Back to the Roots: The Revival of Nationalism in Europe

Revised Final Capstone Paper

POLS 596: MAIR Capstone Seminar

Master of Arts in International Relations

Spring 2016

Ann-Cathrin Howard
# Contents

1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 4

2 Definitions .................................................................................................................................. 5

2.1 Important Concepts .............................................................................................................. 5

2.2 Nationalism .......................................................................................................................... 6

3 Research Question and Theoretical Inquiry ........................................................................... 6

3.1 Right-Wing Populist Parties ............................................................................................... 6

3.2 Empirical Methods of Inquiry ............................................................................................. 7

3.3 Definitions of Variables and Data Sources .......................................................................... 7

4 Europe’s Swing to the Right ................................................................................................... 8

4.1 Overview of Right-Wing Nationalist Parties in Europe ....................................................... 9

4.2 Immigrant Population ......................................................................................................... 11

4.3 Unemployment Rate .......................................................................................................... 13

4.4 EU Resentment .................................................................................................................... 15

4.5 Muslim Population .............................................................................................................. 16

5 Findings .................................................................................................................................. 18

5.1 Correlations ........................................................................................................................ 18

5.2 Case Studies ........................................................................................................................ 19

5.2.1 Austria – The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) .............................................................. 22

5.2.2 Germany – The Alternative for Germany (AfD) ........................................................... 23

6 From Political Outlaws to Mainstream .................................................................................. 25

7 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 26

Appendix .................................................................................................................................. 28

References ................................................................................................................................. 30
List of Figures

Figure 1: Protesters demonstrating against the Islamization of Europe in Bratislava, Slovakia……4
Figure 2: Vote for Right-Wing Parties from 2010 to 2015………………………………………………..10
Figure 3: Immigrant Population in 2015……………………………………………………………………12
Figure 4: Unemployment Rates in 2015……………………………………………………………………14
Figure 5: EU Disapproval Rates in 2014……………………………………………………………………15
Figure 6: Muslim Population in 2010……………………………………………………………………17
Figure 7: Austrian Freedom Party Election Poster…………………………………………………………22
Figure 8: Election Poster of the Alternative for Germany in Saxony-Anhalt…………………………24
List of Tables

Table 1: Correlations of Dependent Variable and Independent Variables..........................18
Table 2: Immigrant Population and Right-Wing Support in Switzerland and Luxembourg........19
Table 3: Unemployment Rate and Right-Wing Support in Macedonia and Greece..................20
Table 4: EU Disapproval Rate and Right-Wing Support in Austria and Greece......................20
Table 5: Muslim Population and Right-Wing Support in France and Germany.......................21
Table 6: Comparison of Austria and Greece regarding Right-Wing Support and Immigrant Population, Unemployment Rate, EU Disapproval Rate, and Muslim Population...............21
Back to the Roots: 
The Revival of Nationalism in Europe

Figure 1: Protesters demonstrating against the Islamization of Europe in Bratislava, Slovakia (Deutschlandfunk 2016)

1 Introduction

In 2015, the pictures of hundreds of thousands of people migrating from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to Europe went around the world. Ever since, the tsunami of refugees and migrants has been called the European refugee and migrant crisis. The continent has not experienced a comparable wave of migration since the aftermath of World War II. At first, the newcomers were welcomed with open arms. However, the welcoming culture of the summer months slowed down in a matter of weeks and has since turned into a culture of rejection.

All over Europe, nationalist protesters went on the streets demonstrating against the overwhelming influx of migrants and refugees. From Hungary to Germany and from Greece to Sweden, right-wing protesters and parties have stormed the mainstream of European politics with voters rebelling against years of predominantly socialist rule. The criticism of this part of society has been picked up by politics in the past, however, there is virtually no question that the combination of refugees, terror, and economic austerity have given rise to the right. The ongoing economic instability, the surge of migrating people into Europe, as well as the ISIS related
bombings in Brussels in March and two major attacks in Paris in 2015, have left nationalist parties with the political winds at their backs. Not since the 1930s has nationalism enjoyed comparable political influence and traction in Europe like today.

Yet, the question remains what exactly has caused the surge of so-called right-wing parties. This paper seeks to answer this question by examining the drivers and contributing factors of the revival of nationalism in contemporary Europe focusing on the influence of the immigrant population, the unemployment rate, the European Union disapproval rate, and the Muslim population.

2 Definitions

In order to fully understand the rise of nationalism in Europe, a few terms have to be defined.

2.1 Important Concepts

Since Charles the Great, the occidental Europe has been separated into nations (Zeit). A nation is based on common race, religion, language, and geographical zone (Laitin 2007, p. 29ff). National identity, national territory and culture, national consciousness, and nationalism define the notion of a nation (Kellas 2004, p. 3).

Identity represents a collective product and plays a key part for nationalism and ethnicity. The construction, unity, fragmentation, and effectiveness of states depend on identities. A common national identity holds citizens together. Furthermore, identities are partially created by birth, external factors (socialization, belief systems, values, assumptions, and expectations), and can be used for different purposes (Hussain & Miller 2006, p. 11ff). Cultural characteristics which are connected to state-bound societies influence the feelings of national identity (Nanz 2006, p. 132ff). People incorporate national identity into personal identity depending on the amount of socialization (Hussain & Miller 2006, p. 11ff).

In comparison to a nation, a state is defined by its status as the primary actor in international relations which makes states more easily identifiable than nations. Generally, a state represents a form of government. The rule of law, citizenship rights, as well as broad economic and social responsibilities characterize the modern state (Delanty & Kumar 2006, p. 164ff).

