

SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION AND THE RISING INFLUENCE OF POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES IN EUROPEAN POLITICS

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Abstract

This article addresses the role of securitization of migration as the main binding factor for the populist radical right parties after the so-called 'migration crisis' and their increasing influence in the 2019 European Parliament elections. Firstly the formation of new security threats after the end of the Cold War is analysed. Secondly, the role of populist radical right parties in securitization of migration and their rising influence in European politics are discussed. This claim is supported by a comparative analysis of three populist radical right parties: National Rally (NR), the League, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) by focusing on the rhetoric used by their leaders, their electoral campaigns and performance in the last European elections in 2019.

Keywords: *Securitization, Migration Crisis, 2019 European Parliament Elections, Populist Radical Right, National Rally, League, Alternative for Germany (AfD).*

Göçün Güvenikleştirilmesi ve Popülist Radikal Sağ Partilerin Avrupa Siyasetinde Artan Etkisi

Öz

Bu makalede göçün güvenikleştirilmesinin popülist radikal sağ partiler için 2015 'göç krizi' sonrası temel bağlayıcı unsur olarak rolü ve bu partilerin özellikle 2019 Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimlerinde giderek artan etkileri incelenmektedir. Makalede ilk olarak Soğuk Savaş sonrası ortaya çıkan yeni güvenlik tehditleri,

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sonrasında, populist radikal sağ partilerin bu güvenikleştirilme sürecindeki rolü ve Avrupa siyasetinde artan etkileri tartışılmaktadır. Göçün güvenikleştirilmesi analizi, National Rally (NR), League ve Alternative for Germany (AfD) gibi populist radikal sağ partilerin 2019'da son Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimleri öncesi liderlerinin siyasi söylemleri, kampanya süreçleri ve performanslarının karşılaştırmalı analizi yapılarak incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güvenikleştirme, Göç Krizi, 2019 Avrupa Parlamentosu seçimleri, Populist Radikal Sağ, National Rally, League, Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Introduction

The influence of populist radical right parties in European politics has increased since the 2008 economic crisis and even more since the 'migration crisis' in 2015. Givens argues that despite differences in their historical development during the 1980s and 1990s, these parties have common characteristics, such as their emphasis on nationalism, negative positions on issues like migration and the European Union (EU), and their anti-establishment rhetoric.¹

Various terms are used to categorize far-right parties, such as 'radical right', 'extreme right', and 'populist radical right'.² Mudde³ uses 'far right' as an umbrella concept to include both extreme-right and populist radical-right. The 'extreme right' rejects democracy altogether whereas the radical right accepts democracy but rejects liberal democracy, which includes pluralism and minority rights. One of the main examples of a populist radical right party is National Rally (NR), formerly Front National (FN). This article focuses on populist radical right parties in Europe.

This article considers migration as a constructed societal insecurity threat that became significant in the post-Cold War era. The founders of the Copenhagen School of Securitization, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, pioneered the theory of securitization with a special emphasis on security complexes. They argue that political actors have presented migration as a security threat, thereby gaining support from voters who are skeptical about a culturally different migrant population. In particular, populist radical right parties have put societal security and cultural insecurity at the centre of their political manifestos and discourse. They have

¹ Terri E. Givens, *Voting Radical Right in Western Europe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 18-20.

² Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³ Cas Mudde, "The Far-Right and the European Elections", (2014): 98-99.

constructed immigrants, particularly culturally different immigrants, as a societal security threat.

According to Middleton, there is little academic research on the interrelationship between the securitization of migration and the rise of populist radical right parties.⁴ Although identifying causal relationships between these phenomena is difficult, Jaskulowski argues that comparative research on securitization is essential. Jaskulowski also claims that further studies are needed regarding the relationship between securitization and domestic politics, especially regarding support for populist radical right parties.⁵ Accordingly, the main purpose of this article is to contribute to the literature through a comparative analysis of the securitization of migration focused on its role as a common goal for European populist radical right parties with various backgrounds and national concerns. It focuses on the period after the migration crisis in 2015, which accelerated their collaboration before the European Parliament (EP) elections in 2019 and which increased their influence in European and domestic politics. The article also attempts to enrich the debate on critical reformulations and interpretations of the Copenhagen School's Securitization theory, which has attracted great attention in the debate surrounding the 2019 EP elections.

The main research question concerns how the securitization of migration after the so-called migration crisis in 2015 brought together populist radical right parties, particularly before the 2019 EP elections. To address this question, the article firstly explains the new security threats that became relevant after the end of the Cold War. It then discusses the acceleration of the securitization of migration in European politics by focusing on three populist radical right parties: National Rally (NR) from France, the League from Italy, and Alternative for Germany (AfD) from Germany. These cases were chosen from three founding EU member states with significant migration communities. Germany has become the main European destination for asylum seekers, especially since the migration crisis. This led to the AfD reformulating its policies. Having been established as an anti-Eurozone party in 2013, it transformed itself into an anti-immigrant party after the migration crisis. In France, NR, with its consistently anti-immigrant policy and rhetoric, came second in the 2017 presidential elections and first in the 2019 EP elections. Italy was one of the

⁴ Ashley Middleton, "Migrants as Threats? Populist Radical Right Parties and The Securitisation of Migration in France", *SIT Digital Collections*, 2016, retrieved on 24 November 2020, https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3438&context=isp_collection

⁵ Krzysztof Jaskulowski, "The Securitisation of Migration: Its Limits and Consequences", *International Political Science Review* 40, no 5 (2019): 719.

countries most affected by the migration crisis because it is located on the EU's external borders and hence the country of entrance for many migrants. In response, the League easily transformed itself from a populist regionalist to a populist radical right party.⁶ By focusing on anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, it became the largest party in the 2019 EP elections.

I. New Security Threats: Securitization of Migration

The ending of the Cold War changed migration from a security threat exclusively focused on territorial security to a much greater focus on the security of societies. While states need independence to survive, the survival of a society is determined by identity and culture. Processes that undermine or weaken a society's identity lead to societal insecurity, particularly when a change is perceived as a threat to its survival as a community. An insecure society does not resort to military action; rather, it turns to processes that strengthen 'us' versus 'them'. As a result, migration-related issues become constructed as important security threats because migrants are the outsiders to the community previously constructed through a shared culture and identity.

