

Assessing the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in the EU: is Immigration Really the Cause?

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Abstract:

In recent years, there was a visible shift in citizens' attitudes towards voting for right-wing populist parties all across the EU even in countries previously considered "immune" such as Germany, Spain, and Sweden. This paper aims to assess the rise of right-wing populism in relation to the 2015 immigration crisis through a comparative outline of their electoral results before and after the

crisis. The paper argues that the 2015 immigration crisis might be the triggering element that catalyzed the rise of radical right populism; however, the continuity of this rising trend can't be explained exclusively by the immigration factor. Therefore, the paper will explore the more structural causes behind the rise of radical-right populism, in essence, economic and institutional causes.

Keywords: Brexit; Cultural backlash; European Union; The 2015 immigration crisis; Right-wing populism.

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Introduction:

In recent years, right-wing populist parties made significant gains in the European Union (EU). In 2016, the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) candidate Norbert Hofer gained 46.2% in the Austrian presidential elections. Marine Le Pen of the Front National (FN) came second in the second round of French presidential elections in both May 2017 and April 2022 with 33.9% and 41.4 % respectively. Similarly, the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) entered the German Bundestag in September 2017, a first for post-war Germany. The Lega, running as part of a right of center coalition in the March 2018 Italian election under the leadership of Matteo Salvini emerged as the third largest party in parliament with 17.37% of the popular vote.

Right-wing populism (RWP) appears to be on the rise in the EU countries. However, it is vital for academics to assess whether this rise

is real and supported with empirical evidence or if it's just a mediatised phenomenon that is overestimated for propaganda reasons.

Furthermore, there seems to be an automatic causal linkage between this rise of (RWP) and the 2015 immigration crisis given that the wave of right-wing populism rise followed the wave of immigration in 2015. Nevertheless, as academics, we must not be easily dragged behind superficial explanations and go further in our inquiry to explore the structural more rooted causes behind this rise, especially since it continued even after the drop of refugee applicants number, and that this trend is more noticeable in areas where immigrants are less concentrated compared to metropolises where immigrants are mostly located.

Therefore, in order to assess these allegations, that RWP is rising and that immigration is the main cause behind it, the problematic will be: **Is right-wing populism really on the rise? And is immigration the real causes behind it?**

For the sake of addressing this problematic I will be using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods as follow:

- **Qualitative methods:** the first step to take is to determine in a comprehensive and comparative way the political identity of these parties beyond the issue of immigration. Namly, what are the common ideological features that make these parties a family despite the dissimilarities that might occur among them?

To do so, I used data from the Manifesto Project Dataset version 2022⁽¹⁾ to analyze the campaign platforms of the parties. Then, I used - **content analysis** to analyze the communication artifacts of these parties including leaders' speeches, manifestos, electoral programs, and official websites content.

This was beneficial in two ways: the first is to determine what are the parties included in the scope of the study. The second is to determine the importance and emphasis these parties give to the issue of Immigration.

- **Quantitative method:** the assessment of RWP's rise requires the use of the most quantifiable indicators that allow us to measure political attitudes: **elections.**

Here it is worth clarifying that the study will be limited in the time scope from 2015 to 2022. I took the year 2015 as a departure point to show the impact of the immigration crisis on the electoral attitudes



regarding that the event was pivotal for RWP as they built all their rhetoric and programs in opposition to migration policies. What I basically did is conduct a **comparative analysis** between the last election before the 2015 immigration crisis and the first elections after the immigration crisis to measure the rise of radical-right populism. In addition to another analytical comparison between the first and second elections after the immigration crisis, the point of this was to see whether RWP continued its rise or lost its support once the refugee crisis passed in order to prove/disprove the causality between immigration and RWP.

It is also worth noting that the study will focus on Europe in its institutional meaning not geographic meaning, namely the EU-27, the reason for that is exploring the relationship between RWP and the immigration policy conducted by the EU.

Based on the above-mentioned considerations the paper will examine available evidence concerning the results of RWP parties in both general elections in all EU-27 countries in addition to referendums.

