kern 2016); "Ireland will continue to be at the heart of the common European home which we helped to build." (Varadkar 2018); "[…] the European Union is the most successful time in European history […] European cooperation is a key to solving many of the major problems of our time." (Björklund 2017); "We realised the dream of Poles, of many generations of Poles, to anchor Poland in the west of Europe. It was the entry into NATO and the entry into the European Union that were the most important things." (Schetyna 2017).

employ much less inclusive notions of the people than citizenry. Although those are not made explicit, they can be inferred from the parties' discourse in general and from the properties ascribed to the people in particular. That is, depending on the party and its position on the left-right political spectrum, the people are, to a varying degree, linked to identificatory properties associated with a particular socio-economic background (class), with a particular shared ethnic, historical, cultural and religious origin or similarity (nation), or with a combination of both notions with each other or with the notion of citizenship.

While the outer perimeters of those framings cannot be delineated based on the discourse covered in the investigation alone, it seems plausible to understand those as excluding a part of the populace from political care based on "pre-legal" criteria, which effectively, i.e. in a meaningful sense, cannot be acquired. This may be more obvious in the case of nation, as becoming part of the people as nation would, in a sense, require changing one's origin, which is not possible. But from the way the discourse about the people as class (or class playing a partial yet important role) is employed it can, too, be observed that the parties treat the people as a static group for which the economic criteria defining group membership remaining fixed. This, of course, does not, as in the case of the people as nation, logically preclude transition to (or from) the people. However, nothing of this sort is accounted for in the discourse of the main sample parties heavily relying on this framing.

Importantly, in the case of the main sample parties, the characteristic properties of the people are not only not fully made explicit (say, what qualifies as shared history, culture or origin, or which socio-economic conditions are vastly shared by the overwhelming majority) they also are not empirically inferred from the actual populace. This is the case, since they are constructed under homogeneity assumptions regarding the dimension of their application (ethnicity, culture, religion, economic background etc.) which obviously do not account for the diversity regarding those dimensions within the populace.

Hence, it is not that relevant traits are – on the level of discourse – inferred from the populace so that they are present in the overwhelming majority of the persons inhabiting the respective state and then persons sharing those properties being included and persons not sharing those being excluded from the people. Instead, those traits are assumed to be present in such a way and to trump other criteria, so that persons are, in turn, in- or excluded to respectively from the people based on what could be termed the parties' ideal of the people, which is first and foremost a normative construction rather than an empirical inference.[123]

It should be noted that this does not mean that main sample parties do not consider the empirical reality of the populace framed by their understanding of the people at all, they do – but only where this does not obstruct or contravene the properties ascribed to the people from their discourse. This is what I have previously referred to as the location of the respective notion's evocation and the appertaining dimensions along which the notion is constructed. By this I mean that the assumption of particular properties of the people in one area does not preclude abstaining from or making different assumptions in others.

Perhaps most vividly, this can be demonstrated by the discourse of Law and Justice. Law and Justice endorses the idea of (comprehensive) equality amongst the Poles. And while a particular vision of Polish culture, values, religion and history is simply assumed, the party also takes note of existing economic inequality, say, between provinces or between urban regions and the countryside. Similar observations in this regard can also be made by the main sample parties further to the left on the political spectrum. For example, whereas both the Socialist Party and the Left Party heavily draw from the economically laden class notion when framing the people and hence assume particular socio-economic characteristics to be shared by most within the populace, they at the same time emphasise diversity in terms of ethnical/racial

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[123] As with some of the other observations made in comparing the main to the control sample, this strongly reminds – and very well can be considered a practical instantiation – of what has been labelled "imagined community". This has been the view that populists, when talking about the people, do not refer to a "flesh and blood" majority of a state's populace but rather to an (idealised) projection from a moralised construction.

background, gender etc., particularly committing themselves to providing justice indiscriminatingly to all those groups existing within the country.

Of course, those characteristics of the main sample parties' notions of the people – as the entire kinship between both samples – comes in degrees. Still, it becomes evident from the direct comparison of both samples that the parties of the control sample do not (or only to a much lesser degree) show this characteristic. Since the control sample parties, with some minor deviations, overall use people equivalently to citizenry, they mostly refrain from assuming deeper reaching, ontological ascriptions about its constituents.

Here, it is worth emphasising that this is not to say that they do not assume that *particular* properties exist within the populace and that politics should respond thereto in one way or another. For example, the control sample parties very well do assume that young people desire good job opportunities, which enable them to develop themselves and pursue their life and career goals, or that there is a widely prevailing interest in having access to good infrastructure, public services or adequate welfare provisions. Those assumptions, however, are neither generalised across the populace nor used as criteria based on which in- or exclusion from the people is regulated.

In light of those differences, it can also be observed that even though parties of both samples in parts emphasise the same values– say, patriotism, the interests of the people, equality or justice – those values take different forms in the parties' positionings.
Appertaining the different framings of the people, the main and the control sample overall also substantially differ regarding their issue analyses. On the one hand, those differences concern disagreements about issues identified, although in this regard the analyses overlap not only

within but also in between the samples.[124] On the other, they cover the causal analysis of those issues.

That is, in contrast to the entire control sample, it is common in the main sample that the parties identify a single cause to which, in good approximation, all pressing issues are linked. For this root issue, in turn, a particular group of agents is blamed. Furthermore, those agents are, similarly to the construction of the people, constructed in a monolithic way, i.e. without considering variations within the group or aspects not reducible to the allegation that they are responsible for the root issue at hand. Here, the main sample parties usually include the entirety of the parties' political competitors to the group of agents responsible for the root issue – aided by the mainstream media and in alliance with financial elites, cultural aliens and immigrants, or both. In this situation, the main sample parties consider themselves the only (real) alternative capable and willing of alleviating the root issue and thus promoting the wellbeing of the people. Subsequently, they allege those agents of joining forces against them to prevent them from alleviating the root issue.

Framed this way, the main sample parties tend to draw a rather clear and simple picture of the political landscape, so that what needs to be done appears to be both urgent and clear. The people have a set of interests to which politics ought to respond. The blamed agents have some different and conflicting interests and are responsible for the issues identified. Hence, what needs to be done is directed against them.

The same cannot be observed within the discourse of the control sample parties. Those, too, usually criticise the government (if they are in opposition) or some of their party competitors based on diverging political visions. However, these critiques are, usually, tied to specific political positions or outputs.[125] Some intersections in terms of content with the main

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[124] Particularly, when the state of the economy and the provision and quality of welfare, infrastructure and public services is concerned.
[125] Examples of those are ineffective economic policies following the financial crisis, approaches considered bad in education or public housing, international relations or migration politics.

sample parties notwithstanding, the control sample parties' critique of particular agents is neither comprehensive (holding them responsible for, in good approximation, all major issues of the country) nor does their issue analysis collapse to a single root issue (say, migration and cultural change or so-called neoliberalism).

Moreover, in the discourse of the control sample parties, the different agents criticised are not tied together in a homogenous bloc, which is considered to have joined forces against the party and thus to obstruct the realisation of popular interest. In connection thereto, the control sample parties also do not allege the media of being biased against them.[126]

Note that some of the control sample parties also leave open how some challenges can be fruitfully politically handled (such as globalisation, climate change or the consequences of migration). Although this does not happen often and by no means prevents the control sample parties from proposing political demands, it nonetheless contrasts with the main sample. There, what is wrong, who is at fault, and thus what needs to be done is perfectly clear from the very beginning of the issue analysis.

6.2.4. Analysis of Results

6.2.4.1. Preliminary Remarks

Before turning to identifying and categorising the characteristic ideational properties of contemporary populism in the EU, an important aspect of characterisation needs to be discussed. This is the observation, which has already been referred to on several occasions, that the similarities and differences identified within and between the main and the control sample parties come in degrees.

In a sense, it is a triviality that the extent of political positions and hence the labels employed to capture those vary in matters of degree. Still, I hold that emphasising this in the

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[126] Though Civic Platform criticises how the free media has been subjected to political institutions under the rule of Law and Justice.

context of discussing the nature of populism is important so as to not draw false conclusions about what is characteristic for populism (in the contemporary EU) and what is not. This means that, instead of certain properties being present in the control sample and others in the main sample, differences and similarities are better understood as instantiations of the same kinds of properties in differently pronounced forms – a continuum of variations rather than a Boolean dichotomy.

Take, for example, the notion of the people. It is not that the control sample parties rely on exactly the same notion on which the people equal the citizenry, which is not exclusionary and does not make further ontological presuppositions about the nature of the people's constituents, and that, by contrast, the main sample parties rely on notions of the people which all entirely decouple the people from the citizenry and enrich it with equally comprehensive background assumptions. Instead, a more accurate description would hold that, while archetypical cases like that certainly can be imagined, the parties of both samples are located somewhere in between those poles, with parties of the control sample rather leaning to the former and parties of the main sample rather leaning to the latter, however, with parties within each sample exhibiting different degrees of distance (for a qualitative depiction thereof, see Figure 6 below). Similar observations can also be made regarding the other similarities between the samples, such as the parties' identification of the culprits responsible for issues and their issue analysis gravitating around a root issue.

Here, however, a qualification of what has been said is in order. Although the similarities and differences within and between the sample are better understood as instantiations of continuous rather than Boolean properties, it does not follow from this that the grouping into both samples is meaningless. Even though, conceptually, both cohorts do not need to form disjunct groups as some properties can to different degrees be found across both samples, the

substantial differences discussed in the previous subsection nonetheless clearly follow the demarcation lines of both samples.

Although it exceeds the purpose of this section to explore the reason for this – or the reason why any other positionings are, as a matter of fact, held by the parties – a possible explanation could be that the properties the continuity of which can be *principally* observed between samples still *factually* come to degrees so strong that their pull on positionings linked thereto is too strong to allow substantial leaking into the other sample. Consider, for example, once again the central notion of the people. While the notion itself comes in degrees of difference, notions within the samples are more similar than between samples. Those differences between the samples, in conjunction with, say, differences regarding the identification of culprits stemming from the issue analysis linked thereto, might influence whether the parties do or do not hold that their competitors have joined forces to prevent their political influence. So, whereas no party of the control sample takes this position, it is found in several, although not all, of the main sample parties.

6.2.4.2. Results

With all this in mind, we can observe that populist parties in today's European Union, in contrast to non-populist parties, tend[127] to:

- enrich the notion of the people with ontological ascriptions which serve as exclusionary membership criteria applied to the populace;
- subsume persons excluded from the people in terms of interest and contrast those with the people, thus employing an antagonistic view of society;
- identify a single root issue to which a plethora of issues is linked and for which the part of the populace not considered part of the people is held responsible, thus reducing the complexity of discourse;

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[127] I say 'tend' to indicate the degree-aspect discussed earlier in this subsection.

- employ a comprehensive critique of political competitors, linking them to a root issue and collapsing their differences in light of their alleged connection thereto;

- lament an unfair treatment by their competitors and the media;

- present themselves as the only true alternative to existing politics;

- propose a comprehensive change to established politics.

Those characteristics received from the previous inter- and intra-sample comparison hardly come as a surprise. What is less obvious, however, are the ways in which those preliminary findings manifest. I believe that from those important ideational aspects of populism can be inferred which are underemphasised or inaccurately reflected in existing accounts of populism.

Since, as we have seen, the differences and similarities of the parties' positionings strongly correlate to their framing of the people, it is useful to provide a graphical representation of their notions of the people for an impression of the overall location of the reviewed parties to each other. Those are illustrated[128] in Figure 6. There, the origin of coordinates denotes a notion of the people that is fully equivalent to citizenry, the x axis denotes the degree to which the notion of the people is enriched with class properties, and the y axis denotes the degree to which the notion of the people is enriched with nation properties.

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[128] I say illustrated to express that Figure 6 is meant to provide a (mere) visualisation of the analysis.
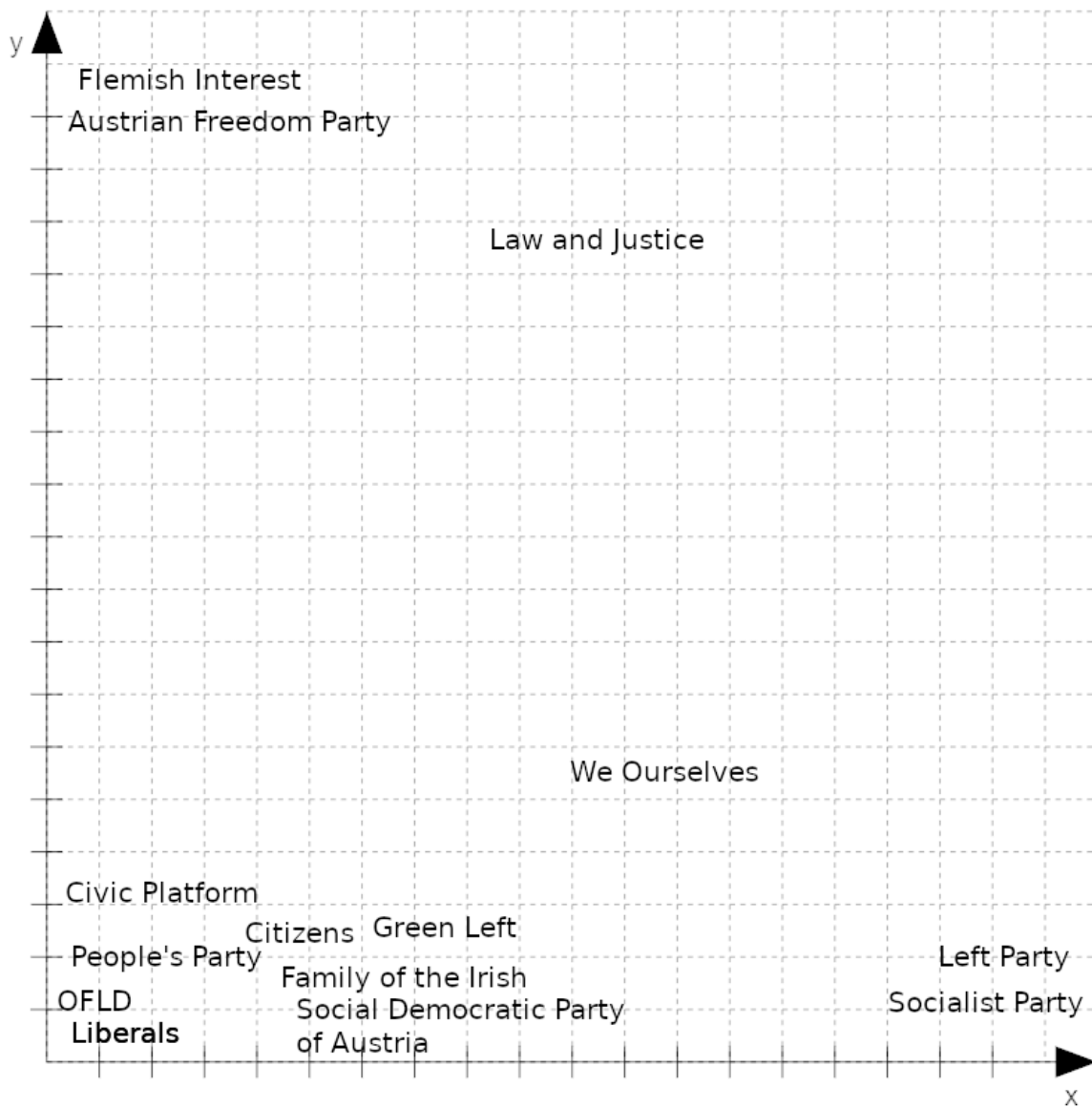
Figure 6: Notions of the People of the Parties in Both Samples (x axis: class, y axis: nation, point of origin: citizenry)

Thus understood, a cluster of parties from the control sample (and, presumably, parties that score low regarding the ideational definition) appears near the origin of coordinates. Those vary regarding their x-y-coordinates – with, say the Social Democratic Party of Austria and Green Left featuring a higher x value and Civic Platform having a higher y value than Liberals – but, in comparison to parties scoring high, not straying too far from the origin.

In contrast, the bulk of the main sample parties (and, presumably, parties which score high regarding the ideational definition) is dispersed further away from the origin and covers an array of the coordinate system representative of how exactly their notion of the people is composed of notions varying from citizenry. Whereas the Left Party and the Socialist Party are located at coordinates with a high x and low y value since they heavily frame the people through a particular class membership, Flemish Interest and the Austrian Freedom Party are located at coordinates with a low x value and a high y value since they heavily frame the people through a belonging to a particular nation, with all four parties having a high absolute distance to the origin.

Law and Justice and We Ourselves, then, feature higher y values but lower[129] x values than the former two and lower y values but higher x values than the latter two. While We Ourselves is more closely positioned to the former two, featuring a smaller absolute distance to the origin than Law and Justice, Law and Justice would be more closely positioned to the latter two with an absolute distance to the origin comparable to all four previously mentioned parties. As noted on several occasions, Citizens substantially differs from the rest of the main sample so that it can reasonably be doubted whether the label populist is warranted for this party. Thus, on the graph presented in Figure 6, it is more closely located to the cluster of control sample parties than to those of the main sample.[130]

Figure 6 also shows that the different variations of contemporary populism in the EU can be identified as a spectrum of right- to left-wing populism. This spectrum, at least for the

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[129] Though, presumably, equally high or higher values in one dimension could also coincide with higher values in the other one.

[130] In light of the substantial differences of Citizens to the rest of the main sample, a reason for the party having scored relatively high regarding the ideational definition could be that it is – and presents itself – as a challenger party. As such, the party shows anti-elitist attitudes, say, by blaming the government of political mismanagement, however, without also substantially expressing people-centric attitudes also characteristic for populists. Since the operationalisation of the ideational definition evaluated parties in terms of their anti-elitism – which, as has been noted, is overall a good indicator for people-centrism – there was, on the level of case selection, no way, and indeed no justification, to preventively exclude challenger parties from the main sample, which were only anti-elitist but not people-centric.

considered main sample, has clusters at its poles and covers an array of differences in terms of content from non-populist parties. Note that, here, I purposefully speak of variations rather than of types to emphasise the spectrum-like character of the properties distinguishing those parties from each other.

There are a few things that can be taken from this. First, it can be observed that, while the differences of the main sample parties coincide with their position on the left-right political spectrum in a similar fashion to that of the control sample parties,[131] their similarities to each other *irrespectively* of their position on the spectrum are the more clearly delineated the bigger their distance to the non-populist parties.

Second, the increase of a party's illustrated dimensions of difference seems to coincide with (though without being coextensive to) what could be labelled the party's political extremism. Note that, here, I use political extremism in a non-normative, analytical understanding, as it has been proposed, for example, by Jackson (2019), who argues "that political extremism is best understood as purposeful disruptive political behavior" (Jackson 2019: 245).[132]

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[131] For example, both the left-leaning non-populist parties as well as the left-leaning populist parties problematise, say, the inequality of wealth and income, the presumably too large influence of corporations on political decision making and the too low levels of income and welfare provisions. Somewhat analogously, the right-leaning non-populist parties as well as the right-leaning populist parties emphasise, say, the belonging to a particular culture or the constitution. I say "somewhat", since, admittedly, this effect of inter-sample similarity based on the position on the left-right political spectrum is more strongly pronounced for clearly identifiable left- than right-wing parties – at least for the parties included in the control sample. There are different potential explanations for this, which, however, in the context of this thesis cannot be pursued exhaustively. However, reasons for this could include, for example, that the right-leaning control sample parties are less on the right than the left-leaning control sample parties on the left or the right-leaning main parties are more on the right than the left-leaning main sample parties on the left, such that similarities to populist parties on their side of the left-right political spectrum appear less pronounced or that, due to less acceptance in the public opinion for right-wing positions, right-wing positionings of non-populist parties are termed more moderately phrased and hence appear (slightly) further away from right-wing populist parties than their left-wing non-populist competitors. Of course, it could also be that there is simply more overall similarity between populist and non-populist parties on the left than on the right. That said, whatever the reasons for this, the observed relationship between both groups holds.

[132] This "may be disruptive activity outside of normal political behavior (for example, coups or ignoring governmental authority), or it may be disruptive activity within normal political behavior that aims to interfere with normal political processes (for example, nuisance lawsuits meant to tie up government resources)" (Jackson 2019: 245).

As Jackson notes, this "behavior results from a belief that the political system is corrupt or broken" (Jackson 2019: 245) and hence ought to be replaced, partially or fully. This, in turn, often goes in hand with: a strong identity shared by the extremists, the obligations stemming from which are considered to override much of what others demand (Jackson 2019: 247; see also Smith 2003: 20), an "imagined history" (i.e. a particular understanding of history supporting their identity and sought for system), an "imagined crisis" (i.e. a perception of crisis motivating radical change, which strongly differs from other established narratives), and an "imagined future" (a prognosis for the future in both cases: that the extremists do realise their goals or that the crisis continues) (Jackson 2019: 248).

Note that the purpose of the previous paragraph was not to establish Jackson's definition as superior to other comparable, descriptive notions of political extremism. Instead, the point is that the clearer the populist attitude of parties appears (illustrated by the distance to the origin of coordinates in Figure 6) the clearer the parties expressed a narrative of total crisis (cf. their issue analyses being tied to root issues and directed against particular agents considered responsible for that), and the corresponding aspiration to provide a comprehensive and only alternative to established politics.[133]

Third, and, in a sense, as a corollary of the previous point, the bigger the distance of the scrutinised parties to the origin of coordinates in Figure 6, the more are the parties' positionings, in particular the issue analysis and the demands, directed against a particular group within society and the rights of its constituents. This rather tacit aspect, which was identified in the individual party analyses (see Appendix 3), could be observed in relation to different groups and – importantly – to different rights.

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[133] While I will not pursue this analogy further, since it is specifically tied to Jackson's definition, it is also worth taking note of the fact that the notions of an *imagined history* and *imagined future* Jackson borrowed from Smith (2003) seem to harmonise well with the idea of the populist *heartland* proposed by Taggart (2000) as well as with the analysis of populism inspired by a perspective on totalitarian ideologies borrowed from Voegelin (1993/1938) in part I of the thesis.

Here, once again, is brought to bear what was previously referred to as the different notions' of the people varying area of evocation. That is, dependent on the parties' position on the left-right spectrum and the specific composition of their notion of the people of class and nation, not only the agents responsible for the root issues differ, so that for the rather left populist parties financial elites and for the rather right populist parties culturally alien elements are to blame. Furthermore, the proposed measures, or the implication of the way to proceed arising from the framing of the issue, target different, albeit not entirely distinct, sets of rights. Whereas on the left the discourse mostly contests the economic or property rights of the targeted groups, on the right it contests their religious, cultural or social rights, with their political rights being challenged in both cases. The bigger the distance, then, the deeper reaching into the rights provided by liberal democracy (cf. chapter 2), those intrusions become, whereby those contestations can also come combined.[134]

Fourth, assuming the discourse of Citizens is comparable to that of other parties, for which the label 'populist' is sometimes employed in conjuncture with the qualification 'liberal', it is, in light of the analysis, unclear in how far this attribution is warranted. Though I cannot further investigate this here, it could be an example of the still widely encountered usage of the populist label as a *Kampfbegriff* to delegitimise Citizens' challenger aspirations.

Fifth, as should have become clear by now, the (mostly theoretical) reduction of populist parties into either left- or right-wing populism without further elaborations is insufficiently complex to adequately describe the reality of populist agents and discourses. The reason for this is that it collapses a rich continuum of properties existing between both cohorts, which are,

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[134] Note that in this regard the spectrum found in the main sample has not been symmetrical. While, for example, the Left Party and the Socialist Party did not refer to national identity etc. but solely to economic struggle, The Austrian Freedom Party or Flemish Interest have predominantly referred to national identity yet also to welfare (though, as has been highlighted in the individual analyses, those references were directed *against* persons considered alien on the parties' issue analysis in the first place rather than *for* the people). Furthermore, the astriction of rights, too, appears – in the discourse covered by the investigation – to be more strongly present for main sample parties predominantly leaning to the right than to the left.

amongst other things, relevant when discussing "mixed" cases such as Law and Justice or We Ourselves, and thus results in an understanding of populism, which is elegantly clear, however, comes at the cost of an inadequate portrayal of populist agents.[135]

With this in mind, I now turn to discussing the results of the analysis. The discussion will review the results in light of the approach employed for content analysis and relate the findings to liberal democracy.

6.3. Discussion

In this section, I first review the performance of the selected method of content analysis and thereafter assess the relation of the results of the analysis to liberal democracy.

6.3.1. Review of the Performance of the Selected Approach to Content Analysis

Overall, the methodical approach laid out in chapters 4 and 5 for analysing ideas expressed in populist discourse succeeded in producing interesting results. Nonetheless, there have also been some drawbacks to the approach which have partially been touched upon earlier and which, in parts, are structural in nature.

6.3.1.1. Where the Approach Performed Well

Even though the qualitative analysis is explorative and hence was employed without the claim of exhaustiveness in relation to relevant ideational aspects of populist positionings in the contemporary EU, selecting cases from different regions of the EU as well as cases which are associated with different party families and different positions on the left-right political spectrum paid off. That is, purposely controlling both samples for being diverse in these regards brought important differences and similarities to light, which otherwise might have gone

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[135] This is addressed in more depth in the discussion of the analysis and the argument from theory in relation to other characterisations of populism in the next chapter.

unnoticed and which exceed differences or similarities trivially[136] to be expected from such a selection. As a corollary observation to this, the qualitative approach in this case additionally allowed considering the specifics of cases appropriately while simultaneously, in an inductive process, embedding them into an overarching analysis.

Here, employing an interpretative approach inspired by the ADE provided an analysis which enabled structuring political discourse across cases and, subsequently, putting those structures into relation with each other. This was advantageous, since otherwise it would have been difficult to compare the different discourses covered by the investigation. After all, those not only were, as political communication often is, incomplete, rather implicit, and without a clear argumentative structure, they have also been embedded in different national and historical contexts. Guiding the individual analyses by a frame mirroring the argumentative structure (values expressed in the speeches, issues addressed, demands made and, where applicable, accomplishments noted) allowed to analytically access the content of the discourse and to fruitfully compare the individual analyses to each other, without compromising the authenticity of the positionings and other unpleasant side effects possibly occurring in discourse analysis.

Furthermore, the case selection method borrowed from Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) lived up to expectations. Based on the operationalised minimal definition of populism, parties were indeed selected (with the exception of, perhaps, Citizens), which differed not only due to their increased anti-elitism but also due to their people-centrism not found to a comparable degree in the control sample. This supports Rooduijn and Pauwels' (2011) conclusion that anti-elitism, overall, constitutes a good indicator for people-centrism (but not vice versa) and hence for populism, and renders the prospects for further research enterprises on this basis optimistic.

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[136] With this I mean aspects which without much analysis can be plausibly expected to be present in party discourses based on the case's national belonging and party family. For example, it was plausible to assume that Irish unification or the status of Ireland will be more substantially discussed in the positionings of the Irish than of the Austrian parties. Similarly, it could be expected and thus was by itself unsurprising that the left parties of both samples overall were favourable of increasing welfare and infrastructural provisions in both quality and substance.

In this context, it should also be noted that, unlike in the theoretical enterprise of part I, the assumption that the notions of the people and of the elite employed by populist parties are, in an important sense, homogenous, was not made in part II when operationalising the minimal definition. Nonetheless, the parties of the main sample tended to show this trait, while those of the control sample tended not to. I believe that this, too, can be considered to count in favour of the idea of selecting (and evaluating) parties as populist based on the operationalisation of the minimal definition as proposed by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011). Moreover and more generally, this underscores the applicability and usefulness of the minimal definition for empirical enterprises.

6.3.1.2. Where Obstacles Materialised

One of the encountered structural issues concerns the very operationalisation of the minimal definition. That is, as has already been problematised during case selection, the operationalisation of the minimal definition through a reliance on anti-elitist vocabularies (with the investigation unit being the single word) does not allow excluding challenger parties from the sample. While anti-elitism is overall a good indicator of people-centrism and hence of populism, there are, of course, also parties which are solely anti-elitist, without this attitude being tied to people-centrism. Since the operationalisation relies on anti-elitism only, however, there is nothing to preclude solely anti-elitist parties from being included into the main sample. Indeed, a case could be made that this is the reason why Citizens was included in the main sample, despite the party, overall, showing more similarities to the control than to the main sample parties.

Another structural issue affecting the analysis is the general unresolved challenge that, despite the inclusion of different regions and party families, there is no warrant that all relevant cases were covered. There might exist cases not properly captured by the characterisation derived from the analysis at hand. This issue, of course, is present within every qualitative

research enterprise. It also was one of the reasons why I have from the very beginning emphasised the exploratory character of the argument from the empirical investigation.

Furthermore, from the employed approach an, in a sense, meta-challenge arises from the fact that the analysis has focussed exclusively on contributions to the political discourse (i.e. speeches). While those touch upon political actions, the analysis cannot by itself be shifted to political actions, at least not without assuming a correlation to exist between positionings expressed in discourse and actions. In fact, it will be one of the challenges of part III to bring the theoretical argument from part I and the empirical argument from this part together to explore in what respect the actual actions of populists mirror the previous findings, and to motivate the conclusion that populism factually and comprehensively contests the foundations of liberal democracy.

As a sub-aspect of the previous point, a comparable challenge for and, subsequently, task of part III is posed by the fact that the discourse analysis not only reviewed discourse, but also that it focussed on a specific type of discourse, namely a specific type of speech in a specific context (party leader speeches at internal party events on a national level). This decision was purposely made to increase the comparability of the cases, amongst other things. Admittedly, though, it could be considered unduly narrow, such that focusing on other parts of populist discourse (party programmes/manifestos, direct speeches to the electorate, policy drafts etc.) could have yielded different results. Against this background, it may be a research enterprise worth pursuing to conduct a similar type of analysis for different parts of populist discourse, too.

6.4. Contestations to Liberal Democracy

Now that the perimeters of ideas expressed in the discourse covered by the investigation have been structured and reviewed, it can be scrutinised in how far those ideas are in conflict with the principles of liberal democracy. Before engaging in an analysis thereof, it should be noted

that, whereas the depiction in chapter 2 consisted of a theoretical reflection of liberal democracy as a general concept, the forgoing discourse analyses were concerned with positionings located in a specific, national context.

As with the argument from theory made in chapter 3, the contestations to liberal democracy posed by the ideas identified in populist discourses during the empirical investigation spring from the populists' understandings of the people and of the society, as well as from the instrumentalisation of the framing thus promoted. That is, parties holding stronger populist attitudes do not only conceive of politics being responsible for acting in the interest and improving the wellbeing of the people – which is a commitment found across both samples – they also combine this with a framing of the people, which is exclusive, homogenous, and pre-legal. Exclusive because it effectively does not allow entry; homogenous because it assumes the prevalence of particular properties to being in good approximation present within the entire group; and pre-legal because the categories of group membership do not correspond to formal requirements usually characterised by criteria commonly employed to regulate scopes of equal rights for individuals (say, being resident or citizen of a state).

6.4.1. Contestations to the Rule of Law

Recall that the rule of law in liberal democracy is linked to a set of commitments including the provision of formal and material rights (including human, political, citizen and property rights) to all persons concerned passing the relevant criteria to claim those rights (say, being human to claim human rights and being a citizen to claim citizen rights), as well as the equal application of the law to all (including effective control mechanisms to prevent political instrumentalisation of the law).

Those commitments, on the one hand, gravitate around an individualist approach, i.e. the treatment of humans as individuals qua the properties found in them instead of treating humans solely as a token of a group and deducing treatment and properties about the individual based

on ascriptions to the latter. On the other hand, while it has been acknowledged early on in the development of the modern conception of the rule of law that it ought not only to serve a negative purpose (preventing abuses of the law through entities wielding political power) but also positively realise values (i.e. a thick understanding of rule of law) and every law means an imposition limiting the scope of freedom of those it governs, liberal rule of law usually refrains from – and protects against – the imposition of a particular vision of the good upon its subjects.[137] This protection is, beside institutional checks and balances, provided through exactly those individual rights guarding the individuals against illegitimate intrusions of the state.

The ideas expressed in the discourse of contemporary populist parties in the EU are at odds with this liberal vision of the rule of law, and, indeed with rule of law as such, in several ways. First, the populist parties tend to depart from the individualist commitment of the rule of law. That is, particularly in the course of their issue analysis, they divide society into homogenous groups (the people and those facilitating or failing to alleviate the root issues) and judge persons through properties ascribed to them as tokens of those groups. In the cases discussed, this, apart from the people, especially affects other political agents, the media, financial elites (predominantly on the left), and (particularly Muslim) immigrants and alleged cultural aliens (predominantly on the right).

Second, this grouping directly affects the equal provision of rights to the persons considered belonging to those groups. While in the discourse covered by the investigation no party directly and explicitly denied rights commonly considered generally available to all within the jurisdiction at hand to agents held responsible for the identified root issues, they nonetheless problematise that those agents come under the enjoyment of the rights' respective

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[137] It should be acknowledged that this point is controversial in political theory discourse. That said, my focus here is on what has emerged in empirical reality.

goods. Hence, even if only through implication, a narrative is constructed according to which those persons do not (or should not) have the same rights that the people have.[138]

Here, it should be noted that, although partially overlapping, overall different rights are contested by the main sample parties, analogously to their position on the left-right political spectrum and the differences commonly linked thereto in relation to the notion of the people and agents identified as responsible for the root issues. On the left, this implicit negation of rights (and the explicit negation of goods those rights constitute a justified claim to), for example, concerns the property rights of those identified as wealthy (expressed through demands for higher and the introduction of new taxes and despite the left leaning populist parties emphasising the equal provision of rights).[139] On the right, in turn, the welfare rights of immigrants (expressed through critiques that concern the provision of welfare, public services and infrastructure to immigrants and the allegation that they unduly benefit therefrom) as well as their rights of realising theirs and other presumed cultural aliens' life plans without state obstruction (expressed, e.g., through the problematisation of the presence of Muslim religious and associated cultural practices) are affected, for example.

Third, and directly connecting to the sentiments against Muslims and other alleged cultural aliens, amongst other things, driving populist parties further on the right, the ideas expressed in their discourse also violate the neutrality regarding the good the liberal rule of law under normal circumstances seeks to adhere to. As has been pointed out during the depiction of the liberal rule of law (as a thick conception of rule of law) in chapter 2, liberal rule of law, despite actively promoting values embedded into its legal foundation, overall refrains from imposing a particular conception of the good on the persons within its jurisdiction.

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[138] Which rights are affected by this depends on the root issue and the rest of the party's issue analysis.
[139] On a grander scheme of things, the parties engaging in this, more or less directly, also contest a market based, capitalist approach to the economy as such. While this, beyond the challenge of equal property and economic rights, may not be directed against liberal democracy on a conceptual level, the latter, as has been pointed out, is particularly capable of embedding such an economy. Consequently, this economic challenge posed by populists, in practice, affects a facete of real existing liberal democracies.

With their positionings directed against predominantly Muslim immigrants or Muslim citizens as well as their advocacy of a national culture (linked to a cultural, ethnical, religious and historical belonging), the main sample parties, drawing from the notion of the people as nation, depart from this idea of neutrality regarding the good. Instead, they on the one hand actively seek to promote particular conceptions of the good at the expense of others (say, Christian and national cultural practices) and on the other hand limit the rights of those not truly counting to the people (on their understanding) to live according to their own conceptions thereof, without being obstructed or burdened by the law or political actions.[140] Note that a similar, though less pronounced, observation could also be made for the left-leaning populist parties, however not in relation to culture but to professional life. In the context of their issue analyses gravitating around neoliberalism, those put forth a negative view on and subsequently problematise whole professions considered further up at the economic ladder (banking, renting, employers etc.).

In this context, it is interesting that the populist parties under scrutiny do not explicitly argue against the (liberal-democratic understanding of the) rule of law. Instead, a standard trope employed involves the claim that the rule of law *is* already broken in a way that results in an unfair treatment of the party and its supporters. This is most vividly the case for Law and Justice, which explicitly laments the politisation of the courts and, in turn, justifies its own usurpation of the judiciary as a putative defence of the rule of law and of the constitution. That this is no more than a rhetoric manoeuvre will be seen later on, when Law and Justice' actions in government are depicted in chapter 8.

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[140] Note that whereas in the discourses covered by the investigation the violation of the neutrality regarding the good predominantly presumed Muslim immigrants and inhabitants to be alien in a relevant sense, in political practice (and other discourses) the LGBTQI+ community is also often affected by the political outputs or positionings of populists leaning to the right (see prominently the Polish case under the rule of Law and Justice). This will be depicted in more depth in part III of the thesis.

6.4.2. Contestations to Democracy

The contestations to liberal democracy ideationally posed by populist parties, however, are not exhausted by contestations to liberal rule of law. Some central ideas expressed by the parties of the main sample also challenge the second pillar of liberal democracy: popular sovereignty realised through representative democracy.

As depicted in chapter 2, liberal democracy rests on the insight that, while the people are sovereign in holding the final political authority and hence all political authority is accountable to them, the people, as a sum of a multitude of persons, are in an important sense heterogenous (concerning their interests, statuses, beliefs or other properties) so that, in general, no will of the people can be identified in a meaningful sense. Popular sovereignty, on this understanding, therefore, cannot be realised directly, but only indirectly through an intermediary. Against this background, liberal democracy usually rests on some sort of representative democracy, which, though sometimes including elements of direct democracy, canalises the exercise of political power through periodically elected representatives.

The ideas put forward by the main sample parties challenge this in several regards. First, populist parties tend to conceive of the people in a way that assumes some sort of homogeneity regarding the properties of its constituents. This would allow the populists to identify a popular interest shared throughout the people on the basis thereof and successively to act according to the popular will arising therefrom. Here, those shared properties are closely tied to the parties' issue analyses, which more than those of the non-populist parties tend to gravitate around a single central issue considered to threaten the wellbeing of the people.

Second, and in a sense coinciding with the first observation, populist parties, in their issue analyses, establish a division of society, which follows rather clear lines between those who are considered part of the people and those who are not. Of course, this is not done straightforwardly. In the case of the right-leaning populists, it is rather clearly communicated

that properties associated with Muslim immigrants do not belong to their national culture, religion etc., implying that those persons subsequently do not belong to 'the people' as well. In the case of the left-leaning populist parties, in turn, this separation is mainly operationalised through antagonising economic interests and the emphasis that politics should be less dominated by the interests of financial elites.

Third, employing such a view on the populace not only has implications for what rule of law may allow (or even require), it also implies that popular sovereignty is no longer the final political authority employed by a state's citizenry (of sufficient age etc.), but instead of an exclusive subgroup thereof. Note that since this grouping of society is largely based on pre-legal attributions made explicit only in parts and only in an ad hoc manner, the populist parties are left for themselves to set the boundaries of what they consider falling within the scope of persons whose status politics ought to promote.

All this also has implications for the parties' attitudes on representative democracy. Here, it needs to be pointed out that none of the parties directly argued against democracy or even against representative democracy as such. Instead, the tension existing in their discourse is more tacit, as it is primarily a tension to the corollaries of representative democracy rather than an explicit critique of (representative) democracy itself.[141]

This tension is twofold. First, beyond the separation of the people and other groups mentioned earlier, populist parties tend to antagonise the entirety of their political competitors. They, and financial elites, mainstream media or (international) institutions, are considered responsible for the root issues identified, either actively through endorsement or passively through incompetence. Due to this, in conjunction with the collapse of other properties of their

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[141] This is not to say that populist parties do not engage in political activity damaging or actively seeking to usurp democracies. They do and chapter 8 of the thesis is engaged with the actual actions of populist parties. The point here is to note that, on the level of the specific type of discourse considered in this analysis, they do not openly contest democracy directly, despite there existing a tension between their positionings and other contestations they pose to democratic practices common for liberal democracies.

competitors and their ontological reduction to this (alleged) connection, the populist parties' rejection of their competitors is rather comprehensive.[142] As a consequence, other parties are framed not only as a bad choice but as illegitimate, irrespective of their level of electoral support.

Second, this comprehensive rejection of competing political agents is processed against the background view that the issues, as well as their solutions, are more or less obvious so that they do not require further debate. This, on the one hand, connects to the aforementioned critique of other agents involved in politics, such that those who do not engage in the alleviation of the issues the populist party identified as crucial (the causes of which are obvious) are concluded to be incompetent, or complicit in their facilitation, and thus compromising the popular interest. On the other, the very fact of this alleged state of affairs itself renders political discourse as such essentially redundant – only the populist perspective is legitimate or needed.

In turn, populist parties present themselves as a comprehensive alternative to the state of affairs, and as the only true alternative there is: others, after all, are essentially exchangeable in regard to what matters. This, of course, is not a direct negation of (representative) democracy. But it contests its founding principles, since both discourse, as a method of conflict resolution and political deliberation, and political competition, which under normal circumstances is necessary to providing a range of options for the citizenry to elect their representative from, as such are effectively rejected.

Here, too, similarly to what was observed regarding the populist parties' contestations to the rule of law, populist parties lament that their competitors and their accomplices treat them unfairly and hence, in a sense, violate democratic fair play. As such, the populist parties present themselves not as contestants to democracy, but as victims of undemocratic behaviour of other

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[142] Here, I say 'rather', because, in parts, the populist parties scrutinised emphasise that they are principally willing to cooperate. However, this cooperation is usually conditional on others doing exactly what they want. On this position, compromises, in a sense, are excluded, because they would equate to *pro tanto* betrayals of popular interest.

political agents, who have become targets precisely because they alone truly advocate the wellbeing of the people and provide a meaningful alternative to the unacceptable status quo.

Before concluding this section, it should also be noted that the parties of the main sample only rarely make concrete statements regarding the mode of democracy they wish for. While at some points particular reforms are demanded and at others the parties call for direct democratic measures (or even the introduction of direct democracy in general, as the Austrian Freedom Party does) those references remain brief in the discourse covered by the investigation.

Part III:

The Bi-Partite Argument

7. The Overall Narrative

7.1. Introduction

In part I of the thesis, the argument from theory on the conceptual relationship between populism and liberal democracy was constructed. In turn, part II engaged in an empirical investigation on ideas expressed in populist discourse in contemporary EU, thus pointing towards ideational specifics of populist parties in the here and now. With both parts of the be-partite argument completed, we can now bring them together and reflect on the overall narrative thus constructed.

This section is organised as follows. First, the empirical analysis jointly with the argument from theory is related to previous attempts of characterising and categorising populism. Of course, such an attempt can be only temporary and non-exhaustive, since the field is continuously evolving, has accumulated several decades worth of research and features several dominant yet incongruent approaches for framing populism. Nonetheless, not only can my analysis be localised, but my findings, in turn, carry lessons for the categorisation of populist parties in the EU as well as for the notion of populism more broadly.

Second, both parts of the bi-partite argument are put into relation to each other, thus giving rise to the overall narrative about the anti-liberal-democratic character of populism put forth in this thesis. This will include assessing differences and similarities between both parts and inquiring how they fit to each other. In short, I will argue that both parts should be understood as complementary. That is, both parts, using different methodologies, assess different aspects of the ideational characteristics of populism (conceptual implications vs. positionings of actual agents). Whereas the argument from theory shows the conceptual space populism can occupy, the argument from the empirical investigation gives a glimpse of the situation in the here and now.

7.2. Relation of Analysis to Existing Characterisations of Populism

Though now already four decades old, Margaret Canovan's eminent study *Populism* from 1981 not only inspired many later works but also still contains one of the most insightful accounts of the multifaceted[143] nature of populism. There, Canovan asked whether a common core of populism can be constructed[144], which is shared by all instantiations commonly associated with the phenomenon. Canovan denied this. Instead, she provided a seven-fold classification of populism encompassing, in her terms, "farmers' radicalism", "peasant movements", "intellectual agrarian socialism", "populist dictatorship", "populist democracy", "reactionary populism" and "politicians' populism". Of those seven types, then, the former three are grouped as "Agrarian Populisms" and the latter four are grouped as "Political Populisms" (Canovan 1981: 13). Note that those types are not considered mutually exclusive so that cases can (and often do) – to a degree –[145] fall into several categories (Canovan 1981: 289).