The notion of a nation state blends the concepts of nation and state. In a nation state, cultural boundaries match up with political boundaries. For international relation scholars, the sovereign nation state represents an essential piece for global order (Tierney 2015, p. 35ff). The fact that today the state is no longer regarded as the primary focus of national culture results in problems for the idea of the nation state. The European Union represents an unparalleled historic attempt of combined governance to establish a peaceful and prosperous political community beyond the nation state (Foreign Affairs, McNamara 2015).
2.2 Nationalism

“Nationalism is either (a) a form of political mobilization that is directed at rectifying a perceived absence of fit between the boundaries of the nation and the boundaries of the state; or (b) the ideology that justifies this” (Coakley 2012, p. 12).

The attachment of people to a national collectivity illustrates a main characteristic of nationalism. Yet, insisting in the excellence of one’s nation can lead to collective aggressiveness, belligerence, and pathological behavior (ethnic cleansing, murder, and genocide). Secondly, nationalism is connected to feelings of belonging and the will to sacrifice for one’s nation’s wellbeing, security, and social welfare. Nationalism and patriotism both involve love for, identification with, and special concern for a certain entity. However, patriotism is concerned with one's country which is defined by state borders; nationalism with one's nation which relies on cultural boundaries. Moreover, political movements with goals that are declared as the will of the nation have their origins in nationalism. Thus, nationalism can constitute and sustain nations and nation states through the politics of nationalism (Karolewski & Suszycki 2011, p. 5ff).

In the past, nationalism has been described as the ‘revolt of the poor’ associated with backwardness and/or discrimination. The present revival of nationalism in developed countries has however turned this movement into the ‘revolt of the rich’ (Tierney 2015, p. 39).

3 Research Question and Theoretical Inquiry

Populistic-nationalist parties are a phenomenon that can be found in just about every country. Overall, nationalism is a characteristic trait of Europe and Europe’s history. Yet, many European countries have displayed a noticeable rise in xenophobic and Euro-sceptic parties over the past decade.

The main research question of this paper asks why right-wing nationalism is on the rise in Europe, and in specific, why the support for anti-immigrant and Euro-sceptic parties and movements has increased in the past few years.

3.1 Right-Wing Populist Parties

Populism stems from the Latin word ‘populus’ which means ‘people’. Populism stands in contrast to elitism, aristocracy, or plutocracy by asking for a government by the people and not by a small, privileged, and selective group (Wodak 2015, p. 8).

“Right-wing populism can be defined as a political ideology that rejects existing political consensus and usually combines laissez-faire liberalism and anti-elitism” (Wodak 2015, p. 7).

Voter alienation and cynicism is regarded as a result of the elites’ inability to provide security and prosperity (Wodak 2015, p. 7). Contrary to the elites, populism appeals to the common man and woman (Hagtvet 1994, p. 241).
In most cases, today’s right-wing populist parties do not bear personal or ideological reference to the fascism or national socialism of right-extremist post-WWII parties. All in all, they do not want to abolish democracy. On the contrary, the majority of right-wing populist parties compare specific aspects of democracy (majority decision and freedom of expression) against other aspects (protection from minorities and personal rights) (Tagesspiegel, Causa 2016).

Right-wing nationalist movements have been branded as ‘far-right’ by the established political parties and influential social institutions. The underlying reason for this ‘far-right-branding’ stems from the fact that the traditional classification scheme on a left-to-right-axis does not represent an adequate tool to classify the developing political landscape anymore. The current development is at the same time right-wing and left-wing, nationalist and arch-democratic, anti-neoliberalist and against globalisation, as well as anti-capitalistic.

### 3.2 Empirical Methods of Inquiry

It is this paper’s underlying hypothesis that Europe’s immigrant population (H1), economic recession (H2), and anti-European Union sentiment (H3) are – from a short term point of view – less significant than Europe’s Muslim population (H4) in explaining the rise of the so-called right-wing nationalism across the European continent.

The dependent variable for my research is defined as right-wing nationalism. It should be mentioned at this point that not only right-wing nationalism but also left-wing nationalism exists in Europe. Yet, the number of left-wing nationalist parties happens to be far smaller than the number of right-wing nationalist parties, and since nationalism is generally more likely associated with politics on the right side of the spectrum, I decided to solely focus my research on right-wing nationalist parties.

For my independent variables, I chose the immigrant population (H1), the unemployment rate (H2), the EU disapproval rate (H3), and the Muslim population (H4).

My methods of analysis are descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and case studies. To proof my hypothesis, the independent variables are correlated with the dependent variable. Altogether, this is used as an explanatory tool to explain a cause for the revival of nationalism in Europe.

### 3.3 Definitions of Variables and Data Sources

The dependent variable of my research, right-wing nationalism or right-wing support is defined as the percentage of votes for right-wing parties in national elections between 2010 and 2015. The broad timeframe is based on the fact that national elections happen in various frequencies across Europe. I use data from a website called ‘Parties and Elections in Europe’, which includes an archive with all the legislative elections in European countries and autonomous regions since 1945 (Parties and Elections in Europe 2016).
The immigrant population (H1) is regarded as the percentage of foreign born permanent residents in relation to the total population of selected European countries. The data for this variable stems from the Eurostat website. Eurostat is the official statistical office of the European Union which provides the European Union with statistics at the European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. The reference year for this data set is 2015 (Eurostat).