In order to answer the problematic I will follow the plan:

Chapter I: Defining the Right-wing Populism

Chapter II: The Rise of Right-wing Populism in the EU

Chapter III: Causes of the Rise of Right-wing Populism in the EU

Chapter I: Defining the Right-wing Populism

1- Definition of the Right-wing:

The right is defined on the basis of the socioeconomic dimension. The right believes in the self-regulating power of the market and thus favors a government laissez faire attitude towards it, while the left distrusts the market and wants the state to play an important role within the economy.⁽²⁾

This definition of right made Eger and Valdez argue that parties currently characterized as right belong to two distinct party families. One set of parties is generally rightist on various characteristics considered right-wing: free-market liberalism, anti-tax attitudes, and authoritarianism. These are the parties that began to appear around 1970. They shared a preference for neo-liberal economic policies, including lower taxes and reduced social expenditure. Beginning in the 1980s, their successors constitute a distinct party family. Although

their stances on social issues are similar—most notable is their ardent opposition to immigration—their economic positions differ fundamentally. These parties can be increasingly characterized as economically left-wing, as contemporary anti-immigrant parties do not take a weak-state stance on taxation, redistribution, or government intervention in the economy.⁽³⁾

Nevertheless; Norberto Bobbio provides an alternative distinction between left and right based on the key feature of propensity to egalitarianism that better illuminates the difference between the parties in question and the traditional right. Bobbio's distinction is based on the attitude toward (in) equality: the left considers the key inequalities between people artificial and wants to overcome them by active state involvement, whereas the right believes the main inequalities between people to be natural and outside the purview of the state.⁽⁴⁾

In this sense, right-wing considers immigrants as unequal and they stand against any state intervention or supra-state policy to decrease this inequality. Therefore, the most important feature of the current right is anti-immigration.

The issue of immigration is central in the ideology of right parties because it has challenged the ethnic domination generating a counter-reaction among white people who felt that their culture, identity, and ethnic purity were threatened. In short, the right/left ideological polarization nowadays shifted from economic polarization to cultural polarization.

2- Definition of Populism:

Populism is defined as a form of politics predicated on the fundamental moral opposition between an irredeemably corrupt elite and a virtuous people, with the latter seen as the only legitimate source of political power. The vilified elite in the case of Europe recent wave of populism are typically elected politicians, but depending on the ideological orientations and extremity of the actors making populist claims, they can also include state bureaucrats, business leaders, and intellectuals, representatives of the organized labor or any other group perceived as having violated the interests of the people.⁽⁵⁾

This definition demonstrates that populism is not of left or right orientations but instead it is always associated with more



comprehensive ideologies, in this regard Cas Mudde describes populism as a “thin-centered ideology” that can be attached to all sorts of “thick ideologies” such as communism, nationalism or socialism.⁽⁶⁾

In this case, the ideological marriage between populism and the right was on the basis that at the heart of both beats a boundary between two antagonist groups, those who belong to the people and those who do not. Populism draws on the antagonistic relationship between ‘us’ the pure people and ‘them’ the corrupt elites; while right-wing draws on the antagonistic relationship between the in-group and the out-group based on ethnic-racial, religious and cultural differences. Parties that combine right-wing with populist claims make their quest for national sovereignty on the basis of the ‘will of the people’; the people being the ‘pure people’ defined in terms of a narrow ethnic understanding of the nation.⁽⁷⁾

Chapter II: The Rise of RWP in the EU:

What we mean when talking about the rise of RWP is the visible shift in citizens’ attitudes towards voting for parties with the ideological features discussed above. How are these attitudes reflected in terms of political choices? Do citizens in EU countries vote for RWP? And most importantly, is the current wave of RWP temporary, or more structural and permanent?

1- The Rise of Radical-Right Populism in General Elections:

The post-2015 immigration crisis marked the beginning of a new trend with RWP parties rising all across the European continent even in countries previously considered “immune” such as Germany, Spain, and Sweden. This section will examine the national election results of both parliamentary and presidential elections in all EU-27 members to evaluate the rise of RWP and their performance both as governors and opponents.