The connection between societal security and socio-cultural security is examined in detail by Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde in their book 'Security: a New Framework for Analysis'. They consider identity as the organizing concept in societal security.⁷ Furthermore, a security community's societal identity is not harmonious; instead, it experiences inner tensions and conflicts that provoke a willingness to defend itself against internal or external threats. In Europe, several factors led to the perception of migration as a security threat to the identity of receiving states. First, cultures and norms in a community differ in defining who belongs to or can be admitted into the community. Violation of these norms, usually by a culturally different migrant community, is often regarded as a threat to basic values, and hence perceived as a security threat. Second, the ways migrants decide to deal with the host community also affect how and why only some migrant communities are perceived as threats to the identity of the receiving state.⁸

⁶ Selcen Öner, "Europe of Populist Radical Right and the Case of *Lega* of Salvini: Pioneer of a 'Parochial Europe'?", *European Politics and Society*, 2020: 7, Retrieved on 27 November 2020, doi: 10.1080/23745118.2020.1842700.

⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1998).

⁸ Yannis A. Stivachtis, "Civilization and International Society: The Case of European Union Expansion", *Contemporary Politics* 14, no.1 (2008): 71-89.

For European societies, Muslim immigrants have constituted the main 'other' in Europe's past. European identity was predominantly formed through its relationship to Islam, such that Europe has developed a collective identity and the ability to orchestrate action within a security community. The more that state sovereignty transferred to the EU level, the more nations have felt vulnerable. Formerly, if a nation or cultural group felt threatened (e.g. by immigration), it could call on its state for assistance (e.g. by stopping immigration). Now, however, the increasing transfer of sovereignty to the EU level means that nations can no longer rely on the state to handle such matters. Thus, a security threat to the EU may fragment the previously integrated community and destroy 'Europe' as a project.

This debate around the securitization of migration in Europe has been supported by other scholars, such as Jef Huysmans⁹ and Didier Bigo.¹⁰ They conclude that EU immigration policy has been securitized, immigration has become one of the greatest security concerns of 21st century Europe, and the perception of immigration as a threat has become the hegemonic discourse in government policy.

The Copenhagen School of Securitization argues that a security complex includes three main elements: a reference point (the threatened element that needs to survive), a securitizing actor (the element that presents a topic as a security threat because it threatens the reference point), and functional actors (those who affect the dynamics of the sector). Huysmans adds to this analysis by constructing a security threat as three referent objects: internal security, cultural identity, and the welfare state. The core of internal security is the internal market and, as a corollary, the free movement of people. The use of cultural identity and the welfare state as referent objects is particularly relevant regarding securitization of migration. That is, in addition to seeing migration and migrants as security threats to the collective identity of their security community, citizens of the host country do not want to share the welfare state's social and economic rights with migrants.¹¹ Instead, they see them as free-riding on welfare state benefits, which generates 'welfare chauvinism'. In this case, citizens see migrants as threatening both cultural homogeneity and the welfare state.

⁹ Jef Huysmans, "Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues," in *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, eds. Robert Miles and Dietrich Thraenhart. London: Pinter, 1995).

¹⁰ Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease." *Alternatives* 27 (2002): 63-92.

¹¹ Jef Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*, (New International Relations Series, London, UK: Routledge Pub, 2006), 78.

The securitizing actor, the power holder, may use securitization to gain control over issues; hence, securitization may be based on a perceived rather than a real existential threat,¹² meaning that declaring something a security issue becomes a political choice.¹³ Thus, for Buzan and his colleagues, there are no security issues in themselves, but only issues that have been securitized, i.e. socially constructed as such through securitizing speech acts. State representatives usually declare in their speeches that any existential threat to the designated referent object is defined as a security matter requiring extraordinary measures to deal with it.¹⁴ This is accepted as such by the audience of the speech act – the electorate. Societal insecurity triggered by migration manifests itself in the political radicalization of societies, as evidenced by the rising influence of populist radical right parties. Societies start voting for political forces that securitize migration through the use of nationalism and xenophobia in their speech acts.¹⁵

However, despite their popularity, these arguments have various limitations as identified by different scholars. These include a lack of analysis of rival views (i.e. attention to rival voices and counter-securitizations), overemphasis of speech acts and under-analysis of non-discursive practices, an elitist framework, a decisionist approach that assumes that securitization occurs at the moment when the audience accepts the securitizing actor's proposal, the framework's Eurocentric perception, and overemphasis on macro-level discourses while ignoring micro-level practices.¹⁶

The most criticized aspect is its focus on speech acts. According to McDonald, the theory over-emphasizes speech acts while neglecting other processes or means of communication, such as images and other visual representations like videos, which also play a significant role; indeed, several studies have examined the impact of other means of communication during the securitization process.¹⁷

¹² Ole Waever, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, (Columbia University Press. 1995), 54.

¹³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁴ Buzan, et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 21-24.

¹⁵ Huysmans, "Migrants as a Security Problem," 72-73.

¹⁶ Başar Baysal, "20 Years of Securitization: Strengths, Limitations and A New Dual Framework," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 17, no. 67 (2020): 5-6.

¹⁷ Matt McDonald, "Securitization and the Construction of Security," *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no.4 (2008) : 576, Erişim Tarihi: 18 September 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066108097553>.

Several scholars¹⁸ have also moved away from the traditional definition of securitization as a ‘speech act’ to develop an understanding of securitization as a field effect. This theoretical framework, pioneered by the Paris School of Securitisation, is known as (in)securitization theory. According to this framework, the field of (in)security comprises (in)security professionals such as police officers, border control enforcers, and in some cases members of the army, who play a fundamental role in the (in)securitization of migration because of their expertise.¹⁹ These ideas have been further elaborated in Balzacq’s sociological view of securitization, which emphasizes the importance of practices, context, and power relations. As he explains, ‘security practices are enacted, primarily, through *policy tools*’.²⁰ In this way, Balzacq aims to distinguish between this approach and what he sees as the philosophical view of securitization, which emphasises the speech act elements. He argues that it is institutionalization through repetitions of security practices that produces security issues that plays a more crucial role in constructing security issues, rather than the magical power of speech acts. However, this approach may seem rather limited as its bottom-up framework overemphasizes micro-level practices and ignores how speech acts impact macro-level decision-makers.