Against this background, Canovan follows Wiles (1969) and considers populism "'A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine'" (Canovan 1981: 290). While she notes that some kind of anti-elitism and "some kind of exaltation of and appeal to 'the people'" are usually present in instantiations of populism (even if both properties themselves are rather "vague and ambiguous", Canovan 1981: 294), Canovan famously concludes that, notwithstanding those similarities, populism is "not reducible to a single core", for "the various populisms […] are

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[143] Canovan emphasised that while other terms such as socialism, liberalism or conservatism would also carry different meanings and hence lead to disagreements on their nature, the range for populism is wider as the term, in contrast to the other examples, is primarily not self-given (Canovan 1981: 5 f.).

[144] I speak of 'constructed', since Canovan, taking what could be considered an interpretivist perspective on the study of populism, emphasised that concepts of this sort are not found but constructed: "[P]ure empiricism is never possible, least of all in the study of society. Historians do not find the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution lying about with neat outlines waiting for their description: they must construct such concepts, and therefore force their interpretations upon their data even as they collect it. The same applies to sociologists studying classes and political scientists examining political systems" (Canovan 1981: 10 f.).

[145] Canovan holds that there are limits to the intersection of categories: "No movement has ever been populist in *all* senses identified, and indeed—given the contradictions between some of our categories—none ever could satisfy all the conditions at once" (Canovan 1981: 289, emphasis in the original).

not just different varieties of the same kind of thing: they are in many cases different *sorts* of things, and not directly comparable at all" (Canovan 1981: 298, emphasis in the original).

What does this mean for the bi-partite argument and, vice versa, for Canovan's categorisation? Is the situation as precarious as would follow from Canovan's own remarks about the plausibility of the notion of populism (referring to the arbitrariness of her own categorisation, Canovan 1981: 16; referring to the doubts readers may have about the meaningfulness of the term, Canovan 1981: 301)? It is not. Instead, the analysis strengthened the perspective that there is something ideationally common to contemporary instantiations of populism in the party systems of the present-day EU's member states.

That is, while the notions of the people and the elite are, as such, vague, in the discourses covered by the investigation a somewhat clear map of understandings emerged from which much can be inferred about the respective parties' overall stance. Put into relation to Canovan's categorisation, this field is probably best characterised as falling under what Canovan called political approaches. In a sense this is hardly surprising, since the sample consisted of parties present in national-level parliaments and not of other types of politically active agents or groups (say, grassroots movements). More precisely, the ideas reconstructed in course of the analysis seem to be dispersed across the first three types but not across politicians' populism. The latter's gravitation around a "catch-all" politics (cf. Canovan 1981: 260; see also Taggart 2000: 20) strongly contrasts with the main sample's shared antagonistic perspective on society and excluding notions of the people.

Moreover, ideological continuances – beyond the implications of the minimal definition – amongst the main sample parties emerged which were not or only to a much lesser extent present in the control sample. This is not to say that populists share a particular "thick" ideology. Rather, it is to point out that populism not only has been rightly described as a thin-centred ideology but also that this thin-centred ideology, in the case of contemporary populist

parties in the EU, is attached to *particular* full ideologies, in a composed and spectrum-like manner.

Many researchers pointed out that populism bridges the left-right divide as its' main line of confrontation does not run between left and right but rather between the people and the elite, with how those are constructed differing across contexts (cf., e.g., Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 186 f.; Urbinati 2019: 6; see also Grillo and Casaleggio 2011).[146] This, however, as the previous analysis suggests, oversimplifies and hence impedes our understanding of populism. It is certainly true that populism, at least in its current instantiations in the EU member states' party systems, does not clearly fall into the left- or right-wing of the political spectrum, but can occur on both wings (cf. Bonikowski 2016: 18; Rovira Kaltwasser 2014: 478; Schulz et al. 2018: 317). It can also not be denied that populist parties reject a conglomerate of different agents associated with the political, economic or medial elite or establishment. This line of confrontation, however, should not obstruct the observation that populist parties across the left-right political spectrum nonetheless clearly maintain positionings associated with this location on the spectrum, which provides the context for, and direction of the similarities more abstractly observed between them.

There are, as has been emphasised in the joint analysis, important differences between populist and non-populist parties, irrespective of their position on the left-right political spectrum. Yet, at the same time, notable differences exist between the populist parties which, apart from contextual differences grounded in the specific national situations at hand, resemble those between left- and right-wing parties more broadly. That is, the left-right division in populism remains meaningful and maintains significant influence on the value commitments

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[146] Urbinati (2019: 42), for example, in establishing her account on populism as a particularly disfigured democracy, explains: "We often see populist parties being classified according to the traditional Left–Right divide that we adopt for established parties. This approach is deceptive, though, because it conceals what makes populist parties different from all other parties—namely, that they rely on a conception of antiestablishmentarianism that breeds hostility not simply to the existing ruling parties but to partisan divisions and the party form of political representation in general".

and issue analyses of the parties across the sample,[147] including the notions of the people and the elite, purely or composedly[148] employed by the parties. It is bridged only in so far as those positionings are put into a similar framing informed by their populist characteristics. In this sense, the characterisation of populism, at least as it is understood on the minimal approach, as a thin-centred ideology appears accurate, even though its relationship to full ideologies is more elaborate than the image of a mere attachment may suggest.

In practice, quite clear, non-arbitrary outlines amongst those full ideologies can be identified, which, in turn, were reflected in the notions of the people and the elite as well as in the issue analyses put forth by the parties. Therefore, while populism may remain conceptually vague when applied throughout history, at least regarding its contemporary reinvigoration within the party systems of the EU's member states, its appearance is much more streamlined. Non-superficial clusters of similarity emerge, even though those not always manifest in ideologically pure forms.[149]

Thus understood, while the three-dimensional construct for the measurement of populism put forth by Schulz et al. (2018) must be lauded, it nonetheless fails to acknowledge the ideological intersections and compositions existing within the positionings of populist parties, particularly regarding their notion of the people. Similarly, though for exactly the opposite reason, Brubaker's framing of populism in general and populist discourse in particular, which conceives of populism "as a two-dimensional space" of inequality and difference (Brubaker

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[147] Relatedly, Noury and Roland emphasised that, at least following the financial crisis of 2008, the populist parties that emerged or reinvigorated in Europe were heavily concerned with economic and cultural causes (cf. Noury and Roland 2020: 421).

[148] The Polish party Law and Justice, which has been amongst the analysed parties most clearly drawing from different ideas in different programmatic areas hereby can be considered representative of a wider trend in this area of the EU. For example, Uslaner (2021: 247) observes that, "[i]n Central and Eastern Europe, dominant parties have adopted nationalist positions on immigration and culture but left-wing policies on social welfare. The issue is one of who is 'deserving' of government assistance. Nationalist parties in the former Communist countries seek to exclude non-Christian immigrants, but they also cater to their lower-income supporters by generous social welfare programmes".

[149] Thus, Canovan's position that „[a]ntielitist rhetoric […] is typical of populism in all its forms" but "that the similarities are rather superficial" (Canovan 1981: 297) appears unwarranted.

2020: 44),[150] fails to acknowledge the *logical* independence of both parameters from each other and subsequently the non-necessity of their presence in populist positionings. With reference to the main sample, this is most obviously exemplified by the Left Party and the Socialist Party, which not only do not employ arguments for the exclusion of agents along Brubaker's space of "difference" parameter, but, to the contrary, put forward arguments drawing from an international outlook of solidarity.[151]

Some scholars have doubts about the usefulness of the notion of populism. For example, Rydgren (2017) argued that it is inaccurate to describe radical right-wing parties in Northern Europe as populist, because, even though populist elements could be identified, not they but ethnic nationalism constitutes "the most pertinent feature of this party family" (Rydgren 2017: 486). Stavrakakis et al. (2017: 421, emphasis in the original) suggested that we conceive of anti-immigrant parties in the EU "as nationalist, xenophobic, maybe even elitist, and only *secondarily* – if at all – as 'populist'". And Stengel (2019: 435; amongst others, referring to Zakaria 2016; Colgan and Keohane 2017; Nye 2017) argued against employing populism as a concept to understanding the danger agents the concept is applied to pose to, say, "democracy, European integration, 'the West', the liberal international order, or all of the above" since doing so would unduly lump together agents of substantially different kinds and radicality, leading to the exaggeration of the danger of some and the understatement of the danger of others (see

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[150] "The frame of reference for populist discourse is most fruitfully understood as a two-dimensional space, at once a space of inequality and a space of difference. Vertical opposition to those on top (and often those on the bottom) and horizontal opposition to those outside are tightly interwoven, generally in such a way that economic, political and cultural elites are represented as being 'outside' as well as 'on top'" (Brubaker 2020: 44).

[151] Note that this also casts doubt on Taggart's view that populism is "inward-looking" and therefore rejects both internationalism and cosmopolitanism (Taggart 2000: 96). While the main sample parties closer to the left may employ criticisms of the European Union or international financial institutions, they, informed by a class-leaning notion of the people, at the same time promote international solidarity. In Taggart's defence, however, it must be stressed that he made those observations regarding what he called "New Populism", i.e. the observed rise of right-wing populist parties in western Europe of the 90s (cf. Taggart 2000: 73 ff.).

also Mudde 2021 for populism's conflictual relationship to constitutionalism, and Urbinati 2019 for populism's distorting effect on representative democracy).[152]

As with holding that in describing populism the left-right political spectrum does not accomplish much, here, too, the devil is in the detail. That is, one should be keenly aware of what the application of the notion of populism to a particular agent implies and what it does not imply. Authors like Rydgren and Stengel are certainly right in pointing out that, in the at times messy discourse about populism, this is often done inadequately. That said, I believe that this does not speak against the usefulness of the notion, but rather is a result of a conjuncture of a conceptual misunderstanding with a misunderstanding of this conception's implications widely encountered in the literature. Conceiving of an agent as populist, the analysis put forth so far suggests, implies neither that the properties specifically connected to populism (the thin-centred ideological entailments) out- or overweigh others, nor that all agents for which those properties can be observed hold stances of the same level regarding their contestations of other values, institutional arrangements etc. Indeed, both are not necessarily the case, and in the main sample contrary observations could be made already.

The former fails to appreciate the non-consuming and non-competing relationship between populism and its full host ideologies. Consequently, it is missed that emphasising the presence of populist commitments is important to adequately capture the specifics of a case. While from an empirical perspective it can hardly be denied that, presently, populism and some full ideologies often appear together,[153] a conceptual necessity for this is far from obvious. In fact, the question of conceptual relationship does not even need to be conclusively answered in theory to observe that the presence of populist commitments sets parties apart.

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[152] Stengel exemplifies this, amongst other things, by a comparison of the (presumably) moderate Bernie Sanders and the (presumably) radical right-wing French party Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) chaired by Marine Le Pen.

[153] For example, Brubaker argued that populism and nationalism are only "analytically distinct but not analytically independent" since they are "intersecting and *mutually implicated* though not fully overlapping" (Brubaker 2020: 45, my emphasis).

The latter, in turn, fails to pay proper respect to the spectrum-like, multidimensional and composed character of populism. The argument put forth in part I posited that populism necessarily entails autocratic potentialities. The analysis conducted in part II, in contrast, stressed the spectrum-like variances existing between parties regarding the properties considered constitutive for the diagnosis of populism. This, however, by no means implies that all agents associated with populism contest, say, democracy or the rule of law, to the same degree. To the contrary, if anything, it suggests that the contestations such agents pose are dependent on the scale and scope of their populist characteristics. But holding so does not necessitate this to be the only relevant factor. Instead – and this, too, can be considered advantageous for the characterisation of populism as a thin-centred ideology – it allows us to consider the extent and specifics of both, an agent's populist commitments as well as her host ideology (or mélange of host ideologies). In short, describing an agent as (in comparison more) populist does not inform us about the extent of any of her positionings but rather about the *type* of ideological commitment this agent holds and hence the *potential* challenges it could pose for those.[154]

It should also be noted that the relation of populism to technocracy emerging from the joint analysis in part II is not as straightforward as the theoretical argument employed in part I – or indeed the very ideational definition of populism – may suggest. That is, following Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), elitism was identified as one of the oppositive concepts of populism – and certainly technocracy is an elitist ideology. While the oppositionality already trivially follows from the definition of populism as necessarily anti-elitist and people-centric, and populism and technocracy are often considered as opposing forces in the contemporary EU (see for an overview Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 187 f.), there are certain

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[154] In line with the argument from theory made in part I, 'potential' here is used to describe that a particular aspect (e.g., danger to democracy) coherently follows the logic of an ideational commitment without necessitating it in practice.

connections between populism and technocracy, which emerged during the empirical investigation.

Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2017) identify as commonalities between populism and technocracy that both are not confined to the left- or the right-wing (and frame themselves as beyond left or right, cf. Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 186 f.) and that both "are predicated on the critique of […] party democracy" (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 188).[155] Whereas the reasons for this predicament differ – populism contesting (mainstream) parties[156] for their alleged actions against the will and interest of the people, and technocracy contesting parties for their inefficiency of producing good policy outcomes – within the main sample a combination of both aspects could be found.

It is common for parties to criticise the actions of their political competitors and, while doing so, to doubt their competence of achieving good political outcomes (in contrast to one's own). What is characteristic for the main sample but not the control sample parties, however, is the joint reference to honesty or authenticity on the one hand, and competence or capability on the other hand.[157] That is, the main sample parties criticised their political competitors for an alleged disloyalty to the people, their failure to produce good political outcomes, or both. Against this background, a comprehensive rejection of their competitors was produced according to which all other parties failed to adequately respond to the will of the people for one or both of those reasons. Here, competence, of course, no longer refers to the "non-

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[155] Whereby party democracy is understood "as a political regime based on two key features: the mediation of social conflict through the institution of the political party understood as a means for the articulation of particular interests into comprehensive – although competing – conceptions of the common good; and the idea that the specific conception of the common good that ought to prevail and therefore be translated into public policy is the one that is simultaneously constructed and identified through the democratic procedures of parliamentary deliberation and electoral competition, which is often but not always based on majority rule" (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 189).

[156] Note, however, that, as Urbinati (2019: 47) observed, in contending "party politics", the antiestablishmentarian stance of populists leads them to making a transition towards "faction politics" rather than to "partyless democracy".

[157] Contra to Urbinati's view (cf. 2019: 59 ff.), it is not *just* the authenticity or honesty populists, above all, (must) claim for themselves.

192

partisan" provision of "'pragmatic' solutions to political problems" (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017: 187), but instead to the correction of what is identified as obstructing the realisation of popular interest.

Given this, it seems that Taggart's evaluation that "[p]opulism aims to create a politics of simplicity" since it considers that "[p]olitics should embody the wisdom of the simple people and therefore should itself be simple and direct" (Taggart 2000: 112) does not adequately capture the simplicity of the stance of contemporary populism in the EU. It is not that populists employ, from their own perspective, a primarily *simple* politics, and surely not because it ought to correspond to the simplicity (better: ordinariness) of the people.[158] Rather, they present a politics they consider *obvious*. It is obvious, since it directly follows from their issue analysis, which gravitates around a root issue directly linked to their construction of the people.

Here, although both terms are not mutually exclusive and many positionings of populists can arguably be considered simple, the difference between simplicity and obviousness reflects the double-attestation of honesty and competence the populist parties under scrutiny claim exclusively for themselves. Whereas the critique of the dishonesty or unauthenticity of others could be related to both simplicity and obviousness so that others, even when they know what a good politics would demand of them (because it is obvious or doing so is simple), are not complying thereto, the critique of incompetence better harmonises with the obviousness than with the simplicity of what ought to be done. After all, there is not much competence needed to produce simple outcomes. The parties' critique is not proposed from the view that the others do not do what they ought to do despite it being so easy to achieve, but despite what ought to be done being so evident.

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[158] Although the analysis aligns with Taggart's view that populism has a tendency to "dichotomize[] issues" (Taggart 2000: 113) and to conspiracy theories regarding the elite, so "that those involved in the conspiracy actively conspire together to further their interests, and do so secretly" (Taggart 2000: 105).

7.2.1. Excursion: Political Attitudes

So far, populist ideas put forward by political agents have been the main subject of investigation. In other words, I have been concerned with an aspect of the supply side of (populist) politics. In contrast, a growing body of literature increasingly focusses on the demand side thereof: the populist attitudes of voters (e.g., Akkerman et al. 2014; Castanho Silva et al. 2019; Hawkins et al. 2012; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Van Hauwaert et al. 2019).

These works analyse populism on the level of individuals (see for an overview Wuttke et al. 2020: 356) by putting attitudes of persons under scrutiny with whom populism resonates well. The overall idea is that the stronger a person's populist attitude, the higher is the expectation that this person will vote for populist parties (cf. Geurkink et al. 2020: 248). While I cannot engage in depth with populist attitudes here, it is nonetheless worth emphasising the potential implication for this area of research yielded by the analysis of populism put forth so far.

The developed characterisation of populism aligns well with research on populist attitudes of voters. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, this is because populist attitudes manifest in varying degrees (see Wuttke et al. 2020: 360). Against this background, it seems advantageous if the very understanding of populism that accompanies this can properly accommodate those gradual differences – especially if what is under scrutiny is how populist appeals affect voters (see for this project, e.g., Neuner and Wratil 2022). In turn, the reverse also holds true. The fact that the analysis put forth here suggests that populism is spectrum-like and multi-dimensional strengthens the perspective that populist attitudes are also adequately described as gradual.

Secondly, populism's multi-dimensional character has led some authors to argue that populist attitudes should be understood as not only spectrum-like/continuous but also as non-

compensatory, so that for different to-be-measured dimensions of attitudes "higher values on one subdimension do not compensate for lower values on another subdimension" (Wuttke et al. 2020: 362).[159] On this perspective, a populist attitude is understood as being "more than the sum of its parts" (Wuttke et al. 2020: 358). While some researchers of populist attitudes have highlighted the compatibility of their analysis with both ideational and discursive understandings to populism (e.g., Neuner et al. Wratil 2022: 552), the minimal definition on the ideational approach seems to be especially capable of mirroring the non-compensatory nature of populist attitudes on the supply side.

Thirdly, in the debate on populist attitudes, it has been emphasised that, as Neuner and Wratil put it, "[p]opulist parties and politicians blend […] thin and thick populist ideologies when appealing to voters, and *the exact blend of appeals is most likely responsive to different national and temporal contexts*" (Neuner and Wratil 2022: 552, my emphasis). This observation, too, sits well with my emphasis on the multidimensional, spectrum-like and composed nature of populism. In its current manifestations in the EU, populism is dispersed across the left-right political spectrum, simultaneously combining positionings usually associated with either part of the spectrum while accommodating national specifics.

Of course, the brief excursion above can make no claims to exhaustiveness. That notwithstanding, the three exemplificatory aspects give reason to consider the framing of populism developed so far as being highly compatible with, and potentially useful for, research on populist attitudes.

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[159] See Goertz (2006, 2020) for an approach to measuring populist attitudes which is non-compensatory and continuous.

7.3. The Relationship Between the Argument from Theory and the Argument from the Empirical Investigation

The results of the empirical investigation on the characteristics of contemporary populism in the European Union in part II can now be compared to the theoretical argument regarding the inherent tension between populism and liberal democracy made in part I.

Both analyses hint towards a departure from liberal democracy's commitment of statuses being without discrimination provided to individuals on the basis of belonging to the citizenry (or humankind) instead of belonging to a particular subgroup within the population. In this context, the aspects discussed during part I of the thesis in relation to liberal democracy could also be found within the empirical analysis in part II. Those include the division of the populace into the people and the non-people (the elite and associated others), the blame of the latter for, in good approximation, all major problems in the country obstructing the realisation of the clearly identifiable popular interest, the identification of oneself (the party) as being the only political force committed to realising the interest of the people, as well as of effectively excluding some agents from the former and considering them part of the latter group.

Ex negativo, by identifying root issues and suggesting means to their alleviation, the argument from the empirical investigation emphasised the redemptive nature of populism (cf. Canovan 1999: 9 ff.).[160] This aspect of populism has also been highlighted in the argument from theory, where it was inferred from the coherency of the logic of populism with that of totalitarian ideologies, which carries an idea of this-worldly salvation.

Moreover, the notions of the elites and associated others as well as of the people found in part II are, similarly to the analysis of part I, not only homogenous but also strategically employed to delegitimise others and to render one's own claim to power independent of and impenetrable by any practical scrutiny. On both analyses, it seemed that transitions from others

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[160] Canovan borrows and elaborates on Oakeshott's (1996) distinction between "the politics of faith" and "the politics of skepticism" and contrasts redemptive with pragmatic politics (Canovan 1999: 8 ff.).

to the people are not possible. Noteworthily, this emerged in the discourse analysis even though the homogeneity assumption not being included in the operationalisation of the minimal definition during the case selection process.

The differences between both analyses concern the scale of those properties and, subsequently, the scope of the political implications those yield. That is, in the theoretical argument it was contended that populism is necessarily at odds with both pillars of liberal democracy, disregards individual rights, and provides justifications to populists for a scope of actions reminiscent of totalitarianism. In contrast, the observations made in the course of the discourse analysis are limited to particular political domains and are overall more subtle, emphasising the varyingly different, contingent, but at the same time evident, differences existing between populist and non-populist parties.

Amongst other things, those differences arise from the fact that whereas in the theoretical argument the very notion of populism constituted the subject of analysis, the discourse analysis was concerned with concrete instantiations of populist positionings. Thus understood, the former analysis provides the outer perimeters, or potential, of the conceptual implications of populism, while the latter analysis captures the current state of affairs of populist ideas. Both analyses are complimentary in nature.

More precisely, the connection between both parts of the argument is twofold. First, they focus on different aspects of the ideational characteristics of populism, including in terms of generality and scope. Whereas the argument from theory reflects on the notion of populism and its conceptual implications, the argument from empirics reflects on the actual positionings of populist agents. In doing so, the former denotes the conceptual space populism can reside in, and the latter takes a snapshot, so to speak, of the state of affairs in the here and now.

Second, they, in their different spheres of operation and from different angles, contribute to an understanding of populism that is not limited to a characterisation of populism as a thin-

centred ideology. In addition, they suggest that populism is 1) a spectrum-like property, which not only can be attached to different full ideologies to varying extent, but also 2) is multidimensional and composed and therefore occupies a conceptual space in between them.

What do these considerations mean for a perspective on populism, particularly within the contemporary EU's party system? Some authors insist on the majoritarian nature of populism and that populism may reject liberal democracy's liberal pillar but maintains a commitment to democracy. Urbinati, for example, building on her work on democracy (Urbinati 2014), argued that populism may be in conflict with representative democracy or even with certain working principles of democracy more generally and, in government, tends to disfigure democracy (Urbinati 2019: 3), but that, in contrast to fascism, it never leaves the electoral legitimacy constitutive of democracy behind (cf. Urbinati 2019: e.g. 5, 20 ff.).

A similar assessment, albeit with a particular focus on the right-wing of the political spectrum, is yielded by Mudde's work on the contemporary far right (2007, 2019). There, Mudde draws from Ignazi's (2003) eminent distinction between the extreme right on the one and the radical right on the other – whose attitudes towards democracy substantially differ. As extreme right, Ignazi identifies parties, which a) are (relationally) positioned on the outmost right of the political spectrum in their arena, and b) "recall cornerstone elements of fascist ideology, by expressing regret for the glorious inter-war past, by exhibiting that symbolism and phraseology, and […] by invoking a 'third way' beyond capitalism and communism" (Ignazi 2003: 32).[161] Defined this way, the extreme right is rendered anti-system in a comprehensive sense with reference to liberal democracy. The radical right, to the notion of which Ignazi dedicates far less effort, in contrast, does not share this anti-system attitude (Ignazi 2003: 28, following Himmelstein 1990: 73 ff.). While the extreme right rejects democracy as such, the

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[161] The second, ideological, criteria includes both groups Ignazi identifies within the extreme right: the old "neo-fascist" and the new "post material" / "post-industrial" extreme right parties (Ignazi 2003: 2, 33).

radical right does not. Instead, it (merely) attempts to substantially alter institutions central to the functioning of *liberal* democracy (such as the separation of powers, the rule of law, minority rights etc., Mudde 2019, Ignazi 2003).[162]

This distinction, though bound to the right-wing of the political spectrum, informs about Mudde's perspective on populism's relationship with democracy. That is, Mudde identifies populism, nativism and authoritarianism as key characteristics of *populist radical right parties*, a sub-type within the radical right, but not of the extreme right (Mudde 2007: 22 ff.). The radical right must not be perceived as "merely a moderate form of the extreme right", Mudde warns us, as both fundamentally differ regarding their attitude towards democracy: "the radical right is (nominally) democratic, even if they oppose some fundamental values of *liberal* democracy […], whereas the extreme right is in essence *antidemocratic*, opposing the fundamental principle of sovereignty of the people" (Mudde 2006: 31, my emphasis). And since populism is "pro-democracy, but anti-liberal democracy" (Mudde 2019: 8), it has no place with the extreme right. On this account, too, then, the demarcation line where populism ends and autocracy begins lies where democracy (particularly free elections) fades away.

Papas (2019), too, effectively shares Mudde's and Urbinati's assessment, even though he takes a different approach to populism. That is, Pappas rejects any of the conventional approaches presented in chapters 1 and 2 of defining populism as an ideology, discourse, strategy etc. (Pappas 2019: 24 ff.), and instead goes as far as to define populism as *democratic illiberalism* (Pappas 2019: e.g., 3, 33). Here, this definition targets 1) *modern* populism as it 2) emerges *in liberal democracies*. It is neither supposed to capture historic forms of populism

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[162] Note that this does not mean that extreme right parties necessarily openly call for the end of democracy or necessarily try to overturn the system by force (though some do). As Ignazi observed: "most of the present extreme right parties display non-compatibility of aims and acceptability of behaviour" (Ignazi 2003: 32). They "do not openly advocate a non-democratic institutional setting; on the contrary, it is easy to find ritual homage to the democratic principles in their official statements and documents. Nevertheless, they undermine system legitimacy" (Ignazi 2003: 33). It is no coincidence that an anti-system attitude is, based on comparative research, identified as one of the central – if not the most important – mobilisation factors for supporters of the extreme right (Ignazi 2003: 204).

nor populism emerging outside of the boundaries of liberal democratic states (Pappas 2019: 4 f.).[163]

Populism, Pappas explains, "is always democratic but never liberal" (Pappas 2019: 35) and thus stands precisely between liberal democracy and autocracy (i.e., undemocratic illiberalism) (Pappas 2019: e.g., 3, 35, 50). Not being limited to either side of the left-right political spectrum (Pappas 2019: 61), populists reject and, if given the chance and it being advantageous, undermine and *weaken liberal institutions*, but *rely on democracy* to reach and maintain positions of power (Pappas 2019: 190, 210).[164] Importantly, though not dissimilar to Urbinati (2019), Pappas points out that innate to populism is a certain instability, which may lead it to collapse to either of its neighbouring concepts. It may leave illiberalism behind and turn towards democratic liberalism, and it may abandon its democratic commitments and become autocratic (Pappas 2019: 3, 260 f.). But if one of those scenarios materialise, it would no longer be populism we are talking about.

Where does the bi-partite argument stand in comparison to these accounts? In contrast to Urbinati's or Mudde's account, my argument suggests another interpretation of the scope of populist action. As has been argued in the argument from theory and substantiated with reference to Voegelin's analysis of totalitarian ideologies, populists utilise the inevitably constructed nature of "the people" not only to delegitimise others but also to render their own claim to power (and scope of political action) unreachable by critique and impenetrable by any practical evaluation. This breaks the bond of necessity between populism and electoral legitimacy, since the populist can always uphold realising the popular will, because the popular

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[163] Furthermore, Pappas limits his analysis to parties, which are "politically significant", i.e., successful (Pappas 2019: 4.f).

[164] Pappas identifies four characteristic actions of populists in government: ": (a) colonizing the state with loyalists, (b) reinforcing the party and state leader's executive capacity, (c) assaulting liberal democratic institutions, and (d) utilizing various forms of state patronage to the benefit of their supporters" (Pappas 2019: 210).

will is ultimately constructed with reference to the worldview of the populist to begin with – whatever the populist does complies to it, whoever dares to disagree is acting against it.

Of course, this is not to say that elections can have no role to play in the rationale of populism. They, usually, will have. But it is important to stress that this role on this perspective is purely external (to the thin ideology of populism) and no necessary boundary of the populist commitment to realising popular interest. The populist can always claim to realise popular interest, even when losing the electorate's support, by referring to a silent majority of the real people. If populism is isolated from external factors, there is no reasonable ground to believe that it will restrict itself to the rejection of the liberal pillar and otherwise remain within the bounds of the system across time and space. Using Mudde's assessment of populism within the far right as an example, then, it can be said that, indeed, most populist parties on the far right today are radical rather than extreme. But, so the bi-partite argument suggests, this is precisely due to the strong external factors obstructing and penalising anti-democratic sentiments existing in liberal democracies today (institutions, opposition, voters' attitudes, full ideologies). If those are taken away, the picture on the far right may change.

With regards to Pappas' account, things are a little bit different, since he *defines* populism as non-autocratic instead of investigating it for its autocracy departing from an (in this regard) prima facie neutral definition. The first thing to note here is that my argument agrees with Pappas' observation regarding the frequently materialising behaviour of populists in government mentioned above – if the focus is solely laid on those parties, which reject only the liberal pillar of liberal democracy. But I disagree with Pappas on the deeper level of analysis. Of course, this is partially because, in contrast to Pappas, I define populism on ideological grounds. Pappas' critique of any such attempts notwithstanding, my argument stresses that populism features ideological properties which allow it to turn more autocratic (up to the full departure from democracy) without ideological breaks or inconsistencies. Pappas emphasises

populism's innate instability and its possible collapse into autocracy or democratic liberalism. However, precisely due to his rejection of the ideational approach, he fails to see that, where those changes occur, they need not extinguish the populism of the parties involved. Populism can maintain its core but otherwise (de-)radicalise, if external constraints change. For example, Pappas identifies changes in the resource of populist leader's charisma as a reason which may cause populism turning into autocracy:

> "[P]opulism may turn autocratic in cases of either unbounded charisma (as in Hungary) or unsuccessful charismatic succession (as in Venezuela). In the former case, autocracy becomes feasible for charismatic leaders in situations where both the opposition and the liberal institutions are feeble. In the latter case, successors of charismatic leaders who are devoid of charisma themselves may have no other option for holding onto power than to switch from democratic illiberalism to outright autocracy." (Pappas 2019: 260 f.)

In line with the foregoing elaborations, I agree with Pappas that these factors may in the presented cases be causes of populism turning more autocratic. But, following the bi-partite argument, I hold that this precisely demonstrates the effect of possible changes in external constraints. No ideological breaks had to materialise. In Hungary as in Venezuela the autocratic potential already existed prior to the autocratic turn. What changed is that autocracy became the only option of maintaining power, or external constraints (institutions, opposition, public sentiments etc.) weakened so much that autocratic rule was feasible without much risk. Of course, this is not to say that in such cases the (degree of the) populist property is always staying the same. It, too, may change – as has been reiterated throughout the thesis, not all autocrats are populists just like not all populists are autocrats. To truly understand such cases and to be able to differentiate between them, however, exactly these ideational properties need to be investigated. Pappas' comparative study and his alternative approach are highly insightful and yield important findings in many ways. Nonetheless, the ideational property allowing populism

to travel away from liberal democracy under changing conditions must not be disregarded to get a better understanding of populism and its relationship to liberal democracy.

Considering these factors, contrasting populism to autocracy – so that a party can be either autocratic or populist but not both, because in contrast to autocrats populist must stick to elections – does not adequately capture the nature of populism. Instead, I suggest that a more adequate perspective on populism would characterise it as a specific variation of collectivism, which is bound to an imagined homogenous collective of the people, employed strategically to secure power, and to render populists unreachable by any control mechanisms. Against the background of populism's spectrum-like, multidimensional and composed character, this collectivism can stretch all the way from an institutionally harmless, in comparison to other ideational commitments, insignificant occurrence in non-populist parties, over the extreme-majoritarian, disfiguring force in populist parties that Urbinati, Mudde or Pappas, amongst others, describe, to the very ends of autocracy and totalitarianism without changing its *inner* logic (although this is not necessarily coherent vis-à-vis the agents' thick-centred ideological commitments).

Thus, when observing that all contemporary populists in government presently maintain parliamentary elections, one should be keenly aware that this is not because populism is unable to transcend those in virtue of its own nature. Rather, it is due to factors outside of populism itself, such as strategic considerations, the corrective force of democratic institutions, the influence of full host ideologies present in the parties and so on. With this, we can now turn to elucidating the actions of populist parties in the next chapter.

8. The Trajectory of Populist Action: The Polish Case

8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter concluded the bi-partite argument on the ideational characterisation of contemporary populism in the EU. The present chapter is dedicated to supplementing the bi-partite argument, which was concerned with ideas, with reflections on populist action. For this purpose, I, relying on descriptive inference, review a prominent example of populism in government: the Polish Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS). PiS, which has also been included in the main sample in part II, currently (for the second time since 2005) heads the Polish government and has close ties to the current President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, himself a former PiS member. PiS is selected as a case-study, because PiS is a typical and, by EU-standards, fairly extreme populist party as well as one of only few populist parties in the EU, which managed to head a government and rule for a considerable period, thus allowing to meaningfully engage with its actions over time.

I focus on PiS' time in government (the years 2005-2007 and from 2015 onwards), to illustrate how PiS entrenched a plethora of individual rights and systematically widened the scope and scale of its own power at the expense of liberal and democratic standards. In particular, I depict PiS' attack on checks and balances and the separation of powers, the takeover of institutions, its pressure on the media and civil society and the forced reorientation along the lines of the party's normative vision.

After providing an account of PiS' policies so far, I will reflect on them through the lens of the bi-partite argument. Considering populism's spectrum-like quality and its inherently autocratic tendency, it will be assessed that PiS progressively – and systematically – eroded Polish liberal democracy. It acted progressively in so far as it first challenged liberal values to replace them with its own, then the rule of law as such and finally began eroding the very bedrock of democracy. And it acted systematically, because it applied the knowledge gained

from its experiences during its first time in government to render its actions more effective after returning to power, thus fostering its goal of unchallenged and unrestrained rule over the entirety of the Polish polity.

8.2. Prologue

Before embarking on PiS' actions in government it is helpful to recapitulate the political context from which the party emerged and in which it operates. The development Poland underwent after the fall of the Iron Curtain was substantial in many ways, concerning the economic, political and social bedrocks of society. Politically, most importantly, Poland became a democracy (see for respective political reforms, e.g., Borowiec et al. 2017: 311, see also Kurczewska 1995) and joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004. The democratisation process was accompanied by the birth of many civil society associations, by the pluralisation of (now free) media (see, e.g., Klimkiewicz 2017: 199), and the rise (and fall) of a multitude of political parties (cf. Bojarowicz 2017: 9 f.; see for a review of the field of Polish parties following the end of communism Jasiewicz 2008: 9 f.).[165] Poland's transformation from a state-run planned to a market-based economy coincided with this. While much can be said about the exact process and the political economy thereof (see for the evolution of the Polish market economy, e.g., Kozarzewski and Baltowski 2017: 3 ff.), this development went in hand with

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[165] Amongst those newly established political parties were also some associated with right-wing radicalism and extremism. While, as will be depicted later on, PiS engaged in close interaction with some of them and subsequently absorbed a fair share of their officials and a large share of their electorate (particularly of Self Defence and the League of Polish Families with which it formed a coalition government), it is important to note that activity on the far right in Poland is in no way a novel phenomenon but has precursors with a direct trajectory all the way back (at least) to the late 19th and early 20th century (for an overview, see e.g., Swider 2019; for the history of the right-wing parties in Poland before, during and after communism also see Pankowski 2010). Similarly, while Poland can be considered a historically religious country, having featured comparatively high degrees of religiosity even during communist rule, the Catholic Church in particular, having played an important role during Poland's transition from communism, invigorated after the fall of the iron curtain (see Sadlon 2016) and established itself as an influential social institution.

large-scale privatisations and a withdrawal of the state in light of pro-market reforms (cf. Kozarzewski and Baltowski 2017: 2).[166]

In this context PiS was founded in the year 2001 (Pankowski 2010: 152) by the brothers Jaroslaw and Lech Kaczynski. Since it, like its main competitor Civic Platform, developed from the fractioned Solidarity trade union, the party is often described as a post-Solidarity (in contrast to post-communist) party (cf. Bojarowicz 2017: 10; for a detailed account of the origin of PiS and other important Polish parties, see Borowiec et al. 2017). For example, both Kaczynskis had worked directly for Solidarity president and later Polish president Lech Walesa before eventually breaking with him, accusing him of having made too many concessions to, and having too close ties with, (former) socialist nomenklatura (Pankowski 2010).[167]

Upfront the 2005 elections, PiS and Civic Platform were leading the polls. Early observants assumed that the two post-Solidarity parties would form a coalition government – with the central question remaining who will act as junior and who as senior partner. The election campaign, however, quickly turned ugly and combative as PiS employed the narrative of "Poland in Ruins", i.e. the idea that the Polish polity was in a bad shape on various levels, despite the country's objectively good situation (cf. Millard 2006: 1008).[168] Coinciding with general traditionalist sentiments and scares upfront to the EU accession widely prevailing in

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[166] Although a substantial amount of the privatisation occurred in the early 21st century and in a rather careful way. For example, often ownership rights transferred to private agents did not entail control rights, say, because shares were sold as minority blocks. Due to this, some have characterised the process as a "reluctant privatization" (Bortolotti and Faccio 2004).

[167] Acting as Walesa's advisers, they also were both present in the famous Round Talks (for an overview of the Round Table Talks see, e.g., Biskupski 2018: 184 ff.).

[168] Millard (2006: 1008, emphasis in the original) sums the Polish situation in 2005 up as follows: "Poland's economic transformation is widely regarded as a major success story. The economy grew steadily from 1992 onward. Welfare arrangements and redistributive mechanisms mitigated increases in inequality and poverty, with 'transfer mechanisms . . . well designed to reduce political resistance to market-oriented reforms in the early years . . .' (Keane & Prasad 2002, p. 324). Concerns about the state of public finances remained chronic and justified. Yet the economic situation in 2005 was better than in 2001, when the previous parliamentary elections occurred. Inflation and unemployment were lower; growth, industrial production, and income were up; and economic prospects in the run-up to the 2005 election were generally good (*OECD Economic Outlook 2005*, pp. 105 – 106). Membership of the EU was bringing greater benefits than anticipated (Walewska 2005). Society was happier, healthier, and more affluent than it had been 10 years earlier".

certain sectors of the Polish society (cf. Binnie and Klesse 2012: 447),[169] PiS thus established itself not only as a welfarist party,[170] but also as a defender of traditional and religious values (cf. Millard 2006).

During its campaign, PiS also cast doubt on Civic Platform leader Donald Tusk's personal patriotic conviction, because his grandfather was Kashubian, an ethnic minority which was coerced into conscription to the Wehrmacht in World War II (cf. Pankowski 2010: 159). Simultaneously, religious and conservative agents associated Civic Platform with both moral decline and economic unfairness imported from the West. For example, the historian Stanislaw Krajski in 2005 referred to Civic Platform as "masonic conspiracy of wolves" – meaning "of Western corporations and postcommunist elites" (Burdziej 2008: 211). And "Nasz Dziennik", a Catholic daily, explained in retrospective that the coalition between PiS and Civic Platform could not materialise because of Civic Platform's alleged "anti-Polonism", i.e. its "continuous and total assault on the government, on the majority party, on all parties who want to restore Poland, and on millions of people who think themselves as Poles and don't want cosmopolitanism and globalism" (Burdziej 2008: 211; Bartnik 2005).

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[169] In terms of LGBTQ politics, particularly, the accession constituted "a radicalizing moment resulting from an escalation of public homophobia in the face of anxieties linked to EU accession" (Binnie and Klesse 2012: 447; referring to observations made by Gruszczynska 2009; Törnquist-Plewa and Malmgren 2007). While feminist and LGBTQ organisations used the moment to put pressure on the government so that it complied with "what they considered to be European human rights standards" (Binnie and Klesse 2012: 447; see also Beger 2004; O'Dwyer 2010; Regulska and Grabowska 2008; Roth 2008), for both nationalist and anti-EU parties the matter became a symbol of alleged interference with the national identity and sovereignty (cf. Binnie and Klesse 2012: 447, the authors also identify similarities to previous debates on abortions, referring to Graff 2003, 2010; Zaborowska and Pas 2011; see also Chetaille 2011). For example, during the first PiS-led coalition government, when the European Parliament, amongst others referring to cases in Poland, published a resolution on the "Increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe", PiS declared that the term "homophobia" itself already constituted "an imposition of the language of the homosexual political movement on Europe" and went against "the whole of Europe's Judeo-Christian moral heritage" (Pankowski 2010: 189, referring to Sejm 2006).

[170] Filling the gap that the crisis-ridden, social-democratic SLD left behind (for the crises of the SLD government 2001-2005, see Millard 2006:1008 ff.).

8.3. The PiS-led Coalition Government 2005-2007

Following its two-fold election success at the general and at the presidential elections in 2005[171]

PiS' path to heading the Polish government was not without obstacles (see Pankowski 2010:

170 f.). However, a volatile[172] coalition between PiS, Self Defence and the League of Polish

Families materialised eventually, after a first pact of stabilisation between the later coalition

parties signed on Feburary 2nd 2005 did not work out (cf. Burdziej 2008: 211 f.; see also

Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 357).

The PiS-led coalition did not last long and broke apart in 2007. In the subsequent

elections, PiS could increase its vote share (to 32,11 %, Stanley 2011: 267; see also Albertazzi

and Mueller 2013: 357 f.). Yet – since those new votes mainly resulted from an absorption of

votes of people, who in previous elections voted for Self Defence or the League of Polish

Families – lost the election, with Civic Platform heading the next government (cf. Pankowski

2010: 187).[173]

8.3.1. PiS' General Vision

Central to PiS's vision for its (first) time in government was building the "IVth Republic of

Poland"[174] (Burdziej 2008: 207; see also Gwiazda 2021: 585). While its exact parameters have

been left somewhat unspecified, overall, the IVth Republic narrative captures the idea that

during the transition of the 90s the Polish Republic could not fully materialise, because of the

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[171] At the parliamentary elections in September 2005, PiS received 27 %, whereas Self-Defence and the League Polish Families received 11 % and 8 % respectively (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 357; for a more detailed overview of the 2005 election results see Millard 2006: 1024 f.). A month later, this success was followed by then-party-leader Lech Kaczynski's win during the presidential election (Warsaw Voice 2005; see also Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 357).

[172] The coalition was often preoccupied with struggles between the coalition-parties. For example, Self Defence briefly abandoned the coalition on the 22nd of September in 2006 before re-entering it not even a month later on the 16th of October (Pankowski 2010: 173).

[173] During the 2007 elections, Self Defence and the League of Polish Families failed to enter the Sejm (Markowski 2008: 1062).

[174] The notion also was the name-giver of PiS' 2005 election programme titled "*IV Rzeczpospolita – sprawiedliwosc dla wszystkich*" ("The Fourth Republic – Justice for All", Jasiewicz 2008: 13, emphasis in the original), in which it was diagnosed that Poland suffered "a crisis of polonism and patriotism" (Pankowski 2010: 154, citing Zaluska 2008).

influence of (former) communist elites and others which stole power from the people (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 345). Millard summarised the hope put into the IVth Republic as follows:

> "The Fourth Republic would experience moral cleansing through deep lustration, anti-corruption measures, and reaffirmation of Catholic values; its new Constitution would repair the state; it would heal society with a social contract, including fundamental changes in social and economic policy. This new beginning would rid Poland of the enduring legacy of the Round Table negotiated in 1989 between the regime and Solidarity." (Millard 2006: 1016)

On this view, those who championed "a more open society and those supposedly responsible for the transitional course […] were not misguided political adversaries, but treacherous threats to the integrity of the nation" (Bill and Stanley 2020: 390, referring to Kaczynski 2006). Subsequently, to realise a true Polish republic (a continuation[175] of the II. Republic), the state was considered to require a deep cleansing of hostile elements – a "defenestration of the Third Republic and its elites" (Bill and Stanley 2020: 391).[176] The actions of the coalition government can largely be considered to gravitate around this intention.