Table (1): Parliamentary election results of radical right populism parties in the EU

Country	Party	Last election pre-immigration crisis %	First election after immigration crisis %	Second election after immigration crisis %
Hungary	Fidesz	44.8	49.2	54.1
Poland	PiS	29.9	37.5	43.6
Austria	FPÖ	20,5	26.5	16.2
Slovenia	SDS	20,6	24.9	23.4
Denmark	DPP	12.3	21.1	8.7



Italy	LN	4,1	17.4	8.8
Italy	FdI	2.0	4.4	26.1
Estonia	EKRE	8.1	17.8	-
Finland	PS	19.0	17.6	17.4
Sweden	SD	12.9	17.5	20,5
Spain	VOX	0.23	15,8	-
Latavia	NA	16.7	11	9.4
Netherland	VPP	10.1	13.1	10.8
Germany	AfD	-	12.6	10.3
Belgium	VB	3.6	11.2	-
Croatia	DP	-	10.8	-
Czech Republic	SPD	-	10.6	9.5
France	FN	-	8.7	17.3

Source: Parties and Elections in Europe⁽⁸⁾

From **table (1)** and **graph (1)** the observation is obvious; indeed, RWP took an upward curve in the first election after the 2015 immigration crisis as follows:

- Rise of RWP in 21 countries;
- Drop in 3 countries (Finland, Romania, and Lithuania), However, in Finland, they kept their place in the government coalition;
- No support in 3 countries (Luxemburg, Malta, Ireland).

Another important indicator is that:

- Of 27-EU member states, RWP seized power in 8 of them; either by taking over such as in both Hungry and Poland, or by becoming part of national governments like in Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia;
- They managed to enter the parliament and surpass the threshold in 14 countries.
- They couldn't seize any seats in national parliaments in 5 countries (Luxemburg, Malta, Ireland, Bulgaria, and Romania) compared to 14 countries in the pre-crisis elections.

As for the second election after the 2015 immigration crisis, it is worth noting that Europe underwent an overflow in the arrival of asylum seekers.

Between 2014 and 2015, the digit of non-EU citizens applying for asylum within the EU more than doubled (from 626,960 to 1,322,845). Asylum applications stayed at that level the next year, then decreased following the hardening of borders in the Balkans and



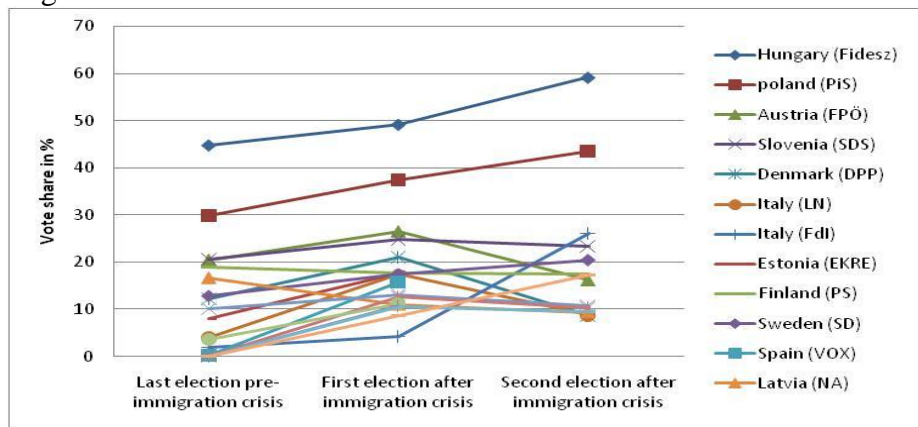
an EU-Turkey agreement on the return of refugees.⁽⁹⁾

However, the drop in asylum applications didn't trigger a drop in the support levels for radical right populism as follows:

- They continued to rise in 10 countries, including in countries where they didn't have previous gains (Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania) constituting a whole new wave;
- They had a slight drop in 9 countries (in Austria the drop was due to the 'Ibiza scandal');
- Luxemburg, Malta, and Ireland continued their resistance to radical right populism;
- There are still 5 countries where elections haven't yet taken place.

To sum up, the 2015 immigration crisis might be the triggering element that catalyzed the rise of radical right populism, nevertheless, the continuity of this rising trend can't be explained exclusively by the immigration factor, other more structural factors are taking place within the explanatory jigsaw that will be addressed in the next section.