Moreover, this approach ignores the significant impact of high-level decision-makers similar to the Copenhagen School’s concept of the securitizing actor. In a state, this unit includes higher-level decision-makers, such as the head of the executive, chief of staff, or the defense, interior, and foreign affairs ministers, and leaders of political parties, whether in opposition or in government. These high-level decision-makers play a crucial role in defining security because they are publicly visible and capable of reaching a mass audience directly, which in turn enables them to convince via discourses.²¹

Another related limitation usually cited by scholars is the Copenhagen School’s Eurocentric perspective. Securitization requires exceptionalization of an issue to justify extraordinary measures against it. However, an exceptional issue in one time and place may be regarded as normal in another, so securitization mechanisms, measures, and consequences may vary across contexts and not should necessarily focus on European contexts.

¹⁸ For further detail, see Bigo, “Security and Immigration,”; Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, “Terror, Insecurity and Liberty. Illiberal practices of liberal regimes after 9/11” in *Understanding (In)Security*, eds. Bigo and Tsoukala (Routledge Pub., 2008).

¹⁹ Bigo, “Security and Immigration”.

²⁰ Thierry Balzacq, “A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions, and Variants,” in *Securitization Theory. How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. Thierry Balzacq (New York: Routledge Pub., 2011), 15–16.

²¹ Baysal, “20 Years of Securitization,” 46-47.

Indeed, this Eurocentrism has already been addressed by applying securitization theory to countries like Turkey and Israel.

While acknowledging these rival theories, we will continue using the Copenhagen School of Securitization to analyze the interrelationship between the securitization of migration and the growing influence of populist radical right parties at European level. This is primarily because the securitization of migration has also influenced the rhetoric and policies of mainstream parties, who have started to take a more negative stance against irregular migrants in the wider political debate and usually favor more restrictive migration policies. Examples of this will be given in later sections of the article.

II. Securitization of Migration in European Politics

When societal security concerns escalate to the point of securitization, migration becomes the fulcrum of the political agenda. The importance of migration rose dramatically in 2015. After German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to provide refugee status to anyone seeking protection from violence and war abroad, the number of asylum applications peaked, with an influx of irregular migrants to Europe. The cultural and religious otherness of these migrants, crucial to societal security, made migration securitized by various political actors.

Securitized discourses and policy responses are primarily developed at national level whereas the EU has been a crucial actor at the European level in migration and asylum policies, especially since the Amsterdam Treaty (1999).²² As Karamanidou argues, “a securitizing approach has dominated migration policy since September 11, both at the EU and individual state levels, and has been institutionalized through EU laws and policies and the establishment of agencies like FRONTEX”.²³ As Özerim argues, while various actors may contribute to securitization of migration, populist radical right parties have played a key role in promoting rhetoric and policies that increase public anxieties regarding immigrants and construct migration as a societal security issue.²⁴ Populist radical right parties have securitized migration and highlighted the insecurity caused by the new influx of irregular migrants since 2015. Consequently, their audience, namely the

²² Lena Karamanidou, “The Securitisation of European Migration Policies: Perceptions of Threat and Management of Risk,” in *The Securitisation of Migration in the EU*, eds. G. Lazaridis, et al. (Palgrave Pub., 2015), 37.

²³ Karamanidou, “The Securitisation of European Migration Policies,” 40.

²⁴ M. Gökay Özerim, “European Radical Right Parties as Actors in Securitization of Migration”, *International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering* 7, no: 8 (2013): 2198.

public that were already against foreigners due to their different cultures and lifestyles, were encouraged to vote for politicians willing to defend their constituencies, social systems, cultures, and borders. The public's tendency to vote for anti-migration parties is clear from Eurobarometer surveys. Although Eurobarometer does not directly address the migration-security relationship, a series of relevant questions can contribute to the relationship. Surveys conducted around November 2015 found that 59% of the European public shared negative feelings about migration from outside the EU. This negativity remained relatively stable at 58% in spring 2016 and 56% in autumn 2016.²⁵

The framing of a large inflow of irregular migrants, especially since 2015, as a 'migration crisis' or 'refugee crisis', and linking this crisis with increasing terrorist attacks, particularly in Paris (2015), Brussels (2016), and Berlin (2016), accelerated the securitization of migration in European politics. Politics was radicalized with the rise to power of new political forces that not only politicized immigration but framed it as a security issue. Despite differences in their political programs and priorities, they are linked by opposition to migration politically (insecurity), economically (re-distribution of resources), and culturally (fear of Islamization).

For contemporary populist radical right parties, nationalism is the primary political concern determining their policy preferences. Their 'opposition to migration is consistent with the idea that diversity threatens the nation-state'.²⁶ Mudde calls this 'nativism', meaning an 'ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and non-native elements are fundamentally threatening to the nation-state's homogeneity'.²⁷ Moreover, according to Mudde, populist radical right parties have also influenced mainstream parties, shifting them towards more nativist tendencies regarding migration policy.²⁸ Especially after the migration crisis, mainstream parties, particularly centre-right parties have increasingly defined immigration as a threat to national identity and security.²⁹

²⁵ For further detail, see Standard Eurobarometer surveys 84 in 2015, 85 and 86 in 2016.

²⁶ Maureen Eger and Sarah Valdez, "From Radical Right to Neo-Nationalist," *European Political Science* 18 (2019): 383, Retrieved on: 14 May 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-018-0160-0>.

²⁷ Cas Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," *West European Politics* 33, no 6 (2010): 1173.

²⁸ C. Mudde, "Three Decades of Populist Radical Right Parties in Western Europe: So What?," *European Journal of Political Research* 52, no 1 (2013): 11.