The same data source and reference year are used for the second independent variable, the unemployment rate (H2). The unemployment rate stands for the percentage of unemployed people in a country (Eurostat).

The percentage of people who disapprove of the European Union is called the EU disapproval rate (H3). The latest data for this variable was found on the Gallup website and goes back to 2014. Gallup is an organization that delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations (Gallup 2015).

The Muslim population (H4) is based on the percentage of Muslims in European countries in relation to the total population. The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think tank, that informs the public about global issues, attitudes, and trends, offers data for this variable from 2010 (Pew Research Center 2015).

4 Europe’s Swing to the Right

All across Europe, nationalist parties and movements are experiencing the kind of impact one could only imagine in a time of economic recession and convulsion (Hagtvet 1994, p. 244). However, a combination of economic and cultural insecurity has triggered this development (Rovny 2009, p. 18).

The financial crisis of 2008 has had a strong negative impact on Europe’s economy. Furthermore, high national debt levels and the concerning condition of many of the continent’s banks will most likely cause more problems in the future (Council on Foreign Relations 2010).

Next to the economic decline of Europe, the unprecedented migrant crisis across the European continent has been fueling a surge in support for nationalist movements. Nevertheless, Europe has experienced a growth of its immigrant population, and especially its Muslim population for the past few years (Council on Foreign Relations 2010).

From Greece to Norway and Poland to the United Kingdom, right-wing parties have stormed the European politics mainstream. This development indicates the possibility of an end of the European Union with several countries attempting to regain the sovereignty which they sacrificed not too long ago to achieve a collective political ideal (Council on Foreign Relations 2010).

Furthermore, the citizens of many European countries have been going through an identity crisis which has an effect on the feeling of national pride. The success stories of several nationalist parties in Europe stem from the ongoing identity crisis of the whole continent (Ignazi 2003, p. 201ff).
4.1 Overview of Right-Wing Nationalist Parties in Europe

Mainstream political parties find themselves more and more in a besieged situation. Once stable two-party systems are under new pressure, continuously fracturing which creates openings for populists on the extremes – left and right (New York Times, Solomon et al 2016).

Empirical tests have shown that the present right-wing movement tends to be more responsive to contemporary politics than similar developments in the past (Ignazi 2003, p. 202). The majority of right-wing parties in Europe share specific elements – nationalistic and populist tendencies, strict immigration limits specifically for Muslims, anti-globalization sentiment, and Eurosceptic tendencies (Rovny 2009, p. 18).

The majority of right-wing parties are not overnight success stories since they have been present in the European political scene for many years and in some cases even for decades (BBC 2014). A list of right-wing nationalist parties in Europe sorted by country with the year the party was established can be found in the appendix (Appendix 1).

Since the early 1980s, a ‘third wave’ of right-wing parties took off all over the European continent, yet, with significant differences regarding the success of the individual parties (Ignazi 2003, p. 1ff.). This right-wing movement in the eighties and nineties resulted as a counter-reaction to the liberal and cosmopolitan actions in the sixties and seventies out of which the Green parties evolved (Rovny 2009, p. 18).

The support for right-wing parties shows significant differences from country to country in Europe. Figure 2 visualizes the percentage of votes right-wing parties received in the European countries in the last national election cycle.
Since more than one right-wing party exists in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia, the percentages of votes for each party were added to one single percentage amount for right-wing support in these countries. The average right-wing support for the portrayed countries lies at approximately 17 percent. Altogether, a wide range in right-wing support can be seen within Europe from 4.5 percent in Croatia to 46.4 percent in Poland.

In the European Parliament elections in 2014, right-wing parties gained an enormous amount of seats in comparison to the last election run in 2009 (from 38 to 129 seats). Altogether, nine nationalist parties were elected to enter the European Parliament in 2014: Front National (France); National Democratic Party (Germany); Golden Dawn (Greece); True Finns (Finland); Danish People’s Party (Denmark); Party for Freedom (The Netherlands); Jobbik (Hungary); Austrian Freedom Party (Austria); and Lega Nord (Italy) (Wodak 2015, p. 30ff).

Despite many similarities, a wide discrepancy exists regarding the extreme nature of the parties’ right-wing political values and policy platforms. Some scholars consider several parties as
far-right, whereas others do not categorize them that way. A number of the nationalistic parties have far-right factions, however, they are not defined as far-right parties altogether like the Finns Party of True Finns (PS) of Finland. In other cases, some parties practice a right-leaning discourse, especially in times of election, but do generally not share a far-right ideology like the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (The Washington Post 2014). Altogether, the majority of Europe’s right-wing nationalist parties either have no connection to the far right and/or have openly distanced themselves from such accusations (Economist 2014). The current revival of nationalism in Europe is regarded as a “silent counter-revolution” (Ignazi 2003, p. 202), instead of a fascist resurgence (Ignazi 2003, p. 202). Knowing that the lines between right-wing populism and extreme and fascist right can sometimes be blurred, it should be mentioned at this point that the majority of parties discussed in this paper do not belong to the category of extreme right or fascist right parties. Only parties which openly and explicitly endorse Nazi ideologies and physically violent traditions will be called as such in the following.

4.2 Immigrant Population

Migration has become far easier with the advances of a globalized world especially concerning transportation and communication (Barker 2015, p.1ff).

“International migration arguably poses challenges to the traditional form of the modern nation-state by ‘compounding identities, ignoring borders and overruling orders’ [...].” (Barker 2015, p. 19).