8.3.2. The Coalition's Politics

On the most fundamental level, PiS sought to replace the Polish constitution (the Basic Law of 1997) by a constitution which, in contrast to liberal-democratic values, was based on Catholic values (cf. Pankowski 2010: 153 f.). Although its draft bill was never passed, the vision of the "IVth Republic" nonetheless made it into the coalition's ordinary politics.

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[175] Jasiecki has described the political system striven for by PiS as a combination of De Gaulle's France, Orban's Hungary and Pilsudski's Poland (Jasiecki 2019: 133; see for a continuation of nationalist discourse in Poland from the interwar period to the present O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 236 f.; see for elements of the Pilsudski tradition in PiS' positions Pankowski 2010: 160).

[176] In this context it should also be noted that, by promoting this narrative, PiS acted as what Mazzini called a "mnemonic warrior" (Mazzini 2018: 47), as it constructed "a sharp line between themselves – proprietors of the true vision of the past – and those who cultivate wrong, or even false, versions of history" (Bernhard and Kubik 2016: 9).

That is, the governing coalition, aided by the appointing powers of President Lech Kaczynski, employed a highly active personnel politics, replacing various officials in public institutions, state-affiliated enterprises, and public media with people aligned to the government. Most significantly, this included: "ambassadors, provincial governors and their deputies, […] boards of [state-controlled] key firms […] [,] the State Tribunal, Ombudsman, the head of the Institute for National Memory (IPN) and the […] Broadcasting Commission" (Millard: 2006: 1028).

In addition, the coalition increased its own competences and reduced checks on itself. For example, in 2006, a law was passed that granted vast competences to the Prime Minister in cases of emergencies, which were only "ambiguously defined as 'a significant undermining of the social fabric'" (Pankowski 2010: 186; cf. Em 2007). In turn, PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski programmatically explained in an interview with the pro-government newspaper Rzeczpospolita that the government could take measures so as not to lose power (Pankowski 2010: 186).[177]

In line with the idea that the Polish state apparatus was infiltrated by and still is under the influence of communists and their allies, the government, however, not only installed its own loyalists in public offices – it also engaged in what Kelemen and Orenstein (2016: 6) referred to as a "controversial witch-hunt". In the course thereof, the government created the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyne, CBA), a special agency, which, as Pankowski observed:

> "[…] was placed outside of parliamentary control and reported directly to the prime
>
> minister. Led by Mariusz Kaminski, a former leader of the radical right Republican League

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[177] Kaczynski explained: "Let's make one thing clear. We are not in a position where we could be forced to lose power. We can take a certain decision to the effect that we would not lose power." Following the interviewer's question what this decision was, Kaczynski emphasised: "I repeat: we can take such a decision so as not to lose power. Whether or not we take it, depends solely on our judgement of what will be good for Poland." (Lisiecki and Subotic 2006).

(LR), the CBA was referred to by the government's opponents as 'the PiS political police'.

The CBA indeed could be seen as an institution working primarily against the ruling party's political opponents […]." (Pankowski 2010: 177, referring to Kacki 2007)[178]

Relatedly, many people were put under surveillance without due processes or arrested on corruption allegations unsubstantiated by evidence, with both prime minister Kaczynski as well as Minister of Justice Ziobro exerting pressure on the judiciary (Pankowski 2010: 176 f.; see Paradowska 2008; Pietraszewski 2008).[179] Furthermore, under the banner of lustration[180], a law passed in October 2006 (Warsaw Voice 2006) obliged approx. 700.000 (Kochanowicz 2007; see also Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 359) individuals in certain occupations (e.g. teachers, university staff, journalists, law practitioners) to certify that they had not acted as informers for the communist authorities in the past. This had to be verified by the Institute of National Memory, which, too, was effectively under PiS control, as many of its offices were filled with young graduates involved in far-right circles (Pankowski 2010: 179 f.; for calls to apply lustration to the economic sphere as well, see Millard 2006: 1013).[181]

The PiS-headed coalition government also increased its grip on the media. On December 29th in 2005, it amended the law on the National Broadcasting Council responsible for the supervision of public media, so that it could exert more control over the body, specifying the task of the council as "safeguard[ing] the principles of journalistic ethics" (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 359). Even though the latter was negated by the Constitutional Tribunal (Constitutional Tribunal 2006: 5), the amendment allowed the government to install

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[178] For example, the CBA chef declared that the case of the civic Platform MP Beata Sawicka, who was "exposed for corruption" in front of the 2007 parliamentary election, should be guiding to the voter in shaping her decisions, and former PiS prime minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (acting as MP between October 31th 2005 and July 14th 2006 before Jaroslaw Kaczynski took over the office) reported to have been tapped by Kaczynski-loyalists in the secret services (Pankowski 2010: 177).

[179] On other occasions, both Kaczynski brothers criticised the Constitutional Tribunal for ruling some of the coalition's policies as unconstitutional (Pankowski 2010: 177; cf. Kurski 2007).

[180] Lustration refers to „the systematic vetting of public officials for links with the communist-era security services" (Szczerbiak 2002: 553).

[181] Pankowski (2012) has provided a detailed description of PiS' coalition partners' connections to extreme right-wing circles and activities.

functionaries in central positions in state TV and to remove its critics from public radio stations on the national and local level (cf. Pankowski 2010: 178). In consequence, the public TV channels TVP1, TVP2 and TVP Info began to cover on the PiS-led government more favourably.

The tightened grip on the media was not limited to state-owned media, however, but was also exerted on private media. In sum, this resulted in the entrenchment and politicisation of vast parts of the media landscape (Dobek-Ostrowska and Nozewski 2019: 78; see also Anaszewicz 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska and Lodzki 2008). For example, the coalition government presumably pressured the private Polish TV station Polsat to fire Tomasz Liz, a political journalist, upfront of the 2007 parliamentary elections because of his critical coverage on PiS. The government also proposed the creation of the National Centre for Monitoring of the Media, a new control body "whose purposes were rather ill defined, raising fears of curbing free speech" (Pankowski 2010: 179).

Note that under the coalition's lustration law journalists, too, were generally considered "public figures", requiring them to undergo a vetting procedure. This also was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Tribunal in 2007, because it contravened "the principle of freedom to express opinions as well as to acquire and disseminate information" (Constitutional Tribunal 2007: 22; see also Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 359 f.).

Another recurring aspect of the coalition's politics consisted in targeting groups, which were considered anti-Polish (see also O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 236). Here, members of the coalition, starting in the election campaign already and adding to measures taken locally

before 2005,[182] openly targeted homosexuals[183] and ethnic minorities, while simultaneously encroaching upon women's rights.

For example, the coalition abolished the office of the Commissioner for the Equal Status of Women and Men, who was responsible for the promotion of anti-discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race and sex, thus violating its duty under the European Union Race Equality Directive (Pankowski 2010: 175; Vermeersch 2007; see also Sadurski 2007: 24).[184] The office of the national prosecutor began investigating "alleged 'links' between gay right groups and 'paedophile and drug dealer circles'" (Pankowski 2010: 176).[185] Roman Giertych, the Minister of Education, fired Miroslaw Sielatycki, the director of the National Teacher Training Centre CODN, because the centre published a Polish version of a manual on human rights released by the Council of Europe which, amongst other things, problematised homophobia. Moreover, Giertych (unsuccessfully) called for a criminalisation of "any kind of

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[182] For example, while Lech Kaczynski headed the Warsaw city council as mayor, the council, in a move directed against sexual minorities, forbade the Equality Parade (Parada Równosci), an event advocating equal rights for homosexuals, in 2004 and again in 2005 (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 226, see 227 for other attacks on those marches). Whereas the 2004 ban was formally justified by reference to an existing threat of violence (against the background of anti-gay sentiments), the 2005 ban initially was announced with reference to traffic issues (see Krzyzaniak-Gumowska 2005), before then admitting that opposition to homosexuality sufficed by itself. That is, Kaczynski announced that he "will prohibit the parade regardless of what I find in the organizers' application. I can't see a reason for propagating gay culture" (Kosc 2005). Both bans were ruled unconstitutional in September 2005 and January 2006. Moreover, in 2007, the European Court of Human Rights judged that the Polish bans of the marches were in "violation of the right to freedom of assembly" (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 359; European Court of Human Rights 2007: para. 27).

[183] "PiS leader and Prime Minister (2005–2007) Jaroszaw Kaczynski proposed barring homosexuals as schoolteachers. Culture Minister Kazimierz Michaz Ujazdowski (PiS) warned, 'Let's not be misled by the brutal propaganda of homosexuals' postures of tolerance. It is a kind of madness, and for that madness, our rule will indeed be for them a dark night' (Amnesty International, 2006, p. 7). […] The new Prime Minister (PiS) told an interviewer, 'If a person tries to infect others with their homosexuality, then the state must intervene in this violation of freedom' (Amnesty International, 2006[, p. 7]). LPR proposed that Poland reintroduce the death penalty for 'murderer-pedophiles' (Wroblewski, 2006)" (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 229). Relatedly, the coalition's measures against homosexuality can presumably be linked to the focus of the League of Polish Families "on moral issues and alleged threats to Poland's cultural identity" (Jasiewicz 2008: 7; see also Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 258).

[184] In turn, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was tasked with anti-discrimination. There, the Department for Women, Family and Anti-Discrimination was created for this purpose. The department, headed by Joanna Kuzik-Rostkowska, declaredly neglected homophobia and instead officially focused on family issues and women rights (Chowaniec et al. 2021: 6 f.).

[185] The investigation was launched because of a claim of Mojciech Wierzeiski, a Sejm member of the League of Polish Families, that "criminal gangs" were responsible for demonstrations against the nomination of Roman Giertych as Minister of Education. According to Pankowski, the intention behind the allegation was "to intimidate the government's opponents" (Pankowski 2010: 176).

'promotion of homosexuality' in schools" (Pankowski 2010: 181 f.; O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 225),[186] and drafted a bill[187] that would have allowed the fining and even imprisoning of teachers who were "promoting homosexuality" (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 225; Biedron and Abramowicz 2007).[188] Internet filters at schools were implemented to block websites containing references to homosexuality. School materials were amended to link homosexuality to "a lack of a proper idea of love and a hedonistic attitude, as well as prostitution" (Council of Europe 2007: paras 53-54; cf. Pankowski 2010: 182; see also Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 358). Ewa Sowinska, the Spokesperson for Children's Rights of the parliament, called for investigating whether the children TV show "Teletubbies" promoted homosexuality (Dzierzanowski and Nowicka 2007; Pankowski 2010: 184). And Jaroslaw Zielinski, Vice-Minister of Interior, oversaw cuts of funding for organisations advocating the interests of ethnic minorities (cf. Pankowski 2010: 182). These examples of attempts to remove homosexuality from public life were embedded in a discourse often employing verbal attacks, which already contradicted the protection from discrimination guaranteed by the constitution (cf. Sadurski 2007: 24).[189]

Note that already in 2005-2007 the coalition entered an open conflict with the Constitutional Tribunal – and with the judiciary more generally. On the one hand, government

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[186] A subsequent intervention by Terry Davis, then Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, in this regard remained unsuccessful. Following Sielatycki's dismissal, the new CODN director instead "warned against the dangers of homosexuality in schools" (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 225).

[187] In consequence, discrimination against openly homosexual teachers intensified (Kwasniewski 2007; see also O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 225).

[188] Giertych also removed literature of allegedly non-Polish and left authors from school curricula and instead sought "to introduce 'patriotic education' as a new obligatory subject in schools" (Pankowski 2010: 182 f.; see Graczyk 2006; kt 2007).

[189] Since the rule of the Russian Empire, no law had existed in Poland that actively criminalised sexual minorities – although homosexuality had been associated with "Western depravity" during communism and listed as an illness in the Polish medical register until 1991. Whereas a law from 1974 already forbade discrimination based on sexual orientation in the work context, the 1997 Constitution protected against all kinds of discrimination (Chowaniec et al. 2021: 2). Against this background, it is not surprising that the coalition's policies were criticised by various international organisations and institutions for violating the rights of (amongst others) sexual minorities. Those prominently included the European Parliament, the European Court of Human Rights, Amnesty International (2006), the United Nations (2004), and the International Lesbian and Gay Association (2006) (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010: 225).

officials declined to follow the decisions[190] of the constitutional court and instead tried to pressure it and influence its rulings (cf. Albertazzi and Mueller 2013: 360; Sadurski 2007: 25-28). On the other, the coalition formally constrained the independence of the judiciary. This followed Law and Justice's accusation that criminal courts are responsible for an (allegedly) "high level of criminality and general disorder in the country" (Bodnar 2010: 36). That is, a law from March 2007 expanded the power of the prosecutor general, an office held in personal union by the Minister of Justice, on other prosecutors, as well as of higher ranking prosecutors on their subordinates (Bodnar and Zilkowski 2007: 49-50). And another law from June 2007 allowed the Minister transferring judges between courts and suspending their work (International Bar Association 2007: 26). Importantly, this happened with the intention of Zbigniew Ziobro, Minister of Justice 2005-2007 and since 2015, "to revolutionise the [Polish] justice system" (Bodnar and Zilkowski 2007: 49).[191]

8.3.3. The End of the First PiS Government

PiS' first time in government came to an end in 2007,[192] when the party, facing growing sentiments against its politics, decided to prepone the elections and use them as a "referendum" on its politics (Jasiewicz 2008: 11). During the subsequent elections, it lost its parliamentary majority. Civic Platform won the elections and headed the next government(s) until 2015 (for the 2011 Sejm election in comparison to the 2007 elections, see Sokolowski 2012: 469). Given

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[190] For example, between 2005 and 2007, the PiS-led coalition rejected a series of rulings of the Constitutional Tribunal, which were protected by Art. 190 of the 1997 constitution from being overridden (see Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 62).

[191] As Albertazzi and Mueller (2013: 360) observe, PiS had been critical of the functioning of the judiciary well before its first time in government: PiS announced "to fight 'legal impossibilism', meaning the constraints placed on the executive by 'liberal' laws (including the constitution and by the 'corporations of lawyers and judges' (cited in Kucharczyk 2007: 11). Unhappy with the 1997 constitution, Law and Justice had advocated the creation of a 'Fourth Republic' based on Catholic and 'social' values (Pankowski 2010: 153), a reform predicated on the need for systemic change and moral and political renewal, after the years in which corrupt, self-serving and unpatriotic elites had allegedly ruled the country (Stanley 2011: 266). The proposed changes would have posed a further threat to liberal values, since it was envisaged that the president would have enjoyed the power to legislate even against the wishes of parliament (Sadurski 2007: 16–17), not to mention that all references to the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in the current constitution would have been removed (Pankowski 2010: 154)."

[192] In contrast, President Lech Kaczynski remained in office past 2007. In 2010, before his period in office had ended, he died together with various other Polish officials and his wife in a plane crash near Smolensk, Russia.

this relatively short-lived coalition, it is worth considering the overall impact of PiS' first time in government.

As the previous subsection has sketched out, the coalition introduced 'traditional' values to public institutions and staffed (public) media, companies and manifold institutions with officials loyal to the coalition. Simultaneously, it removed or pressured critics and entrenched the rights of sexual minorities.

Despite this, PiS and its coalition partners did not achieve a lasting deep-reaching impact. Burdened by internal[193] struggles and lacking a constitutional majority, the coalition "did not fundamentally change the country's basic outlook" (Pankowski 2010: 173) and thus failed to realise PiS' vision of the IVth Republic (Jasiecki 2019: 133). Both domestic and international opposition to the coalition's politics had also contributed to this, including private media, NGOs (specifically those concerned with minority rights contested by the government), European Institutions, the Polish National Bank and the Constitutional Tribunal (cf. Jasiecki 2019: 133).

That said, perhaps the greatest longer-term impact the short-lived coalition had was through its personnel politics. Many officials the government put in charge remained in office far beyond the end of the coalition. Relatedly, PiS was also able to expand and consolidate its conservative support network (amongst other things, strengthening its relationship to the religious right-wing media network of Radio Maryja headed by Father Rydzyk, Millard 2006: 1028).

The time in coalition followed by the defeat at the 2007 elections, however, furthermore had significant consequences for the coalition partners themselves. It has already been noted that, although PiS lost the 2007 parliamentary elections, it nonetheless gained vote shares

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[193] Including conflicts of interest both within the government and between the government and the president (cf. Jasiecki 2019: 144; see also Szalamacha 2009).

compared to 2005 and that the reason for this was that many voters, who previously gave their vote to Self-Defence or the League of Polish families, moved to PiS. Against this background, PiS also underwent an ideological transformation surpassing the absorption of former League or Self Defence voters into its own voter base and the incorporation of parts of its former coalition partners' cadres. While different attempts were made to explain this – e.g. strategical considerations vs. a genuine ideological adaption – in course of this change PiS undoubtedly moved further to the right (cf. Pankowski 2010: 155 ff.; see also Karnowski and Zaremba 2006: 221).[194] Perhaps this absorption itself contributed to the deepening cleavages between PiS and the Civic Platform led coalition governing from 2007 to 2015 (see Bojarowicz 2017: 10 ff.), as it produced a PiS party essentially subsuming the conservative, populist, religious and right-wing opposition.[195]

8.4. The Second Coming: From 2015 Onwards

After PiS' defeat at the 2007 elections, the Civic Platform led government rolled back some of PiS' policies (e.g., in relation to EU integration, Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 59; in relation to privatisation, Kozarzewski and Baltowski 2017: 5). This process ended with PiS' return to power in 2015, when Andrzej Duda surprisingly won the presidential elections on October the 25th and PiS received an absolute (though not a constitutional, Jaremba 2016: 262) majority[196] in the parliamentary elections in the Sejm and Senate on March 10th (for the parliamentary seat distribution post 2015, see Dobek-Ostrowska and Nozewski 2019: 77). In doing so, PiS succeeded in what it failed at in both 2007 and 2011 (cf. Sokolowski 2012: 469) and defeated

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[194] PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski himself, when confronted with inconsistencies of the coalition's politics and his former positionings (say, regarding nationalism or antisemitism), declared that he erred, having "overestimated the threat of nationalism". (Karnowski and Zaremba 2006: 221; Pankowski 2010: 155).

[195] In this context, see the division between "solidarity Poland" and "liberal Poland" (Bojarowicz 2017: 11; see also Jarosz 2010: 10).

[196] For procedural reasons, PiS secured an absolute majority of 51% despite the fact that it received just 37,6% of the votes, which equalled 18,6% of the electorate given a participation of ca. 50% (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 62; speaking of a "procedural incident", Markowski 2019: 119).

its long-time rival[197] Civic Platform (Bunikowski 2018: 285).[198] Following those elections, for the first time since the end of communism, a one-party government assumed office in Poland (Jaremba 2016: 262).

Overall, during its second term in government, PiS continued where it failed 2005-2007 by "changing the entire political system of the country" (Jasiecki 2019: 113) in line with its obscure vision of the IVth Republic.[199] As Sadurski (2018a: 106) pointed out, in contrast to 2005, in 2015 PiS did already have governmental experience it could draw from and, because of the absolute majority its electoral list[200] secured, could rule without having to rely on the support of coalitions partners.[201]

It should be noted that PiS, despite its absolute majority in the Sejm, lacked the two third majority Art. 255 (5) of the 1997 Constitution required to formally change the constitution (Jaremba 2016: 262). This, however, did not stop PiS, which only strategically adhered to the legality of its actions, from – unconstitutionally – implementing de-facto (if not de jure) constitutional changes through regular laws (Sadurski and Steinbeis 2016: 1; 2018a: 109 f.,

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[197] Between 2006 and 2015, PiS consecutively lost eight times to Civic Platform on the local, national, presidential and European level (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 59).

[198] PiS electoral success occurred despite a generally positive economic development in Poland (cf. Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 60). Hence, Markowski (2019: 111) argued that PiS' second rise to power was "mainly determined by socio-cultural factors rather than economic ones". According to Markowski (2019: 113; see also 2016, 2017a, 2017b), PiS achieved a "supply side revolution" as "hardly any evidence existed prior to 2015 of a social 'demand' for radical change". Politics against so-called "gender ideology", for example, played a central role in PiS' 2015 election campaign and in its policies (Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 553; for a critique of "gender ideology" in PiS' 2014 election programme, see Gwiazda 2021: 586 f.). Against this background, the argument of Mamonova and Franquesa (2020) that neoliberal capitalism is responsible for right-wing populism in the countryside seems misguided. Furthermore, Tworzecki's (2019) assessment that the right-wing populist backsliding in Poland was an asymmetric top-down process of polarisation fostered by PiS to increase its popular support, appears plausible.

[199] Following this narrative, PiS MPs declared that they are wedging a "'war' with liberalism, post-communism and the left" (Bunikowski 2018: 293; for a list of enemies, see Gwiazda 2021: 585). In doing so, they gave their own answer to the question to whom the "new" transformed Poland shall belong (cf. Bill and Stanley 2020: 389), and actively (re-)interpreted the Polish history to promote its exclusionary actions (referring to PiS as a "*memory excluder*", Mazzini 2018: 48, emphasis in the original).

[200] PiS' 2015 list also featured candidates from the parties Polska Razem and Solidarna Polska (Markowski 2019: 112).

[201] Sadurski (2018a: 106) also argues that in 2005 Lech Kaczynski had a "moderating effect" on Jaroslaw Kaczynski. The former's death at the 2010 Smolensk airplane crash is by Sadurski taken to partially explain the increased radicality of PiS' politics. Relatedly, Przybylski (2018: 56 f.) observes that the Smolensk crash constituted a "turning point for PiS political ideology", as PiS claimed a collusion between Civic Platform and Russia on the matter.

115; cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 25). In sum, PiS produced political outputs which, continuing its reforms of 2005-2007 (Jasiecki 2019: 133; Kolarska-Bobinska 2017), reached much deeper than its overall unsuccessful attempt of comprehensively transforming the Polish polity, thus undermining central features of liberal democracy.[202]

8.4.1. PiS' Politics

Since PiS was declaredly preoccupied with the transformation of Poland, it is, in a sense, not surprising that, unlike the Civic Platform led government, the PiS government gave more weight to domestic than to foreign policy (Balcer et al. 2016: 2). Here, it is helpful to begin the depiction of the government's actions by elaborating on the constitutional crisis (Bunikowski 2018: 285; Jaremba 2016: 265 ff.) the party has thrown Poland into, as it set the context (and sometimes preconditions) of PiS' subsequent politics. By constitutional crisis I mean the consequences of PiS' attack on the judiciary the party undertook right after its second ascension to power (for a detailed account, see Sadurski 2019).

At the centre of PiS attack against the judiciary stood the Constitutional Tribunal, which emerged as the most formidable obstacle to its policy plans 2005-2007 and hence became its first target after 2015 (Sadurski 2018a: 121 f.). Following its ascension to power, PiS made a series of decisions which, violating European standards of human rights (Venice Commission 2016), initially disempowered the Tribunal, i.e., paralysed it so that it could no longer effectively constrain arbitrary political power of the government and the parliamentary majority. And then, after it was ensured that the majority of seats of the Tribunal was occupied by judges sympathetic to PiS (Sadurski 2018a: 132), PiS effectively turned it into an instrument of the government to help it and its parliamentary majority take measures against its opposition and consolidate its power (Sadurski 2018a: 122).

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[202] Because of the depth and quickness of the changes undertaken by PiS from 2015 onwards, some have characterised its policies as "an accelerated and condensed version of" Fidesz rule in Hungary since 2010 (Puddington and Roylance 2017: 112; Sadurski 2018a: 106).

Those measures included, amongst other things: the refusal of President Duda to swear in judges to the Tribunal which had been nominated by the preceding government in 2015, and his later refusal to swear in 10 more judges on June 22nd 2016 (Mazur and Zurek 2017);[203] the voiding of those nominations by PiS' Sejm majority and the subsequent staffing of the court with judges, who were loyal to PiS and informally cooperated with PiS politicians (cf. Bunikowski 2018: 292; for President Duda's justification of swearing in the new judges, see 289 f.); the refusal of the Prime Minister to publish some of the tribunal's decisions (and later limiting the government's obligation to publish the Constitutional Tribunal's decisions to those made after March 10th 2016, Sadurski and Steinbeis 2016: 2); the Minister of Justice's directive to launch investigations on the actions of the Tribunal's (former) Chief Justice Andrzej Rzeplinski (Bunikowski 2018: 292);[204] the creation of a politicised chamber for "dealing with disciplinary proceedings against judges (and other legal professions)" (Sadurski 2018a. 146); and the implementation of a new regulation prohibiting judges of the Constitutional Tribunal "to claim that the composition of the Tribunal was established in an unconstitutional way and that some judges are unconstitutional" (Bunikowski 2018: 301).

After the Constitutional Tribunal had been brought under control, PiS expanded its attacks to the ordinary judiciary,[205] because Art. 8 of the Polish constitution allows the constitution to be directly applied. This means that ordinary judges can assess the constitutionality of laws (Sadurski 2018a: 140 f.) and hence could take up the slack for the Constitutional Tribunal. Drawing from an often-stressed narrative, the reforms PiS conducted in this regard were formally justified with an alleged unfairness of regular courts and the supreme court's connection to the former communist elite. However, as Sadurski pointed out,

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[203] In 2007, then-President Lech Kaczynski also had refused to appoint 9 judges presented by the National Judiciary council. However, in contrast to Duda's decision, back then other instances were able to confirm the appointments (cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 28).

[204] Rzeplinski was also declared "a 'public enemy'" by Jaroslaw Kaczynski in 2016 (Bunikowski 2018: 291).

[205] In light of those developments, the Congress of Polish Judges presented several resolutions addressing the waning independence of the judiciary (cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 36).

none of those alleged issues have been addressed by the reforms to begin with. Instead, the latter have focussed on changing personnel and facilitating political control of the judiciary (Sadurski 2018a: 142).

This included, for example (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 28 ff.), a change[206] to the Act on the National Judiciary Council –also responsible for filling positions of the Polish Supreme Court, which in turn is responsible for controlling elections both of the parliament and the president – effectively expanding the president's competences to appoint judges;[207] the separation of the Council into two chambers, with the first one having more voting power and being more strongly composed of politicians than judges;[208] the creation of a special investigation unit directly responding to the Minister of Justice tasked with investigating criminal behaviour of judges and prosecutors (despite Art. 32 of the Constitution requiring that cases against judges and prosecutors be reviewed by prosecutors); a draft law tightening corruption control for judges, prosecutors and jurors (but not other officials); another draft law requiring judges to publicly declare their financial situation (thus potentially putting them at risk, e.g. when investigating organised crime) as well as increasing disciplinary liability and potential penalties; a law from January 28th 2016 re-merging the offices of the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General (Sadurski 2018a: 149 f.); the expansion of the Minister of Justice's influence over operations of courts through their directors, who, being responsible for financial operations, came to be directly appointed by the minister (before, they had been accountable to the court's president and elected in a competitive process, cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 34);[209] the increase of the "workload on judges who acted as press spokespersons, and of whom a

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[206] The Council itself was only formally notified about the amendment and asked for its opinion thereon without a real opportunity of properly reviewing it (cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 32).
[207] Amongst other changes, the amendment required the Council to present two candidates to the president and left the decision whom to select from those candidates to the President (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 31).
[208] Both changes regarding the Council conflict with the positions of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ). According to the ENCJ, judges should, on the one hand, be only appointed by other judges, and, on the other, compose the majority of the Council's members (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 33).
[209] A project to make assessors and court presidents being directly appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Justice is planned (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 35).

significant number strongly supported the principles of the separation of powers and judicial independence" (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 35); and the "removal of […] 'old' judges (of ordinary courts) by lowering the retirement age" (Sadurski 2018a: 106 f.).

Those measures aiming at disabling the power of the judiciary to exert control over the government's actions were accompanied by the government's avoidance of existing control mechanisms in other areas as well (cf. Gwiazda 2021: 581). For example (cf. Sadurski 2018a: 150 ff.; Szymaniak 2017), PiS fast-tracked bills in the Sejm by having its MPs submit them privately instead of submitting them as members of the governing party,[210] and took measures to obstruct opposition voices.[211] Regarding laws which were subject to parliamentary consultations and for which expert opinions had to be heard and impact assessments made, those supplementary documents were no longer required to be published on the Sejm's website. This effectively excluded the public from accessing this information. From time to time, parliamentarians of the opposition were, with some pretext, denied access to premises of the parliament. PiS used its parliamentary majority to install loyal personnel at the Bureau of Research (an institution providing information services to deputies and Sejm bodies, Przybylski 2018: 58). And, instead of acting as Prime Minister himself, Jaroslaw Kaczynski handled the office to loyal PiS members to evade institutional responsibility while remaining the undisputed "centre for political command"[212] (cf. Przybylski 2018: 57 f.).[213]

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[210] During the first year of its second time in government, 76 of 181 bills were proposed this way, amongst others the law on the reforms of the common courts and the Supreme Court (Sadurski 2018a: 151).

[211] Measures taken for this included, for example: "limiting speeches to one minute, vote *en bloc* on the amendments, with bundling of all the amendments together not on the basis of their subject matter but on the basis of which party proposed them; failure to provide enough time to read some proposed amendments; working late into the night, failure to respond to observations of legislative mistakes in the bills", as well as utilising procedural tricks at the expense of opposition members and baring them "from the parliamentary floor on disciplinary grounds" (Sadurski 2018a: 151, referring to a report of the NGO "Civic Legislative Platform" (obywatelskie Forum Legislacji), 2017, emphasis in the original).

[212] Sadurski (2018a: 113) borrowed this notion from the Polish legal scholar Stanislaw Ehrlich to describe "a de facto ruling entity, not to be confused with any formal institutions designed by the Constitution, and issuing strategic directives for all state institutions."

[213] Przybylski (2018: 58) points out that observers compared those dual power structures (party on the one and government on the other hand) to communist rule, where the secretary of the communist party wielded more power than official government figures.

Having effectively disabled the judiciary from exerting checks on the governing majority, PiS turned its attention to other agents capable of obstructing its actions (Chapman 2017: 2). Under the name "Good Change" (dobra zmiana), the PiS government implemented a programme which, inheriting the spirit of the 2005-2007 lustration measures, facilitated elite replacement to transition away from communism (Bill 2022: 118 ff.). Subsequently, it placed loyal personnel, amongst other domains, in the civic service, the military, the diplomatic service and state companies (Chapman 2017: 3).

This also included measures concerning the media and the civil society. That is, employing a double-fold approach to elite replacement through "negative *pressure* and positive *promotion*" (Bill 2022: 119, emphasis in the original), the PiS government amended the statute of 23rd April 2003 which regulated "activity for the public good and voluntary service" and passed a statute on October 13th 2017 that established the Committee for Public Benefit and The National Institute of Freedom: Centre for the Development of Civil Society (Narodowy Instytut Wolności – Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego). Both institutions centralised state control of NGOs previously diffused across several ministries (Sadurski 2018a: 153).

This came on top of the government's discrimination against certain parts of civil society, which already existed before the new law was implemented and was further exacerbated by it. For example, while several right-wing NGOs were favoured regarding fund allocations and supported by the National Institute of Freedom (Bill 2022: 120), left- or liberal oriented ones, including the Women's Rights Centre and several NGOs supporting refugees, were deprived of funding (Sadurski 2018a: 154). Instead, "long-standing local pro-refugee civil society initiatives and their activists became subject to public censure and […] attacks" (Follis 2019: 314).

Moreover, the government utilised the Institute of National Remembrance to build partisan support for its interpretation of history entailed in its IVth Republic narrative (cf. Mazzini 2018: 55, see Mazzini also in general for an analysis of PiS' mnemonic strategy),[214] widened[215] the competences of the police and the secret services (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 65; Sadurski 2018a: 157 f.),[216] and put constraints both on the right of assembly and the freedom of speech. Those included, for example, a "new regulation […] to ensure a privileged position for assemblies devoted to patriotic, religious and historic events" (Sadurski 2018a: 155), the harassment and threatening of journalists critical of the governing party as well as the criminalisation of certain public positionings (Sadurski 2018a: 156 f.; e.g., of accusing Poland of complicity with the Nazis or of war crimes during WW II, cf. Przybylski 2018: 61).

That, amongst other things, resulted in a measurable deterioration of press freedom and pluralism in Poland. Whereas in 2015 Poland ranked 18th on the Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index, the country dropped to place 47 in 2016 and even further to 54 in 2017, when the Polish press was downranked from "free" to only "partly free", a status held the last time in 1990 (Dzieciolowski 2016-2017: 7, referring to Freedom House 2017).

The direct political influence on public television and radio was also expanded under the new PiS government (despite a general tendency of ruling party interference in public media in post-communist Poland, cf. Dzieciolowski 2016-2017: 25 ff.). On December 30th in 2015,

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[214] Amongst other things, this concerned the Round Table talks, the Smolensk plane crash, the resistance to communism and the war against the Nazis, and markedly excluded important historical agents from the narrative, which were disfavoured by PiS (such as Lerch Walesa, cf. Mazzini 2018: 54 ff.; and, more generally, Kaczynski's rivals, cf. Przybylski 2018: 60 f.).

[215] Under the label of ani-terror legislation, a bill was passed that increased the power of the Internal Security Agency (ISA). The regulation "makes it legal under some circumstances to conduct surveillance of foreigners without their knowledge; limits the freedom of assembly; and opens up the possibility of the ISA blocking selected Internet content. As with other controversial pieces of legislation, the new law was adopted without public consultations and over protests from the Ombudsman's office as well as civil-rights NGOs" (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 65; Szary 2016).

[216] Noteworthy, Mariusz Kaminski became minister-coordinator of the Special Services. Kaminski, who was formerly the Head of the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau before he was sentenced to three years in prison and banned from public offices for 10 years, assumed this position right after receiving a pardon by President Duda in November 2015 (Mazur and Zurek 2017: 27)

the parliament, in a speedy process, passed the Small Media Act (Mala Ustawa Medialna), which amended the 1992 Broadcasting Act and was meant as a temporary measure for six months paving the way for a main regulation piece (a "Big Media Act") later (Chapman 2017: 9).

Officially, the Small Media Act targeted the alleged partisan character of public media (disfavouring conservative positions and being biased in favour of Civic Platform, cf. Chapman 2017: 9) and aimed for raising public media's journalistic and ethical standards as well as economic efficiency (Chapman 2017: 9). De facto, however, the act was meant to prevent media from criticising government policies (cf. Chapman 2017: 9). For this purpose, it reformed the appointment procedures to public state media, so that members of the board of management and the supervisory board of public TV and radio stations were appointed directly by the Minister of Treasury, shortened terms of board members, and let already running mandates expire (cf. Klimkiewicz 2017: 201-204). In sum, its regulations led to massive layoffs[217] of management staff and journalists in public TV and radio stations, who were quickly replaced by personnel loyal to PiS (Klimkiewicz: 2017: 202 ff., Chapman 2017: 2, 9; Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 63).

Before the Small Media Act shifted appointment powers to the Minister of Treasury, the authority to appoint supervisory board members of public TV and radio stations lied with the National Broadcasting Council (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii I Telewizji, KRRiT). Its task was to "safeguard the freedom of speech, the right to information, and the public interest in radio television" (Chapman 2017: 4). Against this background, the Constitutional Tribunal had declared the Small Media Act to be in parts unconstitutional on December 13th in 2016, because it circumvented the KRRiT as a control instance and limited media freedom. This verdict,

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[217] The directors of the state TV channels TVP1, TVP2 and TVP Kultura as well as of the Television Information Agency laid down their posts even before the Act took effect as a sign of protest (Chapman 2017: 9).

however, was rejected by PiS. By then, the Small Media Act had already expired (on June 30th 2016) and was succeeded by the Act on the National Media Council on June 22nd 2016. This act had already been part of the draft on the "Big Media Law" (Law on National Media), which was anticipated yet postponed in June 2015 (Chapman 2017: 10; on the latter see also Klimkiewicz 2017: 205-207).[218]

The Act on the National Media Council incorporated Poland's biggest press agency to a public medium and established the National Media Council (Rada Medów Narodowych). The council replaced the Minister of the Treasury as the appointing instance for public media, thus deepening the relationship between the state and public state media, and increasing political control (Chapman 2017: 11; cf. Klimkiewicz 2017: 205-207). That is, continuing what the Small Media Act had begun, the Act on the National Media Council effectively neutralised the KRRiT as a control instance by relocating its competence to appoint board members to the National Media Council. In contrast to the KRRiT, whose members must not be member of any political party, the National Media Council was staffed with PiS politicians (Chapman 2017: 4).[219]

Here, it should be noted that, as in 2005-2007, PiS actions were not limited to public media. For example, private media outlets critical of PiS were pressured (Chapman 2017: 2) and leading PiS politicians obstructed their access to political information, preferably giving

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[218] The draft of the Law on National Media was presented on April 20th to the Sejm and intended to turn public TV and radio into "national media". Overall, this effectively would have resulted in a loss of the affected outlets' editorial independence, with them propagating the PiS government's positionings instead. Amongst other things, the draft law, for example, intended to oblige public media to: "preserve national traditions, patriotic and human values, […] contribute to fulfilling the spiritual needs of listeners and viewers, […] respect the Christian value system, […] strengthen the national community, […] counter misrepresentations of Polish history, […] portray family values and take steps to strengthen the notion of the family" (Chapman 2017: 10 f.; for heavy political support of PiS by the important TVP1 evening show *Wiadomości* and example coverages biased in favour of PiS, see moreover ibid.: 11 f., and Zuk 2020: 300; for biased reporting in favour of PiS reporting at TVP under an ex-PiS-MP chairman, see also Przybylski 2018: 60; for reporting practices directly before the 2019 elections, see Zuk 2020).

[219] The Council is composed of five members, who are each elected for a term of six years. Three of those are appointed by the Sejm and the other two by the president following the nomination by the two biggest opposition factions in parliament. As Chapman observes, "[t]his arrangement effectively guarantees the ruling party a majority" (Chapman 2017: 11).

interviews to right-wing media while shunning liberal outlets (cf. Chapman 2017: 7). In December 2016, there also was an attempt to limit the access of journalists to the Sejm, though this proposal was withdrawn after heavy protests and a crisis in parliament (Chapman 2017: 13; Wprost 2016). Moreover, under PiS advertisement revenues[220] have shifted towards right-wing media (Chapman 2017: 13). Criticising that large parts of the Polish media were owned by foreign corporations,[221] the government also attempted to bring media back under Polish ownership by reducing the amount of foreign media owners. This was labelled "repolonisation" (Chapman 2017: 8; cf. Przybylski 2018: 60).

"Repolonisation" also played a role in the economic sphere more broadly. Overall, PiS' economic policies have been rather left-leaning and were characterised by increased market regulation, economic state intervention, the redistribution of wealth, and the expansion of the welfare state (for the categorisation of PiS as an economically left-leaning populist party, see Inglehart and Norris 2016: 44; see also Jasiecki 2019: 134). This notwithstanding, they have simultaneously been intricately connected to the promotion of PiS' normative political vision delineated at the beginning of this chapter. For example, PiS not only changed the pension system, introduced the possibility to get free medical prescriptions for the old (Bunikowski 2018: 298), promoted work protections, cancelled a retirement age raise (Toplisek 2020: 395), raised the minimum wage, sought to decrease the number of non-permanent work contracts and generally attempted to alleviate precarity (cf. Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 552). It also limited property rights (cf. Tworzecki 2019: 99 f.) and restructured state-business relations to widen its regulatory competences and exert pressure on (predominantly foreign) corporations while at the same time aiming for a "repolonisation" of the economy (cf. Jasiecki 2019: 138 ff.), with particular focus on the banking sector (cf. Toplisek 2020: 394).

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[220] This happened against the background of overall declining advertisement revenues. For example, between 2008 and 2015, those fell from ca. 795 mil. PLN to ca. 280.3 mil. PLN (Chapman 2017: 14).

[221] In 2017, ca. three out of four outlets were controlled by foreign owners, many of them German (see Chapman 2017: 8).

Furthermore, the party, promoting its traditional view on the family, implemented the generously funded (see Republic of Poland 2017), "pro-family" oriented Family 500+ programme. Family 500+ provided financial benefits (500 PLN, at the time of writing somewhat above 105 EUR) to parents for every child after the first one younger than 18 years (Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 552).[222] In line with its overarching attempt of "family mainstreaming", i.e. politically advocating heteronormative family constellations and upheaving them above others (Grzebalska and Petö 2018: 168; also cf. Mudde 2019: chapter 9; Bunikowski 2018: 298), the "pronatalist" programme was intended to boost birth rates,[223] however prioritising traditional family constellations (Detwiler and Snitow 2016: 60; cf. Wierzcholska 2019: 205 f.).

Importantly, and once again mirroring its first time in power, PiS' advocacy for traditional values and an excluding notion of nation also coincided with a multi-facetted discrimination of sexual, religious, and ethnic minorities as well as the limitation of women rights. That is, amongst other things, members of the LGBTQ community had their rights contested regarding civil society organisation and assembly, education as well as housing, and faced hate crime not addressed by law due to a legal bias (see Godzisz and Knut 2018); there has been an effort to eradicate gender-sensitive language, and the term "gender" specifically, from policy documents (Detwiler and Snitow 2016: 57; Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 553; Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 268); and some communes have labelled themselves "LGBT-free zones" (strefy wolne of ideologii LGBT"), thus declaring members of the community unwelcome (ca. 100 cities and towns in 2021, Chowaniec et al. 2021: 1).

Note that with the constant portrayal of LGBTQ groups and refugees as a threat, PiS accomplished to turn public sentiments against those. For example, in 2019, a poll conducted

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[222] In special cases, such as a disadvantaged socio-economic background or children with disabilities, benefits are provided for the first child, too (Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 552).
[223] In 2015, Poland had one of the lowest birth rates in Europe with just 1,35 children per woman.

nation-wide suggested that Polish citizens considered "'the LGBT community and gender ideology'" to be the second largest danger to the security of the nation (Cadier 2021: 718; for exemplary accusations by PiS and allied agents, see Korolczuk 2020: 166),[224] and xenophobic (Islamophobic and antisemitic in particular) attitudes increased in the time after the refugee crisis (Narkowicz 2018: 358). The latter coincided with rising numbers of hate crime against ethnic and religious minorities (Bujalski 2016). PiS further aggravated this by dissolving the Council Against Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia in 2016 (Narkowicz 2016). Simultaneously to the dismantlement of institutional support for those groups, PiS increased its "support[] of ultraconservative, far-right and neo-fascist organisations" (Korolczuk 2020: 167; cf. Narkowicz 2018: 366).[225]

Women, in turn, faced an attack on reproductive rights (cf. Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 553), including an imminent restriction of their – in comparison already quite restrictive – abortion rights (for the history of abortion laws in Poland, see Hussein et al. 2018: 11 f.). Supported by the Polish Catholic church and right-wing NGOs, the government's attempt,[226] if successful, would not only had almost entirely banned abortion but also established penalties, including prison sentences, for women receiving and gynaecologists performing abortions (Detwiler and Snitow 2016: 61 f.; Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 553; Kubisa 2017). The draft was only rejected by the Sejm and subsequently withdrawn after mass protests across the country (cf. Wierzcholska 2019: 198, 209 f.; for a chronology of those "Black Protest" marches, see, e.g., Graff 2020: 233; Korolczuk et al. 2019: 7-15).

This backlash, however, did not stop the PiS government from further attempts to curb abortion rights. Instead of prohibiting abortions (in almost all cases), the government

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[224] During the 2020 presidential election, the narrative of LGBTQ rights threatening the Polish society was employed once again (Chowaniec et al. 2021: 1).

[225] PiS also removed elements concerned with far-right ideology from an information on hate crime used for the education of the police (Pedziwiatr 2017; see also Narkowicz 2018: 366).

[226] Advocates of abortion rights were framed as enemies of the Polish and compared to the Nazis (cf. Wierzcholska 2019: 208).

introduced financial incentives in the form of up to 1.000 EUR for women who abstain from abortion despite their foetuses suffering from incurable illnesses or distortions or being expected to pass away shortly after being born (labelled by the euphemism "difficult pregnancy", Kubisa: 2017: 31; cf. also Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2019: 553). In addition, the PiS government restricted funding for in-vitro fertilisation as well as for the fight against domestic violence,[227] limited access to contraception for emergency cases (Wierzcholska 2018; cf. also Gwiazda 2021: 581) and, instead of courses on sexual education, introduced a conservative course on "education for family life" to schools (cf. Wierzcholska 2019: 203).