²⁹ C. Mudde, "Why Copying the Populist Right isn't Going to Save the Left," *The Guardian*, 1 June 2019, Retrieved on: 29 July 2019b: 28

The following section focus on three cases as previously mentioned, NR, the League, and AfD, as examples of populist radical right parties.

III. Securitization of Migration by Populist Radical Right Parties: The Cases of National Rally (NR), League and Alternative for Germany (AfD)

National Rally

NR was established as the Front National in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, who remained its leader until resigning in 2011, after which his daughter, Marine Le Pen, took over. The party's name was changed in 2018. Since its foundation, NR has had a clear anti-immigrant position.³⁰ While making its anti-migration claims, it relies on the history of the securitization of migration in France and Europe. NR continually identifies migrants as a threat to French cultural cohesion.³¹

Marine Le Pen has invested in a new generation of party activists who usually start at the local level with discriminatory tendencies towards migrants. For instance, Robert Menard, who became mayor of Beziers in 2014, considers Islam as 'insoluble in democracy' and launched an offensive against kebab shops.³² Since 2015, France has faced several terror attacks, mostly linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which placed security at the heart of election campaigns and affected France's domestic politics. Before the 2017 national elections, Marine Le Pen accused the government of giving French nationals 'fewer rights than foreigners'. Her speeches have included the following statements: "We are not a free country if we cannot control our territory. My first measure as president will be to reinstate France's borders"; "With the serious terror threat that weighs on us, we have to be able to control who enters and be able to expel those who represent a danger. With me there wouldn't have been the migrant terrorists of the Bataclan and the Stade de France"; and "Mass immigration is not an opportunity for France, it is a tragedy for France".³³ She also announced

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/may/14/why-copying-the-populist-right-isnt-going-to-save-the-left>

³⁰ Bhaswati Sarkar, "The Right Matters in European Politics," in *Challenges in Europe*, ed. Gulshan Sachdeva (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 170-172.

³¹ Middleton, "Migrants as Threats?"

³² Karina Piser, "How Marine Le Pen is Making a Comeback, One French Village at a Time," *Foreign Policy* (2019), Retrieved on: 27 June 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/24/marine-le-pen-national-rally-france-local-elections/>

³³ "French Elections: Marine Le Pen Vows to Suspend Immigration to Protect France", *Independent*, 18 April 2017, Retrieved on 15 December 2019,

plans for a moratorium to cut net migration³⁴ to 10,000 people a year, freeze long-term visas, and impose a 10% tax on companies hiring foreign workers.³⁵

In April 2019, Le Pen told the French media that “migration needs to be stopped” and rejected any forced redistribution of migrants around Europe. She referred to FRONTEX as a ‘welcoming agency for migrants’ and stated that “French borders needed to be protected at all costs”. She added that instead of distributing migrants from SAR NGO ships around Europe, they should be taken back to the port they came from.³⁶ Thus, Marine Le Pen has securitized migration by constructing migrants and refugees as threats to societal security. Moreover, she links the EU’s external border controls to France’s security as protection from outsiders.

The League

The Northern League was established in northern Italy in 1991 as a regionalist party before evolving into a populist radical right party. Umberto Bossi led the party from 1991 to 2012 before Matteo Salvini, who became a member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 2009, took over after defeating Bossi in the 2013 leadership election.

The Northern League put immigration at the centre of its political agenda after its first electoral success in the early 1990s, although it initially opposed southern Italian immigrants.³⁷ The economic crisis in 2008 provided an opportunity for the Northern League to strengthen anti-migration legislation.³⁸ Under Salvini, the Northern League gradually moved from a regionalist to a more nationalist position. This transformation from a regionalist party to a populist radical right party (League), especially since the migration crisis, is a unique case in European politics.³⁹

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/french-elections-latest-marine-le-pen-immigration-suspend-protect-france-borders-front-national-fn-a7689326.html>

³⁴ Migrants currently make up under 10% of the French population, only 2% more than in 1975. France granted asylum to 33,000 people in 2018, which represents only a quarter of all requests (*The Guardian*, September 2019).

³⁵ “French Elections,” *Independent*.

³⁶ Emma Wallis, “What the European Parliament Election Results Could Mean for Migration,” *Features*, 29 May 2019, Retrieved on 07 July 2019. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/author/emma%20wallis/>

³⁷ Monica Colombo, “The Representation of the ‘European Refugee Crisis’ in Italy: Domopolitics, Securitization, and Humanitarian Communication in Political and Media Discourses,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16, no 1-2 (2018): 163.

³⁸ Tiziana Caponio and Teresa M. Cappiali, “Italian Migration Policies in Times of Crisis: The Policy Gap Reconsidered,” *South European Society and Politics* 23, no 1 (2018): 125.

³⁹ Öner, “Europe of Populist Radical Right.”

Since this transformation, the League has gradually moved closer to Europe's populist radical right parties,⁴⁰ although Salvini kept the League's populist and anti-systemic style, prioritizing issues perceived as problems throughout Italy, such as EU immigration policy.⁴¹ The party developed a nativist, exclusivist, ethno-cultural conception of the people. It emphasized its strong anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies by referring to Islam as a threat to Christian identity.⁴² For example, the 2017 party manifesto demanded that Italy "stop the invasion", adding that "all illegal immigrants should be immediately repatriated".⁴³

Rhetoric soon turned into practice once the League joined the coalition government in June 2018. As interior minister, Salvini refused to allow humanitarian ships carrying rescued immigrants from docking while criminalizing Search and Rescue (SAR) NGOs and leaving migrants at sea for weeks. A security decree was also passed by the Italian Senate declaring that private vessels carrying migrants entering Italian territorial waters would face fines of up to 1 million Euros, the arrest of the captain, and the confiscation and possible destruction of the ship. Thus, during his term as interior minister, immigrants and SAR NGOs operating in the Mediterranean were constructed as security threats. As Salvini put it, "As long as I live, it is my duty to defend the borders, the dignity and the sovereignty of my country against migrants".⁴⁴

After the 2019 EP elections, Salvini withdrew from the coalition expecting snap elections. Instead, however, a new coalition was formed between the Democratic Party (PD) and the Five Star Movement (M5S), under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte. Conte criticized Salvini's actions, especially the security decree. In response, Salvini

⁴⁰ Stefano Fella, and Carlo Ruzza, "Populism and the Fall of the Centre-Right in Italy: The End of the Berlusconi Model or a New Beginning?," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 21, no 1 (2013) : 42.