The influx of foreign minority groups into Europe has caused increased ethnic violence all over Europe. Consequently, some scholars assume the existence of a limit for the number of immigrants an individual society can accept. The reaching of this threshold causes conflicts which are triggered by economic competition, ethnic tensions, and cultural clashes (Hagtvet 1994, p. 243). The majority of European countries represent multicultural societies. Some critics claim that too many immigrants have a negative impact on a nation’s cultural, religious, and linguistic characteristics which can lead to weaker national identity and societal cohesion (Barker 2015, p. 1ff).

The percentage of immigrants in relation to the total population differs significantly within countries in Europe. Figure 3 shows the percentage of people with a migration background in European countries in 2015.
The data used for this graph contains all flows of migration which includes migration from one European country/European Union member state to another. This means that the people included in this dataset do not necessarily have to be born outside of Europe/European member states to be included in the immigrant population. Altogether, Figure 3 highlights huge variations regarding the immigrant population within Europe. Whereas countries like Luxembourg (45.9 percent) and Liechtenstein (33.7 percent) have very large immigrant populations, other countries like Romania and Poland have less than 0.5 percent of people with a migration background residing within their territories.

The average immigrant population of all included European countries totals about nine percent. In comparison, the United States of America which is known as the ‘country of immigrants’ has an immigrant population of about ten percent. This means that the first nine countries included in Figure 3 have a higher immigrant population than the number one immigrant nation. However, the
way of judgment has to be put into relation with the starting point. Nine to ten percent of immigrants in a country with a developed culture based on language, religion, and ethnicity is not the same as in a country with a culture traditionally molded through a variety and diversity of ethnicities and religions.

European far-right parties with anti-immigration agendas go back decades. The National Front has blamed massive and uncontrolled immigration for France’s worrisome financial situation and a number of right-wing parties in Germany have claimed that the elimination of immigration would solve the problems of the German labor market (Rovny 2009, p. 18ff). Nevertheless, Europe’s current refugee and migrant crisis has renewed the appeal of nationalist parties’ anti-immigration rhetoric. With the influx of hundreds of thousands of people from countries like Syria and Afghanistan, many far-right anti-immigration parties speak to a lot of voters’ fears about the consequences the immense immigration wave will have (Huffington Post, Robbins-Early 2015).

4.3 Unemployment Rate

Economic upheaval results in political upheaval which delivers opportunities for radical solutions to obstinate situations. This represented the environment out of which fascism evolved over 80 years ago – the European continent was just recovering from the First World War, when the Great Depression delivered millions more into unemployment and poverty (RT 2014).

The European Union is held together through markets, laws, and institutions. The atmosphere of trust and optimism which was established through the decade-long success story of the EU, has been replaced by a tainted atmosphere initiated by the Greek debt crisis. The commitment to face political challenges together seems harmed and many European Union citizens have been criticizing this very heart and soul of the European Union (Foreign Affairs, McNamara 2015).

“[T]he Greek debt crisis has demonstrated once and for all the fragility of a polity that does not rest on robust institutions and norms of legitimate democratic governance.” (Foreign Affairs, McNamara 2015).

According to Eurostat data, unemployment rates have jumped from under five percent to over twenty-five percent in some European countries since the global economic crash of 2008. Not since the 1930s, has Europe experienced a comparable time of economic recession (Eurostat).

Figure 4 lists the unemployment rates in European countries in 2015.
Figure 4: Unemployment Rates in 2015 (Eurostat, created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

As with the two previous variables, a significant divide can be seen for this dataset as well. In Macedonia 28 percent, in Greece 26.5 percent, and in Spain 24.5 percent of the population was unemployed in 2015, while in Iceland, Switzerland, and Norway less than five percent of people were without work during the same timeframe. It is interesting to notice that the three countries with the lowest unemployment rates in Europe are all not part of the European Union. Overall, the average unemployment rate in Europe was about ten percent in 2015. In comparison, the U.S. had an unemployment rate of approximately five percent in 2015.

As a consequence of the debt crisis, most countries have cut benefits. The austerity cuts have burdened the European economy even more (Guerrieri 2013, p. 51). Moreover, austerity cuts have limited the access to jobs and resources which leads to ever more increased job insecurity, longer working days, and smaller wages while the cost of living keeps rising. This is what connects Europe's financial crisis with migration and the rise of the far-right. Altogether, the work insecurity
experienced by the middle class results in stronger support of right-wing extremism (Aljazeera 2016).

4.4 EU Resentment

A disillusion with the European Union has been spreading in Europe for the past few years. Whereas in 2007, 52 percent of the public expressed positive views about the EU, by 2013 only 30 percent shared this mindset. The rise of right-wing nationalist parties in Europe illustrates a new identity of politics which connects the problems of Europe and those of immigration. Additionally, nationalist political parties express concerns about globalization which impairs a country’s ability to defend its jobs, traditions, and borders (Economist 2014).

The citizens of EU member states share various views about the European Union. Figure 5 illustrates the EU disapproval rates in European Union member states in 2014.
Figure 5: EU Disapproval Rates in 2014 (Gallup 2015, created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

The percentages of disapproval rates vary from 60 percent in Greece and 57 percent in the United Kingdom, to 22 percent in Lithuania and 21 percent in Romania. Yet, the fact that all disapproval rates start in double-digits shows that even in the country with the lowest disapproval rate (Romania), every fifth person does not approve of how Brussels runs the EU. Overall, about 36 percent of people in EU member states disapproved of the European Union in 2014.