Although most of the policies implemented by PiS instructive for this chapter are domestically oriented, PiS' overall outlook on the sovereignty of the Polish nation based on a shared culture, history and religion (cf. Balcer et al. 2016: 3 ff.; for PiS' manifesto on its notion of the nation, see Gwiazda 2021: 584 f.; see also part II of the thesis) also prompted it to readjust Poland's foreign policy (for how PiS' foreign policy is generally characterised by "*Renationalization, Disengagement, Circumvention and Resistance*" (Dyduch and Müller 2021: 572, emphasis in the original), see Dyduch and Müller 2021: 572 ff.). This, for example, included increasing the size of the army and the stationing of US-American troops (Bunikowski 2018: 298), employing a tougher approach on Russia as well as taking a more critical stance towards the EU (Balcer et al. 2016: 2; Csehi and Zgut 2021; Varga and Buzogány 2021: 1455; Mérö and Piroska 2016).

PiS' stance on Russia is grounded in the threat Russia had historically posed to Polish independence (both during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union). In contrast, the reason for its scepticism towards the EU is that the EU, and the West more broadly, is considered to threaten Poland's religious, social and ethno-cultural heritage due to multi-culturalism,

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[227] Note that the reduction of funding for organisations engaged against domestic abuse since 2015 coincided with an increase of funding for Catholic organisations (Gwiazda 2021: 589; see also Human Rights Watch 2019).

immigration[228] (Balcer et al. 2016: 6 ff.; specifically immigration of Muslims, Narkowicz 2018: 358) and gender politics (cf. Wierzcholska 2019: 213 f.; see also Graff and Korolczuk 2018) amongst other things. Because of this, PiS – proclaiming to defend its traditionalist values,[229] and also citing a security threat –[230] for example did not accept refugees from majority Muslim countries thus refusing to participate in the EU's distribution scheme to which the previous Civic Platform led government under Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz had agreed (Cap 2017: 65; Follis 2019: 308; Krzyzanowska and Krzyzanowski 2018: 615; Narkowicz 2018: 366).[231]

This was embedded in a general, presumed threat to Polish sovereignty, as the EU is considered to be dominated by the special interests of larger member states, especially Germany and France (see for Poland's attempt to counterweight this through Visegrad and the Three Seas Initiative, Jasiecki 2019: 132), in favour of which the European Commission is allegedly biased (Balcer 2016: 9 f.). That said, PiS' EU scepticism has not been limited to the cultural sphere, but also extended to economic concerns. In particular, the party rejected the European Banking Union (Varga and Buzogány 2021: 1455; Mérö and Piroska 2016) and generally took a more protectionist stance, aiming to build large corporations in Poland with a stronger role of the state in the market (Balcer et al. 2016: 11) and a subsequent reluctance to privatisation (Kozarzewski and Baltowski 2017).

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[228] Interestingly, unlike in other countries, in Poland immigration had only become a political topic in 2015 in the context of the so-called European "refugee crisis" (Krzyzanowski 2018: 76 f.), when migration was deliberately associated with crisis by PiS "to promote anti-immigrant views" (Krzyzanowska and Krzyzanowski 2018: 612). In turn, it was also during this refugee crisis that the Polish (and the Hungarian) backsliding for "the first time […] had a clear impact on European level politics" (Everett 2021: 402).

[229] Assuming that those values are foundational to the European culture as such (Balcer et al. 2016: 7; TVN24 2016).

[230] The Polish withdrawal was made following the terrorist attacks in Brussels 2016. The worry was that acceptance of Muslim refugees would raise the risk for terrorist attacks in Poland. That said, as Narkowicz (2018: 366) observed, the connection between Muslim refugees and danger also went in hand with "racialised comments about refugees". Jaroslaw Kaczynski, for example, associated refugees with diseases and parasites, which those would import to Poland if let in (Rettman 2015; for a connection of refugees to crime, see Narkowicz 2018: 367).

[231] Under the quota system for the relocation of refugees within the EU, Poland was meant to accept a contingent of 400 people in 2016, which would be increased up to 7200 (Pedziwiatr and Legut 2017). PiS withdrew from this agreement in March 2016 and instead suggested increasing support in transit or origin countries (cf. Follis 2019: 308).

There have also been internal changes related to PiS' foreign policy, which largely mirror the party's overall project of concentrating power in the hands of the government and of disabling independent centres of authority. That is, the party not only transferred competences of the foreign ministry to the prime minister and president – it also, in the context of its "Good Change" reform (Balcer et al. 2016: 1), laid off many senior diplomatic personnel and replaced them with PiS loyalists (cf. Dyduch and Müller 2021: 576 f.).[232]

PiS' contestations to liberal democracy did not end with its attack on the rule of law and the liberal values enshrined therein, however. After PiS had effectively subjugated the institutions, which were able to effectively check the government in the past, it also began undermining "the very foundations of democracy" (Sadurski and Steinbeis 2016: 5). By this I do not mean that PiS curbed elections or prolonged the government's term indefinitely. But, in addition to the staffing of electoral institutions with officials loyal to PiS, a law was passed on September 14th 2017 which, through establishing a politicised chamber for "extraordinary control and public affairs" (Sadurski 2018a: 146), shifted competences for the control of elections from the judiciary to "the parliamentary majority and executive" and granted its commissioners, which were noteworthy no longer judges but politicians, "full authority […] for redrawing electoral boundaries" (Sadurski 2018b: 1).

This law, which was justified by reference to alleged, but never evidenced irregularities during previous elections, technically gave PiS (and, by extension, any ruling party with a parliamentary majority) the ability "to commit electoral fraud allowing it to stay in power, regardless of the voters' preferences" (Sadurski 2018b: 1; see for a more detailed analysis of the electoral law, Sadurski 2018a: 158 ff.). And indeed, as Sadurski noted with respect to PiS'

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[232] As Dyduch and Müller (2021: 576) observe, "[f]rom November 2015 till February 2018, 88 out of 100 positions at the level of ambassadors and 34 out of 38 'consul's general' were replaced. Moreover, 21 out of 24 directors of Polish Institutes were replaced." The reason for this, according to a former Polish ambassador, is that they had been perceived as a threat to PiS' power "due to their competences and institutional memory" (Dyduch and Müller 2021: 577; cf. Rzeczkowski 2019).

instrumentalisation of the Constitutional Tribunal, it seems that PiS does not expect to leave the government anytime soon (cf. Sadurski 2018a: 122). In light of this, it is no surprise that Poland dropped[233] on the Democracy Index after PiS' return to power in 2015 (Dobek-Ostrowska and Nozewski 2019: 75; for a comparative assessment of Poland's democratic decline, see Cianetti et al. 2018).

This adds to the impeding of civil society, the hostile media environment, and institutional barriers to opposition candidates PiS established and seriously undermines if not (yet) the form but certainly the substance of democracy in Poland. Of course, PiS has so far not transformed Poland into an autocratic state. But it is the trajectory that matters, and Poland's trajectory under PiS rule leads away from both pillars of liberal democracy. Even if its primary focus so far has been on the rule of law, the party has also prepared a "structural institutional transformation away from democracy" (Sadurski 2018a: 113).[234]

8.5. Reflections on the Polish Case

In 2019, PiS repeated some of its election successes, receiving 43,59% with its United Right alliance, which translated to a 235 (out of 460) seat majority in the Sejm (Lipinski 2021), though losing its absolute majority in the Senate (48 out of 100 seats). Just a year later, president Duda, who formally laid down his party membership but remained closely aligned to PiS after becoming President, was re-elected. Hence, since the current period of PiS' rule is still ongoing, any reflections on PiS' record must necessarily remain preliminary.

While it is fair to say that the envisioned end state of the changes PiS continues to implement is not fully clear (cf. Sadurski 2018a: 176), the direction of those changes has been indicated by Jaroslaw Kaczynski himself, who suggested that he wanted "Budapest in Poland"

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[233] From 7.09 in 2015 below the 7-mark to 6.83 in 2016 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2016, 2017).
[234] Hence, I agree with Sadurski (2018a: 112) that speaking of Poland under PiS as a "illiberal democracy" is misguided, since it unduly presupposes "that illiberal backsliding maintains its essentially democratic character".

(Mudde 2019: chapter 7). Although there are considerable differences between the political realities of Hungary and Poland (see, e.g., Csehi and Zgut 2021: 63; Fesnic 2016; Karolewski and Benedikter 2016; Przybylski 2018: 61 ff.; Sadurski 2018a: 107), this process, as has been suggested by changes PiS has implemented since 2015, clearly leads away from liberal democracy.[235]

In light of this, it is not surprising that some observers have referred to the PiS government as "authoritarian" (Zuk 2017) or "[a]uthoritarian populist" (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016: 58) and described the situation in Poland since 2015 as "anti-constitutional populist backsliding" (Sadurski 2018a: 113), "democratic deconsolidation" (Sata and Karolewski 2020: 206), "authoritarian neoliberalism" (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa 2021: 562) or "growing political authoritarianism" (Zuk 2020: 287). And, indeed, Poland has come to occupy a high placing on the TMBRO Authoritarian Populism Index (Csehi and Zgut 2021: 64; TMBRO 2018).

In the previous chapter, the distinction between radical right and extreme right (see Ignazi 2003; Mudde 2007, 2019) with regards to populism has been discussed. To reiterate once more: As the bi-partite argument suggested, this distinction, when applied to populism, on the one hand misses[236] the intrinsic autocratic compatibility of populism and on the other ignores its multidimensional spectrum-like and composed character – two properties, which together open up an outlook on how populist agents can move on a road into autocracy without ideological

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[235] Against this background, it is also hardly a coincidence that PiS employs a narrative of "sovereign democracy" closely resembling that of Russia under Putin (Przybylski 2018: 59). Of course, the situation in Poland is a different one than the one in Hungary and both Poland and Hungary in many ways substantially differ from the mature dictatorship in Russia. Those differences not only concern the degree of authoritarianism, but also the characteristics of the networks of power the government draws from. For example, whereas in Russia those "networks […] cut across parties, firms and NGOs", the network is much more focused on the governing party in Poland (Sata and Karolewski 2020: 220).

[236] Though Mudde correctly observes that boundaries between party categories are turning blurred (cf. Mudde 2019: chapter 10.4).

breaks.[237] We can, of course, place populist regimes on different points on the scale of autocracy, with most actual instances being somewhat further away from common cases of authoritarianism. However, there is no simple conceptual threshold that demarcates the distinction between populists and autocrats as such. Not every populist *is* autocratic – and, for what it matters, not every autocrat is populist – but no degree of autocracy is incompatible with populism so that, if only becoming autocratic enough, populist regimes would have to be considered autocratic and cease to be rightly considered populists. The autocratic compatibility is embedded in the very ideational foundation of populism.

As this chapter has suggested, both, populism's compatibility with autocracy and its multidimensional spectrum-like and composed character, can also be found in PiS' governance of Poland. Comparing PiS' first to its second time in power, a set of aims emerges which the party consistently sought to bring about. This included: the concentration of power in its own hands, the expansion of its own competences, the subjugation of institutions, the undermining of checks on its own actions, the installation of allies in the media, the economy, the judiciary and other state apparatuses, the silencing of critics, as well as the re-orientation of the Polish polity along the lines of its own values at the expense of individual – and particularly minority – rights, including those of the LGBTQ community, immigrants, Muslims and women. This golden thread runs from PiS' references to the IVth Republic, over the comprehensive attack on the independence of the judiciary, to the establishment of "LGBT-free zones" and the party's turning towards the democratic process.

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[237] Once again it must be stressed that this does not suggest that all populist agents across the left-right political spectrum decide to walk on this path (and, if they do, walk the same distance): "[p]opulist policy making […] is not necessarily a fully divergent, alternative model leaning towards illiberal governance" (Bartha et al. 2020: 73, referring to Pappas 2014). Indeed, empirically, Vachudova (2021: 472) has observed that – at least within the EU –, "[w]hile time in government has transformed new left populist parties into more ordinary democratic parties, it does not appear to have had a similar tempering effect on established parties that have been revamped using ethnopopulism."

At the heart of this thread lies the willingness to take control, which, from the party's perspective, is justified with its political vision. As the argument from theory suggested, the structural similarity between populism and totalitarian ideologies is in parts due to their promise of salvation. Its realisation takes supreme priority and the populist frames oneself as the only instance capable to bring the vision about and as hence the only true legitimate political authority. In the context of PiS' discourse, the salvific vision is tied to the IVth Republic. It is with reference to this 'true' Polish state that certain agents are enemies of the Polish people, or that certain teachings, positions, religions or groups of people are not truly Polish, and that major political changes are justified. This core has always been present, even though the radicality (but not the comprehensiveness) of its factual consequences was less pronounced during PiS' first time in government and its full-ideological complement slightly changed over time.

In light of this, it is worth emphasising the reasons for the differences between those two periods. It cannot denied that parts of the differences stem from the ideological adjustments which went in hand with the absorption of personnel and the takeover of the voters of its former coalition partners Self Defence and League of Polish Families (the former being a strong advocate of left-wing economic policies and the latter being infamous for its ties to the extreme right). Indeed, this well illustrates a movement on different dimensions on the spectrum-like parameters sketched out in part II, changes of PiS' full ideology so to speak.

Moreover, PiS had a much smaller power basis (coalition government, no absolute majority, no experience) in its first time in government compared to the time from 2015 onwards. PiS second time in power can, all in all, be considered a continuation of 2005-2007, albeit with less obstacles. This enabled the party to make much more substantial changes and

leave a, presumably, more lasting impact on the Polish political, institutional, and social order.[238]

It is certainly true that populist governments in democracies, in contrast to "pure" autocratic regimes, are responsive "to majoritarian preferences" (Bartha et al. 2020: 71). However, there is no ground to hope that this responsiveness comes from a genuine care for what "the people" think or want, for instrumentalist considerations appear to be the driving force behind them. PiS cares for public support and opinion because it lacks the power to be able to rely on force alone (cf. Sadurski 2018a: 118). Consequently, it withdrew proposals at times when the public (and political) opposition became dangerously strong, but otherwise rigorously went on to realise its political project. Similarly, the party officially adhered to the legalism of its actions, yet, when it deemed legal boundaries too inconvenient and assumed that the backlash would remain tolerable for its retention of power, acted contrary to legal provisions as it saw fit.

Here, the direction taken by PiS must be contrasted with its the modus of its politics. Sadurski (2018a: 108) rightly pointed out that regarding PiS' actions "no single new law, decision or transformation seems sufficient to cry wolf". Instead, through a rapid succession of changes, liberal democracy is undermined step by step – the political system is radically transformed without a clear, identifiable "tipping point". For example, it is not that, say, laws concerning the operations of the judiciary are unheard of in themselves. The extraordinary number of changes PiS introduced in a brief time period, however – with occasional interference and the exertion of pressure on the judiciary –, all in all drastically diminished the independence of the courts (cf. Mazur and Zurek 2017: 29).

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[238] This increasingly prompts interventions by the EU (already in 2016, cf. Jaremba 2016: 263; Przybylski 2018: 52). These, however, have so far failed to change the course of events.

Note that this step-by-step process was not disorganised but strategically employed. That is, to effectively increase and consolidate its power, PiS applied lessons painfully learned from its first short and rather unsuccessful government. With this experience, PiS, after returning to power, first turned to the Constitutional Tribunal and the rest of the judiciary, and then put pressure on critics, established control over public media and independent institutions, filled influential positions with loyalists and enacted its plan one step after another.

Where this development will end only time will tell. Yet, it should be clear that for PiS no necessary transitional thresholds exist between a populism which by and large respects liberal democracy, and a populism which is turning increasingly autocratic. This exemplifies populism's essential compatibility with autocracy as well as its structural incompatibility with liberal democracy. Ideological constraints holding populist agents within their bounds cannot be expected to be derived from their populist commitments. Against this background, a populist Zeitgeist (Mudde 2004) must be viewed with special attention, and indeed concern.

9. Conclusion

9.1. Overview

This thesis employed a mixed-methods approach and, drawing from political theory and qualitative discourse analysis, constructed a bi-partite argument on the relationship between populism, as it exists in the EU today, and liberal democracy.

The first, theoretical part of the argument clarified the notion of populism used in the thesis and established the conceptional relationship between populism and liberal democracy. There it was argued that populism is inherently and necessarily incompatible with liberal democracy, because it qua its very nature is at odds with both of its conceptual pillars: a liberal version of the rule of law, and representative democracy informed by a specific notion of popular sovereignty. The second, empirical part of the argument supplemented this conceptual space of contestations with a map of the ideational commitments of populist parties. In doing so, the spectrum-like, composed multidimensionality of the thin ideology of populism was sketched out exploratively.

Jointly, both parts of the bi-partite argument gave grounds to the assessment that the tension between populism and liberal democracy cannot be redeemed, for populist agents can move all the way to autocracy without ideological breaks, whereas liberal democracy is fundamentally structured in a way designed to oppose and check autocracy. It was concluded that constraints on the factual challenges of populism must therefore be located externally – be it in a specific party's full ideology, or other factors leading to, for example, strategical-instrumental self-moderation.

9.2. The Argument from Theory

The first part of the bi-partite argument argued that populism necessarily conflicts with both pillars liberal democracy, and hence is a source of a comprehensive and irredeemable

contestation. Importantly, this means that populism is neither merely anti-liberal but essentially democratic, nor disfiguring yet overall compliant to democracy. Instead, it is also inherently and necessarily anti-democratic.

9.2.1. Populism and the (Liberal) Rule of Law

Populism's incompatibility with the rule of law in general, and the liberal rule of law in particular, follows from its commitment to the 'will of the people' as the supreme political authority. Since populism holds that the will of the people must not be restrained, the rule of law as a constraint applying equally to all – including agents wielding political power – appears at best redundant and at worst an illegitimate obstacle to the realisation of the will of the people. It is redundant in cases where the law aligns with the will of the people, and it is an illegitimate obstacle where its provisions are contrary to it.

In this context, I emphasised that populism's rejection of the rule of law at its core also affects the protection of equal individual rights that the rule of law commonly provides. This is the case because such rights would, again, reduce the scope of political authority and thus put side-constraints on the will of the people, which in consequence are considered illegitimate from the populist perspective. On the one hand, because populism conceives of the people in its entirety as the relevant rights-holding instance, and not the individuals which are a part thereof, its constituents are not taken to possess genuine rights. On the other hand, individuals which are not part of the people lack the grounds to be provided rights to begin with. This demonstrates populism's essentially collectivistic nature.

9.2.2. Populism and Democracy

In turn, populism is anti-democratic because populists instrumentalise the inevitably constructed nature of the people to categorically delegitimise others, to secure power, and to render themselves unreachable by any control mechanisms, including electoral control. In sum,

this results in populists being licensed to rule in an unrestrained manner, with themselves being the only authority deciding on their competences.

The populace, as a sum of heterogenous individuals, does not possess a single will, which could be derived, say, through the aggregation of individual wills. For this reason, liberal democracies opt for delegating practical political authority to representatives, which act on the people's stead, with only constitutional sovereignty remaining with the people. Populism diverges from this, for it claims to seek to infer and subsequently bring about the actual will of the people *directly* – it thus rejects representation in the democratic process. Populism's conflict with the democratic pillar, however, does not end with contesting democracy's representative configurations. Even though populists may (and often do) demand the use of more direct-democratic instruments when they are in opposition and do not hold decisive political power, they may reign with much disregard for the matters of the real existing people when in power. References to the will of a relevant but "silent" majority always remain available. Hence, the use of populism's understanding of the people and the appertaining notion of (popular) sovereignty do not require populists to follow any actual democratic processes whatsoever in practice.

9.2.3. The Nature of the Contestation

I completed the first part of the bi-partite argument by elucidating the scale and scope of the contestations that populism's conflict with both pillars of liberal democracy entails. Drawing from the work of Voegelin, I first established populism's structural similarity to totalitarian ideologies and then emphasised the comprehensive reach of populism beyond the political.

9.3. The Argument from the Empirical Investigation

Whereas the argument from theory delineated the conceptual brackets in which populism operates in relation to liberal democracy, the second part of the bi-partite argument was

comprised of a qualitative content analysis seeking to exploratively characterise populism as it nowadays exists in populist parties of EU member states.

The cases for the empirical investigation were selected based on the ideational minimal definition which understood populism as an attitude which is anti-elitist and people-centrist. Relying on an approach which aimed to identify argumentative structures in political positionings, the textual grounds for the analysis were constituted by speeches held by party leaders at central party events on the national level between 2015 and 2019.

9.3.1. Results

The intra-sample comparison demonstrated that, in both samples, the discourses of the selected parties ranged across the left-right political spectrum. Subsequently, both assumed different value standpoints as well as identified, on the basis thereof, different issues as problematic and called for different calls of actions. This was not surprising for the samples have specifically been composed in a way so that they include parties of different party families. Moreover, it was not surprising that the attitude towards government policies and the state of affairs brought about thereby differed between parties which were in government and parties which were in opposition (at the time referred to in the speeches).

The more interesting results were found in the inter-sample comparison. That is, the samples yielded quite different results when it came to discursive practices on the one hand, and the notions of the people the parties employed the other.

Whereas parties in the main sample in some cases strongly diverged from the people as the citizenry and included elements of class (predominantly on the left) and nation (predominantly on the right) in their notion thereof, the control sample tended to refer to the people as the citizenry. Visualising the parties' notions of the people on a graph with the notion equalling citizenry lying in the origin of coordinates and increasingly including elements of class and nation with increasing x- and y-values, it was found that the parties of the control

sample compose a cluster close to the origin of coordinates whereas the main sample parties (with the exception of Citizens) are dispersed further away.

Here, it emerged that, despite this grouping, notions competing to that of citizenry were not employed in a disjunct fashion. Rather, they often emerged in different combinations, to different degrees, in different ways and in different areas of evocation. This was best seen in the cases of the Law and Justice (PiS) party in Poland, the Citizens party in Spain and the We Ourselves (Sinn Féin) party in Ireland, where notions of the people as nation, as class and as citizenry most clearly coexisted in discourse.

It was also exemplified by reviewing those cases how the character of the composed notion can differ across different areas of evocation. That is, whereas the relevant criteria for which properties of the people to draw from in the case of We Ourselves matched the demarcation line between domestic and foreign policy (so that in the national discourse the party more strongly relied on class and in the foreign policy discourse it also included elements of nation), in the case of Citizens the notion was enriched with class elements when referring to some economic polices but otherwise remained with the citizenry, and in the case of Law and Justice both notions are present throughout as consequences of one and the same value, namely the comprehensive equality between all Poles.

While in the control sample, too, some parties more than others tended towards class or nation, the distance of both cohorts in this regard was substantial. This could also be seen by diverging discursive practices in both samples. Whereas parties of the control sample, even in their critique of their political opponents, mostly stuck to discussing technicalities, parties of the main sample tended to employ a comprehensive critique that, in good approximation, blamed their competitors for all major issues that the parties identified.

Here, most parties of the main sample identified either neoliberalism (on the left) or immigration and appertaining cultural shifts (on the right) as the root issues to which many

important issues are related and which have been propelled by their political competitors with support of established elites in the media, the economy or wider society. Consequently, they tend to regard themselves as the only party which honestly and competently acts in the interests of the people by addressing these issues. This trope was absent from the discourse of the control sample parties. Laudations of their own competences and blaming the political actions of others are employed, but never in the same manner (root issue, central responsibility, exclusive claim to legitimate agency).

Appertaining to the difference of the mode of critique were differences regarding the attitude to the media between the parties of both samples. That is, unlike the control sample parties, the parties of the main sample accused the media of a bias against them. According to the narrative thus employed, established media is complicit with the political mainstream and subsequently tries to prevent the main sample party from succeeding, as this would give way to a competent political agent truly dedicated to curbing the root issue and promoting the people's interests.

9.3.2. Contestations to Liberal Democracy

Analogous to the argument from theory, those characteristic traits of populist parties in the EU were put into relation to liberal democracy in order to elucidate the presence and nature of eventual conflicts.

Here, too, contestations to both pillars of liberal democracy were observed. Regarding the former, it emerged that the more populist parties of the main sample, in light of their rather exclusionary notions of the people, noticeably contest the equal provision of rights for all, and hence conflict with the rule of law which attempts to enshrine precisely that. The same could not – to a comparable degree – be observed for the overall less populist parties of the control sample.

Regarding the latter, common discursive practices of the more populist main sample parties, which were in good approximation absent from the control sample, undermined the spirit of some central elements of democracy. Reoccurring features thereof were, for example, that other political agents are illegitimate and collude against the respective populist party, or that the established mainstream media is biased against the respective party and exhibits efforts to prevent its ascension to power.

As to the nature of both kinds of contestations identified in the empirical investigation, it must be emphasised that they, corresponding to the spectrum-like, multidimensional and composed character of populism, emerge on a spectrum across both samples, and not as monolithic properties disjunctively separating both samples with the properties being present in one but not in the other sample. That said, with regards to the degree of the contestations to liberal democracy observed in the empirical investigation, all party discourses were located within the constraints of liberal democracy. Although parties in the main sample, sometimes more and sometimes less, undermined central principles thereof, they did not openly suggest the need to (comprehensively) break away from the established political system at large.

9.4. Bringing the Case Together: The Bi-Partite Argument

Having established the two components of the bi-partite argument, both parts were brought together in a complementary fashion. First, the differences and similarities regarding the ideational contestations to liberal democracy posed by populism (conceptually vs. practically in the contemporary EU) were identified, before inquiring about the relationship of both analyses to each other. In short, both parts supplemented each other as they brought to light different ideational aspects of populism, thus jointly drawing a comprehensive picture of its comprehensive anti-liberal-democratic nature.

9.4.1. Similarities and Differences of Both Parts of the Argument

Both parts concluded that populism conflicts with both pillars of liberal democracy. While in the case of the argument from theory this was established by analysing the logic inherent in populism's understanding of the people, their will, and the elite, in the case of the argument from the empirical investigation it was inferred from the discourse of populist party leaders.

The differences between both analyses most importantly concern aspects of scale and scope. According to the argument from theory, populism is inherently at odds with liberal democracy, with no threshold within populism itself existing to how far populists may depart from liberal democracy into autocratic territory. Moreover, the scope of the claims of populism is comprehensive in the sense that there is no internal threshold designating a stop of its reach, neither regarding what areas of a polity it may affect nor regarding how much it can interfere with the lives of individuals.

In contrast, the contestations exploratively identified during the empirical investigation were much narrower in both scale and scope. They were narrower in scale, because parties, operating within the institutional constraints of (to varying extent) functioning democracies, expressed positionings which did not directly argue for abandoning the political system. And they were narrower in scope in the sense that the reach of claims directed by populist party leaders was limited to particular areas.

9.4.2. The Two Parts of the Argument Supplementing Each Other

What do the similarities and differences between the results of both parts of the argument imply for the overarching narrative spanned by the bi-partite argument? As has been laid out, the relationship between both parts of the argument emerges from their different foci in conjuncture with different methodological approaches. It is in this light that both parts are supplementary in nature and jointly allow us to draw a more substantive, albeit not exhaustive, picture on the ideational dimension of the contestations to liberal democracy posed by

246

contemporary populism in the EU. In other words, the combined argument allowed us to point to the threat the emergence of populism poses to liberal democracy, while simultaneously appreciating populism's everchanging character.

Whereas the argument from theory focussed on the conceptual relationship between populism and liberal democracy, the argument from the empirical investigation scrutinised political discourse. In consequence, the results of the former can be considered a conceptual frame, laying out general aspects of the relationship as well as the potential configuration between the two notions. The results of the latter, in contrast, constitute a glimpse into the configurations currently existing in the EU as well as patterns between them.

From this, it emerges how both part's conclusions fit together. The first part's conclusion pointed out the conceptual incompatibility of populism with liberal democracy in light of populism's structural similarity to totalitarian ideologies. The second part, in turn, emphasised the spectrum-like, composed and multidimensional character of populism. While from the former emerges the totality of the possible, the latter informs about the actual.

Populism itself, as a thin-centred ideology without considering its attachment to eventual full ideologies and abstracting from factors external to the ideological dimension (e.g., strategical considerations, institutional constraints), is necessarily incompatible with and fundamentally conflicts with both pillars of liberal democracy. It is structurally similar to totalitarian ideologies and knows no internal boundaries to what populists, with reference to their commitment of realising the popular will, may do, either in scope or in scale. This sets the outer boundaries to how far populism, and with it populists, can depart from liberal democracy without suffering ideological breaks.

In practice, when assessing real-existing agents, populism cannot be abstracted from its full host ideology as well as from ideationally external factors. Hence, the ideological distance of populist agents to values and principles enshrined in liberal democracy is not unlimited but

constrained. Nonetheless, in practice, populist agents are often clearly distinguishable from others, despite the scales between them being gradual rather than ordinal.

9.4.3. The Bi-Partite Argument Exemplified: The Polish Case

The bi-partite argument, focussing on the conception of populism and the ideas expressed in populist discourse, has entirely operated within the realm of ideas. Therefore, to increase its argumentative force as a characterisation generally applying to contemporary populism in the EU and at the same time to (exemplarily) provide a lens for the analysis of populist action, I reviewed a prominent case of populism in government. For this purpose, Poland under the rule of the Law and Justice (PiS) party was selected. In the analysis, the entrenchment of institutions and practices of liberal democracy in the face of ideological adjustments and strategical considerations has received specific attention.

Effectively, PiS substantially undermined institutions and principles of liberal democracy while in government, including the separation of powers and checks and balances (and the freedom of the judiciary in particular), the freedom of the press as well as of civic organisations, and attempted to purge the public sphere from its competitors and critics while staffing offices with party loyalists. Such elements were present during both of its times in government. I emphasised that PiS pursued those developments progressively and systematically, continuously working at widening its competences and removing potential threats to its rule.

Reviewing the case equipped with the bi-partite argument, it was stressed how the party, ideologically gravitating around the so-called "IVth Republic", increasingly moved from less to more autocratic, thus further and further breaking away from both pillars of liberal democracy. In the narrative of the IVth Republic also emerged the idea of salvation attested to populism with reference to Voegelin's analysis of totalitarianism, as well as the comprehensive reach of the populist party as the only interpreter of this salvific vision.

9.5. Outlook

The bi-partite approached the relationship between populism and liberal democracy through the realm of ideas. It led to the conclusion that inherent to populism is a set of ideas which are necessarily incompatible with liberal democracy and potentially tend towards autocracy. How this may play out in practice was exemplified by reviewing the actions of PiS in Poland, as a prominent case of a populist party in government. In the remainder of this conclusion chapter, it is left to inquire about the wider implications of the thesis and what forms subsequent research may take.

Let us first focus on the implications of the bi-partite argument. As I am convinced, the analysis' main implication, beyond its contribution to the elucidation of the conceptual relationship of populism to liberal democracy, emerges from its emphasis on the spectrum-like, composed and multi-dimensional quality of populism. Against the background of the so-called populist zeitgeist, i.e. the observation that non-populist parties increasingly adopt populist discourse, attested to the European political arena, amongst others, by Cas Mudde (2004) more than a decade ago, this suggests that the populist zeitgeist may not be mostly[239] limited to mere rhetoric. Instead, we should be attentive to the possibility that those, at the surface, only rhetorical manoeuvres may correspond with ideational transitions from lesser to stronger populist attitudes within previously (in good approximation) non-populist parties.

This thesis' analysis has thus far remained descriptive in the sense that it did not employ a normative analysis on the virtues and vices of populism. If the above is true, however, then from the perspective of proponents of liberal democracy – including those in academia, political institutions, and wider civil society – the populist zeitgeist warrants more profound worries, since it may mean that populist ideas infiltrate the political mainstream and may serve to severely undermine liberal democracy in turn.

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[239] According to Mudde, while some mainstream parties "call for populist amendments to the liberal democratic system", most of them are confined to "populist *rhetoric*" (Mudde 2004: 562, emphasis in the original).

This, of course, does not imply that ideas are directly translated into actions so that affected parties, be it immediately or in the long run, will become autocratic, and seek the eradication of liberal democracy. After all, they, to a degree at least, remain constrained by, amongst other things, the institutions of their liberal-democratic host states as well as by the full ideologies, to which they are aligned, and which may conflict with and hence provide outer boundaries to increasingly pronounced populist (or autocratic) attitudes.

It is, however, the trajectory that matters here, especially since neither full ideologies nor institutional constraints are unalterable facts but themselves subject to potential change. Hence, if the analysis holds true, then it is warranted paying closer attention to changes of ideas expressed in party discourse, and specifically to rising populist attitudes, for they may provide ideational foundations to and in this sense foreshadow actual contestations of liberal-democratic institutions. A prolonged populist zeitgeist would mean the diffusion of this danger from the political periphery, such as the radical right or left or protest parties, to the political centre occupied by well-established, non-populist parties.

The analysis realised in course of the bi-partite argument made no claims to exhaustiveness and, particularly regarding the argument from the empirical investigation, emphasised its explorative nature. How might future work continue or otherwise fruitfully contribute to the analytical frame proposed? Beside extending the characterisation of ideas expressed in populist discourse with regards to other states, regions, parties, and parts of discourse, I also believe that there is merit in further scrutinising the relationship between those ideas and populist action. In this regard, future research could, for example, focus on how populist ideas are translated into action and how or when ideological adjustments imply changes in factual politics (or vice versa). Beyond the policies proposed or enacted by parties, this may, for example, also include operational changes in institutions or changes in legal practice. Focus may also be put on the different dimensions of populism, especially on attaining

a better understanding of the areas across which potentially different notions of the people, elite, etc. are evoked.

In addition, future research could continue to engage with the "demand" side of the equation, i.e., with voters and populist attitudes within the general population. In particular, it could be inquired how ideational adjustments of populist parties affect voters' choice and, asking if the populist zeitgeist is limited to parties or has wider societal-political purview, how it affects the worldviews or discursive practices of voters.

After establishing both parts of the bi-partite argument, the analysis was brought into first contact with other systematisations of populism. There, I stressed that the results should not be understood as an attempt to undermine the validity of other work, but rather draw the focus towards certain aspects, which thus far have not received due attention. Whereas, at some points, the bi-partite argument may directly conflict with other analyses, in general I view it as a supplement drawing attention to underappreciated or thus far unperceived aspects of populism, bridging the research gap between pure conceptual analyses on the general level and non-ideational case studies. In some cases, the analysis' results, if validated through further work, may necessitate the readjustment of some existing characterisations. In others, a fruitful synthesis, in one or both directions, may crystallise.

We should also be reminded that the analytical framework adopted in this thesis was based on the ideational approach. As emphasised earlier, ideational approaches to populism are widely spread but not universally accepted by scholars in the field. Different approaches exist. While those are not necessarily mutually exclusive, such that different characterisations could hold true at the same time, they are nonetheless competing. In light of this, I believe that the results yielded in this thesis could also be brought in more detailed relation to analyses based on other approaches to populism. Given that the different approaches gravitate around different aspects of populism, they could benefit from each other, and hence from this analysis.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Dictionary of Anti-Elitist Vocabulary

Bulgarian	Croatian	Czech	Danish	Dutch	English	Estonian	Finnish	French	Greek
елит*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*	eliit*	eliit*	elit*	ελίτ*
консенсус*	konsenz*	konsens*	konsensus*	consensus*	consensus*	eliid*	konsensus	consens*	ομοφωνία*
недемократич*	nedemokratsk*	nedemokrati*	udemokratisk*	ondemocratisch*	undemocratic*	elit*	epädemokraatt*	antidemocratique*	αντιδημοκρατ*
референдум*	referendum*	referend*	folkeafstemning*	ondemokratisch*	referend*	konsensus*	kansanäänesty*	referend*	δημοψήφισ*
корумпиран*	korumpiran*	korupc*	korrupt*	referend*	corrupt*	üksmeel*	korrupt*	corrupt*	διαφθορ*
корупция*	korupcij*	zkorump*	propagand*	corrupt*	propagand*	antidemokraatlik*	propagand*	corromp*	διεφθαρ*
пропаганд*	političar*	propagand*	politiker*	propagand*	politici*	rahvahääletus*	poliitikot*	propagand*	προπαγάνδ*
политиц*	obman*	politic*	bedrag*	politici*	*deceit*	referendum*	poliitikko*	politici*	πολιτικό*
измам*	prevar*	podvod*	snyd*	*bedrog*	*deceiv*	politiku*	pet*	tromp*	*απατ*
заблуждав*	izdaj*	podvád*	forræd*	*bedrieg*	*betray*	pettus*	huiput*	fraud*	πρόδ*
заблуд*	sram*	zrad*	forråd*	*verraa*	shame*	peta*	huijau*	trahi*	*τρέπο*
предат*	skandal*	hanb*	skam*	*verrad*	scandal*	petm*	häpe*	honte*	ντροπ*
срам*	istin*	*styd*	skandal*	waarheid*	truth*	*reet*	häve*	scandal*	ντρέπ*
скандал*	nepošten*	skandál*	sand*	oneerlijk*	dishonest*	reed*	skandaal*	verite*	σκανδαλ*
истина*		pravd*	uærlig*			häbi*	totuu*	malhonnete*	αλήθει*
нечест*		nečest*				skandaal*	epäreil*		άδικ*
непочтеност*		nepoctiv*				tõe*	epärehell*		ανέντιμο*
						tõde*			ανέντιμ*
						ebaaus*			ανειλικρίν*

German	Hungarian	Irish	Italian	Latvian	Lithuanian	Maltesian	Polish	Portuguese	Romanian
elit*	elit*	mionlach*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*	elit*
konsens*	konszenzus	comhthoil*	consens*	vienprātība*	sutarim*	kunsens*	konsensus*	consens*	consens*
undemokratisch*	antidemkrat*	daonlathach*	antidemocratic*	nedemokrātisk*	nedemokratiš*	mhux demokratiku	niedemokrat*	antidemocrát*	nedemocrat*
referend*	népszavaz*	reifr*	referend*	referendum*	referendum*	antidemokra*	referend*	referend*	referend*
korrupt*	korrup*	éilli*	corrot*	korump*	korup*	referend*	*korump*	corrup*	corupt*
propagand*	propagand*	truaillithe*	propagand*	korup*	korump*	korott	korup*	propagand*	propagand*
politiker*	politikus*	bolscaireacht*	politici*	propagand*	propagand*	korruzz*	propagand*	politicos*	politicien*
täusch*	becsap*	polaiteoir*	ingann*	politiķi*	politikai*	propagand*	politycy*	engan*	înşela*
betrüg*	árulás*	mealladh*	tradi*	maldinā*	politikas*	politiku*	politykow*	traír*	fraud*
betrug*	elárul*	meabhlaí*	vergogn*	krāp*	politikų*	politiċi*	oszus*	traiç*	trăda*
verrat	*szégye*	feall*	scandal*	nodev*	apgau*	quarrieq*	oszuk*	*vergon*	ruşin*
scham*	botrány*	náire*	verita*	kaun*	išduo*	*quarr*	zdrad*	scandal*	scandal*
schäm*	igazság*	scannal*	disonest*	skandal*	išdav*	*tradi*	wstyd*	verdade*	adevăr*
skandal*	tisztességtelen*	fírinne*		paties*	gėd*	*istħi*	skandal*	desonest*	sincer*
wahrheit*		éagó*		negodīg*	skandal*	skand*	prawd*		necinst*
unfair*		mímhacánta*			tiesa*	verit*	nieuczciw*		
unehrlich*					teisin*	diżonest*			
					nesąžining*				

Slovakian	Slovenian	Spanish	Swedish
elit*	elit*	élit*	elit*
konsenz*	konsenz*	consens*	konsens*
nedemokrat*	undemokrat*	no democrát*	odemokrat*
referend*	referend*	referénd*	folkomröstning*
korump	korup*	corrup*	korrupt*
korup*	pokvar*	propagand*	propagand*
propagand*	propagand*	políticos*	politiker*
politici*	politiki*	engañ*	lura*
politikov*	politikov*	traicion*	bedräg*
oklama*	prevar*	*vergonz*	förråd*
zrad*	izdat*	*scándal*	skam*
hanb*	izdaj*	veraz*	skäm*
škandál*	izdal*	verdad*	skandal*
pravd*	sram*	deshonest*	sanning*
nepoctiv*	škandal*		oärlig*
	resnic*		
	nepošten*		

Appendix 2: Shares of Anti-Elitist Vocabulary in Manifestos

Country	Count	Total Words	Share	Share/Median	Share/Average	Share/M adjusted	Share/A adjusted	Rating
Belgium (2019)								
Flemish Interest	35	46461	0,000753	4,005319149	3,067209776	4,005319149	3,067209776	3
Christian Democratic and Flemish	7	97048	0,000072	0,382978723	0,293279022	0,382978723	0,293279022	0
Green!	9	49485	0,000182	0,968085106	0,741344196	0,968085106	0,741344196	1
New Flemish Alliance (N-VA)	12	54379	0,000221	1,175531915	0,900203666	1,175531915	0,900203666	1
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	1	35079	0,000029	0,154255319	0,118126273	0,154255319	0,118126273	0
Socialist Party Different	11	75169	0,000146	0,776595745	0,594704684	0,776595745	0,594704684	1
Workers' Party of Belgium	54	128993	0,000419	2,228723404	1,706720978	2,228723404	1,706720978	3
Ecolo	16	62249	0,000257	1,367021277	1,046843177	1,367021277	1,046843177	2
Reformist Movement	5	25911	0,000193	1,026595745	0,786150713	1,026595745	0,786150713	1
Socialist Party (PS)	61	333081	0,000183	0,973404255	0,745417515	0,973404255	0,745417515	1
France								
Democratic Movement	3	10196	0,000294	0,608066184	0,670977558	0,482758621	0,559147965	0
Indomitable France	14	23004	0,000609	1,259565667	1,389882084	1	1,15823507	1
National Front	4	6135	0,000651	1,346432265	1,485736021	1,068965517	1,238113351	1
Republic Onwards!	5	6971	0,000717	1,482936918	1,636363636	1,177339901	1,363636364	1
Socialist Party	0	1561	0	0	0			
The Republicans	2	5589	0,000358	0,740434333	0,8170407	0,740434333	0,68086725	1
Germany								
Alliance 90 Greens	26	68853	0,000378	1,367088608	1,451984635	1,367088608	1,451984635	2
Alternative for Germany	6	18343	0,000327	1,182640145	1,256081946	1,182640145	1,256081946	2
CDU-CSU	5	22125	0,000226	0,817359855	0,868117798	0,817359855	0,868117798	1
Free Democratic Party	5	38547	0,00013	0,470162749	0,499359795	0,470162749	0,499359795	0
Social Democratic Party of Germany	4	41974	0,000095	0,34358047	0,364916773	0,34358047	0,364916773	0

The Left	26	64087	0,000406	1,46835443	1,559539052	1,46835443	1,559539052	2
Denmark				0,000183143	Median=0, hence no score			
Conservative People's Party	1	1681	0,000595	-	3,248829953			
Danish People's Party	0	618	0	-	0			
Danish Social-Liberal Party	0	512	0	-	0			
Liberals	0	1640	0	-	0			
Red-Green Unity List	1	1821	0,000549	-	2,997659906			
Social Democratic Party	1	7256	0,000138	-	0,75351014	0	0	
Socialist People's Party	0	3445	0	-	0			
Estonia								
Conservative People's Party of Estonia	7	6265	0,001117	1,507422402	1,529299014	1,507422402	1,529299014	3
Estonian Center Party	8	9197	0,00087	1,174089069	1,191128149	1,174089069	1,191128149	2
Estonian Reform Party	8	17054	0,000469	0,632928475	0,64211391	0,632928475	0,64211391	1
Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	17	22942	0,000741	1	1,014512596	1	1,014512596	2
Social Democratic Party	6	13192	0,000455	0,614035088	0,622946331	0,614035088	0,622946331	1
Finland			0,0001835					
Finnish Centre	2	5077	0,000393	2,153424658	2,141689373	1,201834862	1,427792916	2
Finnish Social Democrats	2	37296	0,000054	0,295890411	0,294277929	0,165137615	0,196185286	0
Green Union	0	4068	0	0	0			
Left Wing Alliance	2	6424	0,000311	1,704109589	1,694822888	0,951070336	1,129881926	1
National Coalition	0	2838	0	0	0			
True Finns	12	34973	0,000343	1,879452055	1,869209809	1,048929664	1,246139873	2
Ireland (2016)								
Family of the Irish	14	63805	0,000219	0,518343195	0,531553398	0,518343195	0,531553398	1
Labour Party	24	38319	0,000626	1,481656805	1,519417476	1,481656805	1,519417476	2
Soldiers of destiny	5	44714	0,000112	0,265088757	0,27184466	0,265088757	0,337028539	0
We Ourselves	21	30373	0,000691	1,635502959	1,677184466	1,635502959	1,677184466	3