⁴¹ Marco Brunazzo and Mark Gilbert, "Insurgents against Brussels: Euroscepticism and the Right-Wing Populist Turn of the Lega Nord since 2013," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22, no 5 (2017) : 631, Retrieved on 11 January 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2017.1389524>.

⁴² Gilles Ivaldi, Maria Elisabetta Lanzzone and Dwayne Woods, "Varieties of Populism across a Left-Right Spectrum: The Case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement," *Swiss Political Science Review* 23, no 4 (2017): 363. Retrieved on 27 February 2019. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12278>.

⁴³ Cited by Ivaldi, et al., "Varieties of Populism," : 363.

⁴⁴ Cecilia Butini, "There's No End in Sight for Matteo Salvini's War on Migrants," *Foreign Policy* (2019). Retrieved on 21 August 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/21/theres-no-end-in-sight-for-matteo-salvinis-war-on-migrants-league-liga-open-arms-rescue-ships-mediterranean-libya/>.

threatened to “close ports all over again, if God and the Italian people give me the chance to be in government again”.⁴⁵ Thus, while the Northern League had securitized internal immigrants from southern Italy, the League, particularly Salvini, securitized non-European immigrants from Africa and Muslim immigrants. This increased the party’s influence at national and European level, as will be further discussed in later sections.

Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Considering Germany’s past and consequent political sensitivity to extreme nationalism, the rising influence of a radical right party has great symbolic importance. Following its foundation in 2013 as an anti-Euro party, AfD gained 4.7% of the votes in the 2013 federal elections, which almost enabled it to enter the *Bundestag*. It then got 7% of the votes in the 2014 EP elections and sent 7 members to the EP.⁴⁶

Since then it has increased its influence by embracing the anti-immigration and anti-Islam agenda that was initially associated with the PEGIDA⁴⁷ movement, especially after Frauke Petry replaced Bernd Lucke as party leader.⁴⁸ While officially denying any link between the AfD and PEGIDA, Petry acknowledged an overlap in relation to patriotism, asylum, and immigration laws.⁴⁹ Petry is noted for her anti-Islam and anti-immigrant views. She emphasises the pre-eminence and importance of German culture while rejecting Islam within German society.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Robert Grimm, “The Rise of the German Eurosceptic Party Alternative für Deutschland between Ordoliberal Critique and Popular Anxiety,” *International Political Science Review* 36, no 3 (2015): 264-265. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512115575384>.

⁴⁷ PEGIDA, *Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West), began life in Dresden on October 20, 2014, when a group of locals marched to protest what they saw as increasing dilution of German identity due to immigrants. The movement is against both Islam and immigration.

⁴⁸ Dalibor Rohac, Edit Zgut, and Lóránt Györi, “Populism in Europe and its Russian Love Affair,” *American Enterprise Institute* (2017): 5-6. Retrieved on 25 July 2020. <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/populism-in-europe-and-its-russian-love-affair/>.

⁴⁹ Susanne Beyer and Jan Fleischhauer, “The Immigration of Muslims Will Change Our Culture,” *Spiegel Online* (2016). Retrieved on 12 November 2019. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-frauke-petry>.

⁵⁰ C. Lees, “The Alternative for Germany: The rise of right-wing populism in the heart of Europe,” *Politics* 38, no 3 (2018): 306.

The migration crisis aided Petry's efforts to solidify the party into something more than simply a Eurozone protest vote.⁵¹ Accordingly, the party adopted an explicitly anti-immigrant and anti-Islam policy in May 2016. Its election manifesto included a section explaining why 'Islam does not belong to Germany'. AfD considered Islam as a danger to the state, society, and its values: "Burkas? We like bikinis", read one of the party's most garish posters.

The party's leader since September 2017, Alexander Gauland, had talked of fighting an 'invasion of foreigners' and declared that "Islam is alien to German society". During a post-federal election press conference, he claimed that "One million people – foreigners – being brought into this country are taking away a piece of this country, and we as the AfD don't want that ... We say we don't want to lose Germany to an invasion of foreigners from a different culture". Gauland has also remarked that "Intellectually, Islam is always linked to the overthrow of the state. Therefore, the Islamization of Germany poses a threat".⁵² Thus, especially Muslim immigrants have been constructed as a societal security threat by AfD leaders.

AfD's other leader since September 2017, Alice Weidel, has echoed this line and used several slogans and images on social media to construct immigrants and refugees, especially Muslims, as a societal and cultural security threat. Her Twitter account is replete with Islamophobic statements, such as "Muslim values are in direct opposition to Germany's way of living"⁵³, "In reality, asylum seekers are not victims – we are", and "Syrians and Afghans are killing because of their culture – this stone-age culture does not belong in Germany".⁵⁴

For AfD, true multiculturalism is the greatest danger to social peace and the maintenance of the nation as a cultural entity.⁵⁵ New Germans do not

⁵¹ C. Larkin, "Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe: The Rise of Alternative für Deutschland and its Relations to Front National in France," University of Arizona. (March 3 2017): 8. Retrieved on 19 September 2019. <http://eucenter.scrippscollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/files/2017/03/Claire-Larkin.pdf>

⁵² Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen, "Europe versus Islam? Right-wing Populist Discourse and the Construction of a Civilizational Identity," *The Review of Faith and International Relations* 17, no1 (2019): 49-64. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2019.1570759>.