Figure(1): Right-wing Populist Vote Shares Pre/after the Immigration Crises of 2015



Source: Made by the researcher

2- The Rise of Radical-Right Populism in Referendums:

Recently, referendums on matters supported by RWP parties seem to have taken a new direction. They focused on issues of “salient national importance” such as the 2016 referendum on the EU resettlement scheme in response to the refugee crisis in Hungary, and the most remarkable of all the 2016 referendum on UK membership in the EU.

1-2- The Brexit Referendum in the UK:

On 23 June 2016, a referendum was held to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. More than 30 million people turned out to vote, with 51.9 per cent voting in favor of “Leave” and 48.1 per cent voting to “Remain”.

Table 2: Results of the 2016 Brexit Referendum⁽¹⁰⁾

Date of the Referendm	23-06-2016
Electorate	33,577,342
Referendum Question	“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”
Total Votes Cast	46,500,001 (72.21%)
Total Valid votes	33,551,983 (99.92%)
Remain Votes	16,141,241 (48.1%)
Leave Votes	17,410,742 (51.9%)

Source: Made by the researcher

The right-wing populist UK Independent Party (UKIP) the leader of the “leave” campaign, Was founded in 1993 as a single issue political organization determined to secure British withdrawal from the EU, the UKIP has made some significant inroads in second order elections over the last decade. In 2004; it came third in the European Parliamentary elections, gaining 16.1 % of the vote. In 2009, it gained a further MEP and edged into second place ahead of Labor, the party then holding national office.⁽¹¹⁾ By 2013, support for the party had peaked, leading to both European Parliament success (27% of votes and most seats). This was the first time in British politics since the 1920s that a new party tops the poll in a nationwide election. It was also the first occasion since 1906 when a party other than Labor or the Conservatives won the highest share of the national vote.⁽¹²⁾

Analysis of UKIP’s rise raises questions of wider political significance. Its growing influence needs to be seen as a component element in a major shift in party politics in the UK. In the 1964 UK General Election, Labor and the Conservatives accounted for 88 % of the vote; by 2010 this percentage had reduced to 65 %.⁽¹³⁾ This change happened because the mainstream parties had failed to respond adequately to the electorate’s concerns about immigration and the cultural integration of the Muslim minority.

James Dennison and Matthew Goodwin attribute UKIP’s success to their assuming “ownership” of the immigration issue, which had



historically been a Conservative strength. The UKIP has successfully managed to exploit the entrenched issues of uncontrolled immigration into their broader Eurosceptic narrative.⁽¹⁴⁾

UKIP played a major role in pushing towards the referendum, holding the slogan “Taking back control”. Brexiteers wanted to take back control of the UK’s borders and to end the free movement between the UK and the EU-27. The British people were already concerned about the free movement of people from Eastern and central member states. The refugee crises add to their fear as they thought these refugees would eventually migrate to the UK after their settlement in the EU member states, as they will also be entitled to free movement rights in the future. Therefore, the immigration was the main factor behind the successful leave campaign in the UK.⁽¹⁵⁾

2-2- The Hungarian Migrant Quota Referendum:

On October 2016, a referendum was held in Hungary to decide whether this latter should accept the European Union plan to redistribute migrants on member states or not. The total votes cast were 44.04 %, short of the required 50% threshold; this made a lot of commentators consider the referendum invalid. The result was in favor of the anti-migrants camp with 98.36 percent voting “No” and only 1.64 percent voting “Yes”.

To understand the dynamic of this referendum it is important to understand the background of the migration problem in Hungary specifically and in the EU generally. Since the beginning of 2015, the Hungarian authorities counted 1,000 immigrants entering Hungary every week, mainly from Serbia, and Hungarian police detained 67,000 illegal immigrants. Therefore, later on in July 2015, the Hungarian government decided to close its border with Serbia and put up a 4 meters tall fence of 174 km in this section. This temporary fencing off was justified by the need to observe EU requirements and protect the external border of the Schengen zone from illegal immigrants from the south.⁽¹⁶⁾

Table 3: Results of the 2016 Migrant Quota Referendum.