United Kingdom (2019)								
Conservative Party	17	22160	0,000767	0,874074074	0,882116159	0,874074074	0,882116159	1
Labour Party	28	28333	0,000988	1,125925926	1,136285221	1,125925926	1,136285221	2
Liberal Democratcs	13	29816	0,000436	0,496866097	0,501437608	0,496866097	0,501437608	0
Scottish National Party	31	24085	0,001287	1,466666667	1,480161012	1,466666667	1,480161012	2
Italy (2018)								
Democratic Party	9	28833	0,000312	0,78	0,857142857	0,639344262	0,642857143	1
Five Star Movement	128	195041	0,000656	1,64	1,802197802	1,344262295	1,351648352	2
Go Italy	0	1416	0	0	0			
League	19	38929	0,000488	1,22	1,340659341	1	1,005494505	2
Croatia (2016)								
Bridge of Independent Lists	29	38018	0,000762	1,215311005	0,686795854	1,215311005	0,686795854	1
Croatian Democratic Union	23	46709	0,000492	0,784688995	0,443442992	0,784688995	0,443442992	0
Human Shield	75	24929	0,003009	4,799043062	2,712032447	4,799043062	2,712032447	3
People's Coalition	7	40027	0,000175	0,279106858	0,157728707	0,279106858	0,157728707	0
Latvia (2018)			0,002359286					
Development/For!	4	789	0,00507	1,855783309	2,148955495			
Green's and Farmers' Union	1	618	0,001618	0,592240117	0,685800787			
National Alliance	2	668	0,002994	1,095900439	1,269028156			
New Conservative Party	2	732	0,002732	1	1,157977596			
Social Democratic Party (Harmony)	0	655	0	0	0			
Unity	1	756	0,001323	0,484260615	0,560762943			
Who owns the state?	2	720	0,002778	1,016837482	1,177475023			
Lithuania (2016)								
Election Action of Lithuania's Poles	24	5485	0,004376	1,349992288	1,441924323	1,349992288	1,441924323	2
Homeland Union	264	90779	0,002908	0,897115533	0,95820748	0,897115533	0,95820748	1
Liberal Movement	56	35987	0,001556	0,48002468	0,512713493	0,48002468	0,512713493	0
Lithuanian Peasant and Gree Union	181	47606	0,003802	1,172913774	1,252787083	1,172913774	1,252787083	2

Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	26	7273	0,003575	1,102884467	1,177988907	1,102884467	1,177988907	2
Order and Justice	24	12051	0,001992	0,61453031	0,656378714	0,61453031	0,656378714	1
Luxembourg (2013)								
Alternative Democratic Reform Party	36	74949	0,00048	2,162162162	1,418918919	2,162162162	1,418918919	2
Democratic Party	0	64907	0	0	0	0	0	
Pirate Party Luxembourg	21	22550	0,000931	4,193693694	2,752111486	4,193693694	2,752111486	3
Socialist Workers' Party of Luxembourg	3	24627	0,000122	0,54954955	0,360641892	0,54954955	0,360641892	0
The Greens	6	30491	0,000197	0,887387387	0,582347973	0,887387387	0,582347973	1
Christian Social People's Party	9	21627	0,000416	1,873873874	1,22972973	1,873873874	1,22972973	2
The Left	2	9003	0,000222	1	0,65625	1	0,65625	1
Austria (2017)								
Austrian Freedom Party	25	8469	0,002952	6,817551963	3,174876317	6,143600416	2,800759013	3
Austrian People's Party	18	59355	0,000303	0,699769053	0,325876533	0,630593132	0,287476281	0
Ausctrian Social Demoratic Party	19	52354	0,000363	0,838337182	0,390406539	0,755463059	0,344402277	0
The Greens	12	20053	0,000598	1,381062356	0,643149064	1,244536941	0,567362429	1
The New Austria and Liberal Forum	1	2310	0,000433	1	0,465691547			
Netherlands (2017)								
Christian Democratic Appeal	9	29006	0,00031	0,731132075	0,324219334	0,844686649	0,663811563	1
Democrats'66	31	73190	0,000424	1	0,443448379	1,155313351	0,907922912	1
Green Party	8	18011	0,000444	1,047169811	0,464365755	1,209809264	0,950749465	1
Labour Party	4	40111	0,0001	0,235849057	0,104586882	0,272479564	0,214132762	0
Party of Freedom	1	257	0,003891	9,176886792	4,069475571			
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	9	48271	0,000186	0,438679245	0,1945316	0,506811989	0,398286938	0
Socialist Party	21	15700	0,001338	3,155660377	1,399372479	3,645776567	2,86509636	3
Malta								

Poland (2017)							
Civic Platform	8	20466	0,000391	0,658249158	0,619405941	0,658249158	0,619405941	1
Law and Justice	88	65825	0,001337	2,250841751	2,118019802	2,250841751	2,118019802	3
Polish People's Party	0	5922	0	0	0	0	0	0
United Left	41	51425	0,000797	1,341750842	1,262574257	1,341750842	1,262574257	2
Portugal (2015)							
The Greens	9	6928	0,001299	1,503472222	1,506960557	1,503472222	1,506960557	3
Left Bloc	27	27227	0,000992	1,148148148	1,150812065	1,148148148	1,150812065	2
Portuguese Communist Party	32	37055	0,000864	1	1,002320186	1	1,002320186	2
Social Democratic Party	9	7542	0,000797	0,922453704	0,924593968	0,922453704	0,924593968	1
Socialist Party	28	78127	0,000358	0,414351852	0,415313225	0,414351852	0,415313225	0
Romania (2016)			0,000318667	Median=0, hence no score			
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats	0	525	0	-	0		
Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania	0	1194	0	-	0		
National Liberal Party	0	3858	0	-	0		
People's Movement Party	8	6324	0,001265	-	3,969665272	1,323221757	1,323221757	2
Save Romania Union	7	10820	0,000647	-	2,030334728	0,676778243	0,676778243	1
Social Democratic Union	0	12122	0	-	0		
Slovakia (2016)							
Bridge	35	49708	0,000704	0,849728425	0,612840044	0,847172082	0,543209877	1
Direction-Social Democracy	1	1049	0,000953	1,150271575	0,829597388		
Freedom and Solidarity	32	33400	0,000958	1,156306578	0,833949946	1,152827918	0,739197531	1
Kotleba	1	2168	0,000461	0,556427278	0,401305767		
Network	9	14472	0,000622	0,750754375	0,541458107	0,748495788	0,479938272	0
Ordinary People and Independent Personalities	156	62259	0,002506	3,024743512	2,181501632	3,015643803	1,933641975	3
Slovak National Party	4	6281	0,000637	0,768859384	0,554515778	0,76654633	0,491512346	0

We Are Family	17	7236	0,002349	2,835244418	2,044831338	2,826714801	1,8125	3
Slovenia (2018)								
List of Marjan Sarec	5	2008	0,00249	2,895348837	2,181203854			
Modern Centre Party	1	1927	0,000519	0,603488372	0,454636466			
New Slovenian Christian People's Party	53	56456	0,000939	1,091860465	0,822550369	1,043913285	0,80342246	1
Party of Alenka Bratusek	1	3261	0,000307	0,356976744	0,268927543			
Slovenian Democratic Party	6	6973	0,00086	1	0,753347516	0,956086715	0,735828877	1
Social Democratic Party	24	29735	0,000807	0,938372093	0,706920285	0,897165092	0,690481283	1
The Left	30	14501	0,002069	2,405813953	1,812413966	2,300166759	1,77026738	3
Spain (2019)								
Citizens	39	15960	0,002444	2,671038251	1,969379533	2,671038251	1,969379533	3
People's Party	10	29920	0,000334	0,365027322	0,269137792	0,365027322	0,269137792	0
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	60	67824	0,000885	0,967213115	0,713134569	0,967213115	0,713134569	1
Voice	9	5533	0,001627	1,778142077	1,311039484	1,778142077	1,311039484	2
We can	29	31689	0,000915	1	0,737308622	1	0,737308622	1
Sweden (2018)								
Centre Party	0	6426	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christian Democrats	0	2025	0	0	0			
Left Party	12	10231	0,001173	8,625	3,056962025	4,485659656	2,620253165	3
Liberals	1	8528	0,000117	0,860294118	0,304914371	0,447418738	0,261355175	0
Moderate Coalition Party	2	14738	0,000136	1	0,35443038	0,520076482	0,303797468	0
Social Democrats	2	5165	0,000387	2,845588235	1,008562919	1,479923518	0,864482502	1
Sweden Democrats	6	6872	0,000873	6,419117647	2,275130305	3,338432122	1,95011169	3
Czech Republic (2017)			0,001854333					
ANO 2011	11	17253	0,000638	0,377962085	0,344058961	0,384337349	0,474803317	0
Christian and Democratic Union - Czech People's Party	9	5333	0,001688	1	0,910300198	1,01686747	1,256219434	2
Civic Democratic Party	2	5025	0,000398	0,235781991	0,214632393	0,239759036	0,296193919	0
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	15	4815	0,003115	1,845379147	1,679849002			

Party								
Czech Pirate Party	12	5388	0,002227	1,319312796	1,200970699	1,341566265	1,657346375	2
Czech Social Democratic Party	2	8818	0,000227	0,134478673	0,122415963	0,136746988	0,168934723	0
Freedom and Direct Democracy	11	2639	0,004168	2,469194313	2,247708071			
Mayors and Independents	27	16262	0,00166	0,983412322	0,895200431	1	1,235381671	2
TOP 09	41	15963	0,002568	1,521327014	1,384864282	1,546987952	1,911120561	3
Hungary (2014)			0,0020834					
Democratic Coalition	41	26959	0,001521	1	0,730056638	0,680689192	0,635603845	1
Fidesz-KDNP	3	3550	0,000845	0,555555556	0,405587021			
Hungarian Socialist Party	66	17616	0,003747	2,463510848	1,798502448	1,676885209	1,565816966	3
Movement for a Better Hungary	81	59755	0,001356	0,891518738	0,650859173	0,606847169	0,566652737	1
Politics Can Be Different	84	28498	0,002948	1,938198554	1,41499472	1,319310808	1,231926452	2
Greece (2015)								
Coalition of the Radical Left	3	2401	0,001249	0,941930618	0,953435115			
Communist Party of Greece	2	1426	0,001403	1,058069382	1,070992366			
New Democracy	13	8514	0,001527	1,15158371	1,165648855	1,180061824	1,180061824	2
Panhellenic Socialist Movement	13	12248	0,001061	0,80015083	0,809923664	0,819938176	0,819938176	1
Cyprus (2016)								
Citizens' Alliance	14	10511	0,001332	1,328678304	0,898684358	1,206521739	1,197482769	2
Democratic Coalition	22	24416	0,000901	0,898753117	0,607893849	0,816123188	0,81000899	1
Democratic Party	2	2665	0,00075	0,748129676	0,506015968			
Movement for Social Democracy	1	1966	0,000509	0,507730673	0,34341617			
Progressive Party of the Working People	12	10865	0,001104	1,101246883	0,744855504	1	0,992508241	1
Solidarity Movement	21	4887	0,004297	4,286284289	2,89913415			
Bulgaria (2017)								
BSP for Bulgaria	2	4455	0,000449	0,383269313	0,393169877			
Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	21	20127	0,001043	0,890311566	0,913309982			
Movement for Rights and Freedoms	3	2308	0,0013	1,109688434	1,138353765			
United Patriots	1	563	0,001776	1,516005122	1,555166375			

Appendix 3: Individual Content Analyses

Content Analysis of the Main Sample

1. Austria: Austrian Freedom Party

For the Austrian Freedom Party, two speeches have been included in the main sample: the 2017 national party congress speech by then-leader H.C. Strache and the 2019 national party congress speech by now-leader Norbert Hofer. As has been anticipated in the methods section already, the political positionings of the considered speeches do not differ much. The only noteworthy difference in the two speeches was structural and not in a meaningful sense concerning ideas, for the AFP has been in governmental position between 2017 and 2019. Hence, the 2019 speech additionally to the criticisms and demands of the 2017 speech, which are essentially repeated, also includes praise of the own achievements, which, however, in the political positionings advocated wherein align with those of the AFP prior to the party's 2017-2019 government participation.

1.1. Values

In the speeches, the AFP upholds two repeatedly and often explicitly expressed value commitments: (a particular understanding of) patriotism and authenticity. Both set the perimeters of the AFP's positionings and in case of patriotism refer to external demands for political agents, i.e. which actions should be taken and which issues alleviated, and to internal demands in case of authenticity and honesty, i.e. of what character political agents should be.

Unsurprisingly, the patriotism the AFP is committed to ("true" patriotism in contrast to the understandings of its competitors) is, on the most abstract level, tied to the wellbeing of the people, i.e. to taking their issues seriously (Strache 2017). This wellbeing is approached and reflected from social, political and economic perspectives though, as will become clear in what

follows, those perspectives are related regarding issues, causes, and solutions identified on the basis of them and thus cannot be fully separated. Note that, notwithstanding those perspectives, it can with reasonable confidence be reconstructed that when the AFP says "the people" what it means are persons of ethically Austrian descent and Christian religious-cultural heritage living in Austria. That is, the AFP stresses that it has a duty towards the *local* Austrian population (Strache 2017) and, evoking the idea of homeland, emphasises that the country belongs to Austrians (Hofer 2019) and that national sovereignty should be upheld (Strache 2017). At the same time, it excludes the Islam from belonging to Austria stating that it is neither part of Austria today (Strache 2017) nor ever was part of Austrian culture or history (Hofer 2019). Ex negativo, this suggests that Muslims, both Austria- or foreign-born, are no Austrians, precisely because they lack the shared culture (including religion) and history that is constitutive to being Austrian.

This connotation of the AFP expressing a value-commitment to the idea the wellbeing of Austrians will, as we shall see, guide both the identification of issues and their perpetrators as well as of solutions. The reason for this is that it gives a direction to in themselves not fully specified commitments, such as that the people ought to be at the centre of social and labour related policies (Strache 2017), since it provides specifications of both: who the people are as well as what their interests are, which must be met to facilitate their wellbeing. Noteworthy, the AFP's brief commitment to performance-based justice embedded in a social, market-based economic order (Strache 2017) in light of this carries different implications than it otherwise would.

In contrast to patriotism, the AFP's emphasis of the importance of what I here for a lack of a more suitable label call authenticity (as a proxy for conjoined honesty, continuity and competence) relates not directly to the positionings but in a sense to the character and agency of politicians. Here, from the AFP's repeated statements regarding its own virtue, it can be

inferred that it takes it to be central that a political party is consistent between what it claims, demands and votes for in parliament, consequent in its positioning and continuous in its work (Strache 2017). Continuity and consistency, as the AFP uses them, mean remaining with a particular position and not alternating it, say, by moving to the left or the right on the political spectrum (Strache 2017).

Here, both value commitments, according to the AFP, are exclusively met by the AFP: Whereas the AFP is truly patriotic through upholding (its specific understanding of) patriotism, others are non- or false patriots. And whereas the AFP is authentic in demanding what it takes to be implied by its understanding of patriotism (ever since its rebirth in 2005), others are inconsistent in their political action and, because of this, overall unreliable (Strache 2017). As has already been stated, both motifs re-emerge during the identification of issues and demands but before moving on it is worth noting that, by framing itself as the sole upholder of patriotic values, the AFP, even though only implicitly, establishes itself as the only legitimate political agent: Others are either *not truly committed* to the right values or not committed *to the right values*.

1.2. Issues

Economically, the AFP's critique evolves the (allegedly)[240] dire situation of many Austrians and Austrian companies, which it links to international developments in the face of an inadequate handling of the challenges arising therefrom by the government.

On the individual level, the party specifically criticises that there are many jobless people in Austria, that many Austrians live in poverty despite having a job and that people receive insufficiently high pensions without adequate adaptation to inflation (Strache 2017). Regarding

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[240] In what follows, all statements which refer to states of affairs or events etc. do not refer to facts as such but to the positioning of the parties.

the economic performance of Austrian companies, the AFP criticises that many small and mid-size companies are so much under pressure that they are barely operational (Strache 2017). In this context, the party particularly criticises too high taxes and energy prices, which force many companies to relocate to cheaper locations, many thereof inside the European Union (Strache 2017).

In addition to those issues of Austrians and Austrian companies, according to the AFP the entire Austrian economy, and especially its welfare system, is burdened by the consequences of migration and the free movement of labour in the EU. As examples hereof the AFP stresses that immigrants receive welfare provisions despite never having worked in Austria (Strache 2017); that child support is often transferred into other countries (despite its purpose being to support children living in Austria) (Strache 2017); and that, more broadly, mass immigration from the Middle East and North Africa has resulted in the incorporation of many lowly qualified and uneducated immigrants or refugees (Hofer 2019; Strache 2017), thus further pressuring the Austrian economy (and hence welfare system) to the disadvantage of the Austrian population (Strache 2017).

Importantly, the immigration from the MENA region is also identified as the main cause of socio-cultural issues, which the AFP generally links to the proliferation of Islam in Austria. Firstly, it is understood as a security issue. On the one hand, the AFP identifies radical Islamism (Strache 2017) and political Islam (Hofer 2019) as a problem, which, for example, by preaching violence and recruiting fighters (Strache 2017), who unhindered by authorities return to Austria (Strache 2017), pose a threat to the Austrian people. On the other hand, it links refugees, beyond overall massive social and economic burdens, to this radical Islam in general and criminal activity and terror attacks in particular, without being deported as a response thereto (Hofer 2019).

Secondly, the AFP understands Muslim immigration to destroy Austrian culture and Christian heritage by replacing it with Islamic values and practices through an active cultural offense by Muslim agents (Hofer 2019). Here, the AFP lists a variety of developments it takes as evidence thereof: the rising number of Muslim kindergartens (Strache 2017), particularly in Vienna, the introduction of Islamist teachings to school books, that large parts of children in Vienna with a migration background do not speak German at home (Hofer 2019), the existence and growth of parallel societies (Strache 2017) and, at the core of all those developments, the unprecedented and further increasing number of Muslims in Austria (Hofer 2019; Strache 2017).[241]

In light of these perceived issues, the AFP makes the government directly responsible for not properly handling, respectively further exacerbating those developments. It holds that the government, despite claiming otherwise, did not contribute to those issues' solutions (such as the migration crisis or joblessness) and, if it attempted to do so, then only half-heartedly and thus insufficiently copied policy suggestions of the AFP (Strache 2017).

Whereas the (at the time of the speeches) conservative government is considered unauthentic (and thus not truly patriotic), the left-wing parties are directly accused of facilitating an openly anti-patriotic agenda by: eroding Austrian culture, exemplified by their attempt to rename Vienna's *Heldenplatz* (square of heroes) (Strache 2017); undermining the nation as such by seeking to establish voting rights for (presumably Muslim) immigrants (Hofer 2019); working towards the interests of migrants (say, by funding their qualification and education) rather than that of the Austrian workers; jointly with the government, lying to the public regarding migration issues (specifically in the context of the labour market); and being

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[241] According to the AFP, Austria (in 2019) generally features the highest share of immigrants of all EU member states (Hofer 2019), with the number of Muslims having grown from 30000 in the 1970s to over 600000 in 2017 (Strache 2017). Interestingly, those are the only numbers explicitly referred to in the speeches.

engaged in potentially criminal activity, as it is assumed in the Eurofighter affair (Strache 2017).

The AFP links this assumed unpatriotic attitudes to a wider political decay of the country's sovereignty, which is considered being promoted by Austria's integration into the European Union. According to the AFP, the EU is autocratic and bureaucratic in its structures and acts in a way contravening the interests of the Austrian people. As examples thereof serve: (the allegation) that the EU plans to abolish cash, thus increasing its financial control over the Austrian population; the constatation that the EU's expansion to Eastern Europe and the free movement within its borders have increased joblessness in Austria by leading to a substitution process with migrant workers, who were willing to accept lower wages; or the overall suspicion that elites in Brussels, in collaboration with national governments, engage in criminal behaviour at the expense of the electorate (once more referring to the Eurofighter affair) (Strache 2017).

Other political competitors are discredited by linking them to an active or tacit support of governmental policies. According to the AFP, the Social Democratic Party of Austria and the Austrian People's Party – the two major *Volksparteien* who governed in the past in changing coalitions, including with each other – rule and decide jointly on the fate of the country and, where necessary votes cannot be secured by them alone, other establishment parties such as the Liberal party or the Green party step in (Strache 2017). With reference to the Eurofighter affair, the AFP holds that this collaboration goes as far as refusing to clarify crime allegations in which government officials are intertwined (Strache 2017).

Here, it needs to be pointed out that other political agents are not simply discredited in virtue of their alleged failure to adequately respond to the issues described above. Instead, mainstream politics is also alleged of actively colluding to suppress the AFP. In this collusion, both mainstream politics as well the media work hand in hand against the AFP. That is, the

AFP holds that there are combined efforts of mainstream parties (and economic elites the AFP assumes working with those behind the curtain) to stop the AFP (Hofer 2019; Strache 2017), because they perceive the AFP's success as a threat (Strache 2017) to their own activity. As evidence thereof the AFP claims that persons, who are associated with it, are often put under pressure in their private life or derogatively treated by others (presumably associated with the old party system), that the colluding parties set traps for them only to step in (referring to the so-called Ibiza affair) and that they generally lie about the unfair treatment the AFP is confronted with (referring to the mainstream parties' inappropriate response to the AFP's party bureaus being burned by a refugee) (Hofer 2019).

The media is taken to be complicit in this by supporting the system's quasi anti-AFP-coalition with unfair and deceitful reporting about the AFP. Those outlets, according to the AFP, on the one hand aim to conceal the fact that the AFP is a real (patriotic and authentic) alternative to the system (say, by unfairly reporting about the party's split/break in 2005) and on the other hand cover up for the mainstream parties by distortedly reporting about their policy failures and the issues arising as consequences thereof. In particular, connecting to the overarching issue of Islam the AFP identifies, the media is accused of covering up for those issues, for example by supporting the government in its allegedly false claims regarding the average qualification of Muslim refugees (Strache 2017).

By conceptualising patriotism in the specific way discussed above, the AFP is able to connect political agency, which does not coincide with its own vision, as unpatriotic and thus, because being unpatriotic means being opposed to the interests and wellbeing of the Austrians, as ultimately illegitimate[242]. Through this, a verdict is cast on the entire political landscape.

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[242] Interestingly, this connection to legitimacy implicitly lingers throughout the different arguments presented in the speeches, which can be interpreted as premises supporting it, but is itself not directly explicated and thus left unsaid, for the recipient to conclude.

Note that, by framing the political landscape solely on a basis of agreement or disagreement with the AFP and thus by neglecting differences between competitors, the demarcation lines the AFP assumes between itself and others are clear and absolute. The groups established by such a distinction and presumed in the party's reasoning are homogenous, as differentiating characteristics both in and between groups are neglected or at least subjected under homogeneity in terms of being patriotic or not, whereby being patriotic is coextensive with supporting the AFP. This reasoning can also be found in the way how and what issues are identified and supports the reconstruction of the people during the framing of patriotism on pre-political, exclusionary and homogenous grounds. That is, it has already been suggested that when the AFP says the people, it refers to people born in Austria to ethnically Austrian parents, who are Christian, as it excluded non-locals and Muslims from qualifying as (true) Austrians. What can now be inferred from the identification and framing of issues are two main things of which one informs about the assumed constitution of the people and those not belonging to the people and the other about their relationship: homogeneity and exclusiveness.

Firstly, all groups, to which the AFP dedicates substantial parts of its political reasoning are assumed to be homogenous in a relevant sense. The people, as is implicit in the AFP's notion of patriotism as well as in its assumptions regarding popular interest, are framed such that no separate and thus heterogeneous interests from those predicated by the attribution of culture, history and religion and material wellbeing exist (or are important for political action). The AFP notices economic struggle, however, as has been seen and as the AFP's proposed solutions will suggest as well, those economic interests are not used to contrast differences within the people, but to contrast the people (and their material wellbeing through rents, wages, jobs and welfare provisions) with immigrants or international elites. Thus, internal differences are subsumed under the general construction principle and thus reflected as external distinction only. Other attributes, interests, beliefs or values in the Austrian society (Austrian on the AFP's

definition) are precluded and people not supporting the AFP are understood to not have realised that the AFP is the only party facilitating their interests. Different interests as a result of, say, gender, age, occupation, morals etc. are all not considered respectively dissolved in the AFP's construction of the people. The same principles apply to the construction of groups excluded from those people: All other parties are framed through activities that undermine the above-constructed popular interest. Differences in them (and, relatedly, in media outlets etc.) are not considered and, through their alleged opposition to the people, even where they could be constructed, dissolved in light of this opposition. Immigrants, in turn, are across-the-board portrayed as low-qualified and jobless or lowly paid economic migrants, and Muslims are associated with radical Islam.

Secondly, since the people are constructed on the pre-legal grounds of an allegedly shared history, culture and religion, the distinction to the other groups does not allow membership in it and in one of the other groups – there is no intersection and no transition between those groups. The political establishment, the media and the European elites/institutions – qua their construction – are excluded from the people for they are assumed to act against the interests of and have diverging interests from the people. Migrants and Muslims are similarly constructed as having opposite interests so that they cannot meet those constitutive criteria and thus become part of the Austrian to begin with. Implicit in this antagonistic construction of the people and others is that the latter are necessarily hindering the interests of the people and, because it are the people who politics should advocate (cf. patriotism), thus necessarily problematic.

1.3. Demands and Achievements

Against the EU, the NATO and other international alliances, the AFP demands to strengthen national sovereignty and independence (federal structures and subsidiarity), refraining from (especially military) international engagement and decomposing (allegedly

autocratic and bureaucratic) EU structures. Those steps are intended to allow the adequate representation of national interests (Strache 2017). To enable this in the country itself, the AFP suggests the implementation of direct democracy modelled after Switzerland, constitutionally securing the right of the people to have referenda in cases where a plebiscite has been supported by at least 4% of the population has not been accepted by parliament (Strache 2017).[243]

Economically, the AFP demands a variety of welfarist measures directed at lifting the material wealth of the Austrians. Those include lower taxes to reduce the cost of living and of work, stopping the cold progression, decreasing bureaucracy, increasing transparency (especially regarding subsidies), subsidising the energy consumption of Austrian companies, overhauling the pension system (thus increasing pensions in light of inflation) (Strache 2017), and providing better medical care (Hofer 2019).

Here, the increase of welfare for Austrians is not grounded in the acceptance to higher government spending and/or in a commitment to reduce inequality – in fact the party claims as one of its achievements that no additional debts have been made during its governmental activity (Hofer 2019). Instead, it coincides with demands to curb welfare for non-Austrians respectively to decrease their access to the Austrian labour market. In particular, the AFP demands to end or lower the child support for children from other countries immigrants in Austria receive, end the movement of labour to repair the national labour market and, generally, stop the immigration into the Austrian benefits system (Strache 2017).

This antagonistic view of popular interest in conjuncture with a lack of acknowledgement of substantial differences within the people (and hence, say, of demands for more equality or justice within the Austrian population) also is encountered in the socio-cultural demands the AFP puts forward. That is, the AFP's social programme largely is directed against immigrants,

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[243] Note that the opposition of other parties to this is considered to be due to the fact that such a regulation would make governing much more inconvenient for them (Strache 2017).

particularly from majority-Muslim countries. On the one hand, the AFP demands to curb immigration by implementing stronger control mechanisms of immigrant/refugee[244] movements into the country; zero net-immigration and the deportation of criminal immigrants and immigrants without residence rights; the denaturalisation of radical Islamists who joined the IS; and, alleging that many asylum seekers are in truth economic migrants, the substantial separation of immigration from asylum to protect the Austrian social system (Strache 2017). On the other hand, it demands that rather than immigration leading to multicultural effects, immigrants should be culturally assimilated into the national culture to secure that Austria remains the same (Hofer 2019). To do so, the AFP demands: to put measures forward against radical Islam, for example by closing so called hate preaching mosques and deporting so called hate preachers (Hofer 2019); a comprehensive ban of headscarves in public service in general and public schools and universities in particular (Strache 2017); the abolishment of Muslim kindergartens (Strache 2017); and establishing sufficient German language skills as a precondition to participate in school and to take driver's license courses (thus abolishing the so called Turkish driver's license tests, which the party at the 2019 speech claims as one of its accomplishments) (Hofer 2019).

Even though mentioned only briefly, it should also be noted that the AFP expresses some commitments to enhance animal welfare and ecology, however, interestingly and similarly to the maintenance of Austrian religious-cultural identity and practice reframing such policies as measures directed at maintaining the homeland ("Umweltschutz ist Heimatschutz", i.e., protection of the environment is protection of the homeland, Hofer 2019).

In line with its demands, Hofer stresses in his 2019 speech that, during the party's time in government, it achieved to introduce financial bonusses for families, lower the costs of the

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[244] While the party demands to bring an end to the alleged equation of migration with being a refugee, it uses both interchangeably itself (of course, giving the impression that those are usually not refugees but only immigrants in the first place).

social security insurance as well as the unemployment insurance and to overall increase pensions, raising the minimum pension in particular (while simultaneously complaining that its plans to introduce a father pay and other welfare policies had been blocked by its coalition partner (the Austrian People's Party), Hofer 2019).

2. Belgium: Flemish Interest

For the Flemish Interest, three speeches have been included in the main sample, all three of which were held by Tom Van Grieken, who acted as party leader throughout the investigation period. This includes Van Grieken's 2016 speech at the national party congress, his 2018 speech at the party's national programme conference and his 2019 speech at the party's party leader conference. The Flemish Interest has remained in the opposition for the whole duration of the investigation period. Hence, whereas the Austrian Freedom Party's discourse came to include some of its political outputs (framed as achievements), this is not the case for the Flemish Interest. Subsequently, the reflection of political achievements is missing from all three speeches.

2.1. Values

The central perspective from which the Flemish Interest's discourse operates can be identified, on the one hand, as the idea that Flanders, Belgium's region the alleged interests of whose population the Flemish Interest advocates, belongs to the people of Flanders (Van Grieken 2016, 2018) and, on the other hand, as the explicitly nationalist idea that the own people (i.e. the people of Flanders) come first so that political agents should prioritise facilitating their interests over other goals (Van Grieken 2019).

Here, the Flemish Interest's notion of the people is laden with two particular features. Firstly, the Flemish Interest refers to the common (Van Grieken 2016) or ordinary people

whose interests it advocates and which it contrasts with the interests of the established ("old") Belgian elite, to whom, it holds, Flanders does not belong (Van Grieken 2018). Secondly, it links those "own people", in whose values and strength it says to believe (Van Grieken 2016), to a particular cultural, religious and ethnical belonging to Flanders, which, while never fully explained in its content, is established ex negativo through a contrast to and an exclusion of immigrants and Muslims (Van Grieken 2018).

Departing from this framing, then, the Flemish Interests commits itself to a "patriotic spring" (Van Grieken 2016), understood as retaking Flanders from those non-people, to whom it does not belong but who are increasingly taking over, and returning it to the Flemish people.

In relation to its own endeavour of realising this popular interest, the Flemish Interest attests itself honesty and sincerity (Van Grieken 2016). In doing so, the party proclaims a presumably third way to politics, moving away from the classic left- and right-wing mainstream parties, whose default positionings (either somewhat closed borders with weak social security on the right or open borders with strong social security on the left) fail to adequately respond to this popular interest (Van Grieken 2019).

As will become evident in the next subsection, the issues the Flemish Interests identifies and the demands it raises are largely connected to this idea of Flanders belonging to its native population, whose interests are competing with those of Belgian elites and Muslim immigrants alike and whose interests only the Flemish Interest seeks to meaningfully uphold.

2.2. Issues

Overall, throughout the issues identified by the Flemish Interest shines the idea that the interest of others, who do not belong to the Flemish people (i.e. immigrants/asylum seekers or other Belgian regions), are facilitated by government policies at the expense of the Flemish people. Grounding its stance in the values presented in the previous subsection, this later leads the

Flemish Interest to famously reject the Belgian state as such and to demand independence for the region of Flanders (Van Grieken 2019).

Financially, the issues raised by the Flemish interests can be grouped into two, mutually not exclusive, categories: critiques of presumably bad, irresponsible, or ineffective policies (i.e. failure) and critiques of policies which are taken to put unfair burdens on the Flemish people (i.e. injustice). Regarding the first category, the Flemish Interest criticises that the government's failure to implement necessary economic reforms has led to a record public debt (Van Grieken 2016), thus putting burdens on future generations (Van Grieken 2018). Despite this debt, however, the tax burden, which is perceived to be one of the highest in the world (Van Grieken 2018), continues to increase (Van Grieken 2018) while the pensions remain low and average working hours as well as the costs of living increase (Van Grieken 2019). The latter, according to the party, not only affects luxury goods such as tobacco or alcohol but also prices for, amongst other things, such essentialities as electricity, higher education or public transport (Van Grieken 2016). This development, in a sense, is perceived to be associated with the risks of globalisation Flanders faces and which affects the working class and self-employed the hardest. It is criticised that both the media and mainstream politicians turn away from issues linked to globalisation such as factories closing and moving abroad (Van Grieken 2016) or rising housing prices due to immigration (Van Grieken 2018).

Here, the second stream of financial critique connects to the first: Beyond the incompetent handling of finances, the Flemish Interest argues that those burdens of the Flemish people are deliberately put in place for the benefit of others, more concretely: asylum seekers and economically weak Belgian regions. According to the Flemish Interest, on the one hand the Flemish continue to being unfairly burdened by capital flows from Flanders to the francophone Belgian region of Wallonia, which, according to the Flemish Interest, amounts to double digit billion sums of Euros every year (Van Grieken 2016). On the other hand,

immigrants (especially asylum seekers) are benefitting from the tax increases under which the Flanders suffer. As evidence thereof, the party considers that the government not only directly uses the funds obtained from tax increases to finance asylum centres (Van Grieken 2019) but also that the provision of public services, which deteriorate overall (e.g. increasing waiting hours and rising costs), does not affect the provision of those goods to immigrants (Van Grieken 2018).

Analogous critiques are raised for the socio-cultural realm. The Flemish Interest holds that immigration to Belgium is too high and that the multiculturalist dreams of the proponents of open borders have not materialised (Van Grieken 2016). Instead, so the party argues, they increasingly lead to the replacement of the local culture and religion through the cultural and religious practices of Muslim immigrants (the so-called Islamisation) and the alienation of the Flemish population in their own country (Van Grieken 2019).

Because of this, immigration and open borders are considered a major issue threatening the ways of life of the native population on various levels (economically, culturally and socially) (Van Grieken 2016). The adjacent negative effects of this are not only infrastructural burdens partly mentioned above and not admitted by the government (say, generally burdens on the health or the welfare system) (Van Grieken 2016), but moreover rising criminality (Van Grieken 2018) and the risk of Islamist terror (Van Grieken 2019), which the government fails to curb by neither sufficiently screening refugees for criminal activity before accepting them into Belgium nor closing the borders altogether (Van Grieken 2016).

The Flemish Interest cites as evidence for this replacement of the way of life of the native population cultural practices from everyday life it links to the rising number of Muslims in the country. Those include, for example: separate swimming hours for Muslim women in public swimming pools, changes introduced to Christmas markets and trees and the rejection of the *Zwarte Piet* (a dark-skinned companion of Saint Nicholas in the Low Countries' folklore),

changes of food offered in public schools and the spread of religious (Halal) slaughter as well as the acceptance of headscarves in public services and in courts combined with a prohibition of crucifixes (Van Grieken 2016).

Here, it must be emphasised that the problematised scenario of the Flemish soon becoming foreigners in their own country raised by the Flemish Interest (Van Grieken 2016) is not exhausted by a way of life. Instead, it expands to the very physical existence of the Flemish people as such: Due to the rising numbers of presumably non-Belgian children (assuming a higher fertility rate for people from majority Muslim countries such as Turkey or the Arab countries) the Flemish Interest claims that the Flemish population as such is gradually replaced by Muslim immigrants and their descendants. As an alleged example thereof, the party cites the demographic changes which the city of Antwerp has undergone (Van Grieken 2018).

It is against this background, portrayed as a comprehensive threat to the Flemish people, that the Flemish Interest's critique of its political competitors as well as against established media and elites needs to be understood. Here, the Flemish Interest's overall narrative is that other parties, including those in government, have failed to alleviate those issues, being either dishonest or inconsequential about them on the right or supportive of them on the left of the spectrum of established parties (Van Grieken 2018).

Concretely, the Flemish Interest criticises the government, amongst other things, for its allegedly disastrous migration policy which has failed to regulate the (too high) immigration of asylum seekers (Van Grieken 2016, 2019), its simultaneous failure to maintain a balanced budget (Van Grieken 2016) and its failure to stop the aforementioned demographic shift (Van Grieken 2018). Instead of following its election promises (the Flemish Interests speaks here of "a boulevard of broken promises from here to Brussels", Van Grieken 2016), the government continuously looks for excuses (Van Grieken 2018) or attempts to cover the true consequences

of its policies to begin with (referring to the government not making files on immigration publicly available, Van Grieken 2016).

On a broader take, the Flemish Interest criticises the so-called political correctness found in mainstream politics, which it considers a facilitating factor of the cultural shift at the expense of the native people, and positions itself against those politically correct elites. In doing so, it understands itself as part of a Europe-wide movement against the old political elites (Van Grieken 2016). The party links those elites to the Belgian establishment and attests them to be particularly detached from the Flemish people (Van Grieken 2018) and to arrogantly look down on ordinary people (Van Grieken 2019). Even worse, the elites, who often proclaim to act as advocates of tolerance (say, in relation to immigration issues), are intolerant towards other views, discrediting people who do not share the left's vision of open borders and multiculturalism (Van Grieken 2016). This unfair treatment, according to the Flemish Interest, extends to the Flemish Interest itself by a hypocritical double standard of the establishment: While the Flemish Interest is criticised by the establishment for directing tax money to endeavours to curb immigration the government uses tax money to fund asylum centres; similarly, while every act of right-wing extremist violence is followed by an outcry of the Flemish Interest's competitors, those same voices remain silent regarding the terror of Islamist extremists (Van Grieken 2019).

The Flemish Interest holds that the media is overall complicit in this. While this point is not extensively covered in van Grieken's speeches, it is suggested that the media allows the government to spread fake news connected to the consequences of its immigration policies. As common tropes thereof statements are identified which hold that, say, the crisis is under control and that refugees will contribute to the economy (Van Grieken 2018).

Following this line of reasoning, it is argued that while the government claims to represent a substantial majority (two thirds is named in van Grieken's speech) of the Flemish

people, it fails to deliver what has been promised (Van Grieken 2018). Even worse, according to the Flemish Interest, it does not really matter which of the mainstream parties is in government in the first place, since the parties themselves, previously identified as all being characterised by political correctness amongst other things, are essentially interchangeable (Van Grieken 2016). And they are interchangeable, precisely because they do not offer the electorate a *real* choice on policies handling the issues that really matter, which, from the Flemish Interest's perspective, prior to anything else is (Muslim) immigration and its alleged impact on the society. Concretely, the Flemish Interest holds that the choice the mainstream parties offer is not a *real* choice, since closing the borders for immigration is not offered as an option. While the left is taken to propose open borders and an open welfare state, the right is taken to propose a defectively open border (which fails to curb immigration) (Van Grieken 2019).

Linking this to the assumed support of the Flemish people for anti-immigration policies (Van Grieken 2019), the Flemish Interest contests that the will of the people (half a million voters cited in van Grieken's first speech) is ignored (Van Grieken 2016). To this inertia or unwillingness of the established political elites, the Flemish Interest considers itself to provide a true – and indeed the only – alternative, which is dedicated to serving the Flemish people and advocating for their interests (Van Grieken 2019).

As elaborated earlier, the lines of who belongs to the Flemish people and who does not and, linked thereto, who acts in the people's alleged will and who does not are drawn on a clear-cut basis. These distinctions are, in turn, grounded in an understanding of the groups involved which consists of characteristic properties that cannot (easily) be obtained and also do not leave grounds for variances, at least no variances that would be important to the framing of the Flemish Interest's discourse.

That is, as has been noted in the previous subsection, the people for which the Flemish Interest takes to speak – the Flemish people – are understood through a shared cultural, ethnical/racial, religious and historical origin and similarity, whose prevailing in the Flemish is not discussed but assumed. Nowhere in its speeches does the Flemish Interest acknowledge differences within the Flemish people (the ordinary people). The differences are only identified in relation to other groups, which do not count to the people, are framed in an equally non-differentiated way and cover both immigrants and the political establishment/elites. That is, immigrants are discussed as if they all are uneducated, potentially violent, culturally assertive Muslims, who deliberately abstain from work, burden the welfare state and have many children. Established politics in contrast, under the label of which all of the Flemish Interest's competitors or critics are subsumed, are associated with advocating (or failing to object) interests which are contravening those of the Flemish people at their expense – be those the presumed interests of immigrants, of the societal elites or of other Belgian regions.

Doing so allows the Flemish Interest to establish that every political agent but itself fails to live up to the prime idea that politics should respond to the interests of the people to who the country belongs. Thus, according to the Flemish Interest, there is no alternative to itself to accomplish the changes necessary to solve the issues thus identified depicted in the subsequent subsection (Van Grieken 2018).

2.3. Demands and Achievements

Given the very clear understanding the Flemish Interest puts forward in identifying the most vital prevailing issues and their source, it is no surprise that most of its political demands gravitate around changes to the immigration policy, thus essentially amounting to anti-immigration and anti-Islam policies (Van Grieken 2018). Amongst those demands are: holding a referendum on stopping immigration and (presumably assuming the outcome of such a

hypothetical referendum) eventually ending immigration altogether as well as ending payments (effectively stemming from the region of Flanders) for the consequences of immigration (Van Grieken 2018).

Furthermore, as the Flemish Interest has identified the very state of Belgium as one of the obstacles to the fulfilment of the interests of the Flemish people, it demands not only communal reforms (Van Grieken 2016) but independence for the region of Flanders as such from Belgium (Van Grieken 2019).

Presumably from resources opened by curbing refugee support and the financial redistribution from Flanders to other regions – but also as a general demand – the Flemish Interest proposes expanding the scale of welfare services to the Flemish people. For example, it holds that social housing should be made available to all Flemish (Van Grieken 2018). Though this is the only example for increased welfare provision the Flemish Interest makes, it is reasonable to assume – and indeed this is also what the logic of this demand suggests – that other service provisions could also be affected by this redirection of resources from others (be they immigrants or other regions of Belgium) to Flanders and its people. That said, it must be emphasised that all welfarist policies discussed by the Flemish Interest stand in the context of benefits others but not the Flemish people (unduly) receive and not as genuine reflections on redistribution and inequality.

3. Netherlands: Socialist Party

For the Socialist Party, three speeches have been selected for the main sample, all three of which have been held at the party's national congresses. Those include two speeches held by Emile Roemer in 2015 respectively in 2017 and one speech held by Lilian Marijnissen in 2018. The Socialist Party has remained in opposition in the Netherlands for the whole duration of the investigation period (and generally ever since its formation in 1971). That notwithstanding –

and in contrast to the Flemish Interest's time in opposition – the Socialist party still addressed some political achievements in its speeches, which, as we shall see, amount to either its alleged influence on other parties, the participation in historical movements or the mobilisation of the citizenry.