⁵³ D. Jegić, "Germany's Far Right AfD Exploits Passivity and Resentment to Enter the Mainstream," Mint Press News, 03 October 2018. Retrieved on 24 October 2020. <https://www.mintpressnews.com/germanys-far-right-afd-exploits-passivity-and-resentment-to-enter-the-mainstream/250230/>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ A poster distributed by the AfD's national branch depicts a pregnant white woman smiling and lying on her back in a field while the text reads: "New Germans? We make them ourselves".

come from naturalization or immigration but from birth – from descent, as in the pre-2000 citizenship law.⁵⁶ The party's program also included proposals like "Germany must reintroduce permanent border controls and the EU's external borders must be completely shut", and "Germany must set up a new border police force, and police should 'if necessary' shoot at migrants seeking to enter the country illegally".

In the 2017 election after the migration crisis, AfD first entered the national parliament with 12.6% of the vote to become the third largest party. This demonstrates a close link between the sceptic audience/electorate in Germany shifting to vote for a party whose speeches that securitized migration and depicted the integration of migrants and refugees as Europe's biggest threat.

Since then, the party has continued to use the same rhetoric supported by visual images, such as posters, on every possible occasion against Muslims, who are generally dehumanized and depicted as a foreign army of refugees invading Europe intent on destroying its culture. For instance, AfD's Bavaria branch opened their election campaign for the autumn 2019 state elections with posters portraying white school children and advocating that schools should be 'Islamfrei' (free of Islam).⁵⁷ The posters, slogans, and discourse of its leaders clearly show that AfD securitized migration, particularly Muslim immigrants, after the migration crisis in 2015. This in turn increased their influence at regional, national, and European levels.

IV. The Rising Influence of Populist Radical Right Parties in the 2019 European Parliament Elections

Earlier, differences between populist radical right parties prevented them gaining greater influence in European politics and promoting their visions for Europe.⁵⁸ However, the securitization of migration and the construction of immigrants, especially non-European immigrants, as the main 'other' have brought these political parties together, especially since

⁵⁶ J. Sterphone, "Mut zu Deutschland! On the Populist Nationalism of the Alternative für Deutschland," in *Populist Nationalism in Europe and the Americas*, eds. Fernando Lopez-Alves and Diane E. Johnson (New York: Routledge Pub., 2018).

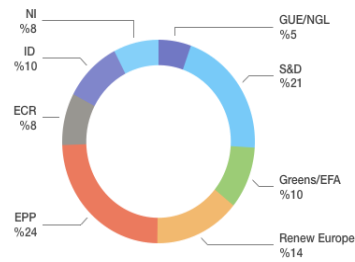
⁵⁷ Jegić, "Germany's Far Right AfD Exploits Passivity," 37.

⁵⁸ Mathieu Camescasse, "Populism in France: 2014 European Elections at Stake?," Institute of European Democrats (2014): 80. Retrieved on 18 November 2020: <https://www.iedonline.eu/download/2014/bratislava/IED-2014-Populism-in-France-2014-European-elections-at-stake-Mathieu-Camescasse.pdf>.

the 2015 migration crisis The EP elections on May 26, 2019, had the highest turnout since 1994, at 50.6%.

Table 1 : Distribution of Seats per political party

Political groups in EP	Seats
GUE/NGL	41
S&D	154
Greens/EFA	74
Renew Europe	108
EPP	182
ECR	62
ID	73
NI	57



Source: Parties and Elections in Europe (<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/>) European Parliament Election Results 2019 (<https://election-results.eu/>).

The mainstreaming of radical right-wing rhetoric and policies can also be seen in the EP elections, specifically in the election manifestos of the European People's Party (EPP). In its election manifesto for the 2014 EP election, "controlling immigration into Europe to ensure internal security" was just one part of its proposals whereas its 2019 manifesto, which was influenced by the populist radical right agenda, focused on "Europe that preserves our ways", and specifically mentioned 'illegal immigration' and 'radical Islam' as fundamental threats to Europe.⁵⁹

This slight change in rhetoric made little difference as both the EPP and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) lost their combined parliamentary majority for the first time in EU history, having failed to engage with key issues for voters, such as European integration and immigration.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cas Mudde, "Why Copying the Populist Right isn't Going to Save the Left," *The Guardian*, 1 June (2019b): 29-30. Retrieved on: 29 July 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/may/14/why-copying-the-populist-right-isnt-going-to-save-the-left>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.,22-24.

Before the 2019 European elections, Salvini pioneered a “European strategy of creating an alliance of anti-immigration European populist parties”, primarily by collaborating with NR.⁶¹ The League increased its share of EP seats from five to 28 with 34.26% of the votes. It became Italy’s largest party and the second largest party in the EP with Germany’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU), just behind the Brexit Party with 29 seats. In France, NR beat Macron’s Liberal Party despite a fall in votes from 24.9% to 23.34%. Lastly, AfD increased its vote share from 7.1% to 11%.

More specifically, AfD gained support in eastern Germany, where it became the strongest political force in both Brandenburg, which had been governed by SPD since 1990, and Saxony, where the party obtained 25.3% to finish ahead of the ruling CDU with 23%. In Thuringia, AfD lost only narrowly (22.5%) to the CDU (24.7%).⁶²

MEPs from both Le Pen’s and Salvini’s parties joined forces with anti-immigration parties across Europe to create the EP’s biggest radical right group.⁶³ Renamed from Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) to Identity and Democracy (ID), this group includes the League, National Rally, AfD, FPÖ, Belgium’s Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*), Finland’s True Finns (PS), and Czechia’s Freedom and Direct Democracy.⁶⁴ ID, led by a League MEP, Marco Zanni, increased their EP presence from 5% of MEPs in 2014 to 10% or 73 MEPs. According to Marine Le Pen, although opinions within the ID differ on some issues there is consensus on major issues like curbing migration and preventing the spread of Islam in Europe.⁶⁵ Thus, despite their various national concerns, they have come together by constructing migration as the main security threat for their respective countries and Europe in general.

⁶¹ Manuela Moschella and Martin Rhodes, “Introduction,” *Contemporary Italian Politics* 12, no.2 (2020): 117. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2020.1743472>.

⁶² K. Frymark, “The European elections in Germany: the Greens move ahead of the SPD,” *Center for Eastern Studies* (2019) <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2019-05-28/european-elections-germany-greens-move-ahead-spd>.