Date of the Referendum	02- 10-2016
Electorate	8.272.625
Referendum Question	“Do you want the European Union to be entitled to prescribe the mandatory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the consent of the National Assembly?”
Total Votes Cast	3.643.055 (44.04%)
Total Valid votes	3.418.387 (41.32%)
“Yes” Votes	56.163 (1.64%)
“No” Votes	3.362.224 (98.36%)

Source: Theresa Gessler: The 2016 Referendum in Hungary, East European Quarterly 45, 1 , 2017, p. 91.

However, these measures seemed insufficient to protect Hungary from immigration invasion, especially since in September 2015 the EU made a decision to relocate 160,000 immigrants who entered Greece and Italy to other member states over a period of two years. Participation in the resettlement program was deemed to be obligatory, with every state having been allocated a number of refugees to admit.⁽¹⁷⁾

Refugees would be resettled depending on the countries’ population sizes, GDPs, asylum applications, and unemployment rates. According to the proposal, Hungary should receive 1295 refugees.⁽¹⁸⁾ Since the number of refugees to be possibly resettled to Hungary seemed insignificant the Fidesz framed the issue as integral to defending national sovereignty against the EU.

Chapter III: Causes of the Rise of Right-wing Populism in the EU:

Scholars attribute the causes of the rise of RWP parties to two approaches: demand-side and supply-side causes. The first refers to arguments about citizens’ changing grievances or demands. Thus, demand-side could be considered bottom-up explanations. Whereas, supply-side explanations, locate the leading cause of RWP in the growing inability or unwillingness of elites and institutions to supply responses to citizens’ demands. Supply-side explanations could thus be considered top-down explanations.⁽¹⁹⁾ These two approaches should be viewed as complementary, rather than competing.



1- Demand-side Causes:

The demand-side camp by its turn is divided between scholars prioritizing economic demands and those foregrounding sociocultural demands.

1-1- The Economic Causes:

The economic explanations focus on the way globalization has contributed to unemployment due to the reallocation of industries from developed countries to places with cheaper labor costs. Neoliberal ideology of consumerism and competition and neoliberal economic policies of austerity, privatization, corporate trade, and financial deregulation, have led to the concentration of capital, rise in housing costs, cuts to welfare provisions, stagnation of wages, precarious jobs, and unemployment, all contributing to a growth in inequality, disempowerment, disenfranchisement, and dissatisfaction which was mobilized by RWP parties.

According to Shahroo Malik, 69 percent of the people, who thought globalization has impoverished them, voted to leave, and the support for “leave” was 10 percent higher among households with income less than £20,000 than among households with income above £60,000.⁽²⁰⁾

The causal links between the economic crisis and the rise of RWP parties were proved in a study entitled “Financial Crises and the Populist Right” in which they analyzed voting data and economic crises from the 1870s till the post-refugee crisis and the conclusion is crystal clear: politics takes a hard right turn following financial crises.⁽²¹⁾

Therefore, economic bureaucracies have been in the line of fire of RWP politicians. The EU has been criticized for being a bureaucratic elitist institution contributing to economic malaise; Marine Le Pen’s 2017 party program blamed globalization, neoliberalism, the EU, and immigration for undermining the country’s national sovereignty, security, identity, and economy. Matteo Salvini, the ex-Italian interior minister and leader of the League party, proclaimed that the 2019 European parliamentary elections would be “a referendum between the Europe of the elites, banks, finance, mass migration and precariousness versus the Europe of peoples, work, tranquility, family and future”.⁽²²⁾ Nevertheless, according to Algan from London business school, it is vital to understand that globalization in general, and the EU in particular, have been successful in promoting growth

but have not done as well in sharing the gains. Large parts of society have felt left behind and have risen against the establishment, and European institutions.⁽²³⁾

However, this explanation fails to explain why the “left-behind” are not the only ones supporting RWP parties. In the UK, 39 percent of the top quarter of UK earners voted Leave. Actually, we can identify an alliance between “winners” and “losers” of neoliberal globalization, united on an anti-immigration platform and sharing a sense of loss of national identity, security, and sovereignty. Hence, the economics-based explanation must be complemented by other approaches.⁽²⁴⁾