3.1. Values

The Socialist Party repeatedly and explicitly makes value commitments in its discourse. Those can, generally, be categorised into commitments regarding the rights they deem should be provided to people as well as commitments regarding the scope of those provisions (i.e. who they should apply to). Here, whereas the former gravitate around the party's particular understanding of equality (which, as we shall see, is a comprehensive understanding), the latter gravitates around its understanding of solidarity (which, as we shall see, is informed by an internationalist outlook).

The Socialist Party's understanding of equality (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2015) is concerned with both formal and material rights and is applied to persons independent of various group memberships. For example, the Socialist Party refers to gender equality (particularly to the equal pay for women, Marijnissen 2018), positions itself against racism and discrimination (Roemer 2015) and endorses equality of opportunity (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2017) and sustainability (Roemer 2017), which, although possibly also a value in itself, could be understood as a necessity to provide meaningful equality across time to future generations. Note that, while this is not explicitly done, the party seems to link its perspective on equality to human dignity (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2017).

Whereas the party's understanding of equality is deep in scale, its understanding of solidarity (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2015) is wide in scope. That is, the party not only stresses that all people in the Netherlands deserve to benefit from the results of good politics (Roemer

2017). It also emphasises international solidarity (Roemer 2017), which should be shared with all people (Roemer 2015) and thus contribute to a fair future independently of the circumstances (here: location) of one's birth (Marijnissen 2018). In a similar manner, the party stresses that citizenship entails more than a national outlook and encourages to reflect on more extensive grounds of similarity (Marijnissen 2018). This, in turn, seems to charge the party's notion of equality with a global understanding (Roemer 2015), albeit only *ex negativo*.

More concretely, the Socialist Party's positioning on what solidarity commands to provide in terms of equality appears to be grounded in the assumption of a set of interests which is taken to be stable across groups (i.e. across so-called races, genders and age). To those interests, the party counts, for example, a permanent job, a decent and affordable housing, affordable care, good education, equal opportunities, and a safe neighbourhood. According to the party, those interests are universally shared in the sense that they can be endorsed by everyone (Roemer 2017).

Against this background, the Socialist Party essentially assumes to advocate the interests of the common people and hence to stand on the side of the overwhelming majority of the people when fighting for equality. Taking the view that it is the responsibility of politicians to stand on the side of the people, the Socialist Party then, as we shall see later on, accuses the government of a failure to comply to this very duty (referring to 90% of the populace, Marijnissen 2018).[245]

Here, the identification of common interests assumed by the party allows reconstructing the party's understanding of the composition of the populace or, at least, its priorities. That is, the party stresses that humans are (or at least should constitute) the starting points of all political decision making (Roemer 2017). However, when speaking of those humans populating the

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[245] It should also be noted that, in linking itself to those values, the Socialist Party not only positions itself against what it takes to be injustice (Roemer 2017) but moreover explicitly distances itself from capitalism as well as what it, referring to Geert Wilders' PVV, considers to be exclusionary (right-wing) politics (Marijnissen 2018), with which it rules out any form of cooperation (Roemer 2015).

Netherlands and thus falling into the scope of the decision making of Dutch politicians, the Socialist Party appears to make substantial assumptions not only about their immediate interests, but also, on a deeper level, about properties which inform what interests they have and how those would be served the best. While this will become clearer during the discussion of issues and demands, it is striking that the party holds to speak for respectively to represent the interests of a particularly composed group (constructed as the "ordinary" people) and simultaneously assumes the sole relevance of this group *as* the overwhelming majority. Furthermore, it is worth noting that while the party appears to uphold rights on various dimensions for various groups of persons, property rights and belonging to specific economic or professional groups appears to be excluded therefrom.

3.2. Issues

While politics and economics are closely intertwined, most of the issues identified by the Socialist Party nonetheless can be largely grouped into general political issues (at home or abroad) and economic issues concerned with the distribution of wealth, income and other goods or resources.

Politically, the party links negative events on the international level to inadequate governmental responses to those developments on the national level. The most prominently featured issue in the Socialist Party's critique of international affairs is the militarisation of conflicts, predominantly, though not exclusively, in the Middle East (specifically referring to Syria). According to the party, those not only lead to havocs such as terror attacks in places far away from the original conflict but they cannot be solved through military means to begin with. Instead, those are considered to only exacerbate the escalation of the conflict and facilitate extremism (Roemer 2015). In light of this, it is criticised that, rather than promoting local development, the West militarily participates in conflicts in those regions – despite a significant

amount of people suffering from hunger and poverty worldwide (Marijnissen 2018) and refugee streams to Europe increasing (Roemer 2015) due to terror and war.

Other political failures linked to government actions are considered the violation of privacy rights through sharing information with foreign secret services and the undermining of democracy by seeking to remove plebiscitary instruments (Marijnissen 2018) against the background of increasing instructions from the EU (Roemer 2017).

Since the values identified in the previous subsection largely gravitate around questions of distributive justice,[246] it comes without much surprise that, in the speeches covered by the investigation, the Socialist Party addresses various economic issues. Generally, those gravitate around what the party considers growing inequality in both the Netherlands and the world (Roemer 2015). This inequality, according to the party, has increased since the beginning of the new millennium (Roemer 2017) and is further exacerbated by government policies (in particular, its tax policies), which widen the wealth- and income-gap between the rich and the poor (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2015). As an example for the former, the party cites that the most wealthy people of the Netherlands, despite constituting only a fraction of the entire society, hold the majority of wealth.[247] The latter is exemplified by emphasising that Dutch company directors, on average, earn many times the income of their employees (Marijnissen 2018).

At the core of this development, the Socialist Party identifies what it refers to as neoliberal politics (Roemer 2015). That is, the party argues that the neoliberal ideology of the last decades has led to an expansion of markets (with especially the financial sector having grown too large) and a retraction of the state (Roemer 2017). As a result, the capital and free markets could act and wield their power over society effectively unchecked (Marijnissen 2018),

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[246] Concerning the provision of rights, goods and opportunities.
[247] The wealthiest 10 per cent of the population are considered to own two thirds of the total wealth.

thereby unchaining disastrous market forces (Roemer 2017). Here, the power the capital presumably amassed is exemplified through the ease with which companies are able to close factories and relocate them abroad, if the production no longer seems profitable (Marijnissen 2018).

These developments are also reflected in political decisions and their subsequent consequences for the provision of social goods, which follow the same neoliberal logic. Whereas the capital has grown, the shrinking state has engaged in austerity and proposed cuts to public spending (Roemer 2017). Effects thereof can be observed in different areas of welfare and infrastructural provisions and the level of wellbeing a growing majority of people can (no longer) afford. In this context, the Socialist Party particularly points out the discrepancy between the dismantlement of social housing in the last few decades and the simultaneous increases of rents, which make housing barely affordable for many (Roemer 2015), and generally criticises that people increasingly have less (Roemer 2017) and struggle to make ends meet, with many children being affected by this as well (Roemer 2015).

These rising levels of precarity, which are met by declining infrastructural provisions (as the state retracts), negatively affect various groups, many of which are especially vulnerable to begin with. A prominent example thereof cited by the Socialist Party is the health system, which, following the maxim of profit maximisation, has been destroyed by market forces: wages decline and costs for services increase – to a degree where many people simply can't afford hospitalisation – while the profits of executives rise sharply (Roemer 2017; particularly referencing the salaries of care home directors, Marijnissen 2018). Consequently, people, and especially the elderly in hospitals and health centres, often do not receive the care they need. At the same time, the numbers of care workers for home care decreases (Roemer 2015, 2017) and the quality of care is arbitrarily dependent on the region in which the person is located

(Roemer 2015). In this context, the Socialist Party also criticises the government for its (alleged) plans of seeking to cut provisions for people with disabilities (Roemer 2015).

Against the background of increasingly precarious work conditions and rising costs for higher education, the Socialist Party also points out the negative impact of the government's neoliberal policies on the life prospects of young people. On the one hand, the rising costs of higher education leave many young people in debt (Roemer 2017). On the other, the volatility of their career paths grows, since non-permanent contracts make it difficult to plan a future and live an independent existence and zero-hour contracts have become a common employer practice (Marijnissen 2018). The consequence of this is that, according to the Socialist Party, for the first time since World War II, the young generation has no reasonable expectation towards a better future (in terms of finances and job security) (Roemer 2017). Moreover, equality of pay and opportunity across genders may exist for the wealthy, but for the large majority of individuals it remains out of reach, putting additional burdens on women, amongst others (Marijnissen 2018).

This rising inequality and precarity of the many, which is facilitated by the government's economic policies, has detrimental effects on the political system as well. That is, it erodes democracy and increases racial tensions (amongst others) (Roemer 2017), because people feel abandoned by the government (referring to the government's failure to provide safe homes in Groningen, Marijnissen 2018). Thus, as the party observes, exclusion based on religion or heritage spreads and affects educated and integrated members of society (Marijnissen 2018).

It has already been pointed out that the Socialist Party considers those issues to be connected to a type of politics (neoliberal politics) facilitated by the government(s) during the last few decades. However, the party's critique of its political competitors is not restricted to the government or the far right. Instead, the Socialist Party criticises all of its party competitors

and stresses that no one but itself offers a real alternative to the neoliberal dictum (more market, less state).

That is, the Socialist Party contends that, in contrast to itself and only itself, the established politics has largely resigned to rising inequality or facilitated that development through the active endorsement of neoliberal policies (Roemer 2015). While the economic position of government officials is not only privileged (Roemer 2017) but moreover renders them out of touch with and thus blind to the issues of the common people (Marijnissen 2018), the other political parties fail to take up the slack and step in for the people. It is not only the far right (i.e. Geert Wilders' PVV), which supports the neoliberal course –[248] even other left wing parties, such as the Green Party (GroenLinks) and the Labour Party, overall support the government's economic policies (Roemer 2017). Hence, if not for the Socialist Party, the neoliberal dogma (and the dominance of the markets over the state institutions) is effectively left unchallenged.

Here, it must be noted that this consensus on neoliberal politics the Socialist Party takes to harm the people (i.e. the ordinary people which are the overwhelming majority) is not only found across established parties but also, unsurprisingly, in the economic elites of the country. After all, those are the beneficiaries of the politics of the last few decades and therefore do everything they can to maintain the power obtained through this politics (Marijnissen 2018; Roemer 2017). For this purpose, they seek to spread the illusion that there is no alternative to a pro market approach to begin with, which, if successful, enables them to continue gaining capital at the expense of others (Roemer 2017). In this conflict of the people versus the capital, the government, through its inertia and neoliberal commitments, stands on the side of big business and not, as it should, on that of the people (Marijnissen 2018).

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[248] In this context, the Socialist Party attests that the PVV fights for the votes of the common people without also fighting for the interests of the common people (Marijnissen 2018).

As this suggests, most if not all of the central issues identified by the Socialist Party are linked to a particular group: the economic elite, whose interests are considered to be in conflict with those of the ordinary people (both abroad and at home) and to whose advantage the politics of the last few decades has operated. Departing from this framing, the party wields a comprehensive critique of all its party competitors through accusing them of complicity or inertia regarding the neoliberal course. As we shall see in the next subsection, both the clear-cut separation of society in the (ordinary, common) people on the one and the economic elites and its political auxiliaries on the other hand as well as the ascription of interests and properties shared within and not shared between those groups are strongly mirrored in the Socialist Party's political demands.

3.3. Demands and Achievements

Given the Socialist Party's strong international outlook, it is not surprising that some of its political demands gravitate around the alleviation of the suffering induced or exacerbated by international conflicts. Such demands are addressed at a political audience both abroad and in the Netherlands and include establishing a cease fire and arms embargo for the entire Middle East and draining funding channels of the terrorist organisation IS; the provision of shelters of sufficient quality (referring to humane conditions) for refugees (referring to those fleeing from radical Islam); and, linked thereto, the acceptance of refugees from the Middle East to Europe, in a distributed rather than concentrated manner (Roemer 2015).

On the national level, most of the Socialist Party's demands are directed at the increase of welfare and infrastructural provisions coupled with an economic redistribution from top to bottom. Here, the party demands: increasing the quality of health care provisions, if necessary with legal enforceability (Roemer 2015), and, more generally, a new health system in the form of a national health fund (Roemer 2017), the introduction of a public basic insurance that is

protected against market forces and their volatilities, a freeze of rents preventing people from falling below the poverty line and, in doing so, obliging landlords to provide affordable housing, abolishing landlord levy, granting tenants more rights (Roemer 2015) and a stronger voice in the political discourse (Roemer 2017), a substantial increase of the minimal wage and associated benefits (Roemer 2017), giving workers a say in company takeovers (Marijnissen 2018), ending unregulated labour migration to prevent the exploitation of workers (Roemer 2017), a ban of zero hour contracts, investments into the economic security of younger people, a more through promotion of income equality across genders, improvements to public transportation, more sustainability (specifically less carbon emissions) and rendering education more inclusive (Marijnissen 2018).

As to where the resources for funding those provisions should stem from, the Socialist Party suggests increasing taxes for those better off. In particular, it demands the introduction of a wealth tax (especially for millionaires) as well as an increase of the income tax for the highest incomes and of large, multinational corporations (Roemer 2015).

When reviewing those demands, it is important to note the context in which they are made and thus the overarching aim they contribute to. That is, the Socialist Party explicitly states that it aims to relocate power from the government (reading: the political establishment) and the capital to the people. The aim is to leave behind what the party labels "raw capitalism" and to establish a system that works for everyone (Marijnissen 2018). As this necessitates substantial changes to the political system, it is not surprising that the party also suggests that substantial (albeit in the considered speeches not explicitly elaborated) changes to EU structures should be made (Roemer 2017) and a right to hold referenda should be established on the national level (Marijnissen 2018).

In this context, the party positions itself on the side of the people, such that its election programme aides the people to regain political power (Roemer 2017) and thus realise what

should have been realised before in the first place: that political decisions should be informed by the interests of the common people (Marijnissen 2018). Note here how "working for everyone" does not really mean everyone – as has been already foreshadowed in the values section – but those who are not identified with wealth.

As its achievements contributing thereto, the Socialist Party claims that, due to its activity,[249] cuts of disability benefits have been put off the table (Roemer 2015), that, in certain areas, local associations already managed to obtain rent reductions (Roemer 2017), and that it collected a substantial amount of signatures to strengthen the care system as a result of which additional funds have been invested into nursing homes (Marijnissen 2018). Moreover, drawing from the party's self-ascribed historical struggle, the Socialist Party links itself to the fight and subsequential establishment of equal rights for women (Marijnissen 2018).

4. Sweden: Left Party

For the Left Party, three speeches have been selected for the main sample, all three of which been held by then-party-leader Jonas Sjöstedt. These include his 2015 speech held during the Left Days event (Vänsterdagarna) and his 2016 and 2018 speeches held at the national party congress. Similarly to the Socialist Party in the Netherlands, the Left Party has remained in opposition for the whole duration of the investigation period – and generally ever since its formation in 1917, when it split from the Swedish Social Democratic Party –, though it for some time lent parliamentary support to the Swedish left-wing government led by the Swedish Social Democratic Party. Against this background, the Left Party addresses political achievements in its speeches, which are linked to the party's alleged influence on other parties, specifically the left-wing government and its (historical) participation in popular mobilisation.

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[249] According to the party, those achievements have been realised through successful negotiations with or through putting pressure on the government with the help of the populace.

4.1. Values

The Left Party, repeatedly and explicitly, links itself to a wide array of values (respectively appertaining sets of ideas) which can be circumscribed as gravitating around its outlook on the different aspects of justice (Sjöstedt 2015, 2018) and fairness (Sjöstedt 2016). Here, similarly to the Dutch Socialist Party, the Left Party's ideas vastly draw from a multidimensional notion of equality (Sjöstedt 2016, 2018) and an international perspective on solidarity (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016).

The party subsequently puts forward an array of ideas, which refer to equality's different dimensions. Perhaps most prominently, those include: (left-wing) feminism, socialism (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016, 2018) and anti-racism (Sjöstedt 2015). Those labels can be understood as representing the party's idea of equality along the demarcation lines of gender/sex, race/ethnicity and class/wealth.[250] Through the identification of adversarial concepts, then, the party positions itself against patriarchy, capitalism and class society (Sjöstedt 2016), which can be considered states of inequality the Left Party takes to prevail.

In either one of those dimensions, the Left Party's notion of equality carries a strong material implication. That is, the party generally endorses the welfare state and holds that everyone should benefit from it (Sjöstedt 2015), which, in turn, means that existing gaps (say, between rich and poor or across genders) should be alleviated (Sjöstedt 2016). The goal thereof is providing everyone with the same chances and opportunities (Sjöstedt 2018) so that everyone has the freedom to make own choices and to realise one's dreams independently of the circumstances – and particularly of the financial situation – of one's birth (Sjöstedt 2016). For this, in turn, material security is considered foundational, so that the party seeks to ultimately make the people both freer and richer (Sjöstedt 2016). As already noted, those provisions driving equality are scope-wise not restricted to the Swedish citizens or residents but instead

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[250] In the cases of socialism and feminism, the link to equality is explicitly established (Sjöstedt 2016).

carry international aspirations (Sjöstedt 2015). While the party does not elaborate much on what exactly this means in its speeches, it repeatedly calls for solidarity with refugees (Sjöstedt 2015) and, as evidence for the own orientation towards social justice, cites how its party members practically have been providing aid to refugees (Sjöstedt 2016).

In light of the party's multi-dimensional understanding of equality it can be assumed that, for example when it speaks of seeking to establish a popular movement across Sweden (Sjöstedt 2015), the party includes a diverse range of persons into its notion of the people, freeing the scope of persons for which Swedish politics should administer justice from the restriction of a particular origin. This is suggested, for example, by the party holding that refugees can become part of Sweden (Sjöstedt 2015) or by its acknowledgement of the diversity in its own base of supporters (while simultaneously assuming that they are bound by a common vision). Noteworthy, however, that diverse body is contrasted in terms of economic power from the wealthy. As we shall see, this understanding which is inclusive along several dimensions but exclusive in terms of economic status substantially informs both the issue identification and the formulation of demands the party puts forward.

4.2. Issues

Driven by the economic implications of its understanding of equality, the Left Party identifies and addresses a wide array of economic issues, which overall, gravitate around the gap between the wealthy and the non-wealthy against the background of perceived insufficiency of infrastructural and welfare provisions.

It is, for example, criticised that unemployment is too high (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016) and rents/pensions (Sjöstedt 2016, 2018) as well as wages are too low (Sjöstedt 2016), that there is not enough (affordable) housing (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016), that elderly care facilities are understaffed (Sjöstedt 2015) and that, on the most general level, there are too many without

sufficient material security (Sjöstedt 2016), who can barely make ends meet and obtain necessary goods (Sjöstedt 2018).

From a social perspective, the party moreover criticises Sweden for being a class based, patriarchal society as well as for the prevalence of racist narratives in political discourse (Sjöstedt 2016). Regarding the latter, the party especially points out that its right-wing competitors, aided by parts of the economic elite, link refugees to crime and poverty (Sjöstedt 2015) and in doing so frame refugees as a threat, thus aggravating the already existing financial inequality and poverty within the Swedish society (Sjöstedt 2016). In light of its internationalist outlook on solidarity, the Left Party relatedly criticises the EU's decision to fund refugee camps in Turkey instead of accepting them into the EU, which the party takes to essentially abandon asylum rights and put children at risk (Sjöstedt 2016).

As a major cause of those developments the Left Party identifies what it refers to as "bourgeois politics" (Sjöstedt 2015), which has been facilitating inequality and the gaps between rich and poor (Sjöstedt 2018) and between classes and overtime has led to a decline in both welfare as well as infrastructural provisions (Sjöstedt 2015). It should be noted that those developments are considered a deliberate result of government policies: The Left Party accuses the government that the economy is rigged in favour of the rich (Sjöstedt 2018), in practice resulting in a reverse redistribution of capital from bottom to top (Sjöstedt 2016). As evidence thereof the party cites that the government has reduced taxes for the rich, thus effectively redirecting money from welfare to tax heavens, and that it further seeks to lower wages and rents (Sjöstedt 2016) as well as that, in general, the wealthy but not the rest has benefitted from so-called economic growth (Sjöstedt 2018). Importantly, the party's critique is not exhausted by addressing what it considers unfair government policies but reaches deeper to the very system of economy as such, since the party rejects capitalism in which big companies allegedly put short term profits before everything else (Sjöstedt 2016).

The Left Party connects this systemic critique to a comprehensive critique of all its political competitors amongst the Swedish parties. Here, it must be noted that, while the party explicitly criticises the right-wing ("nonsocialist") parties for pinning Swedes against refugees and for facilitating this sort of politics by collaborating with the rich at the expense of the poor (Sjöstedt 2016) to secure profits (Sjöstedt 2015), it also takes the rest of its political competitors to be complicit therein. That is, the Left Party criticises that other left-wing parties do not propose solutions to those problems (Sjöstedt 2015) and, having given in to resignation and abandoning the hope that change is possible (Sjöstedt 2018), do not commit themselves to changing the country the right-wing parties (who, over a part of the investigation period had also been in government) left behind (Sjöstedt 2016).

Given Sweden's party landscape, the latter critique is explicitly directed against the Swedish Green Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party. About the Social Democrats the party consternates that they lost the spark they once had (Sjöstedt 2018) and, resulting therefrom, deliver much of the same policy outputs they previously criticised within the right-wing parties. Those include, for example, lowering taxes for the rich (Sjöstedt 2016), property taxes on luxury real estate being only insignificantly higher than on regular housing, curbing sickness benefits, raising the retirement age, attempting to limit striking rights, as well as strengthening the military and taking a tougher stance on refugees (Sjöstedt 2018). Regarding the Greens, in contrast, the Left Party holds that all their agreeable political outputs are mere copies of policies suggested by the Left Party in the first place (Sjöstedt 2016).

From this evaluation of its political competitors, the Left Party concludes that it not only is the only Swedish party that is clearly positioned against what it considers right-wing politics (Sjöstedt 2018) but that it importantly also is the only party that is truly committed to green-left values and in line therewith the only party which actively pursues to reduce inequality (Sjöstedt 2016). In short: other parties are either openly colluding with the economic elites

(referring to venture capitalists and profit hunters as enemies, Sjöstedt 2016) and supporting bourgeois politics – which, according to the Left Party's analysis is an if not *the* source of all major issues in the country – or, either through hypocrisy or incompetence, failing to reverse its effects respectively indirectly contribute to its continuation.

Note how this framing subsumes society into either the capital and its aides or the rest, understood as the non-wealthy. While the party overall avoids referring to the latter group to as the people, it makes no doubt that politics should facilitate the interests of the latter group and that the major issues this group faces are caused by the former group and by the fact that politics has promoted its interests against those of the latter group. In putting this framing forward, the other demarcation lines of (in)equality are, as emphasised earlier, linked to an economic underpinning. Given this picture, even prima facie non-economic issues such as the alleged anti-refugee politics of the right-wing parties are re-related to the above distinction. For example, the critique of the right-wing parties' anti-immigration policies is linked to the accusation of them acting in the interests of the capital by framing refugees as being responsible for the economic decline of many Swedes and in doing so concealing that this is due to the capital and appertaining "bourgeois" politics. Note also that while the former group, the non-wealthy, is established in its diversity along some dimensions (ethnicity, religion, age etc.) and the latter group, the wealthy, is not, the Left Party essentially treats both groups as mutually exclusive monoliths in terms of assumed economic interests.

4.3. Demands and Achievements

In line with the previous subsection's depiction of issues (and their facilitating conditions) identified by the Left Party, the party's demands unsurprisingly gravitate around promoting the material status of the non-rich under the call of curbing inequality on the one hand and, linked thereto, around a call for increasing burdens on the wealthy on the other.

From a general perspective, the party holds that the government should increase investments across a wide array of fields relating to welfare and infrastructure (Sjöstedt 2015). Here, the party particularly stresses the importance of investments into housing, public transport, health- and elderly-care, education (Sjöstedt 2015), a green economy (Sjöstedt 2015, 2018) and more generally measures oriented towards the future (Sjöstedt 2015).

More concrete demands the party puts forward to reduce inequality and promote wellbeing moreover include, for example: in light of the presumed potentials of digitalisation and robotisation (Sjöstedt 2018) the introduction of a six hours working day, the simplification of taking credits for investments, renovating suburbs and rural areas, better working conditions and more employees in elderly care, the reduction of income inequality between men and women, expanding mental health services (particularly for young girls, Sjöstedt 2015), active measures to reduce the unemployment amongst young people, and the creation of more safe spaces for women (Sjöstedt 2016).

To fund those investments and provisions, the Left Party demands more redistribution from (economic) top to bottom (Sjöstedt 2016). This redistribution ought to be conducted through taxation (Sjöstedt 2015) and shall promote the wealthy's contribution towards the common good (Sjöstedt 2018). In this context, the party suggests increasing overall taxes for those better off and furthermore calls for introducing a tax on wealth on the one hand and curbing what it conceives of as unfair tax deductions (Sjöstedt 2015) as well as generally more strongly controlling capital and investment (Sjöstedt 2015) on the other. In addition, it demands that welfare measures be decoupled from profit interests (partially achieved, see next paragraph) as well as that more burdens be put on emission intensive businesses thus challenging big business to reach the party's climate goals (Sjöstedt 2016).

Against the backdrop of those policy goals, the party, despite never having been in government itself, proclaims to have made some substantial achievements in pursuing left-

green policies through successful negotiation with the government. In doing so, it claims to have contributed to several reforms and the establishment respectively increase of provisions that aim for the reduction of inequality and increase of welfare (Sjöstedt 2016). Those include: a budget for the sick, an activity allowance, a housing allowance for elderly with low pensions, increased support of single parent households (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016), free medicine provisions for children (Sjöstedt 2018), the abolition of fees (Sjöstedt 2015) as well as an increase of staff in elderly care (Sjöstedt 2016), more funds for women issues (Sjöstedt 2015, 2018), more housing (Sjöstedt 2015), large investments into public services in municipalities and county councils intended to hire more staff in the health system (Sjöstedt 2016), and the introduction of benefits for low wage workers in Stockholm (Sjöstedt 2015). Moreover, the party claims to have altered the government's attitude towards welfare so that it now operates independently of profit interests (Sjöstedt 2015, 2016).

5. Poland: Law and Justice

For the Polish party Law and Justice, five speeches have been included in the main sample, all five of which have been held by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who acted as party leader of Law and Justice throughout the investigation period. These include his speeches held at the national party convention in 2015, 2018 and 2019 and his speeches held at the national party congress in 2016, and 2017. Law and Justice has transitioned from opposition to government in the course of the investigation period. Whereas the party has been in opposition during the time of the included 2015 speech, it has later in the same year won an absolute majority at the national elections and subsequently entered government. At the 2019 national elections, Law and Justice could defend its absolute majority, so that it remains the sole governing party at the time of this subsection's composition. While this has not had a strong impact on the party's expressed values, issues or demands – which have essentially remained stable as with all

investigated parties – the party, unsurprisingly, addresses more achievements during its time in government than during its time in opposition.

5.1. Values

The values Law and Justice endorses during its speeches can most poignantly be summarised as a combination of a comprehensive equality amongst the Poles covering both, cultural as well as material dimensions in conjuncture with a defence and consolidation of Polish sovereignty. As shall become evident in what follows, the notion of Polishness employed in this context is predominantly linked to an extra-legal, historical, cultural and religious belonging assumed by the party to be shared by the Poles. On the basis thereof, the party seeks to facilitate economic equality between the Poles. The call for sovereignty, then, is in light thereof, amongst other things, means to prevent damages of both Polish culture as well as the economic wellbeing of the Poles from external forces.

To understand the party's notion of equality, it is first necessary to understand the ontological presuppositions of the notion of the people to which it is applied and which is rooted in their shared belonging. That is, Law and Justice's idea of the Polish people is based on an understanding of the nation of the Poles as a community of shared spiritual and material properties (Kaczynski 2017). This mutual belonging is informed by Christianity, Polish tradition and culture, which serve as the foundation of the notions of freedom and equality the party endorses for the Polish people (Kaczynski 2019).

Here, it must be emphasised that, while equality of the Poles is taken to be imperative across several dimensions, there are differences in terms of the handling of those different dimensions. That is, whereas what I subsume under the notion of cultural equality is ex ante assumed as the very foundation of the Polish nation and hence, where it is policy subject, is to be defended, (sufficient) material equality is empirically observed to not prevail. Hence,

whereas real existing cultural differences amongst the Poles are defined away and neglected, economic differences are well recognised and targeted by corrective measures.

Economically, the party, beyond equal rights of all Poles (Kaczynski 2016) before the law (Kaczynski 2019, particularly regardless of wealth, Kaczynski 2016) and equality of freedom (Kaczynski 2019) stresses the importance of equality of opportunity (Kaczynski 2017, 2019) as well as the equalisation of the standard of living between different regions, rural and urban areas and different social groups (Kaczynski 2016). Freedom and equality are not endorsed for their own sake but, as part of the party's vision of a fair (Kaczynski 2017) and solidary (Kaczynski 2016) country, are considered vital for the right of the Poles to a dignified life (Kaczynski 2019). For this, however, the material needs of the Poles must be met for they must be enabled to realise their plans of life (speaking of following one's dreams, Kaczynski 2018). In this context, the party links a strong state to welfare and infrastructural provisions (e.g., housing and roads) (Kaczynski 2016) and emphasises that the lives of Poles should be improved (including incentivising the return of Poles residing abroad, Kaczynski 2016, 2017).

From a cultural perspective – and against the background of communism and post-communism –, Law and Justice moreover emphasises the importance of structures (re-)producing Polish culture. In particular, it holds that what it refers to as "traditional intelligence" should be rebuild and revitalised. Regarding what this traditional intelligence concretely includes, Kaczynski does not go into detail, however, he links it to patriotism, social service and the (Catholic) church (Kaczynski 2017).

Here, the tension in the party's notion of freedom should be noted. That is, it refers to people being able "to follow their dreams" and hence relies on the provision of material appertaining preconditions (Kaczynski 2019). Yet, since the party assumes a shared sense of belonging between all Poles, it does not take its cultural offensive – which explicitly upheaves

certain social and cultural arrangements and values (associated with Polish culture, history, religion etc.) over others – to impair freedom.

Against this background, the party aims to change the entire shape of social and public life, hence offering a full alternative for the development of Poland (Kaczynski 2016), which is considered to be in the interest of all Poles (Kaczynski 2015) and thus to constitute a common cause, which must be consolidated (Kaczynski 2017). To do so, the unity of the Polish homeland (Kaczynski 2015) must be upheld (Kaczynski 2016, 2017). Internally, this means that the Polish republic must be repaired (Kaczynski 2017) after the alleged developments following the fall of communism (Kaczynski 2016). Externally, this means to secure Polish freedom and sovereignty, understood as the right of the Polish nation to be master over its own affairs (Kaczynski 2016), and to oppose exploitation and hegemonial aspirations of others (Kaczynski 2017). In this context, Law and Justice emphasises the importance of both internal and external security, of defending the Polish people against the exploitation of their labour force (Kaczynski 2016), of energy security, and of preserving the right of Poland to refuse the receipt of refugees (Kaczynski 2017).[251]

Against this background, the party seeks to construct a free (Kaczynski 2016), strong and thriving Poland in Europe (Kaczynski 2018), albeit conceiving the EU mainly as an instrument to promote Polish economic and military security (Kaczynski 2017).

In terms of facilitating this project, Law and Justice repeatedly ascribes to itself being honest, competent (Kaczynski 2016, 2017, 2019), reliable (Kaczynski 2018), credible (Kaczynski 2019) and overall, in contrast to its post-communist competitors, to follow a raison d'état (Kaczynski 2016).[252] Moreover, the party conceives its advocacy for the presumed Polish

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[251] In particular, Kaczynski justifies this by arguing that Poland did neither call for refugees nor utilised their labour force nor was responsible for the causes leading to their flight (Kaczynski 2017).
[252] Linking this to traditional values, this is exemplified by Beate Szydlo, former prime minister of Poland, who is depicted as being honest, hard-working and reliable on the one hand while being a wife and mother in charge of the household on the other (Kaczynski 2015).

cause as a continuation of pope John Paul II and the solidarity movement, whose path for the equality and freedom of the Poles it claims to continue (Kaczynski 2019), on the one hand and as a defence of democracy (Kaczynski 2016, 2017), the rule of law and the constitution, in particular the separation of powers, on the other (Kaczynski 2016).

5.2. Issues

Overall, the issues identified by Law and Justice can be categorised along the lines of the value endorsements reconstructed in the previous subsection. That is, the party criticises (and respectively seeks to alleviate) material inequality and a decline of Polish culture and links this to both, external and internal threats.

The party's identification of external threats covers both economic as well as socio-cultural issues. The EU is criticised for seeking to oblige Poland to take refugees in (Kaczynski 2016) and for the pressure put on Poland for its refusal of doing so (Kaczynski 2017), which is understood as a refusal to accept Polish sovereignty and subsequently as an attack on the Polish people. It should be noted, however, that Law and Justice does not reject the EU as such. Instead, its own vision of the EU is one that does not interfere into the inner affairs of its member states and hence maintains the specific cultures that prevail in them. To this, the party refers to as a "union of nations" relying on the principle of subsidiarity (Kaczynski 2016). Economically, it is moreover criticised that Poland is internationally exploited as a source of cheap labour (Kaczynski 2016), that foreign companies make profits by relying on companies in Poland, yet do not pay taxes thus effectively extracting capital from the Polish economy, and that Poland has not received sufficient compensation after World War II (Kaczynski 2017).

Domestically, the most pressing economic issue is considered inequality (Kaczynski 2019), the downside of which can particularly be observed in rural areas. This decline of the countryside (of villages in particular), which is further exacerbated by state-owned land being

sold, not only impairs the life opportunities of many children but also leads to a cultural loss as, for example, local artists and other cultural workers often can no longer support themselves (Kaczynski 2017).

Other examples of economic and infrastructural deficiencies the party identifies include that: costs of labour are too high (Kaczynski 2019), the administration of the health services provided by hospitals is too complicated and the number of health care facilities is insufficient, that, with view to the countryside again, farmers are obliged to have written contracts and that the overall structure of the social life effectively excludes poorer people from the public (Kaczynski 2017). Jointly, those economic issues, against the backdrop of foreign economic exploitation of Poland, are considered to restrict the freedom of the Polish population (Kaczynski 2019).

The domestic threats to the well-being of the Poles identified by Law and Justice, however, are not limited to the economy but also cover social affairs (Kaczynski 2015, 2017). While the economic precarity of cultural entrepreneurs in the countryside has been already noted, the most central theme in the speeches covered by the investigation period is that of presumably Muslim refugees and their alleged threat to the very way of Polish public life (Kaczynski 2016). That is, Law and Justice considers the arrival of refugees a social catastrophe, stresses the (alleged) economic issues linked to their receipt and frames them as a security threat to Poland through linking them to Islamist terror. Hence, refugees are considered a multidimensional threat to the quality of life of Poles (Kaczynski 2017).

Politically, Law and Justice's critique is strongly linked to the malperformance of its competitors. It is important to note that this critique is twofold, though the second part is more thoroughly elaborated. On the one hand, it relates to its competitors' failures to produce good political outcomes. On the other hand, it relates to the active threat its political competitors pose to the realisation of the values identified in the previous subsection.

As to the former, Law and Justice generally holds that its competitors, in particular the previous government, simply failed to improve the lives of Poles through good governance (Kaczynski 2017). As to the latter, Law and Justice holds that its political competitors, and especially the previous governmental coalition, erode(d) the Polish constitution and democracy. In this context, the party presents the view that the previous government illegally installed constitutional justices (which the Law and Justice supported President Duda did not confirm) (Kaczynski 2016) and holds that those judges installed by its competitors are both incompetent and dishonest (Kaczynski 2017). Likewise, it denounces Andrzej Rzeplinski, former president of the Polish constitutional court, as being an opponent of the constitution (Kaczynski 2016).[253] Simultaneously, the party expresses criticism of the current composition of the constitution itself for presumably putting unnecessary, artificial restrictions on the freedom of local governments (Kaczynski 2016) and of the electoral law, for it considers single seat election districts in municipalities to leave a significant part of the electorate without representation, thus being vulnerable to abuse (Kaczynski 2017). Against this background, Law and Justice identifies its political opponents as a threat to both equality and freedom (Kaczynski 2019).

In light of this, Law and Justice considers itself a full alternative to the status quo, providing new proposals to societal organisation at large (Kaczynski 2016). The proclaimed goal thereof is hereby nothing less than to, through a substantial reconstruction of the Republic of Poland (Kaczynski 2017), correct all bad developments which have amassed during the post-communist period (Kaczynski 2016).

Precisely because Law and Justice considers itself to provide a true alternative to its political opponents, it holds that a unified front exists in Poland which is positioned against

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[253] Noteworthy, the alleged illegality of the constitutional court's acting seems to be derived from Law and Justice's view that the constitutional court should not evaluate the constitutionality of laws. Allegedly taking inspiration from the Dutch model, this is a model they seek to introduce to Polish law as well (Kaczynski 2016).

Law and Justice. This front unjustly denies the party's ability to govern, is not interested in fair discussion or dialogue, but instead is dishonest, malicious (Kaczynski 2018) and incompetent (Kaczynski 2019). As to its composition, Law and Justice holds that its unfair treatment is perpetrated both by competing parties as well as by allegedly associated media (Kaczynski 2016).[254] In this context, Law and Justice accuses parts of the media of violating the principles of proper journalism (Kaczynski 2017), by being biased (presumably against Law and Justice) in its coverage. To this alleged distortion of media coverage, the party refers as partial pluralism (Kaczynski 2017) and holds that it is deliberately employed by its facilitators as propaganda meant to deceive the Poles (Kaczynski 2018).

In short, Law and Justice holds that all its political opponents and media reporting about the party in a way considered unfavourable are a) promoting a political agenda from which the Polish people (due to incompetence or bad will) suffer and b) colluding against the only political force acting for the benefit of the Poles. This way, opposition to its political agenda is per default identified as disadvantageous for the Polish people and hence illegitimate. This may illuminate what Kaczynski means when he expresses the view that opponents exist both on an internal and external level (Kaczynski 2016).

5.3. Demands and Achievements

In light of the issues identified in the previous subsection, Law and Justice's demands can be understood as measures contributing to the reparation of the Polish republic through reversing the course of political events facilitated by its opponents (Kaczynski 2016). The concrete demands and outputs arising from this project can hereby be understood by reference to the party's notions of freedom and equality (and through this sovereignty) in light of its

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[254] As exemplificatory evidence thereof it stresses that the media (during the party's time in opposition) did not properly report on Law and Justice, meanwhile favourably reporting about its (left-wing) opponents. For example, it is claimed that the media covered up the allegedly pro-Russian (and hence anti-Polish) policies of the past government (Kaczynski 2016).

assumptions regarding the Polish populace's composition introduced in subsection 5.1. That is, they are mostly concerned with 1) alleviating presumably prevailing economic and material inequality through an increase of welfare and infrastructural provisions while defending presumably prevailing cultural, historical and religious unity and hence equality, and 2) strengthening Polish sovereignty and promoting its vision of the state institutions. Those measures, then, are directed against both domestic and foreign agents which are associated with obstructing the realisation of 1) and 2). Though the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of the party's demands are intertwined, they will, for the sake of clarity, be depicted separately in what follows.

Economically, the party is committed to closing the gap between the rich and the poor (Kaczynski 2019). Examples of measures proposed for this purpose include: a general tax reform to promote a better economic management of the state (Kaczynski 2016, 2017), lowering the costs of labour and increasing rents (Kaczynski 2019) as well as utilising funds received from the EU to strengthen the economy at large but also to support Polish households in particular (Kaczynski 2016). Moreover, Law and Justice demands a health system reform to increase its resilience against abuse of funds, an education reform raising the quality of teaching, amongst other things, that the social system is changed to incentivise the birth of more children (Kaczynski 2017), that the retirement age be not raised (at least during Kaczynski's 2015 speech in opposition) and that the state in cooperation with local governments provides more affordable housing, thus promoting the inclusion of the poor into social life with respective obligations for property developers (Kaczynski 2017).

Culturally, the party overall seeks to defend Polish culture and tradition (Kaczynski 2019). This involves the promotion of elements identified as Polish on the one hand and simultaneously curbing elements which are not on the other. To strengthen Polish culture in the educational context, the party proposes to (in the context of the educational reform

addressed in the previous paragraph) rebuild vocational education so that, beside technical skills, cultural knowledge is taught which would enable the students to understand and participate in the social life of the Polish cultural nation, to include patriotic textbooks into the curricula,[255] and to introduce the teaching of aesthetics to celebrate Polish culture. In addition, for the purpose of revitalising what Kaczynski refers to as "traditional intelligence" and related to patriotism, social service and the church, and to strengthen Polish culture, it is proposed to create cultural centres, as well as more people's universities throughout the country and to increase support for creators of culturally relevant content, including filmmakers and artists (especially in the economically depleted provinces). To contain anti-Polish cultural developments, then, the party at the same time calls for cutting public funds for journalistic enterprises which allegedly promote, inaccurate, anti-Polish historical narratives,[256] and moreover for defunding projects considered anti-Polish (Kaczynski 2017).

Politically, on the international level the party refuses the receipt of refugees and calls for transforming the EU into a union of nations so that the specifics of the assumed Polishness as well as the sovereignty of the state are respected (Kaczynski 2016). Domestically, it proposes substantial amendments to existing political institutions. The most vivid examples thereof mentioned in the speeches include changing the constitution to, according to Kaczynski, adapt it to the Polish socio-political reality and make Poland more sovereign (Kaczynski 2016), improving the organisation of Poland's armed forces, reforming the courts and introducing changes to the electoral system (referring to making it less prone to fraud, Kaczynski 2017).[257]

Towards all those ends, Law and Justice claims vast successes since entering government in 2015. Firstly, the party accredits itself to have undertaken reforms of the Polish political

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[255] In this context, Kaczynski speaks of making the view of Polish patriots equivalent to that of others in school.
[256] His allegation is expressed in relation to anti-Jewish sentiments in occupied Poland during World War II.
[257] Concretely, it is suggested to install surveillance cameras at voting premises, to use transparent urns, to employ novel counting mechanisms and to make the organisation of the elections independent from its participants (Kaczynski 2017).

institutions, which are deemed necessary in light of the issues previously identified. Without reference to technicalities, those most importantly include: the creation of new ministries, the introduction of a new civil service law allowing for easier personnel changes,[258] the modernisation of uniformed services, a restructuring of the armed forces, a revision of the role of the prosecutor general,[259] changes to the constitutional court and the establishment of a national media council (Kaczynski 2017).

Secondly, the party holds to have enhanced Polish security. This includes improving its military security through active and thorough participation in the NATO and improving its energy security through facilitating energy projects (referring to the promotion of projects to import gas from the USA and Norway, Kaczynski 2017).[260]

Thirdly, Law and Justice refers to several welfare and infrastructural provisions it has implemented or improved. Examples thereof are: a lowering of the retirement age, an improved medicine provision for the elderly, the introduction of a minimum wage and minimum hour contracts, a ban of the commercialisation of health care as well as a ban of selling land owned by the state, additional funds for environmental protection and for agricultural projects (Kaczynski 2017), and raises of pensions (with further raises of the minimum pension being planned, Kaczynski 2019).

Fourthly, some of the achievements Law and Justice refers to can be considered to have been employed to promote (views on) Polish culture and history deemed appropriate by the party while containing those that are deemed inappropriate. Although, as will be further elaborated in the third part of the thesis, not all such measures factually implemented by the party are addressed in Kaczynski's speeches included in the main sample, there certainly are a

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[258] Note that while those changes have been associated by Kaczynski with the label of "efficient government" they effectively allow the government to remove civil servants deemed not loyal to the party.
[259] Reintegrating its office with the office of the Minister of Justice and expanding the competences of both in terms of controlling the judiciary.
[260] Though this is not made explicit, this can be contrasted with an alleged risk to Polish security, posed by energy dependence from states considered a danger to polish interests.

few measures that can be understood as contributing to this cultural agenda of the party. This includes, in addition to the media council mentioned above, overall changes to the television and the media more broadly,[261] reforms to higher education including the introduction of a new algorithm for the allocation of funds to universities,[262] and the creation of the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning tasked with improving the aesthetics of Polish villages and cities (Kaczynski 2017).