⁶³ Creating a political group at the EP secures both public financing and law-making influence. Groups are allowed to table amendments at the plenary stage and appoint key posts on legislative files (*euobserver*, 2019). According to EU rules, a group must have at least 25 MEPs from 7 member states (*The Guardian*, May 2019).

⁶⁴ *Deutsche Welle*, “Far-Right Parties Form New Group in EP,” (14 June 2019). Retrieved on 12 September 2019: <https://euobserver.com/institutional/143963>.

⁶⁵ For further detail, see *The Guardian* (13 June 2019).

V. Securitization of Migration by Populist Radical Right Parties in 2019 European Parliamentary Elections: Speech Analysis

National Rally:

Migration has been securitized in France since the 1980s. The National Front relied on the foundation of migration as a security issue to use anti-immigrant discourse and put forward anti-immigrant policies.⁶⁶

During the 2019 EP election campaign, NR no longer defended Frexit or exiting the Eurozone. Instead, its main goal became transforming the EU into a ‘Europe of nations’. According to Le Pen, “today’s objective is to constitute a very large sovereigntist group in the EP, a mission for which Matteo Salvini has been mandated”.⁶⁷

At a Strasbourg press conference on 15 April, 2019, NR presented its Manifesto for a Europe of Nations. Its discourse was unchanged in terms of issues like restoring national borders, stopping migration, and opposing EU enlargement.

The manifesto presented by Le Pen accused the EU of broken promises, favoring unrestrained globalization, undermining national sovereignty and national identity, and making Europeans less safe by removing borders. It defined European identity as Christian while calling for a war against Islamism, the militarization of Europe’s borders, and dismantling of the Schengen agreement by reintroducing national border controls.⁶⁸ In the 2019 EP elections, NR gained 22 seats more than France’s liberal coalition, which included Macron’s party. Following this victory, Le Pen tweeted using the hashtag “Victory of the people”, claiming that “the people had with pride and dignity, taken back power”, and that a “great alternative movement has been born”.⁶⁹ In an interview with *Der Spiegel*,⁷⁰ she reiterated her opposition to migration because there were already millions of unemployed people in France, making it reasonable to start ending migration. She emphasized that “The French want to regain control of their own country. They want to determine the course of their own economy and especially

⁶⁶ Middleton, “Migrants as Threats?”.

⁶⁷ *Euractiv*, “Le Pen’s Rassemblement National Revises Stance Towards EU and the Euro,” (16 April 2019) Retrieved on 18 November 2019: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-elections-2019/news/le-pens-rassemblement-national-makes-its-ties-to-the-eu-and-the-euro-official/>

⁶⁸ Cooper, et al., “The Dawn of a Europe of Many Visions,”.

⁶⁹ Wallis, “What the European Parliament Election,”.

⁷⁰ *der Spiegel*, “Interview with Marine Le Pen,” (July 2019). Retrieved on 7 September 2019: www.spiegel.de.

their immigration policies. They want their own laws to take precedence over those of the EU". Thus, securitization of migration was the main focus of NR in the last European elections.

The League:

The main focus of NL before the 2014 European elections was opposition to the Euro. The party emphasized that "we believe in a different Europe, alternative to the one envisaged by Monti and the ECB".⁷¹ The main issue for the League during the 2019 election campaign was immigration, specifically the EU's migration management. The League was very active on social media before the EP elections, with 2,214 posts, while Salvini's Facebook page had over 3.5 million followers and was more active than the party's own page in terms of posts and engagement.⁷²

At the 2019 EP elections, the League won 28 seats, twice as many as their coalition partner, the Five Star Movement (M5S).⁷³ Salvini's anti-immigrant discourse and policies attracted voters as Italy was facing a large irregular immigrant influx being situated on the EU's external borders. His rhetoric mostly focused on the theme "Italy was left alone after the migration crisis".

As an MEP in the previous parliament and shortly before the League became a coalition partner in Italy, Salvini suggested that "the time has come to put rules back for those who want to enter Europe; they must do it legally ... for the rest there is the rule of expulsion, ... defence of borders".⁷⁴ He argued that "the arrival of legal immigration from the countries closest to our values ... the countries of Christian culture" should be facilitated. He suggested that Christian immigrants were not perceived as a threat to societal security.

In another speech, Salvini (2018) warned that "either Europe will change or the people will change it ... For some people bankers,

⁷¹ *La Stampa*, September 9, 2012; in Pietro Castelli Gattinara and Caterina Froio, "Opposition in the EU and Opposition to the EU : Soft and Hard Euroscepticism in Italy in the Time of Austerity," (2014): 194. Retrieved on 20 November 2020: <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02369113>.

⁷² Edoardo Novelli and Bengt Johansson, "2019 European Elections Campaign: Images, Topics, Media in the 28 Member States," *Publications Office of the European Union*, 9 July 2019. Retrieved on 23 September 2019: www.electionsmonitoringcenter.eu.

⁷³ Wallis, "What the European Parliament Election Results,".

⁷⁴ Matteo Salvini, Debates at the EP, "Fight against Illegal Immigration and Human Trafficking in the Mediterranean," (25 October 2017). Retrieved on 30 January 2020: https://europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-10-25-INT-3-334-0000_IT.html.

multinationals and immigrants come first, for me and for the League, Italians come first".⁷⁵ This reflected a nativist approach that is usually predominant in populist radical right parties.

Similarly, in an interview with *Time* magazine, Salvini securitized irregular migration: "irregular migration brings crime and social conflict. If I could reduce the number of these crimes and the presence of illegal immigrants, they can call me racist as much as they want. I will continue and people will support me ...".⁷⁶ Here, Salvini securitized irregular migration by connecting it to rising crime rates.

AfD:

In the 2014 EP elections, AfD's manifesto included enough nationalist undertones to catch the attention of supporters of ethnocentrism, nationalism, and radicalism while also attracting mainstream Germans who felt threatened by migration. During the election campaign, AfD changed its slogan from "*Mut zur Wahrheit*" (Telling it as it is) to the more nationalistic "*Mut zu Deutschland*" (The courage to stand up for Germany).⁷⁷ The new manifesto indicated a clear intention to focus heavily on asylum and immigration.