1-2 The Sociocultural Causes:

Socio-cultural explanations argue that social and cultural trends over the past decades, including rising immigration, the decline of traditional values, and the mobilization of minority groups, are the primary reason for RWP’s rise. According to this view, these trends have challenged ethnic domination generating a counter reaction among white people who felt that their culture, identity, and ethnic purity were threatened, the counter reaction has led to support for right-wing populists.⁽²⁵⁾

Scholars argue that there are three outcomes of globalization. First, cultural flows among nations and global consumerism can lead to cultural homogenization, creating global forms of identification and erasing national identities. Second, migratory flows can lead to the production of new hybrid identities, espoused by diasporic communities, who share and belong to different cultures and histories at the same time, widening the possibilities of identity. Third, migratory flows can also lead to the strengthening of identities. Dominant ethnic groups, feeling threatened by the presence of “others” in “their” territory, react defensively. Minority groups, in response to experiences of racism and exclusion, also strengthen their identities. In this last case, instead of creating homogenous or hybrid identities, globalization can lead to polarization among groups who appeal to the “essence” of identities under threat by the presence of a different other.⁽²⁶⁾ It seems that the strengthening of national identities has clearly been the response given by radical-right populism parties in Europe to increasing migration flows resulting from globalization which is called a “cultural backlash”.



Norris and Inglehart propose the theory of cultural backlash to explain the rise of authoritarian populism by combining three interactive pillars: a demand for values, supply-side institutions, and governance. Concerning the first pillar, the demand for values engenders a ‘silent revolution’ of attitudes in society, which due to the variables of economic grievance and issues of diversity and immigration have led to social-conservative conventions that reflect authoritarian perspectives. The second pillar focuses on supply-side institutions. It demonstrates how people with conservative ideologies, pulling on new logic of thinking about key issues, utilize the instruments offered by institutions, such as electoral rules and party competition, to vote for neo-nationalist in elections. The last pillar of the theory of cultural backlash, governance, is subject to the seats acquired by populist parties in representative chambers which gradually condition the democratic system and the political agenda, and also slowly transform civic culture in society.⁽²⁷⁾

Central to the theory is the idea of a ‘silent revolution’, which is associated with the change in the demographic structure of societies and the cultural transformation since the second half of the twentieth century, manifested by increasing support for post-materialist over traditional values, and by the organizational expression of these values through the rise of new cultural issues and social movements. Outcomes of this silent revolution are exemplified by increased tolerance among the younger generation and the more educated for the expression of diverse forms of sexuality, same-sex marriage, and varied family units; more secular values, habits, and ethical norms; open-mindedness towards migrants, refugees, foreigners, and multicultural diversity of lifestyles; and cosmopolitan support for international cooperation, and multilateral agencies like the United Nations and EU. However, these developments triggered opposing reactions among older traditionalists who felt threatened by the deterioration of the values which were once dominant.⁽²⁸⁾

For example, many people who voted in favor of Brexit considered national identity as their most important value under threat because of large-scale immigration. Goodwin and Heath report that 88 percent of the people who were against immigration supported Brexit.⁽²⁹⁾

It is essential to note that the demand-side causes are overlapped as both economic and socio-cultural grievances generate each other,

namely anti-immigrant sentiment, resentment of out-groups, and so on tend to grow during hard economic times when low-income, low-education citizens are anxious about unemployment and future job opportunities and concerned about competition for scarce public resources, such as housing or welfare benefits. In short, economic scarcity crucially influences socio-cultural demands and immigrant-native conflict.

2-Supply-side Causes of Radical-Right Populism:

Despite the fact that explanations of RWP that concentrate on social or economic transformation and grievances, or on a mix of them have been very useful in helping us comprehend the phenomenon, they have some worth noting limitations or biases. Most evidently is that economic and/or social changes alone are not problems, they only provoke citizens to become angry, resentful, and susceptible to the appeal of right-wing populist rhetoric if established governments fail to identify and respond to them. Therefore, the need for a further explanatory fact is important and those are the supply side causes which try to explain why democratic institutions have become less responsive to citizens, less able to deal with societies' problems over time, and even fuel radical-right populism through their politics.