Nevertheless, the disillusion with and the disapproval of the European Union comes as no surprise. According to psychological research, it is well known that individual self-esteem is strongly connected to the so called ‘self-efficacy’, the perceived degree of a person’s power to affect and control situations. It seems plausible to apply these scientific findings analogically to nations and nation states. Consequently, it becomes evident that the EU commits a basic violation of one of the most fundamental principle of democracy and democratic nations: subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is a political, economic, and social maxim which strives for the realization of individual abilities, self-determination, and responsibility. In a political system subsidiarity means the delegation of the power of legislation, jurisdiction, and execution to the smallest and lowest political unit according to the latter’s abilities.

Since the European Union does neither have a common constitution, nor the legal obligation to defend the EU’s borders, the European Union’s administration mainly deals with issues which should – according to the principle of subsidiarity – be dealt with by the member states on a lower political level. Moreover, the protection of the EU’s external borders is supposed be implemented and financed by the individual border states. However, the execution of border controls violates EU laws. This nuisance became obvious in 2015 at the height of the European refugee and migrant crisis with Hungary and Austria being fined for restoring border controls. Violating EU treaties for domestic political reasons on the one hand, and the interference of European Union central political powers in the European Central Bank’s policy on the other hand, are just the expression of a tipping scale in judging the EU treaty.

In long-lasting economic stagnation situations, the possibility of societies losing patience tends to be very high. Many European citizens share a high level of disappointment and discouragement in times of continuing crisis and failed austerity policies. An unwillingness – maybe even a hostility – to Brussel’s policy sovereignty is circulating. An environment like this causes a high potential for the rise of populist movements protesting against EU policies. This is exactly what can be observed in many European Union member states with voters linking structural reforms with rising unemployment rates and social unrest. These developments have led to electoral success of several right-wing nationalist political parties all over Europe (Guerrieri 2013, p. 52ff).

4.5 Muslim Population

In 2010, Europe’s Muslim population accounted for 44.1 million of the continent’s inhabitants which illustrates about six percent of Europe’s total population. The European Muslim population has been registering a continuous growth rate and is predicted to make up eight percent of Europe’s total population by 2020. Growing at a faster pace than the non-Muslim population, the Muslim
population is predicted to make up a growing share of Europe’s total population in the future. The biggest increases regarding the Muslim population are expected in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden (Pew Research Center 2011, p. 121ff.).

Overall, Muslims are unevenly divided within Europe. Figure 6 shows the percentage of Muslims living in European countries in 2010.

![Figure 6: Muslim Population in 2010](Pew Research Center 2015, created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

The majority of Muslim Europeans live in Macedonia and Bulgaria. The origin of these Muslim population date back to the Ottoman Empire. In the contrary, the majority of Muslims living in the rest of the projected countries represent immigrants of the past few decades. Most Eastern European countries account for a very small proportion of the overall Muslim population in Europe with about 0.1 percent of their total population in most cases (Pew Research Center 2011, 121ff.).
The political anti-immigration and specifically the anti-Islamization movement does not illustrate a new phenomenon. In 2010, Thilo Sarrazin described in his bestseller ‘Deutschland schafft sich ab’ (‘Germany is abolishing itself’) how Germany’s feeble immigration policies and limited consent to multiculturalism resulted in the growth of the Muslim population in the country. In the same breath, Eric Zemmour wrote in his 2014 book ‘Le Suicide français’ how French cultural elites erode national pride which causes an inability for France to defend itself against social issues like immigration with particular focus on the growing Muslim population (Foreign Policy, Kirsch 2015, p. 44).

The German anti-Islamic political movement, Pegida (‘Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident’; German: ‘Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes’), which started in the eastern German city of Dresden in October of 2014 organizes frequent demonstrations against the Islamization of the Western World. In the midst of Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis, Pegida has received many new followers who support the movement’s more restrictive immigration rules, particularly for Muslims (ZDF 2015). At the beginning of 2016, Pegida organized protests in numerous cities across Europe voicing an opposition against the influx of mostly Muslim refugees and migrants (Reuters 2016).

5 Findings

In order to distinguish if there happens to be a connection between the dependent variable (right-wing support) and the independent variables (immigrant population, unemployment rate, EU disapproval rate, and Muslim population), the extent of interdependence of the variables’ quantities has to be measured.

5.1 Correlations

The correlation of the percentage of right-wing support with the percentage of the immigrant population, the unemployment rate, the EU disapproval rate, and the Muslim population comes to the following results (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>between % Immigrant Population and % Right-Wing Support</td>
<td>-0.057583703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between % Unemployment Rate and % Right-Wing Support</td>
<td>0.029095405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between % EU Disapproval Rate and % Right-Wing Support</td>
<td>-0.220439797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between % Muslim Population and % Right-Wing Support</td>
<td>0.350612670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first three results (% Immigrant Population, % Unemployment Rate, % EU Disapproval Rate) are not significant enough to distinguish a mutual relationship between the variables. Accordingly, there tends to be no connection between the support for right-wing parties and the immigrant population, the unemployment rate, and the EU disapproval rate for Europe as a whole. Interestingly, the correlation between right-wing support and the immigrant population, as well as the EU disapproval rate came to a small negative correlation which means that the more immigrants and the higher the disapproval rate, the less support for the right. However, correlating the right-wing support with the fourth independent variable – the Muslim population (% Muslim Population) – eventuated a moderately strong result. This implies that over twelve percent of the variance can be explained through this variable. Consequently, there happens to be a connection between the rise of right-wing nationalist parties and the percentage of Muslims living in Europe.