6. Ireland: We Ourselves

For the Irish We Ourselves, five speeches have been selected for the main sample. All five speeches have been held at the party's National Party Congress. These include the 2015, 2016 and 2017 speeches held by long-time (then) party leader Gerry Adams and the 2018 and 2019 speeches held by the current party leader Mary Lou MacDonald. It should be noted that We Ourselves is as a party uniquely present in two countries: in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland belonging to the United Kingdom. As we shall see, this unique characteristic is deeply reflected in the discourse of the party. Accordingly, the party's governmental history differs across its two locations. Whereas We Ourselves is sharing government in Northern Ireland with the Democratic Unionist Party ever since the St Andrews Agreement from October 2006 (with Michelle O'Neill currently acting as We Ourselves' deputy First Minister) it has remained in opposition (or abstained from elections to begin with) in the Republic of Ireland for the entirety of its history with a noteworthy exception in 1922, where it led a minority government. Note that this notwithstanding the party's positionings covered by the sampled speeches were on the one hand stable across the investigation period and on the other hand did

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[261] Kaczynski explains that those changes are meant to ensure true pluralism that allows everyone to watch what one wants, thus correcting the media's distortion criticised in the previous subsection. However, from what has been said so far this can be interpreted as an attempt to curb unfavourable coverage.

[262] While the details of those changes are not explained in Kaczynski's speeches, it can be considered that they are linked to the party's commitment of strengthening patriotic views in education contexts and the introduction of teaching so-called cultural knowledge.

address the situation in the Republic of Ireland as well as in Northern Ireland. This, too, does not come as a surprise given the party's prominent goal of uniting North and South in a single Republic.

6.1. Values

Overall, the values referred to in We Ourselves' discourse covered by the investigation gravitate around the combination of a particular understanding of the Irish nation with a particular vision of equality.

The most prominent proposition endorsed by We Ourselves is certainly that of the national and political (Adams 2015) unity of Ireland (McDonald 2019). This unification of the Republic of Ireland with Northern Ireland is explicitly declared to constitute the party's main objective (McDonald 2018) and is considered to be grounded in the Irish people's right for sovereignty and independence (Adams 2016). As to the circumstances of this unity, We Ourselves holds that it should be to the benefit of the entirety of the Irish people (Adams 2015), so that all Irish can live united and in harmony (McDonald 2018). Taking notice of the differences existing within the Irish people (McDonald 2018), Ireland thus understood should be a true homeland to the Irish in all their diversity. Noteworthy, the party emphasises that this does cover unionists in the North as well (Adams 2016, 2017; McDonald 2018).

Regarding the criteria of Irishness, however, the party does not provide a straightforward answer. On the one hand, the party stresses the notion of citizenship – for example when expressing that it wishes for a society based on citizen rights across the island (Adams 2015) or when it puts forward that the EU should be based on citizen rights and equality (Adams 2016) – and, as noted in the foregoing paragraph, recognises that the Irish people, without pre-empting a definition of what they are, are heterogenous. On the other hand, We Ourselves refers to an Irish identity (Adams 2016) and appears to assume some shared origin or belonging in

this regard. The latter can be not only seen in its discussion of the Irish' historical struggle for sovereignty and independence, but also when it raises the idea of extending voting rights to emigrated Irish (Adams 2015) in Northern Ireland as well as overseas (Adams 2015, 2017). While this Irishness across borders, of course, could be understood in terms of citizenship too, a certain tension remains in the party's notion of Irishness and thus in its understanding of the Irish people referred to in its speeches. This is the tension between Irishness legally grounded in citizenship (of an open, internationally interconnected state) and Irishness pre-legally based on a common history, origin and identity.

Note that, although this Janus-faced notion of the people may be considered problematic for reasons of ideological inconsistency, its two aspects in tension do not conflict in the areas of the notion's evocation. This is the case, because they can be understood as tracking the demarcation lines of the party's discourse in terms of internal affairs and foreign affairs:[263] identity, history etc. and subsequently the Irish people in a collective sense are evoked when addressing questions of sovereignty while Irishness as a legal concept applying to individuals is evoked when discussing what rights the citizenry has and what the political implications thereof are etc.

Here, it must be noted that the party's vision of a unified Ireland is also accompanied by respectively is embedded into a comprehensive vision of equality (Adams 2016, 2017; McDonald 2018), which encompasses social (Adams 2015) and economic equality (McDonald 2019) as well as civil and political equality (Adams 2015; McDonald 2018) and is closely linked to the notions of freedom and solidarity (Adams 2016, 2017). Note that this notion of equality not only informs the party's view on domestic affairs but also its vision of the EU, since We Ourselves wishes for the EU to be based on citizen rights and equality (Adams 2016).

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[263] Especially the relation to the United Kingdom and the foreclosing of Irish unity.

Socio-economically, We Ourselves' perspective of equality is linked to its understanding of economic fairness (specifically in the context of post-crisis recovery, Adams 2015, 2016) or justice (Adams 2016; McDonald 2019), which is on base level grounded in the conviction that the economy should serve the people and not vice versa (Adams 2015). Drawing the picture of a society which is both equal and prosperous (McDonald 2019), We Ourselves evokes the idea of shared prosperity (McDonald 2018) and emphasises the importance of the wellbeing of the masses (McDonald 2019). Doing so, the party also conceives of itself as advocating for people, who have been somewhat excluded from the priority of governmental political outputs, including people in rural areas, people of lower income (Adams 2017) who struggle to make ends meet (McDonald 2018), families struggling without proper services and communal support (Adams 2017) and workers (McDonald 2019). This way, opportunities shall be provided to all (Adams 2017; McDonald 2018), allowing everyone to reach their full potential (Adams 2017).

In light of this, the party stresses the importance of a variety of welfare, socio-economic and infrastructural provisions and projects, which should be provided across the country (Adams 2017) so that one can come into their enjoyment independently of one's place of living (more generally referring to equal rights, Adams 2016). Some, quite general, examples thereof include: good public services, adequate living wages, anti-poverty measures, disability support (Adams 2015), education, health, environmental protection (Adams 2015; McDonald 2018, 2019), housing (McDonald 2018) and legal medical protection for women (Adams 2017; McDonald 2018). Against this background, the party also endorses progressive taxation, presumably linking it to its vision of enabling a fair share in wealth (Adams 2015).

Finally, in terms of civil or political equality, We Ourselves emphasises the importance of equality before the law for the entirety of the citizenry (particularly regardless of sexual

orientation or gender), civil and religious liberties (Adams 2015), human rights and respect for different identities, cultures and religions rooted therein (McDonald 2018).

6.2. Issues

The issues We Ourselves identifies can be summed up as follows: a critique of socio-economic conditions, which are considered unjust, on the one hand and a critique of national economic and political elites, EU institutions and the British government, which are considered to be responsible for those conditions on the other.

Economically, We Ourselves criticises the prevalence of austerity and cutbacks in economic policy (McDonald 2018, 2019), which it identifies as remnants of what the party conceives as Thatcherism (Adams 2017). According to We Ourselves, the main benefactors of those policies are banks and corporations, which thrive(d) at the expense of the rest of the country. We Ourselves cites as examples thereof that the exploitation of natural resources has served the interests of multinational corporations rather than the common good (Adams 2015) in the face of an environmental emergency (McDonald 2019) and that public funds have been used to cover the debts of banks instead of being spent, say, to provide housing and jobs (Adams 2015; including bad banks and criminal institutions, Adams 2016). In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, then, this had highly detrimental effects on the Irish economy as it resulted in several hundred thousand of people being put out of work (Adams 2015).

Negative consequences of those policies include rising inequality, which especially in the North of the island is very high (referring to every third child living in poverty, Adams 2015, 2016), that many can barely make ends meet (Adams 2017), that the situation for many has worsened to a degree that they have been forced to look for opportunities abroad (Adams 2015) as well as general damages to the economy and infrastructure (McDonald 2018).

The economic inequalities and turbulences propelled by those policies also had various detrimental effects in the social realm, for which, too, We Ourselves holds the Irish government responsible. While not all issues listed in the following are explicitly linked by the party to the prevalence of "Tory austerity" (McDonald 2018) in economic policy depicted above, they can be assumed to have materialised or grown against this background. Concretely, social issues identified by We Ourselves, amongst other things, include: a decline of rural areas especially regarding the provision of public services (Adams 2015, 2016) of which the government has been negligent due to being out of touch with the rural population (particularly referring to workers and families, McDonald 2019); homelessness and homelessness amongst children (Adams 2016, 2017; McDonald 2019); a health crisis (McDonald 2019; referring to bad conditions in care facilities and hospitals and to too long waiting lists, Adams 2017; McDonald 2018, 2019); a (affordable) housing crisis (Adams 2016, McDonald 2018, 2019) in conjuncture with landlord interests being prioritised over renters' interests by other Irish parties, and the rising costs of childcare, which burden families and workers (McDonald 2019).

Note that, according to We Ourselves, those economic policies had been, in parts, pushed onto Ireland by EU institutions (referring to EU imperialists and emphasising that a true Irish Republic would not have tolerated this, Adams 2016). In terms of international pressure upon the Irish economy, the party also emphasises that the British government's terms on the United Kingdom's departure from the EU had not only threatened the Good Friday Agreement (Adams 2017) but more generally threatened Irish interests in the North as well as in Ireland itself (McDonald 2018). In addition, the British government is accused of criminalising Irish identity and deliberately withdrawing funds from Northern Ireland as a means of economic punishment,

thus furthering We Ourselves' perspective that it lacks legitimate authority (Adams 2015) over any part of the island (Adams 2016).[264]

More generally, We Ourselves links the issues described above to the actions of its political competitors. That is, other Irish parties are considered to have failed to stand up to those developments or to prioritise the interests of the wealthy (referring to landlord interests, McDonald 2019). Those establishment parties are not only detached from the life-worldly reality of regular people (referring to ordinary people's abandonment by the government, McDonald 2018; referring to the Family of the Irish government and workers and families in rural areas, McDonald 2019) but have also incorporated the aforementioned economic perspective into their own political actions. In this context, We Ourselves holds that they make politics in the interests of the wealthy (e.g., by privatising wealth during boom while publicising debts during crisis) or by straight out colluding with banks and subsequently veiling their culpability for the financial crisis of 2008 (Adams 2015).

Here, Irish parties on both sides of the border are not only considered responsible for those economic issues, but also for the very division of the island in North in South to begin with. Note that, in making this allegation, We Ourselves ties economic to political culpability: Departing from the position that the division of Ireland has (historically) been the result of a conservative counterrevolution enacted by elites (Adams 2015, 2016), the party expresses the view that in both parts of Ireland agents exists, which are against Irish unification. Importantly, those are considered to not be exhausted by the DUP in Northern Ireland (Adams 2015). Instead, the party holds that not only the British but also the Irish government is deriving the North of equal rights (Adams 2017) and fails to realise unification (Adams 2015), falsely

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[264] With the exception of financial policies and the concomitants of Brexit, international issues addressed by We Ourselves in the speeches covered by the investigation are limited to the occupation of the West Bank (the recognition of which the party demands, Adams 2015; McDonald 2018) and Ireland's participation in military missions abroad (holding that Ireland should remain neutral and peacefully contribute to solving the humanitarian and so-called refugee crisis in the MENA region, Adams 2016).

claiming that the vision of the Irish republic has been realised already (Adams 2016). Whereas Family of the Irish and Soldiers of Destiny are taken to having abandoned the North (McDonald 2019), other Irish parties, too, are considered to continuously avoid to meaningfully concern themselves with the matter of Irish unification (Adams 2017). It should be noted that while apart from the three aforementioned parties We Ourselves does not address any other parties by name, it does not exclude any political competitor from its general critique either.

This failure, however, is considered deliberate and not coincidental. We Ourselves, without providing further specification, accuses the government and, more broadly, the Irish elites of being corrupt and of having betrayed the project of Irish unification for reasons of self-interest (Adams 2017).[265] In this plot against the unification, the establishment (including the media, financial and political elites), then, not only colludes to protect its self-interests at the expense of the Irish population. It also engages in activities directed against We Ourselves – the only party truly committed to unification – to protect those interests (Adams 2017). As an example of this, the party claims that, in the South, the wealthy (explicitly mentioning banks and landlords) have joined forces to keep We Ourselves from entering government (McDonald 2019) and that its political competitors refuse cooperation despite the party's willingness (Adams 2016) and, instead, together with the media put untrue claims about the party forward (Adams 2015, 2016, 2017).

In short: The two most pressing issues established by We Ourselves in the speeches included in the sample are austerity (used as an umbrella term describing a particular economic policy, which curbs public spending and allegedly puts burdens on the regular people while benefitting financial elites) and the not yet realised unification of Ireland. Against this

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[265] Though We Ourselves appears to include the entirety of its political competitors on both sides of the Irish border into its critique, some part thereof is particularly related to the DUP in Northern Ireland. That is, it is claimed that parts of the DUP are corrupt and that, instead of caring for the provision of rights to the populace of Northern Ireland, the DUP's political actions are guided by the interests of its political survival (Adams 2017). Moreover, it is held to support the UK's departure from the EU (McDonald 2018, 2019), which has been established already as being detrimental to Irish interests.

background, We Ourselves, on the one hand, attests exclusively to itself to truly strive for the unification of Ireland, which, as depicted in the previous section, is framed to be advantageous to the entirety of the Irish people. And on the other hand, the party accuses its competitors and other forces not in line with its positions of both: being responsible for the major issues within the country (austerity and division) and colluding against We Ourselves and subsequently opposing the realisation of a politics from which the Irish would benefit.

6.3. Demands and Achievements

In light of the issues identified in the foregoing subsection, the demands We Ourselves puts forward can, without much surprise, be categorised into the promotion of true equality amongst the Irish, the abolition of austerity and the subsequent expansion of a myriad of welfare and infrastructural provisions, and the advancement of Irish unification.

In terms of economic policy, We Ourselves demands the end of austerity and, against the background of bailouts funded by the public, socialising profits generated during booms, replacing the property tax by a (to be introduced) wealth tax (Adams 2015) and, more generally, rendering taxation fairer by curbing tax exceptions for banks (McDonald 2019).

In addition, the party proposes a wide array of demands which concern infrastructural, welfare or, in the broadest sense, social provisions. Examples thereof include: the abolition of water charges (Adams 2015, 2016), improving the health system by creating more hospitals with better conditions (in terms of capacity, payment, investments, and waiting times, McDonald 2018), improving public transport, investing into housing, introducing rent controls, curbing homelessness (particularly ending evictions leading to homelessness, McDonald 2019), supporting families struggling with the maintenance of a home financially (Adams 2015), building more (affordable) housing (Adams 2016; McDonald 2019), supporting homeowners and buyers on the one hand and reducing insecurities for renters on the other hand

(Adams 2016), introducing an obligatory living wage and protecting workers' and union rights, raising pensions, turning childcare into a public service and making education free of charge (McDonald 2019), appropriation of essential broadband infrastructure by the state (assuming that through this it will reach left out rural areas, McDonald 2018), promotion of the development of rural areas in general (Adams 2015, 2016) and the adoption of measures to tackle climate change (zero net emissions, sustainable jobs, new infrastructure etc., McDonald 2019).

Politically, much of We Ourselves' demands are concerned with the status of Northern Ireland and the matter of unification. That is, the party objects/objected to the imposition of border controls or tariffs on the island as a potential consequence of the UK's departure from the EU (Adams 2016), demands the extension of voting rights both to Irish individuals living abroad as well as to the populace of Northern Ireland (Adams 2015) and that a special status be provided to Northern Ireland within the EU (Adams 2017), a referendum on unification, that the Irish government creates a transition plan for unification (including infrastructural preconditions, public services etc., McDonald 2019), stands up for the interests of all people in the island (Adams 2017), restores Northern Irish institutions (McDonald 2019) and promotes all Irish cooperation thus working towards unity (noting that the United Kingdom is legally obliged to accept unification, if the majority of Northern Ireland is in favour of it, Adams 2016). Apart from that, We Ourselves also demands the recognition of the West Bank (Adams 2015; McDonald 2018), the liberation of protesters from prison (Adams 2015) and the realisation of true marriage equality (Adams 2015; McDonald 2018).

Departing from those positionings, We Ourselves declares that a (truly) republican programme is a precondition of its entering government in the South (McDonald 2019) and emphasises that it is principally willing to work even with Unionists (who oppose Irish unity)

if it is for the mutual advantage of the Irish on both parts of the border, i.e. for Irish interests (Adams 2015; McDonald 2018).

Moreover, We Ourselves in this context identifies as its achievements: its contributions towards the Stormont House Agreement (Adams 2015) and the (renegotiation of the) Good Friday Agreement (Adams 2016), its work aiming at providing adequate institutions to Northern Ireland (referring to tolerance and equality, Adams 2017), its providing checks on the government during the financial crisis and offering own proposals, the (presumably in the North) creation of decent jobs and the implementation of additional protections and benefits for the disabled and patients in continuing care (Adams 2015).

7. Spain: Citizens

For the Spanish party Citizens, three speeches have been included into the main sample. All three speeches have been held by Albert Rivera, who acted as the party's leader from 2006 until the end of the investigation period in 2019. These include the 2015 speech held at the presentation of Rivera's candidacy for the government of Spain, his 2016 speech held at a rally in Barcelona and his 2017 speech held at the opening of the party's summer school. Citizens remained in opposition over the whole duration of the investigation period, albeit lending its parliamentary support to the People's Party under Mariano Rajoy following the 2016 general elections.

7.1. Values

Citizens references a variety of values in its discourse. Perhaps most characteristically, the party combines a particular vision of the constitutional project of Spain (Rivera 2015, 2017) with a particular approach to problem solving deemed appropriate considering the former (Rivera 2015).

Concretely, the party endorses what it refers to as constitutional patriotism (Rivera 2015; also labelled civil patriotism, Rivera 2017). Departing from the idea that the constitution is "sacred" (Rivera 2015) for the perimeters of political action, Citizens endorses what it takes to be covered by the constitutional vision. In doing so, the party, in the selected speeches, endorses democracy, freedom (Rivera 2015, 2016, 2017), the unity of Spain (Rivera 2015) solidarity and equality (of rights and freedoms) between all Spaniards (Rivera 2015, 2017) across the country (Rivera 2015), respect for journalism and the judiciary (Rivera 2016), the welfare state (particularly emphasising the importance of the health system and public education, Rivera 2015), a market economy (Rivera 2015, 2017) as well as a diverse (Rivera 2015) pluralistic society (Rivera 2016).[266] Moreover, Citizens takes a pro-European stance as it favours further European integration, the Euro and free movement within the EU (Rivera 2015) and has a rather positive, though not substantially articulated, attitude towards globalisation (under conditions of freedom and equality, Rivera 2017).

Note that here the constitution is, in a sense, understood as a common project of all Spaniards (referring to irrelevance of age differences, Rivera 2015). Thus, when the party addresses changes necessary in light of the prevailing issues identified in the next subsection, it considers to be concerned with all Spaniards understood as the sum of all Spanish citizens (referring to their right of representation, Rivera 2015; and equating the nation ultimately to the citizens, Rivera 2016) and hence to advocate change for all Spaniards (Rivera 2015).

Here, however, it must be added that this notwithstanding, when discussing whose interests the party's political demands would serve, the advocated group is less extensive and mostly gravitates around the middle class (Rivera 2015, 2017). While Citizens does not provide many clarificatory remarks on its understanding of the middle class' composition and

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[266] Here, Citizens also stresses that different identities need not be mutually exclusive or contradictory. This is exemplified by the compatibility of being all three: Catalan, Spanish and European (Rivera 2015).

subsequently on who is included therein, it can be considered a – to an unclear degree – excluding notion. For example, the party commends other countries (USA and Nordic countries in particular) for their presumed advocacy of working people (Rivera 2015), holds that politics must respond to the interests of law-abiding taxpayers (Rivera 2016), and, apparently assuming interests of this group, emphasises that they are interested in setting up enterprises, receiving good pensions as well as, generally, increase their wealth (Rivera 2015).

As to the modus operandi of political action aiming to solve issues, Citizens adopts a two-fold approach. On the one hand, the party emphasises the importance of expertise and professionalism to ensure that both congress and government live up to the highest standards. In this context, the party repeatedly stresses that its ranks are composed of experts of various kinds (legal, social, economic etc.) and that its very manifesto has been devised by intellectuals (Rivera 2015). On the other hand, the party, adopting a stance with a positive attitude to progress (emphasising that liberalism is progress, Rivera 2017), holds that political action must be performed in a way that, while realising reforms where necessary, does not damage the system as such (Rivera 2015). Arguing that, in this sense, radical actions would only facilitate the disintegration of society (Rivera 2015) – which is detrimental to realising a common project, which Citizens takes the constitution and its corollaries to represent – the party adopts a stance which self-identifies as centrist instead of leaning towards the extremes (Rivera 2016). Instead of generating sides, the party thus explains that it seeks to reach a consensus through discourse which, in turn, requires dialogue[267] with the different groups existing within society and politics (Rivera 2015).[268]

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[267] As we shall see, the party, despite otherwise vast political agreement, criticises the People's Party government precisely for its alleged inability or indignation to engage in dialogue with different factions.
[268] For this reason, Citizens also stresses the importance of regional parliaments (Rivera 2015).

7.2. Issues

Against the background of values depicted in the previous subsection, the issues Citizens identifies can be described as the result of bad governance forestalling or precluding necessary reforms in light of economic, social or political challenges.

Economically, Citizens on the one hand criticises that the taxes are too high (Rivera 2015, 2016), burden the middle class in particular (referring to the VAT raised by Rajoy's People's Party government, Rivera 2017) and that the corrupt instead of the working people have benefited from past tax cuts (particularly in Barcelona, Rivera 2016). On the other hand, the growing economic inequality is identified as a central issue. According to the party, this inequality is facilitated by insufficient wage levels, since people increasingly struggle to make ends meets despite having a job, as well as by the high level of unemployment (specifically referring to unemployment amongst the youth) and in turn impairs economic growth (Rivera 2015).[269] In this context, Citizens laments that Spanish workers are put at a disadvantage in an EU-wide comparison,[270] and that, jointly the Greece,[271] the country had one of the lowest levels of productivity within the EU (Rivera 2016). According to the party, however, the government ignores the economic issues prevailing in Spain and is instead wrongly asserting that the Spanish post-crisis recovery is succeeding (Rivera 2015).

Similarly to those inadequacies prevailing in the Spanish economic structure, Citizens identifies structural issues in the public realm more broadly. That is, the party criticises that administrative structures are outdated and thus inefficient, that public governance structures are too bureaucratic and simultaneously understaffed (e.g., regarding judges, police officers,

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[269] This critique is to be understood in the context of the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis (Rivera 2017).

[270] This is held because the Spanish model of labour presumably provides less rights to workers.

[271] Note that Citizens holds that the financial troubles of Greece are caused by the prevalence of ideology over professionalism in government. In particular, the socialist government is blamed for its allegedly ideological policies which, rather than contribute to problem solving, administer fear (Rivera 2015).

medical personnel or public servants, Rivera 2015) and that public education fails to meet an adequate standard (blaming the government, Rivera 2016, 2017).

Its political competitors then, both nongovernmental and governmental parties, are criticised for failing to provide effective problem-solving strategies or for endangering the constitutional values in course of their actions. From this perspective, then, if it was not for Citizens, the alternatives would be solely between no change at all or the wrong (i.e., destructive) change (Rivera 2015).

In particular, Citizens claims that the government continues to engage in obsolete and ineffective politics and hence to only make insubstantial promises (Rivera 2015), that it is incapable of political cooperation as it can only govern with an absolute majority (Rivera 2016),[272] that it engages in corruption, which undermines the populace's trust into politics (Rivera 2015, 2017) and that it makes pacts with subversive political forces out of political calculations (Rivera 2015). Other parties, in turn, are criticised because their actions are considered detrimental to the common project depicted in the previous subsection to begin with. In this context, Citizens particularly stresses that Catalonian sectarianism promotes societal division through grouping society into good and bad (Rivera 2016) and seeks to divide (i.e., break) the country (Rivera 2015).

While Citizens, apart from the People's Party, which is in government, and Catalonian separatists, does not extensively discuss other parties or groups in the speeches included in the main sample, it appears to generally hold that other parties (explicitly mentioning socialists, Christian democrats and conservatives) are unable to provide effective solutions for the pressing issues of our time. This failure, then, facilitates nationalism and populism (Rivera 2016, 2017).[273] Against this background, Citizens implicitly positions itself as the only political

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[272] Though this accusation is made only briefly, Citizens also claims that the political establishment does not want to revise the electoral law (so that it features open lists) out of fear to lose mandates (Rivera 2016).
[273] Here, the party identifies similarities to the developments in other countries (Rivera 2017).

force who can effectively solve urgent political issues while simultaneously paying due respect to the political vision of the constitution.

7.3. Demands and Achievements

Analogously to the issues depicted in the foregoing subsection, Citizens' demands gravitate around political action which, from the party's perspective, contributes to effective problem solving and good governance on the one hand and that does not damage, respectively strengthens, the political system in the multitude of its dimensions (referring to the constitution, the welfare state, the economy, the EU membership) on the other hand (Rivera 2015).

Generally, the party aspires to introduce socio-economic reforms which aim to improve both the economy as well as the public administration. In this context, Citizens speaks of improving the labour market and generating more jobs, curbing corruption (Rivera 2016), improving and modernising public education (referring to an "educational revolution", Rivera 2017) and otherwise ensuring adequate provisions, for example pensions or public health (Rivera 2015).

In the speeches included in the main sample, Citizens therefore suggests: that taxes should be lowered (IR and VAT in particular; claimed as an achievement in subsequent speeches), that tax fraud is curbed (Rivera 2015) and that taxes are rendered fairer in general (Rivera 2016), that the middle class is economically strengthened (Rivera 2015), that fixed-term contracts are abolished (Rivera 2016) and simultaneously self-employed and entrepreneurs are more thoroughly supported (Rivera 2017), that young people receive more support to be able to start businesses or work in locations of their choosing (nationally or globally, Rivera 2016) and that public services are not only strengthened (Rivera 2015, 2016) but public administration also is modernised (say, by simplifying hiring and transaction processes through digitalisation, Rivera 2015).

Politically, Citizens assumes a stance which attempts to be neither anti-system nor pro-elite (Rivera 2016), calls for an end to attempts of breaking the state apart and thus seeks to conduct political changes and reforms in a way which does not damage the system (Rivera 2015). Here, the party urges for a removal of politicians who attempt to abolish the regional parliament system, for changes to the electoral process (introducing open lists and ensuring the equivalence of every vote), for making the party system more transparent (especially during primaries), and for promoting the political independence of the judiciary (Rivera 2015).

Note that Citizens claims, through successful negotiations with the government, to have achieved that additional aid is provided to young people who fail to make ends meet, that freelancers receive additional support during the first year of their activity and that the VAT has been lowered (Rivera 2017).

Content Analysis of the Control Sample

1. Austria: Social Democratic Party of Austria

For the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SDP), two speeches have been included in the control sample: the 2016 national party congress speech by then-leader (and then-chancellor) Christian Kern and the 2018 national party congress speech by now-leader Pamela Rendi-Wagner. As has been anticipated in the methods section already, the political positionings of the considered speeches do not differ much. Though in the second speech, the issues identified are more strongly linked to the malperformance of the conservative government. This can be considered reflecting the fact that, within the investigation period, the party, led by Kern, has been in governmental position until its defeat in national elections 2017 and remained in the opposition thereafter.

1.1. Values

In the speeches covered by the investigation, the SDP endorses a wide array of individual rights equally provided to all (Rendi-Wagner 2018), specifically emphasising basic rights, voting rights for women, minority rights, human rights (Kern 2016) and refugee rights (referring to the Geneva Convention, Rendi-Wagner 2018). The endorsement of those rights can, in a sense, be understood as a consequence of the party's humanistic conviction that all humans are good (Rendi-Wagner 2018). According to its self-understanding, this leads the party to focus on all humans (Rendi-Wagner 2018), thus, adopting a future- and progress-oriented stance (Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018), realising progress for the benefit of all (Kern 2016) and making the life of all people in Austria better (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

By implication, the party therefore adopts a stance which is avowedly informed by tolerance (Kern 2016), solidarity, freedom (Rendi-Wagner 2018), fairness (particularly between genders, Kern 2016) and justice, whereby the latter is acknowledged in its different

dimensions. Amongst those, the following are explicitly mentioned: social justice (Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018), distributive justice, performance-based justice ("Leistungsgerechtigkeit"), justice regarding health, justice in taxation (Rendi-Wagner 2018), as well as justice of opportunity (implicitly through emphasising that performance-based justice requires opportunities to begin with, Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018),

Politically, this leads the SDP to reject fascism and authoritarianism (Kern 2016) and to commit itself to democracy (Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018). Moreover, on an international perspective, the SDP rejects nationalism and, contrasting nationalism with a positive understanding of patriotism as "Heimatverbundenheit" (i.e., loving one's home, and feeling connected to it), endorses the EU in particular, as well as international solidarity in general (including solidarity regarding migration issues, Kern 2016).

As those value references in the selected speeches suggest and as likewise will become evident in the subsequent subsections, the Social Democratic Party of Austria is largely preoccupied with providing all people (plainly understood as all individuals without Austria) with the rights, opportunities and resources which they are due (on its view). Against this background, the issues identified are mostly technically concerned with obstacles to these provisions.

1.2. Issues

The issues the Social Democratic Party of Austria identifies in the speeches covered by this investigation can be summarised as concerns for the deteriorating socio-economic status of many people against the background of the climate change and the challenges posed by international and technological developments (Kern 2016).

The bad or worsening financial situation is considered to be a consequence of the economic crisis of 2008, which has resulted in economic pessimism throughout the society, in

conjuncture with growing economic equality (Kern 2016). According to the party, not only is joblessness high, in particular amongst the European youth – even working people (including families) are under pressure to make ends meet economically (Kern 2016) as things become more expensive, taxes increase and the costs for living grow (referring to rising rents, Rendi-Wagner 2018). Growing inequality, in turn, can be observed across Europe and is reaching ever staggering hights. That is, according to the SDP, the disparity of wealth has grown so large that the richest 5 per cent of the populace possess as much as the remaining 95 per cent.[274] This cannot only be assumed to be considered a socio-economic injustice in itself in light of the party's value commitments elaborated in the previous subsection, but moreover is, so the party holds, slowing down economic growth in Europe (referring to IWF data, Kern 2016). Further, the party stresses that there is a connection between inequality of wealth/income and other non-economic parameters such as, for example, health and education (Rendi-Wagner 2018), which means that economic issues as delineated above are taken to negatively radiate into different spheres of life.

In connection thereto, the SDP criticises strategies of wealthy economic agents which contribute to avoiding their fair share. That is, not only do many companies not pay proper wages to their foreign employees, they also (with particular reference to the European plastics industry) are under pressure by low wages abroad (explicitly named: in China) to reduce wages at home to remain competitive, and engage in both legal and illegal tax avoidance in Europe. Especially amongst large tech companies the party considers this unacceptable as they make large profits with almost no taxation effectively applying to them (Kern 2016).

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[274] It should be noted that disparity between the wealthy and the less wealthy is not the only economic disparity the SDP criticises. In addition, the party also takes note of the fact that, in terms of income and overall, disparities between men and women continue to exist (Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018). The party holds that those are facilitated by a lack of all-day schools and the handling of part time employment, and lead to poverty in old age amongst women (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

Politically, the party criticises the radicalisation of politics and the invigoration of right-wing parties in Austria and Europe more broadly (Kern 2016), which are held to facilitate hate and intolerance, which, in consequence, often leads to violence against refugees. Those parties, according to the SDP, provide simple yet not-working answers to issues, such as, for example, blaming refugees for the worsening of the socio-economic situation. In contrast, according to the SDP, the mass migration from the MENA region to the EU is itself a result of wrong and irresponsible policies of European and Austrian leasers (Kern 2016). In this context the party also commiserates that many refugees (have to) rely on the operations of criminal traffickers to safely migrate into the EU across the Mediterranean Sea (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

According to the SDP, there are many pressing issues at the moment, including how to handle globalisation, technological progress, digitalisation and migration, as well as open questions how the mobility of labour can or should be organised within Austria and the EU, how wage, voluntary and care labour in families should be distributed/organised, how the welfare state can be financially sustainably maintained and, against the background of climate change, how the economy can be reconciled with ecological sustainability (Kern 2016).

While the SDP does not claim to have answers to all those issues, it criticises that the conservative-right-wing government coalition led by Sebastian Kurz fails to provide good governance, takes no responsibility for its actions and is afraid of both parliamentary debate and expert comments. To the contrary, the coalition is considered to put forward a politics the party considers to not be compatible with its conception of the human being (referring to the government hiding behind subordinate employees) and to promote the dismantlement of the welfare state. Here, chancellor Kurz is particularly criticised for having done nothing to develop solutions at the different stations of his political career (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

In a similar light, the EU, while being acknowledged by the party to constitute a great project in itself, is criticised for its narrow economic policy on what the party refers to as a

neoliberal agenda. According to the SDP, the neoliberal dogmatic belief in the market is highly problematic and, in parts, responsible for the economic crisis of 2008 ff. (Kern 2016).[275]

1.3. Demands and Achievements

Against the background of the issues identified in the previous subsection, the Social Democratic Party of Austria demands a wide range of investments into the Austrian polity. This includes an increase of investments into both federal and communal infrastructure,[276] investments strengthening the Austrian purchase power, economy and entrepreneurship (albeit in a way which does not neglect the responsibilities of economic agents) as well as investments in research and development (Kern 2016).

Those investments, then, can be considered a contribution to the party's vision that the private and public sector ought to cooperate with each other. This, however, requires bidding farewell to the privatisation realised by neoliberal policies of the past (Kern 2016), which has been identified as a negative economic factor.

To promote economic justice, the party thus goes on to demand market conditions which are fair for the industry (say, in relation to concurrency from China) but also for the employees (Kern 2016; referring to the need of providing fair working conditions for care personnel, Rendi-Wagner 2018) while ensuring the competitiveness of Austria so that it is able to attract the best workers (Kern 2016), increasing the numbers of available jobs while simultaneously halting the dismantling of the welfare state (Kern 2016; Rendi-Wagner 2018; referring to providing a minimum of security as otherwise the very vulnerable groups would be affected,

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[275] As to Austria's role in this, the party, for example, laments that Austria did not properly use its presidency of the Council of the European Union to develop solutions for integration issues (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

[276] As a specific example, the SDP emphasises the need to provide more and better education, as education is central when it comes to enable the people to lead an autonomous life. Hence, it particularly demands increased support (e.g., more teachers) for schools in difficult neighbourhoods (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

Kern 2016), abolishing the VAT on rent (Rendi-Wagner 2018), and lowering the tax burden on low and mid-sized incomes while simultaneously tax wealth (Kern 2016).

Moreover, the party demands more ambitious climate protection measures (referring to the restructuring of the economic system so that it becomes compatible with climate sustainability) and, from its perspective on international affairs, urges a reform of EU structures so that they are rendered more credible and more strongly attract people (Kern 2016). Furthermore, noting that people fleeing from war and disaster must receive the help they need, the party demands both, international cooperation to curb causes of flight and a European solution regarding questions of the regulation of asylum procedures, border protection and deportation, amongst others (Rendi-Wagner 2018).

As the SDP holds that people demand principled political action instead of compromises, the party declares that, to facilitate social justice, it is principally open to cooperate with others, provided that the rights of individuals are protected. Linking past achievements to a showcase of its own principledness, the Social Democratic Party of Austria holds that it historically has stood up for basic rights, political rights for women, equality between genders (holding that here still much is left to do), democracy, social progress[277] and justice and that it has opposed fascism and authoritarianism. Furthermore, the party puts forward that is has introduced compulsory training for under 18-year-olds, dedicated more financial resources to help children from disadvantaged social backgrounds as well as that, under a social democratic government, Austria was one of the first states to ratify the Paris Agreement for environmental protection (Kern 2016).

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[277] Here, too, it is emphasised that whereas others provide answers of the past, the problem solutions proposed by the SDP are oriented towards the future (Kern 2016).

2. Belgium: Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats

For the Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats, one speech has been included in the control sample: the 2016 speech held by the party's then-leader Gwendolyn Rutten at the party's new year's reception. Rutten has acted as the party's leader over the whole duration of the investigation period. The party, which has been formed in 1992 as a split of the Party for Freedom and Progress, currently chairs the Belgian coalition government, has chaired the Belgium government in the past (under the leadership of Guy Verhofstadt from 1999 to 2008) and also has participated in governmental coalitions led by Charles Michel (Michel I Government: 2014-2018, Michel II Government: 2018-2019) throughout the investigation period.

2.1. Values

The Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats most prominently – and unsurprisingly – commit themselves to what they consider liberal principles (referring to a liberal society as a way of life). Subsequently, the party's approach to politics is informed by freedoms (which, as the party acknowledges, involves accrediting diverse life concepts, sexual preferences etc.) and rights of the individual (Rutten 2016).

In light of this, the party particularly (though presumably not exclusively) emphasises a basic right to security (which it is a governmental task to provide), freedom of speech and opinion, freedom of religion (which the party explicitly considers a basic right requiring governmental neutrality), as well as equality of opportunity (particularly across genders). In this context, although not referring to rights explicitly, the party, emphasising the difference between asylum and economic migration, also stresses that asylum seekers must receive the adequate treatment they are due and that help should be provided to those who seek a better life (referring to international agreements) (Rutten 2016).

Departing from the idea of individual responsibility for one's own decisions and thus rejecting patronising and bans as political instruments, the party, instead, holds that people should, for example, have the freedom to decide themselves what to do with their money. Hence, the party combines an endorsement of individual freedom with the indorsement of less regulations and taxation and stresses the importance of honesty and transparency when making political decisions in general, and when justifying tax regulations or discussing the true costs of political decisions (say, regarding the use of fossil fuel or the introduction of supposedly "free" public transport or electricity) in particular (Rutten 2016).

2.2. Issues

Overall, the OFLD criticises political radicalism and bad governance against the background of national and international matters that need to be handled urgently and competently.

In particular, it is criticised: that there are political forces that seek to split the country and, instead of serving different regions, engage in special interest politics; that in the region of Flanders particularly public debt has increased dramatically over the course of just five years; that Islamist terrorists, who hate the idea of freedom, pose a security threat acting against the very – open and liberal – way of life; that some demand special treatment on religious grounds (referring to no exams taking place on Ramadan or special treatments for Christian hospitals) as well as that as a means to halt the illegitimate expansion of one religion some seek to champion another instead of committing themselves to state neutrality (referring to the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy who sought to fixate Christendom in a European constitution as a response to radical Islam); and that, in the context of the so-called refugee crisis, some demand generally closing the borders, which, according to the OFLD, fails to consider refugees as "people of flesh and blood" (Rutten 2016).

Relatedly to all those issues and without assuming having the sole correct answer, the OFLD notes that it is indeed an open question of how living together with people from many different cultural backgrounds can fruitfully/best be realised (Rutten 2016).

2.3. Demands and Achievements

In light of the value commitments and issues depicted in the previous two subsections, the demands the Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats put forward can be understood as measures to solve current issues without compromising on liberal principles (i.e., while upholding individual rights and freedoms, Rutten 2016).

Regarding (im-)migration, the party suggests that asylum seekers should be clearly separated from economic migrants, that both groups should be treated in accordance with international law and that asylum seekers receive the help they need. To propel integration and the absorption of immigrants into the labour market, the OFLD also demands that additional language lessons be provided to immigrants and that school enrolment becomes mandatory to receive child allowances. The party views those measures as contributions to realising a diverse society through integration, which some of its political competitors, according to the party, do not consider possible (Rutten 2016).

Moreover, the party endorses the idea of establishing taxes on alcohol, tobacco and fossil fuel, because they are harmful, yet at the same time rejects the idea that because of this those goods should be banned (Rutten 2016).

Though this was mentioned only briefly in the selected speech, it should also be noted that the party explicitly positions itself against reforms to the structure of the state of Belgium (Rutten 2016).[278]

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[278] Note that this is, for example, in direct opposition to the positioning of the Flemish Interest, which includes the demand to grant independence to the region of Flanders.

As some of the OFLD's political achievements realised during its time in government, the party holds that for the first time in years (following the financial crisis) there is a positive economic outlook so that many people have jobs, consumer confidence increased and Belgian companies became increasingly competitive. In addition, it commends itself for having introduced substantial tax cuts for self-employed who hire workers and for employing more general, for people in stressful situations (like divorces), for buying eco-friendly cars as well as for donations and culture and art, amongst other things (Rutten 2016).

3. The Netherlands: Green Left

For Green Left, two speeches have been included in the control sample. Those are the speeches Jesse Klaver, party leader throughout investigation period, held at the national party congresses in 2016 and in 2019 respectively. Green Left has – ever since its formation in 1989 when four Dutch left-wing parties merged – remained in opposition. Because of this, not many own achievements are emphasised in Klaver's speeches (except for a climate law proposed by Green Left, which has been accepted by parliament), so that the party mostly focusses on identifying issues and desirable political action.

3.1. Values

Endorsing human rights and (international) refugee treaties, Green Left understands society as a multi-agency process of coordination (Klaver 2016) and, subsequently, envisions a society where different groups (say, in terms of religion, education, wealth/income or, more generally, life realities) live together (Klaver 2016, 2019) under conditions of harmony and solidarity (Klaver 2016).

Against this background, the party commits itself to what it refers to as "financial fairness" (Klaver 2019), i.e. the idea that the economy should produce value for all and not

merely for "fraudulent parasites" and "financial elites" (Klaver 2016), which in turn, (though this connection is established only implicitly) goes in hand with a critique of (too) high salaries and a tax gap benefitting those groups (Klaver 2019).

Importantly, regarding this critique Green Left stresses that its commitments are not directed against elites or the establishment (associated with the government, business community or Brussels) as such but rather are directed towards the realisation of its own commitments (referring to ideals, fairness, and a better Europe, Klaver 2019). To realise those commitments, then, the party endorses what it refers to as a green and (socially) progressive course of action (Klaver 2016).

3.2. Issues

In the speeches covered by the investigation, a wide array of economic, political, and social issues is addressed. Those, in summary, prevent individuals from enjoying the rights they are due and damage the societal vision of the party depicted in the previous subsection.

For one, the party laments that, in political discourse, refugees are often treated as statistical values instead of persons (implicitly: who have rights, plans of life etc.), and that the political style practiced in the Netherlands is fuelling the fragmentation of society, which in turn has resulted in growing tensions between the Dutch and refugees (Klaver 2016).

For another, the party criticises that the economy is biased in favour of large companies and the wealthy, whose interests, amongst other things, include abolishing the minimum wage as well as the dividend tax and the CO_2 tax (Klaver 2019) and who want and more cutbacks (Klaver 2016). Evidence of this bias can be found in both the disparity of the tax situation as well as of wealth and income. Regarding the former, the party holds that, while citizens pay taxes, multinational corporations engage in tax avoidance, which, in turn, promotes inequality (Klaver 2016). Regarding the latter, it criticises that while employees work hard, incentives are

placed to the benefit of the financial elites (Klaver 2016) and that some leading executives nowadays in only a few days earn the yearly income of their employees (holding that this is unfair, Klaver 2019).

Meanwhile, while corporations receive tax discounts, rents increase, groceries become more expensive, the workload for employees rises, and the social perspective of people remains substantially dependant on their heritage (referring to disadvantages for Muslims and even persons who simply have Muslim sounding names, Klaver 2019).