Contrary to demand-side explanations, Supply-side explanations refuse the assumption that broad economic and/or social trends directly influence citizens' political choices. Rather, they draw on the insights of institutionalist scholars and argue that economic, social, and other structural trends are filtered through institutions that determine how they are translated into political outcomes. Supply-side explanations, as noted, locate the central cause of radical-right populism in the decrease of responsiveness and effectiveness of political institutions, which has made numerous citizens willing to vote for politicians and parties with antiestablishment, anti-status quo messages.⁽³⁰⁾

This is mostly true in the case of the EU as more policy-making areas fell under the purview of the European Union during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, most notably monetary policy. Process of European integration undermined the policy options that national governments can offer their citizens. Means, the more decisions derive from the EU the less distinct are the policy choices on which parties compete which explains why parties that offer an out-of-



the-box solution by questioning and attacking the EU itself gain more voters as they promise to restore the decision-making to the national level. Here we should be mindful of the fact that the immigration quota policy was imposed by the EU and that is why parties that stood against immigration and multiculturalism had by necessity some kind of soft or hard Euroscepticism.

Scholars determine three major forms of institutional deterioration in which the EU fuels right-wing populism:

The first is **the judicialisation of politics**: in his article “When the rules won’t bend”, Kundnani explained how the European Union as the ultimate ‘rules-based order’ is based on the gradual removal of policy. In other words, the EU depoliticizes, it transfers issues from the political realm to the judicial realm, where they are subject to rulings by the European Court of Justice. He adds that depoliticization can be a good thing, but it can also undermine democracy and the question is “at what point do rules go from ‘civilizing’ international politics to undermining democracy”⁽³¹⁾ especially since the EU rules and laws are ever-growing.

The second is **empowering executives over legislatures**: in her book entitled “The EU’s Transformative Power”, Heather Grabbe analysis how the process of integration through the conditions it seated for potential member states such as judicial reform, prison conditions, pension reform, taxation, social security systems, and corporate governance... etc. have favored a concentration of resources and power in the executive while the legislature was marginalized. She argues that this created a democratic deficit in the whole accession process. Accountability was lacking on the EU side owing to the Commission’s control of much of the accession policy and there was also little democratic participation.⁽³²⁾

The third factor that is is **the growth of technocracy** at the domestic and European levels. Technocracy, in this regard, means transferring decision-making power to non-elected bureaucrats and international organizations. The problem with transferring power to technocrats is that their preferences often diverge from those of ordinary citizens contributing to a disjuncture between citizens’ demands and the policies supplied. An exemplar of this is the European Central Bank, which was granted increasing power over the past decades through purchasing sovereign debt, intervening in

commercial debt, real estate, and mortgage markets, and being granted oversight over financial systems. However, policies with such enormous distributional impact were left to elected leaders, but no one elects a central bank. The problem is that central bankers, like other technocrats, tend only to ask whether a policy is effective, not whether it is legitimate and this is what makes the radical-right populism who promises to protect national sovereignty and to take back control from Brussels bureaucrats and restore power to the people so appealing.⁽³³⁾

Conclusion:

We conclude this paper by saying that, indeed, the quantitative indicators support the notion that right-wing populism is on the rise across the EU, with RWP parties taking over power in 8 countries of the Union and enjoying high ranking and enough seats in national parliaments to execute active opposition in the rest of the countries.

The 2015 immigration crisis, according to the electoral results, was the triggering element that catalyzed the rise of RWP leading not only to electoral gains but to a structural change in the EU through the outcomes of the Brexit referendum that puts the integration process on stake and proved that, contrary to the wide-spread believe, it can be reversed and disintegration is possible.

Despite the agreement that the 2015 immigration crisis is the primer cause of right-wing populism's rise the continuity of this rising trend can't be explained exclusively by the immigration factor. Therefore, more structural causes are responsible for this phenomenon especially that the counter-reaction against immigration is a part of a general cultural backlash against progressive ideas and globalization.

Furthermore, right-wing populism is the symptom of institutional decay. Radical-right populism's primary cause is citizens' growing dissatisfaction with mainstream, established political institutions that appear unwilling or unable to respond to their grievances and demands.

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