5.2 Case Studies

The comparison of different European countries with above average percentages for the chosen independent variables results in distinct numbers for right-wing support. The following case studies intend to highlight the differences regarding right-wing support in selected European countries with similar situations concerning the independent variables of this research.

Both Switzerland and Luxembourg demonstrate a far above average percentage of immigrants, however, as presented in Table 2, the support of right-wing parties differs significantly in the two European states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Immigrant Population</th>
<th>Right-Wing Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>24.2 %</td>
<td>29.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>45.9 %</td>
<td>6.6 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has to be mentioned at this point that the real effect on nationalistic developments stems hardly from the mere percentage of immigrants living in a country. In Luxembourg almost half of
the population consists of immigrants, however, the majority are immigrants from countries with almost identical cultural, ethnical, religious, and language backgrounds.

Like with the immigrant population, similar results can be seen for the comparison of Macedonia and Greece regarding the unemployment rate and right-wing support. The two top-ranking unemployment rate countries show strong differentiations in votes for right-wing political parties (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Right-Wing Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>42.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>26.5 %</td>
<td>8.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Unemployment Rate and Right-Wing Support in Macedonia and Greece (created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

Moreover, Austria and Greece have very high EU disapproval rates, yet, right-wing parties tend to be far more successful in Austria than in Greece (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>EU Disapproval Rate</th>
<th>Right-Wing Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>20.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>8.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: EU Disapproval Rate and Right-Wing Support in Austria and Greece (created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

Last but not least, as Table 5 illustrates, discerning findings can also be detected regarding the Muslim population and right-wing support in France and Germany.
Table 5: Muslim Population and Right-Wing Support in France and Germany (created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

Two of the countries included in this research – Austria and Greece – show above average results for three out of the four independent variables, yet, the support for the right turns out to be very different in the two states (Table 6).

Table 6: Comparison of Austria and Greece regarding Right-Wing Support and Immigrant Population, Unemployment Rate, EU Disapproval Rate, and Muslim Population (created by Ann-Cathrin Howard)

All in all, these comparisons underline the difficulties in generalizing the rise of the right in Europe. Next to the independent variables chosen for this research, especially historical legacies play an essential part in the success rate of right-wing parties on the country level. Moreover, the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis has already affected regional elections all over Europe with the right gaining far more votes than before. If right-wing parties keep their momentum, this will most likely be reflected in the next national elections in many European countries.

The following two detailed country analyses highlight different right-wing success stories – the one of the Freedom Party of Austria and the one of the Alternative for Germany in Germany. This closer look at two countries with very different right-wing developments after WWII is intended to clarify what other aspects play into the swing to the right next to the immigrant population, the unemployment rate, the EU disapproval rate, and the Muslim population.
5.2.1 Austria – The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)

The Freedom Party of Austria (German: ‘Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs’; FPÖ) was founded in 1956 as a successor of the Federation of Independents which consisted of former NSDAP members. The longevity of this party shows that the right-wing movement has never been suppressed in Austria after WWII like it was in other countries like Germany. In 2000, the FPÖ became the second strongest party in national elections which led to a coalition government between the FPÖ and the Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP). This electoral milestone resulted in sanctions from the European Union claiming a legalization of the extreme right in Europe (Wodak 2015, p. 191).

The FPÖ stresses an ‘Austrians First’ approach prioritizing the protection of the Austrian culture and national identity, as well as the Austrian people’s rights and prosperity. Over the years, the party has adopted a radical, anti-immigration, especially anti-Muslim, and Euro-sceptic agenda (Wodak 2015, p. 191).

Figure 7 shows an anti-immigration election poster for the Austrian Freedom Party which reads ‘We believe in our youth. The SPÖ in immigration’.

![Figure 7: Austrian Freedom Party Election Poster (BNP 2013).](image)

In September of 2015, the FPÖ represented the second strongest party in regional elections in Northern Austria (New York Times, Smale 2016). According to analysts, the majority of Freedom Party voters are male with lower than average income who live in rural areas (Politico 2016).

During the first round of presidential elections in Austria on April 24, 2016, the country’s right-wing party’s candidate, Nobert Hofer, received 35 percent of the vote leading far in front of the
two mainstream political parties – the Social Democratic SPÖ and the conservative ÖVP – which have governed Austria for the past few decades. Since no candidate won more than half of the vote, a second round of presidential election will be held on May 22 where Hofer will face the Green Party politician, Alexander Van der Bellen who got 20 percent of the vote in the first round. Both candidates have benefited from the mood of a country deeply divided over the ongoing European refugee and migrant crisis. The Freedom Party has vehemently criticized the Austrian government’s welcoming culture and has ever since led the opinion polls (Politico 2016). No matter who wins the presidential election, the largely ceremonial position of the Austrian President will not be from either one of the mainstream political parties which will be the first time in over seventy years (New York Times, Smale 2016).

5.2.2 Germany – The Alternative for Germany (AfD)

For decades, Germany represented a special case within the Western European democracies. Whereas right-wing populist parties have illustrated an integral part of the political party system in France, Austria, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries for many years, in Germany, the right-wing nationalist party scene has been practically outlawed since the end of World War II. Given the Nazi past, it has been a mantra that the center-right could not allow a party to flourish further right (Tagesspiegel, Causa 2016).