To those issues (referring specifically to financial and security issues), Green Left holds that the government does not have solutions, but instead engages in distraction tactics (i.e., discussing affairs that do not matter so as not to talk about those that do, Klaver 2019). Worse, the government is furthermore considered complicit in this development. That is, according to the party, while elites act to promote more globalisation and secure their access to tax heavens and the insecurity for most Dutch is increasing (referring to the Panama papers) and the young generation is increasingly left behind, the government, instead of devising measures to curb those developments, is supportive thereof (Klaver 2016). More concretely, Green Left alleges the government that lobbyists and large corporations have a too large influence on the government's political agenda (Klaver 2016) and that the government is itself intertwined with corporate lobbyists (referring to prime minister Mark Rutte, Klaver 2019). Similarly to the government (with reference to Geert Wilders' PVV), Green Left considers that certain parts of the opposition, too, will further damage the society, if elected (Klaver 2016).

It should also be noted that climate change is identified not merely as a danger to the environment and future of the planet as such, but also as an issue of global justice, which is closely linked to questions of the distribution of well-being and prosperity (Klaver 2019).

3.3. Demands and Achievements

The party's political demands can be considered to spring from and seek to contribute to the party's proclaimed goal of helping people in need and building a good future for the society across different groups (Klaver 2016). The demands proposed for this purpose, then, include both: proposals concerning what could be referred to as socio-economic justice as well as proposals concerning respectively seeking to technically contribute to the solution of urgent issues (such as the climate change), albeit with both being interconnected.

In terms of the former, the party seeks to make tax avoidance impossible, to introduce better security for the self-employed (Klaver 2016) and for teachers, to render pensions fair and to reduce the pay gap between employees and employers (suggesting an employee veto right and an automatic pay rises for employees in case of a CEO salary increase, Klaver 2019). Note that in this context the party refers to a "new social treaty" which is, amongst other things, meant to secure that instead of cutbacks economic provisions are raised (Klaver 2016) so that a good future is ensured for the next generations, including fair salaries, good care offers for the sick and the elderly, and a good handling of the police. For this, however, the party emphasises, the country must not (against the background of the former subsection: no longer) be run like a private company (Klaver 2019). Furthermore, the party seeks to facilitate the effective provision of equal rights to women (Klaver 2019).

In terms of the latter, the party also seeks to end cutbacks and instead expand investments (referring to investments in education in particular, Klaver 2016). In addition, the party demands a variety of measures directed against the worsening of climate change (Klaver 2016). Those include tackling the fossil fuel industry on the one hand while supporting companies transitioning from fossil to clean forms of energy on the other (Klaver 2016), introducing a tax on CO2 and, in general, implementing more climate policies into political decision making (Klaver 2019).

In conjuncture of two mutually non-exclusive fields of activity (socio-economic justice and future-oriented problem solution), the party claims to be the voice of a new majority which has arisen (or is arising) against established party politics, as coalitions between diverse groups have formed themselves (Klaver 2019). In support of this, the Green Left observes that eco-friendly companies increasingly take the initiative, that the Paris Agreement has been concluded (2016), that a climate law has been passed following a proposal of Green Left (2019), that the minimum wage has increased, and that people are proactively helping refugees (Klaver 2016) – a new majority not guided by hate or pessimism (Klaver 2019).

4. Spain: People's Party

For the People's Party, two speeches have been included in the control sample: the 2017 and the 2018 national party congress speeches held by Mariano Rajoy, who acted as party leader and prime minister until 2018. Over the duration of the investigation period, the People's Party has led the Spanish government until 2018 (first by an absolute majority and then with other parties lending their parliamentary support), when a no-confidence vote on June 1st ousted the government (following this, Rajoy also resigned as the party's leader on June 5th). Notwithstanding this transition from government to opposition between the first and the second speech, the ideas put forward in both speeches do not differ substantially.

4.1. Values

The values the People's Party advocates in the selected speeches are linked to the Spanish constitution and its appertaining socio-political vision, as the party repeatedly refers to the enforcement of the constitution. Against the (implicit) backdrop of the rule of law, this means that the constitution can only be changed according to the rules of the constitution, i.e. when there is a sufficient majority for such a course of action (Rajoy 2017).

In particular, the party thus commits itself to democracy, as well as to national sovereignty (Rajoy 2017, 2018), loyalty to the Spanish crown and the unity of Spain (Rajoy 2017)[279], which can be understood as aspects considered entailments of the constitution by the party. Linked thereto, as elements of the social, political and economic vision those demarcate, the party also refers to stability (and certainty) and solidarity, as well as to freedom and equality (Rajoy 2017, 2018) for all Spaniards.

Moreover, the People's Party also emphasises the importance of the welfare state, including its provision of public services and social security and sets an increase of prosperity and well-being of all Spaniards as its political goal (Rajoy 2017; referring to providing a good welfare for women in particular, Rajoy 2018). More generally, the People's Party considers itself responsible for the general interest of Spain, which, while not being directly explained, can be linked to the party's concern for what is best for all Spaniards. Here, it is important to note that the party explicitly states that this holds true across groups (Rajoy 2017) irrespectively of who they are (may they belong to ordinary people, the middle class or someone else, Rajoy 2018). In doing so, the characteristics of the people (say, in terms of interests, beliefs or other constituent properties) are mostly left unspecified beyond belonging to the citizenry. It must, however, be noted that the governing party assumes that a majority of Spaniards believes in the values demarcated by the party (Rajoy 2018).

In terms of international relations, the party moreover commits itself to both the EU as well as to good relations with Latin America, and endorses a globalisation, provided that it is well-administered. The latter for the party includes open markets, fair trade, environmental regulations as well as adequate financial and fiscal frameworks (Rajoy 2017).

The party also puts forward some commitments regarding the criteria of good political action applying to political agents. That is, to realise the values previously depicted, the party

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[279] This commit needs to be particularly understood in the context of Catalan separationism.

holds that politicians must work effectively and for this the government in particular must be able to reach agreements and cooperate with others, thus adapting to new circumstances if necessary (Rajoy 2017). This, in turn, requires that politics is guided by what the People's Party refers to as "realism" instead of what it refers to as a "doctrine" (Rajoy 2018).

4.2. Issues

The issues addressed by the People's Party in the selected speeches can, in light of the values depicted in the previous subsection, be understood as threats to the Spanish constitution and its corollaries, and developments which are detrimental to the prosperity of Spain (most importantly the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, Rajoy 2017).

That is, according to the People's Party, some of its political competitors are threatening democracy, solidarity, the rule of law as well as the unity of the nation. Here, the Catalan separationists are particularly addressed. Those direct, so the party holds, their strive for independence not only against the unity of Spain and Spanish national sovereignty but also show ignorance for the rule of law. The party also emphasises that Catalonia breaking away from Spain would not only damage Spain but also harm Catalonia itself, for it would go in hand with a Catalan departure from the EU and hence the European single market, which, in turn, would be detrimental to the Catalan economy. The party also laments the danger of terrorism (Rajoy 2017), as well as the by now dissolved Basque nationalist and separationist armed group ETA (Rajoy 2018), whose members have committed numerous murders over their 58 years of existence for political reasons.

Furthermore, the People's Party identifies the economic crisis of 2008 to have severely impaired the Spanish economic situation (Rajoy 2017). Note that regarding the People's Party handling of the consequences of the crisis, Rajoy laments in his second speech, after the People's Party has been ousted from government, that it was successful and hence that it was

ousted not because of voter dissatisfaction with its political performance but because its competitors instrumentalised the law (without discussing specifics, Rajoy speaks of them taking advantage of the law, Rajoy 2018).

4.3. Demands and Achievements

The demands (or elements put on the political agenda) the People's Party puts forward subsequently gravitate around improving the economy while securing the constitutional provisions, including the unity of the nation.

Concretely, the party seeks to create more jobs, to invest more in tourism, to improve the infrastructure and the public services, to tackle demographic challenges and provide opportunities for young people, to improve the education, to curb corruption and gender-based violence, to introduce a law to support the self-employed while maintaining budgetary stability and ceiling public debt and spending (Rajoy 2017).

As to the issue of Catalan separatism, the People's Party moreover holds that Catalan institutions must be reclaimed so that they, instead of only working in favour of the secessionists, once again serve the Catalan people, the majority of which the party takes to be against the independence of Catalonia. In this context, the party also emphasises the importance of re-establishing the internal cohesion of the Catalan society which has been divided because of separatist activity (Rajoy 2017).

According to the party, it, following the Economic crisis, has achieved quite a lot to improve the situation in and of Spain. This includes having created jobs (Rajoy 2017, 2018) and having rebuilt the Spanish economy (albeit not without sacrifices), so that it has recovered and grows again (Rajoy 2017). Moreover, the party, in the context of national security, accredits to itself that it, in cooperation with law enforcement, managed to bring down the ETA (Rajoy 2018).

The party also holds that, during its time in government which was still characterised by crisis, it took responsibility and was not afraid to make decisions (Rajoy 2018) and that it can govern with both: with or without an absolute majority, as it has the ability to engage into productive dialogue with others to achieve goals. As evidence for this, it can be considered that the party claims to have reached agreements with other parties to form a government, for the purpose of solving issues (Rajoy 2017).

5. Ireland: Family of the Irish

For Family of the Irish, three speeches have been included in the control sample, all three of which have been held at the party's national congress. This includes the 2015 and 2016 speeches held by Enda Kenny, who has, amongst other things, served as Irish prime minister from 2011 to 2017 and as the party's leader from 2002 until 2017, as well as the 2018 speech held by Leo Varadkar, who has, amongst other things, served as Irish prime minister and the party's leader from 2017 onwards and from 2017 to 2020 respectively. As this already suggests, Family of the Irish was in government for the entire duration of the investigation period, albeit governing in a coalition from 2011 to 2016 and in a minority government from 2016 to 2020. Moreover, it should also be noted that the party, at the time of writing, participates in a coalition government with Soldiers of Destiny and the Green Party. Given this fact, it does not come with much surprise that the party extensively addresses what it considers to be its political achievements. That said, it formulates a fair amount of political demands, too.

5.1. Values

Endorsing fairness, tolerance, freedom/liberty (Kenny 2015; Varadkar 2018) and equality (specifically referring to gender equality, Varadkar 2018 and relatedly supporting marriage for same sex couples, Kenny 2015), Family of the Irish commits itself to seeking to improve the

life of (all) the Irish people and thus holds that the economy should be arranged towards this end (Kenny 2015).

To realise this and hence unfold Ireland's full potential (Kenny 2016), the party puts forward several ideas regarding the characteristics of an adequate economic approach. Here, particular in the context of post crisis recovery (Kenny 2016; noting that all regions should benefit from it equally, Kenny 2015), it stresses that it believes that providing jobs (in general, but especially jobs of good quality) to the population is a better approach to curbing poverty than mere welfare (Kenny 2015) and subsequently devises the goal of full employment, so that everyone interested in a job could get one (Kenny 2015, 2016). In this context, the party, particularly against the background of desiring both political and economic stability (Kenny 2015, 2016; Varadkar 2018), aims for long-term prosperity which then results in it rejecting what it refers to as boom-and-bust economics (Varadkar 2018).

As to who the (Irish) people are or what properties they are characterised by, the party keeps its conceptualisation short. In some parts, it speaks of "our people", "all our people" and in others it speaks of "the people of Ireland" (Kenny 2016). While this does not exhaustively elucidate the notion of the people the party employs it can, against the background of the individual rights depicted above and the fact that, notwithstanding other groups, rights and freedoms ought to be provided to all Irish citizens (referring to Irish citizens both in the North and in the South of the island, and relatedly rejecting a potential (hard) border between North and South, Varadkar 2018), be assumed that when the party refers to the people it first and foremost refers to the entirety of Irish citizens.

Moreover, the party emphasises the importance of good public services, including education, housing (particularly emphasising that "every family deserves a decent home", Kenny 2015), child, health and elderly care (Kenny 2016; Varadkar 2018), as well as

environmental protection (Varadkar 2018), and commits itself to Ireland's position within the European Union (Kenny 2015, 2016).

5.2. Issues

The issues identified by Family of the Irish in the speeches covered by the investigation largely evolve around the financial crisis and its aftermath against the background of wrong crisis responses by the preceding conservative government.

That is, the party holds that the financial crisis threated the very survival of the Irish nation as such, as people were losing jobs, banks collapsed, Ireland's international reputation declined and many struggled to make ends meet (Kenny 2015, 2016; Varadkar 2018). While the immediate threat of the crisis has been contained and the party's recovery plan works, many (at the time of the speeches) still suffer from its consequences (Kenny 2015) and remain unwillingly jobless. Joblessness, in turn, is, according to the party, the main cause of inequality and unfairness (Kenny 2016).

Furthermore, the party notes that the taxes are too high and hence detrimental to the economic recovery, specifically noting that they prevent parents and those that have emigrated (for the issue of Irish emigration due to bad economic prospects at home see Kenny 2015) for economic reasons to return or resume work, and that the self-employed pay higher tax rates than others without proper justification and despite being a vulnerable group (Varadkar 2018). In addition, the party also laments some socio-economic issues more broadly (referring to a lack of affordable housing, Varadkar 2018; referring to issues of child abuse, money laundry and insufficient protections at baby homes, Kenny 2015).

Here, Family of the Irish on the one hand criticises the preceding conservative government for its allegedly bad post-crisis handling. According to the party, the conservative government has made a mistake by bailing out banks, because doing so effectively resulted in

destroying money. On the other hand, it criticises those of its political competitors more broadly (without naming specific parties), who seek to handle the crisis by what it refers to as a politics of the past, such as loosening budgetary restrictions (Kenny 2015). This, according to Family of the Irish would threaten the financial recovery (Kenny 2015, 2016) and the reduction of public debt (Varadkar 2018).

5.3. Demands and Achievements

In line with the issues depicted in the foregoing section, much of the demands and aspirations of Family of the Irish revolve around economic policies and their corollaries, in particular in the context of post crisis recovery.

Specifically regarding dealing with the root causes and direct consequences of the crisis, the party demands the end of financial speculation, that post-crisis banks (once again) focus on lending (referring to this allowing families to purchase homes instead, Kenny 2015), that no more bailouts take place and that the so called Troika does not (have to) return ("no more Troika", Kenny 2016). In addition, the party wants to bring public debt under control (Kenny 2015).

On a more broader take to (post crisis) recovery, the party promises tax cuts and wage increases and relatedly seeks to maintain the low Irish corporate tax presumably for recovery reasons (Kenny 2015, 2016), while at the same time committing itself to provide a safety net to (Varadkar 2018) and lowering the taxes for self-employed (aiming for full tax equality between self-employed and businesses, Kenny 2016; Varadkar 2018).[280] Furthermore, Family of the Irish expresses the need to provide additional funds to public services (Kenny 2016; particularly referring to education, health and care, Kenny 2015) and to create more jobs across

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[280] Here, the party speaks of bringing tax discrimination against the self-employed to an end, which, according to the party, without proper justification have been paying higher tax rates than businesses.

Ireland (Kenny 2015; holding that the creation of jobs in turn strengthens public services, Kenny 2016).[281]

The party's concern with public services and, more broadly, welfare and infrastructural provisions, does not end with seeking to increase investments. That is, Family of the Irish moreover specifically suggests that good and affordable childcare be accessible to all families (Kenny 2016), seeks to reform the health care system so that its modus operandi changes from financial capability of paying for services to the need of the patients as well as to build more housing (referring to the positive side effect this would have on job creation in the construction industry, Kenny 2015; Varadkar 2018) and to provide access to fast internet to all private homes and businesses by (back then) 2020 (Kenny 2015).

Those demands stand in the context of three main goals the party identifies for its economic policies: to provide more and better jobs, to facilitate better pay, and to invest into public services while simultaneously ensuring that those investments reach all (Kenny 2016).

It should also be noted that the party, if only briefly, emphasises the importance to fight climate change and environmental pollution to preserve the planet for future generations to come. For this purpose, Family of the Irish, for example, proposes banning the use of single use plastics (Varadkar 2018).

Apart from its historical role in the formation of the Irish state (Varadkar 2018), Family of the Irish refers to a wide array of achievements it realised during its recent time in government. Concretely, the party accredits to itself that: it has successfully negotiated with the United Kingdom that all Irish citizens on both parts of the border can enjoy their rights and freedoms (also referring to economic interests and jobs, Varadkar 2018), that it led Ireland out of the financial crisis (by bringing public finances in order and liquidating dead banks, Kenny

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[281] In this context, the party also notes that attempts should be made to facilitate the return of emigrated young people so that they can take those newly created jobs, thus contributing to the economic (re-)vitalisation of the economy (Kenny 2015, 2016).

2015; by adopting a plan which is facilitating economic development, and the Troika leaving the country, Kenny 2015, 2016),[282] that it created jobs (Kenny 2015, 2016; referring to new jobs being available for returning immigrants, Kenny 2016) and, to do so, lowered VAT and travel tax to strengthen the tourism industry (Kenny 2015, 2016) and generally fiscally relieved low and middle incomes (Kenny 2016; Varadkar 2018), that it improved the situation of the self-employed (Varadkar 2018) and protected cuts to the minimal wage during crisis and even raised it afterwards (Kenny 2016; Varadkar 2018) as well as that it raised infrastructural provisions (referring to broadband, transport, education, healthcare, and housing, Varadkar 2018; referring to education (more teachers) and a better health care system, Kenny 2016; referring to parents being entitled to a second free pre-school year and a higher child relief, Kenny 2016; Varadkar 2018), invested into arts and culture (Varadkar 2018) and implemented a programme for rural development in particular (referring to the creation of jobs through investments in the rural economy, Kenny 2015; referring to the health system being meaningfully available in rural areas, Kenny 2016).

6. Sweden: Liberals

For the Liberals, four speeches have been included in the control sample, all four of which have been held by Jan Björklund, who acted as the party's leader from 2007 to 2019. This includes Björklund's speech at the (non-national-level) 2015 Landsmöte, as well as his speeches at the national-level Riksmöte of 2016, 2017 and 2018. The party has recently participated in a coalition government led by the Moderate Party under former prime minister Frederik Reinfeldt from 2006 to 2014 (where Björklund himself served as minister of education from 2007 to 2014 and also as deputy prime minister from 2010 to 2014) but was then cast to the

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[282] According to Family of the Irish, Ireland, at the time of the speeches, has become a great location for new industries and international companies (Kenny 2015).

opposition. That said, since 2019, the party tolerates the government formed by a social democratic and green coalition led by Stefan Löfven.

6.1. Values

Without much surprise, the Liberals, in the speeches covered by the investigation, extensively refer to what they consider liberal values and ideas (Björklund 2015, 2018). It should be noted, however, that the party emphasises that liberalism is first and foremost an approach rather than a precise answer so that its employment is always to be understood as being located in a specific context (referring to conflicts between growth and distribution, choice and equality, free and regulated migration, the state and the individual, Björklund 2015).

More precisely, the party endorses social liberalism (Björklund 2018), which it essentially ties to the reduction of exclusion and barriers (Björklund 2015) and the provision of equal opportunities (Björklund 2018; referring to equality of opportunity rather than of outcome, Björklund 2016; referring to the idea that not one's origin but the direction one is heading to is important, and to providing all children opportunities and equal chances to children through education no matter where they come from, Björklund 2017). This commitment is made against the background of freedom (Björklund 2015, 2017, 2018), including the freedom of choice (Björklund 2015; referring to freedom of choice for the sick and the disabled, Björklund 2017), to decide over one's own life and to lead a financially independent life (the partly speaks of the freedom to support oneself, Björklund 2016), equality of rights and opportunities (referring to equality between men and women in particular, Björklund 2015, 2016, 2017) and tolerance (Björklund 2017).[283]

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[283] Importantly, the Liberals emphasise that tolerance must come with limits against existential threats as no compromises can be made against threats to the liberal social model and freedom (Björklund 2015, 2016). That said, while terrorism is, in this context, perceived as a veritable security threat, the party stresses that terrorism should not be considered a conflict between religions, since most Muslims reject it and are themselves victims thereof (Björklund 2015).

In the context of rights, the party endorses human rights (Björklund 2015; also referring to human dignity, Björklund 2015; to humanity, Björklund 2018; and to a humane refugee policy, Björklund 2015, 2018) and holds that everyone has a right to freedom (Björklund 2016) which is meant to protect the individual (referring to others cherishing the collective, Björklund 2015). In this context, the Liberals also emphasise the value of the rule of law and note that law and order must be secured, because they protect the weak in society by providing security (Björklund 2017).

Economically, those value commitments lead the party to endorse what it refers to as liberal market economy (Björklund 2017) in conjuncture with a welfare state adequately equipped to provide equal opportunities to all (the party particularly refers to the universal access to a home and free education, 2015).[284] Hence, departing from the idea that education, work, ambitions and responsibility should pay off (Björklund 2015) and that, moreover, the socio-economically vulnerable (the party refers to the weak and the poor) have been strong beneficiaries of the previous century's last decades' globalisation and liberalisation period (Björklund 2017), the party holds that economic independence, prosperity and welfare is to be achieved through the provision of jobs (Björklund 2015). For this, in turn, individual liberty is necessary, as it is necessary for free enterprise (Björklund 2017), which can create jobs (Björklund 2016).

Regarding its international outlook, the party on the one hand demarcates the ideal of free movement without national borders within the European Union (Björklund 2015) and commends the EU's core values of individual freedom, market economy, free trade, transparency and the rule of law (Björklund 2017). On the other hand, it holds that, while

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[284] The party also stresses the importance of climate sustainability (Björklund 2015). This aspect, however, is not much elaborated in the speeches covered by the investigation.

everyone has the right to asylum and openness (Björklund 2015) is generally endorsed, there is no right to a residence permit in general (Björklund 2018).

6.2. Issues

The issues the Liberals identify can be, most generally, grouped into political problems on the domestic and international agenda (largely related to the rise of authoritarianism and populism, anti-EU sentiments and contestations to individualism) and socio-economic issues.

Politically, the Liberals, acknowledging that the high number of refugees which came to Europe required difficult trade-offs as well as substantial efforts, lament that some EU member states reacted thereto by implementing what the party considers inadequate (the party speaks of inhumane and incoherent) refugee policies (Björklund 2015). Simultaneously, the party acknowledges the imminent threat of Islamist terror, the violence of which it takes to be directed against the very Western way of life based on liberal values (Björklund 2015, 2017). In this context of growing extremism (Björklund 2017), the party particularly addresses the issue of Swedish nationals having left to fight in the Middle East and being dangerous after their return (Björklund 2015). Here, the party also criticises that many Swedish municipalities have neither a plan for how to handle (Islamist) threateners nor for how to accommodate the vast number of refugees which entered the country (Björklund 2015) – sustainably (Björklund 2015, 2016, 2017) and without facilitating social disintegration (Björklund 2018).

Moreover, the party considers it problematic that both anti-liberal and anti-European ideas are on the rise in Sweden as well as in the EU. That is, the party criticises that, in Sweden, left- and right-wing populists have established themselves to a degree where they start to influence government output (specifically referring to the Left Party, Björklund 2015). Moreover, while those actively seek for Sweden to leave the EU (Björklund 2017) other parties are, in a sense, considered critical of the EU as they refrain from pursuing further European

integration (Björklund 2018). In this development, Sweden is considered not to be alone so that in other European countries, too, some agents are promoting values in opposition to those of the liberal order (amongst other things, the party refers to isolation vs. European cooperation, protectionism vs. free trade and segregation vs. integration, Björklund 2018).

Those political issues identified within Sweden and the EU are placed into a broader international trend identified by the party. That is, the Liberals hold that, not only do left- and right-wing populists in Europe and the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU contribute to political polarisation within the EU. Liberal ideas are also pressured internationally by different agents across the globe, including nationalists, Islamists, communists and populists in general and authoritarians in the Middle East, Russia and China in particular (Björklund 2015). In addition, whereas illiberal regimes increasingly act militarily aggressively to reach their ends (referring to Russia, Björklund 2017),[285] the UN security council remains blocked by those same authoritarian regimes, with those blockades being to the detriment of human rights, freedom and democracy (Björklund 2018).

Furthermore, while, according to the Liberals, climate change constitutes the biggest global challenge of the present, many countries refrain from meaningful climate action (the party speaks of many countries only signing agreements and at the same time increasing fossil fuel production). Although not extensively discussed, it should also be noted that the Liberals criticise the government's decision to end the use of nuclear power. This, according to the party, poses the risk of rising reliance on fossil fuel (referring to the German case) (Björklund 2016).

Economically, the party identifies a wide array of developments it considers problematic and criticises the governing parties for their presumably inadequate responses thereto. Firstly,

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[285] In light of this, it should be noted that the party criticises Sweden's low military spending which, from the party's perspective, now in times of threats is lower than it was in times of peace during the 90s (Björklund 2017).

the Liberals criticise the government's tax policies. Here, the party holds that the new taxation measures proposed by the government, which, in light of Sweden already being amongst the countries with the highest tax burden in the world (Björklund 2015), are hostile to businesses (referring to corporations, Björklund 2017). In addition, it criticises that the government raised taxes for employers (the party refers to taxes on jobs an entrepreneurship) and further seeks to burden employers by increasing the sick pays which under conditions of globalisation risks companies leaving Sweden (Björklund 2016) and that the green tax introduced by the Green Party effectively only increased the costs of labour (Björklund 2015).

Moreover, the party holds that the labour market fails to respond to the demands of present times (the party speaks of the labour law being designed after the 20th century factory society). The consequence thereof is that there effectively is no functioning labour market (Björklund 2015). One of the consequences thereof is deteriorating unemployment which the government fails to curb (Björklund 2016). In this context, the party specifically criticises the government's plan of funding the creation of jobs, which has failed to create real jobs but created jobs on paper only (2015).[286]

Note that, according to the Liberals, those inadequate economic policies (and the general approach to the labour system) also has detrimental effects on the integration of refugees. That is, the party criticises that, as a result of very high entry wages within the Swedish labour market and the, on average, relatively low qualification level of refugees, they are effectively excluded from the labour market and, subsequently, also from the housing market (Björklund 2015, 2016, 2018). That notwithstanding, instead of lowering the entry levels regarding wages to decrease the further alienation of the jobless (Björklund 2016), the red-green government seeks to maintain those entry levels, as they give a higher priority to them than to the integration

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[286] The party specifically cites that of the several thousand participants of state-funded trainee programmes only a fraction as a matter of fact found a new job (Björklund 2016).

into the labour market (Björklund 2018). In other words, the (at the time of the speech) current model of labour does not care about those who are excluded from the labour market (Björklund 2016).

The Liberals also identify various social issues for the failed alleviation of which they consider the government (partially) responsible. A much-addressed topic amongst those is the government's handling of education, including its enduring failure to improve the conditions in schools (Björklund 2015).

On the one hand, the party laments that teachers have to work under bad conditions (referring to threats, violence, harassment by students, complaining to the head of school by parents of students, mobile phones interfering with the teaching, Björklund 2016). On the other hand, the party criticises the red-green government's very approach to teaching, which it considers having replaced the concept of equality of opportunity with a socialist equality concept, according to which all differences are expressions of to-be-curbed inequality. The consequences thereof are detrimental effects on education (Björklund 2018). Specifically, the party criticises that the government considers order in schools as bad and rejects marking and exams (Björklund 2016), and that many special education teacher trainings have been curbed (Björklund 2019)[287] as applicatory consequences of the previously delineated equality concept. A result of those measures is that many children are not provided with opportunities in school (Björklund 2018) and do not reach their educatory aims (Björklund 2016).[288]

Moreover, the party criticises that thousands of girls in Sweden live under conditions of the so-called culture of honour, subjugated to men and without equal rights being provided to

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[287] It should be noted that curbing special education provisions is considered not the only issue posed to handicapped persons. That is, the Liberals criticise that handicapped people still lack accessibility in everyday life, which is considered a form of discrimination (Björklund 2015), that funding for vulnerable groups has been cut to finance the reception of refugees, which is the wrong place to cut from the party's perspective (Björklund 2016), with especially funding of disabled care being cut resulting in a loss of freedom for the affected persons in general and for disabled children in particular (Björklund 2018).

[288] The party points out that whereas a third of high school students does not reach their goals, every sixth student fails.

them (referring to forced marriages, Björklund 2016, 2017). Some parties on the left wing, however, do not adequately address this issue (Björklund 2016), with the government particularly failing to fight child marriages (Björklund 2018). Importantly, the Liberals link the spread thereof, amongst other things, to independent religious (Islamic) schools. According to the party, leading figures thereof not only reject gender equality and seek to establish patriarchal social structures. In addition, those institutions also act as recruiting grounds for radical Islamists (Björklund 2017).

Relatedly, the party criticises that, in European comparison, Sweden does not have enough police and that of the existing police forces too many do office work and not enough are engaged with patrolling (criticising too much bureaucracy and referring to a negative development in this regard, Björklund 2017), which results in higher crime rates in some areas (Björklund 2018).

It should furthermore be noted that the party, although most of the critique it puts forward regarding its competitors is directed against the Social Democrats and the Greens (the (now) former red-green government), it also criticises the far-right Sweden Democrats, because those hold that immigrants can never become Swedish (referring to this being a racist idea), which the party takes to falsely elevate one's origin over everything else (Björklund 2017). This, however, stands in direct opposition to the party's value commitments depicted in the previous subsection.

6.3. Demands and Achievements

The demands put forward by the Liberals largely mirror the issues depicted in the previous subsection.

With regards to the matters of refugees, the party urges other countries to accept higher refugee numbers (Björklund 2015) and demands that refugees – both those highly and lowly

qualified/educated (Björklund 2016) – be effectively included into the labour market, allowing them a long-term integrative perspective and to support themselves (Björklund 2015, 2016) as well as the economy to benefit from them (Björklund 2016).

More generally, the party urges to take measures which would reduce unemployment, as unemployment is considered, not only in the context of refugees, a major cause of exclusion (Björklund 2015). Here, connecting to the critique of the red-green governments' priority on maintaining high wage thresholds, it stresses that it is not about lowering salary standards for working people but instead about lowering entry salaries for those who, precisely due to the high thresholds, are unable to find a job (Björklund 2016).

From a taxation perspective, the party also suggests realising a tax reform which would effectively lower the costs of labour and establish tax equality between genders (referring to women, on average, earning less while paying higher taxes, because they more often possess academic degrees, Björklund 2015, 2017), while maintaining stable tax revenues through complementary increases of taxes for environmental damages and consumption (Björklund 2015, 2016).

On another note, several demands put forward by the Liberals evolve around increasing the quality of school education (Björklund 2015). That is, the party demands to raise teacher salaries to make those positions more attractive (Björklund 2018), to strengthen the quality of education especially for the weakest, so that they are provided with the same chances in life as others (Björklund 2016; referring to disabled children particularly,[289] Björklund 2018), to introduce a two-year vocational training in high schools (Björklund 2016), to establish clearer knowledge/learning requirements and shift more responsibility to the students (Björklund 2018).

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[289] Analogously to the previous subsection, the party generally demands to reduce legal obstacles and inaccessibilities handicapped people face in everyday life (Björklund 2015).

With regards to radical Islamists' violence and patriarchal social structures, it demands that alleged terrorists coming into the country under the guise of being refugees should be clearly separated from refugee facilities, that measures should be implemented to contain the threat of Islamist terror (suggesting a combination of criminalisation and prevention to curb recruitment, Björklund 2015) and that child marriages are banned (Björklund 2018). Moreover, the Liberals urge to strengthen both the legal system and the police, suggesting hiring civilians for tasks which do not require police training to put more officers on the street (stating that radical changes to the police's hiring practices are needed, Björklund 2017).

It should also be noted that the party expresses its favour on further integration into the EU, including the adoption of the Euro as a currency, the introduction of an EU-wide carbon tax and the deepening of cross-border criminal prosecution (Björklund 2018).

As to its achievements, the party refers to political actions it considers having taken during its time in government. Historically, the party refers to it having realised liberal values for many people in the past, including, amongst potentially other things, establishing universal, equal voting rights for both men and women, the introduction of a national pension, secondary schooling for girls as well as work protections for pregnant women (Björklund 2015). Furthermore, it accredits to itself that it has realised comprehensive economic reforms (referring to this having facilitated economic growth, welfare, and allowed people to realise their life plans, Björklund 2017), that due to its actions unmarried couples are allowed to live together in nursing homes and that it implemented a reform granting the disabled more freedom (Björklund 2015), that it, in the past, successfully reduced unemployment, that it proposed a climate programme (referring to the Swedish energy production effectively being carbon-free already, Björklund 2016), that it contributed to a reform of asylum procedures which resulted in extensive individual examinations of cases, and that it contributed to the provision of equal opportunities to all school children (Björklund 2018).

7. Poland: Civic Platform

For the Civic Platform, five speeches have been included in the control sample: one speech held by Ewa Kopacz, Polish prime minister between 2014 and 2015 as well as the party's leader from 2014 to 2016, at the party's 2015 national convention, and four speeches held by Grzegorz Schetyna, the party's leader from 2016 to 2020, including his 2016, 2018, and 2019 national convention speeches as well as his 2017 speech at the party's national council. The party has led a coalition government with the Polish People's Party from 2007 to 2015 (with Donald Tusk acting as prime minister before Ewa Kopacz) but was cast to the opposition following the 2015 national elections, at which Law and Justice won an absolute majority, where it currently remains.

7.1. Values

Gravitating around the idea that politics ought to serve the people and that the state should care about its citizens, the central concern of the party, according to the speeches considered by this investigation, is to make the life of all Poles better. This includes making their life easier, providing them with opportunities to lead their life according to their plans (referring to young people having a good start in life, Kopacz 2015) and generally providing them with a decent standard of living and a comfortable life (Schetyna 2016).

In light of this, the party claims to adopt a problem-oriented approach to politics, which is primarily concerned with solving issues which obstruct the realisation of those goals. Similarly, Civic Platform holds that politics adopted or reforms undertaken by the party are means to reach those ends (specifically referring to funds received from the EU, Schetyna 2016). Here, it should also be noted that, taking such an approach to politics, the party rejects politics, which is based on what it refers to as "bad emotions" or "self-righteousness" and rejects everything, but is instead committed to what it considers a responsible change, i.e. the

idea of realising progress without devastating side-effects. For this reason, the party also rejects political promises which are financially unsustainable (Kopacz 2015) and instead aims for making Poland (implicitly: truly) wealthy (Schetyna 2018).

As to the specifics of who the party's notion of the people refers to, the party addresses its speech to all people and generally employs a diverse understanding of the Polish (Kopacz 2015), though also briefly referring to seeking to defend the ordinary people (Schetyna 2017) and associating Poles with being hardworking and using resources, albeit not listing further genealogical identificatory criteria in this regard (also referring to both young and old, Kopacz 2015). In this context, the party specifically emphasises that the state ought to help people rather than imposing a particular way of life on them (Schetyna 2019; referring to all poles coming from different social groups seeking happiness in life, Kopacz 2015), that the state should facilitate dialogue between (Kopacz 2015) and unite different groups rather than dividing them (referring to respect, and also to solidarity, particularly with the weakest, Schetyna 2016; particularly with refugees, Schetyna 2017) and that it is committed to serving the people regardless of their worldview, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation as everyone should feel accepted in their country (also making an intergenerational commitment, Schetyna 2016).

With those ends in mind, the party commits itself to a non-partisan (Schetyna 2016), civic state (Kopacz 2015; Schetyna 2016) based on the constitution in general (Schetyna 2016) and its corollaries, extensions and associated values such as citizen rights (explicitly also mentioning women rights and the right to have access to safe abortions, Schetyna 2016, 2018), the rule of law and the separation of powers (Schetyna 2016; specifically referring to the independence of the judiciary, Schetyna 2017), democracy (Schetyna 2016), freedom (Schetyna 2016, 2017, 2018), security (Kopacz 2015; Schetyna 2016, 2017, 2018) and a free market (Kopacz 2015) in particular.

Moreover, the party endorses Poland's integration into the West, expressing pro-EU, pro-NATO as well as pro-USA sentiments (Schetyna 2017). It specifically emphasises the idea of European solidarity (Kopacz 2015), that Poland is a European state (Schetyna 2016; appreciating Poland connecting to the West, Kopacz 2015), that the Polish identity (which is, importantly, left undefined) is compatible with a European one (assuming that this is the belief of the people),[290] that Poland should endorse both the Polish as well as the European culture and that a partnership with the European Union is to the mutual advantage of both parties (stating that Poland needs the EU and vice versa, Schetyna 2016). In light of this and as made explicit by the party, it becomes clear that Civic Platform sees the European Union not only as an effective mechanism to promote one's self interest in a mutually advantageous way but also as a community of values (Schetyna 2017).

Departing from these ideas, the party demarcates its vision for Poland as a civic a European country, based on community and cooperation, and embedded into Europe (emphasising the European market and freedom of movement, Schetyna 2016; emphasising European solidarity, Schetyna 2017) and militarily anchored in the NATO (Schetyna 2017). Relatedly, Civic Platform stresses that true Polishness (which the party also links to Christian values) is not characterised by authoritarianism (referring to the Law and Justice government) and nationalism but instead is informed by openness, solidarity and responsible[291] patriotism (Schetyna 2017).

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[290] Similarly, Civic Platform holds that, nowadays, the dreams of young Poles do not differ from their contemporaries in other European countries (explicitly referring to the Czech Republic, Germany and France, Kopacz 2015).
[291] The party stresses that while love for one's country is agreeable, it wants Polish patriotism to present itself from a good side (without further specification of what this includes, Schetyna 2017).

7.2. Issues

The issues identified by Civic Platform on the international arena largely gravitate around the actions of the Law and Justice government in relation to Polish relations with the European Union and the West more broadly. That is, the party criticises that Law and Justice endeavours to remove Poland from the European community (Schetyna 2017; specifically referring to moving away from Poland's European integration, which has led to success, wealth and respect, Schetyna 2018) and more generally seeks to turn away from Poland's integration into the West (Kopacz 2015). Here, Civic Platform specifically criticises that Law and Justice blocks a European solution to the refugee crisis by refusing to accept adequate numbers of refugees to Poland and that it antagonises other EU member states (Schetyna 2017; referring to the incompatibility of Law and Justice's vision with a European Poland, Schetyna 2016). The consequence thereof is that the European alliance is damaged by the actions of the Polish (Law and Justice) government (Schetyna 2019).

This critique of Law and Justice and the government led by it, however, is not exhausted by references to consequences of its actions on the European level. Instead, it also covers domestic affairs, from a political, economic as well as social perspective.

Politically, it criticises that rather than serving the public interest, certain institutions are poisoning the public life by promoting the interest of a single party (implicitly: Law and Justice) (stressing that history is being instrumentalised as a weapon of political struggle and prosecution, and referring to the political instrumentalisation of the 2010 plane crash in Smolensk, Schetyna 2016) as the (Law and Justice) government is curbing the independence of state institutions (Schetyna 2017). In this context, Civic Platform particularly emphasises that the independence of the constitutional court has been firstly threatened and then limited (Schetyna 2016; cf. for the development having started with the courts and then expanded to other institutions, Schetyna 2017), that the prosecutor's office has been compromised (also

referring to the destruction of the judiciary, Schetyna 2019) and that the public television has been brought under control and is being misused to deliver what the party refers to as hate propaganda (Schetyna 2017).

Civic Platform considers this alleged takeover of state institutions a direct attack on the Polish constitution (Schetyna 2019) and on (parliamentary) democracy (referring to Poland moving towards a system of one party rule reminiscent of the communist dictatorship of the past, Schetyna 2017; referring to a de facto one-man rule by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, former prime minister and Law and Justice party leader since 2003, and to the party reaching for absolute power and positions being filled not on the grounds of merit but on the grounds of political loyalty towards Kaczynski, Schetyna 2019), overall threatening to destroy the state of Poland (Schetyna 2016; referring to Law and Justice's attempt of destroying local governance structures because they obstruct one party rule, Schetyna 2018).

Economically, Civic Platform generally criticises the existing economic inequality between Poland's different provinces (Schetyna 2016), that economic policies do not reach those for the benefit of whom they have been designed (without further specification and during its time in government, Kopacz 2015). In relation to the Law and Justice government it moreover laments that its allegedly authoritarian anti-EU stance is damaging the economic situation of the Polish population (specifically referring to ordinary Poles and families, Schetyna 2017) and that the increased coal imports from Russia conducted by Law and Justice not only are detrimental to the climate but also make Poland more dependent (Schetyna 2018).

In the social realm, broadly conceived, Civic Platform identifies the demographic change as a major challenge (Schetyna 2016), criticises that school education, due to the costs of commuting, learning materials etc., is too expensive for some with especially children in rural areas being affected thereby (Schetyna 2018), and that reforms realised by law and Justice have damaged the Polish school system (referring to schools ideally preparing children for

404

participation in the labour market and educating them to be modern citizens, granting opportunities and broaden horizons etc., Schetyna 2016) as well as that the Polish health system's quality has deteriorated (longer waiting times, higher death rates, often unavailability of medicaments in pharmacies) since Law and Justice took power (Schetyna 2019). Moreover, mirroring its critique in the political realm, Civic Platform criticises that Law and Justice spreads propaganda and facilitates hate, discriminates people who do not fit into its devised narrative of Polishness, including immigrants (referring to xenophobia, Schetyna 2017), and that, quite generally, the state under Law and Justice's rule is imposing its conception of the right way of life on the people it administers (Schetyna 2019).

7.3. Demands and Achievements

The demands Civic Platform formulates can, essentially following what has been said in the previous subsection, be grouped into infrastructural improvements and measures of driving back the allegedly illegitimate influence of the Law and Justice government over state institutions and Polish public life.

Regarding infrastructural and welfare provisions, the party, at a time when it was still in government, promised to raise the minimum wage and abolish unfair contracts, sought to raise the level of schools,[292] provide free textbooks to students, and called to improve the agricultural situation, kindergartens, and nurseries (Kopacz 2015). Moreover, the party demands more and better care for the elderly (promising the creation of a centre for elderly care in every city and municipality, Schetyna 2018), and calls to allow for an easy market entry for young people, thus also increasing the compatibility of work and becoming/being parents (Schetyna 2016). Note that the party particularly emphasises the importance of infrastructural investments

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[292] It specifically demands more language-related education and more schools (referring to building new schools) and that good quality schools are rendered accessible to less affluent students (referring, for example, to the obstructing costs of commuting, Schetyna 2018).

(referring to schools, universities, the labour market, amongst others) of economically weak provinces (Schetyna 2016).

Regarding measures against the influence of Law and Justice, Civic Platform, being committed to the idea that culture also must participate in social progress (Kopacz 2015), seeks to rebuild the presence of Poland in the European Union (Schetyna 2017), to defend the independence of the judiciary (Schetyna 2016) and re-establish the independence of the judiciary and the Constitutional Tribunal (Schetyna 2019), to introduce history as a subject in schools and universities, to liquidate the Institute of National Remembrance (which, according to Civic Platform, has been overtaken by Law and Justice so that historic research is instrumentalised for party interests and used as a means of prosecution) and, in turn, to restore the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom (Schetyna 2016), to investigate corruption (Schetyna 2017) as well as to make structural changes to fight corruption by relocating some tasks away from politics back to the police (Schetyna 2016). In addition, directed to the populace in light of the government curbing the freedom of media, Civic Platform makes a call for disobedience by suggesting not to pay fees for public television (Schetyna 2017).

With regards to international developments – and against the backdrop of the Law and Justice government's refusal to contribute to solving the so-called refugee crisis on the European level –, Civic Platform moreover calls for helping refugees by temporarily accepting women and children into the country (rejecting mass immigration and seeking to reconcile Polish security interests with solidarity, Schetyna 2017). Moreover, the party demands that the government takes measures to reduce smog and toxic/chemical waste (Schetyna 2018).

As to its achievements, Civic Platform holds that it has, during its time in government, realised the dreams of many Poles by anchoring Poland in both the NATO and the EU (referring to having strived for Polish interests on the EU-level, Schetyna 2017), created a substantial

economic growth and navigated Poland well through the financial crisis (though acknowledging that Poles made sacrifices), that Poland has the longest family leave in Europe, that it improved Polish schools, that it introduced single mandate constituencies (Kopacz 2015), that its members have introduced direct elections for mayors and the president in the past (presumably before the foundation of the party) as well as that it raised the budget of local governments so that those actually can practically realise their decisions (Schetyna 2016). Furthermore, it accredits to itself having imposed an obligation on state authorities and allocated funds to improve the air quality and that it has collected funds for improving the Polish infrastructure (referring to the transport infrastructure across regions, Schetyna 2018).