Germany did not have a representative political party reverberating ideas of EU-antagonism, foreigner-unfriendliness, and Islamophobia since recently. With no representation in mainstream politics, protesters took to the streets in Dresden in October of 2014, demonstrating against mass immigration and its consequences. The ‘Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the West’ (Pegida) has been organizing weekly mass demonstrations calling for strict controls on Muslim immigration (Spiegel 2014). It did not take long for the call to be heard by a new political party – the ‘Alternative for Germany’ (German: ‘Alternative für Deutschland’, AfD), which was founded in 2013 as an anti-Eurozone party (DW 2016).

The Alternative for Germany has opened a new political dialogue and language in Germany’s mainstream politics. Since its founding, the right-wing party has shifted its concentration from “fiscal heterodoxy to conservative identity politics” (Foreign Affairs 2016). With sweeping wins in recent state elections – 13.2 percent in Hesse, 15.1 percent in Baden-Wuerttemberg, 12.6 percent in Rhineland-Palatinate, and 24.4 percent in Saxony-Anhalt – the power of the established parties in Germany seems to be crumbling. Altogether, these recent state elections positioned the AfD at almost the same strength as the SPD (Social-Democratic Party), traditionally one of the two governing parties in Germany (Handelsblatt 2016). So far, the AfD is represented in five state parliaments and is predicted to reach representation in more in upcoming state elections (New York Times, Smale 2016). According to polls in May 2016, the Alternative for Germany currently represents the third strongest party in Germany (Stern 2016).

The AfD strongly supports feelings of identity with Germany as its home country which needs secure borders for protection of its culture and traditions. An election poster of the Alternative for Germany is portrayed in Figure 8. The poster reads: ‘We stand for our homeland. Safe borders instead of limitless crime.’
The welcoming culture of the summer months of 2015 has drastically changed with 62 percent of German responders of a YouGov poll stating that the number of asylum seekers in their country is already too high, whereas only 18 percent are willing to accept more immigrants (Statista 2016).

The refugee and migrant crisis and especially the New Year’s Eve sexual harassment and rape incidents in Cologne and several other cities in Germany have definitely changed the fortunes of the Alternative for Germany whose rhetoric is cutting across age, education, class, region, and political persuasion. Nevertheless, the success of Germany’s new right-wing populist party is not just based on the vacuum on the right, which was strongly increased by Angela Merkel’s party’s policy transformations, but also a growth in anti-establishment, anti-liberalization, and anti-European sentiment all over the Federal Republic (New York Times, Smale 2016).

Voter analysis has shown that the Alternative for Germany not only draws support from people who traditionally restrain from voting altogether, but also from disillusioned Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and far-left supporters (New York Times, Smale 2016). Nevertheless, many German citizens are literally fed up with the politics of their country and follow the AfD’s ‘Merkel muß weg!’ (‘Merkel must go!’) motto which is based on the Alternative for Germany’s claim that the chancellor has broken the laws of the German constitution through her recent liberal migration policies (Foreign Affairs 2016).
6 From Political Outlaws to Mainstream

Right-wing populism was long "considered a marginal phenomenon that would pass rather quickly" (Wodak 2015, p. 29). The past few years have proven the contrary – many European right-wing nationalist parties have not just survived longer than expected but have entered the governmental level in quite a few cases (Wodak 2015, p. 29).

The ideas of right-wing parties tend to attract voters from every age group. However, a Facebook study by the British think tank Demos came to the result that 16- to 20-year-olds were twice as likely compared to the over-50-year-olds to mention immigration as a reason for supporting nationalist parties. Some critics claim that the younger part of the population only knows Europe’s dark past from history books and not their or their parents’ personal experience which is why they consider supporting right-leaning political parties more easily. According to a Union of Jewish Students in France poll in 2014, 55 percent of French 18- to 24-year-olds did not want to rule out voting for the Front National (Economist 2014).

In the first round of national elections in France last year, the Front National represented the strongest force among young voters with 35 percent of 18- to 24-years-old supporting Le Pen’s party. Two-thirds of the voters ages 18 to 26 backed right-wing and even right-extremist parties in Poland during the last national election in the country. The popularity of right-wing nationalist parties among young voters illustrates a common trend in many European countries like Hungary, Austria, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. When asked, young right-leaning voters state that politicians of right-wing parties are the only political representatives that provide hope for the future. All in all, right-wing nationalist parties stand for a radical break promoting the end of immigration, debt, and unemployment (Welt 2015).

The average right-wing voter is described as male with skilled work training, a blue-collar profession, and a lower than average salary. The high percentage of young unemployed men in many European countries are due to their low educational status in direct economic competition with the high number of also poorly trained young asylum-seekers. In the light of this competitive situation, especially young men tend to be very likely to support right-wing parties that favor an end of immigration (Rovny 2009, p. 18). Nevertheless, the tsunami of refugees in 2015 does not seem to illustrate the main trigger for the swing to the right in Europe. The ongoing economic instability plays a big part as well. Yet, the newcomers from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia provide shape to the fears of many Europeans, especially the younger generation (Welt 2015).

Additionally, a majority of the European population seems to share feelings of confusion and anxiety about their belongings in a globalized world, the future of their countries, and whether their leaders have any control over these developments. This feeling is reflected in nationalist party slogans like the United Kingdom Independence Party’s ‘We want our country back’ or Jobbik’s ‘Hungary belongs to the Hungarians’ (Economist 2014). Many young Europeans are not just in search of a prosperous future but are looking for their own identities. They claim to want their countries back which provides an answer to their identity search and a future to look forward to (Welt 2015). Economic concerns seem to come second for young, right-wing voters in Europe. Instead, the core ideology focused on civic morals and identity of right-wing parties, tends to be more significant to win votes (Rovny 2009, p. 18).
In 2014, France’s National Front won a nation-wide election for the first time scoring far ahead of the mainstream parties with about 25 percent of the vote. Consequently, the right-wing party is now part of the mainstream (CNN 2014). Meanwhile, in Denmark, a nationalist party represents part of the government. The Danish People's Party became the second strongest party in the 2015 national elections with 21.1 percent of the vote (Parties and Elections 2016). One of the more extreme right-wing parliaments was elected in Poland last June – the conservative Law and Justice party won the first majority government with 39.1 percent of the vote since the end of the Cold War (New York Times, Lyman 2015).

While the majority of the right-wing parties in Europe have not gained governmental power, they have successfully set the political agenda in many European countries, thus moving politics further to the right (CNN 2014).

7 Conclusion

The observable renationalization of Europe’s political sphere illustrates a surfacing expression of a long-term psycho-social development in the very foundation of Europe’s democracies, the people. The continuing – perceived or actual – loss of self-determination through the ever shortening half-life period of knowledge, consumer goods, way of life, professions, etc. caused by the third and fourth industrial revolutions, as well as globalization, leads to fear (of the future) and loss of identity. The slogans ‘my home/nation is my castle’ and ‘my fatherland is where my mother tongue is spoken’ speak for the feelings of many individuals as well as people as a whole.

In Europe many signs of retreats to ‘one’s home’ could and can be observed for quite some time – young people reviving traditional costumes and corresponding music, attending traditional festivals, etc. Altogether, the foundation of the European Union itself brought a loss of self-determination of the nation states. The construct of a union with at least partially centralized lawmaking and one currency but consisting of nation states with their own constitutions and identities has not lead to a unified Europe; it has caused quite the opposite. No European citizen would place his or her hand over his or her heart when the anthem of Europe is played because first, hardly anybody knows that the ‘Ode of Joy’ from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is the European Anthem, and second, the European Anthem is officially not supposed to replace the national anthems of the European Union member states. Under the impression of the timely still close World War II, giving up the control of national borders, national currencies, as well as some independence, felt like a fair price for the perspective of longer lasting peace. With the impressions of the terrible and traumatic occurrences of WWII fading, and the economic problems and foreign culture immigration rising, the scale is tipping.

It is not surprising then that ‘Homeland Security’ illustrates a difficult issue with open and uncontrolled national borders due to the Schengen Agreement. Additionally, cultures and languages do not change that quickly, and it was and is not unknown that building political entities without consideration of national/tribal borders has always caused problems (colonial borders in Africa and Asia). The seeds were sown two generations ago and started – not surprisingly – to bear fruits in economically harder times.
The financial crisis has taken a painful toll on many European Union member states. Additionally, high national debts and the uncertain health of the continent’s banks may cause more crisis situations in the future. The renationalization of Europe’s political sphere represents a serious development (Council on Foreign Relations 2010). Nationalistic views – to put one’s country first – in combination with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim language have resonated more broadly with a public increasingly worried about security, migration, and economic stagnation. Others have been drawn to the right-wing movement by the belief that traditional politics primarily serve politicians and the interests of lobbyists rather than the interests of ordinary people (New York Times, Solomon et al 2016).

Across Europe, the failures of neoliberalism and the political mainstream have caused a swing to the right. The welcoming culture with which Germany’s chancellor Angela Merkel tried to infect the rest of Europe did not last. ‘We can do it’ quickly turned into ‘the boat is full’.
## Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Year Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ); Freedom Party of Austria</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA); New Flemish Alliance</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Vlaams Belang (VB); Flemish Interest</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ataka (ATAKA); Attack</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Hrvatska Stranka Prava Ante Starčević (HSP-AS); Croatian Party of Right Ante Starčević</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>National Popular Front (ELAM)</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Úsvit - Národní Koalice (ÚSVIT); Dawn - National Coalition</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Dansk Folkeparti (DF); Danish People's Party (DPP)</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit (IRL); Fatherland and Res Publica Union</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond (EKRE); Conservative People's Party of Estonia</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Perussuomalaiset (PS); Finns Party of True Finns</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Front National (FN); National Front</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Alternative für Deutschland (AfD); Alternative for Germany</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Chrysi Avyi (ChA); Golden Dawn</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (JOBBIK); Movement for a Better Hungary</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Sjálfaðsambandsflokkurinn (SSF); Independence Party</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Lega Nord per l’indipendenza della Padania (Lega Nord for the Independence of the Po Valley)</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Nacionālā Apvienība (NA); National Alliance</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Tvarda ir Teisingumas (TT); Order and Justice</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei (ADR); Alternative Democratic Reform Party</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo (VMRO-DPMNE); Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Partit Nazzjonalista (PN); Nationalist Party</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV); Party of Freedom</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Fremskrittpartiet (FRP); Progress Party</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS); Law and Justice</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Kukiz’15 (K); Kukiz’15</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR); National Renewal Party</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Partidul Poporului - Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD); People's Party - Dan Diaconescu</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Slovenská Národná Strana (SNS); Slovak National Party</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>L'udová Strana Naše Slovensko (L'SNS); People's Party Our Slovakia</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Espana 2000; Spain 2000</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Year Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Sverigedemokraterna (SD); Sweden Democrats</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP); Swiss People's Party</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


Foreign Policy, Kirsch (2015): “The Pessimist’s Prophecy” (p. 44-45) in Foreign Policy Nov-Dec 2015