'*Zusammenhalt*' (cohesion) became a manifesto buzzword for all German parties in the 2019 EP elections. The campaign posters of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Green Party) all drew on the rhetoric of community, emphasizing togetherness and 'our Europe', while referring to the strength and protection the EU should provide. Thus, the fact that the AfD's manifesto only mentioned cohesion negatively in the context of immigration evidenced its nativist position: "Many European governments have tried to compensate for a shrinking population with immigration, however this has been proven to be wrong and would lead to massive problems with cultural and social cohesion".⁷⁸ Thus, securitization of migration and construction of irregular migration as a threat to societal security were AfD's main concerns before the 2019 EP elections.

⁷⁵ This is a common feature of these parties as, while securitizing migration, they usually try to legitimize it by their nativist approach, which is reflected by their discourse on 'Italians first' or 'Germans first' in the case of AfD.

⁷⁶ *Time*, "We Want to Change Things from Within": Italy's Matteo Salvini on His Goal to Reshape Europe," (13 September 2018). Retrieved on 15 May 2019: <https://time.com/5394207/matteo-salvini-time-interview-transcript-full/>

⁷⁷ Sterphone, "Mut zu Deutschland! On the Populist Nationalism,".

⁷⁸ *Deutsche Welle*, "Far-Right Parties Form New Group in EP".

VI. Comparative Analysis: Securitization of Migration by Populist Radical Right Parties and its Mainstreaming in European Politics

The rising influence of populist radical right parties in European politics, particularly in France, Italy, and Germany, and their leaders' speeches, party manifestos, tweets, and election campaigns demonstrate how they have securitized migration. This makes it appropriate to apply the Copenhagen School of Securitization theory to analyze their rising influence in European politics. What is particularly important for this study is the Copenhagen school's argument that securitization of a threat is a specific way of framing an issue and a political choice. When actors refer to an issue as a security threat, they legitimize extraordinary measures against this socially constructed threat.⁷⁹ This can be seen in the statements (speech acts) of the leaders of AfD, the League, and NR (securitizing actors), who refer to migrants as threats (securitization) who should be expelled or stopped (extraordinary measures). According to securitization theory, the issue does not have to be seen by the target audience as a real security issue to accept extraordinary measures. Rather, securitization succeeds when the relevant audience accepts the existential threat identification and supports a political party and its plans to deal with the threat that gave rise to the speech act in the first place. For our purposes in this article, securitization is best understood as a causal process that heavily emphasizes observable action or behavioral change, mainly increased votes for radical right parties following these speech acts.

The most accurate instrument to measure the feelings of the European public regarding the migration crisis analyzing the European public that voted in EP elections for political parties that based their election campaigns on anti-immigration rhetoric. Indeed, as discussed throughout the article, the increasing votes for these parties in both national and EP elections show that a crucial proportion of the public (target audience) agree that migrants are security threats and want migration to be prevented. Consequently, they vote for parties who present migration as a security problem that needs a solution. Politicians across Europe have been exploiting the public's anxiety against immigrants and approach it as a security issue. As the EP election results show, increasing numbers of European citizens seem to agree with them.

⁷⁹ Buzan, et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.

Table 2: Votes given for the three selected populist radical right parties in Europe

	Most recent national election	Previous national election	EP Elections		
			2019	2014	2009
National Rally	2017 - 13.2%	2012 - 13.6%	23.34%	24.9%	6.3%
AfD	2017 - 12.6%	2013 - 4.7%	11%	7.1%	-
Northern League / League	2018 - 17.4%	2013 - 4.1%	34.26%	6.2%	10.2%

Source: Parties and Elections in Europe (<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/>) European Parliament Election Results (<https://election-results.eu/>).

As Table 2 shows, AfD and the League dramatically increased their votes in both national and EP elections while despite a small decline in its votes, NR remained one of the two most powerful parties in France at national and European levels.

Table 3: Securitization of Migration by Populist Radical Right Parties

	Before migration crisis	After migration crisis
NR	Securitization of migration Nativist, culturally different migrants were securitized.	Securitization of migration Nativist, culturally different immigrants, particularly Muslims were securitized. (Consistent)
League	Populist regionalist Securitized migration from southern Italy	Populist radical right Nativist Securitized non-Europeans, particularly African and Muslim immigrants
AfD	Anti-Eurozone	Nativist, Culturally different immigrants, particularly Muslims, were securitized.

Our analysis shows that radical right parties securitized migration for their audience, who then demonstrated their support for extraordinary measures by voting for them. Once mainstream parties became aware of this trend, they also started to refer to migration as a security threat, as seen in their speeches and party manifestos, and at least started to introduce more restrictive migration policies and focused on external border controls.

Securitization theory argues that the securitizing actor is usually the state elite.⁸⁰ When this state elite declares something to be a security problem, it is then able to produce policies to counter this threat and claim to be the provider of security and protection.⁸¹ However, this was only the case in Italy, where the League was a coalition partner before the EP elections. NR is the biggest competitor to the party of President Emmanuel Macron while AfD has weaker representation at federal level.

To situate securitization within the wider political debate, we can derive two conclusions. First, actors from opposition parties can also influence the securitization of migration. Second, governing or mainstream parties securitize migration to maintain electoral support. Thus, the issue is no longer restricted to populist radical right parties. Triggered by economic and migration crises, a particular part of society feel excluded from globalization, face growing economic insecurity, and demand concrete action to solve their problems. They may see populist radical right parties as an alternative to the mainstream to overcome their fears of economic insecurity and a cultural backlash.⁸²

France exemplifies this process. To cope with the NR's rising influence and distract the French public from his unpopular economic reforms, French President Macron also started to focus more on migration. While talking to the magazine *Valeurs Actuelles*, he stressed the importance of reducing migration: "My goal is to throw out everybody who has no reason to be here". While explaining his focus on migration, he told members of his party, *La République en Marche*, that they must avoid becoming a party of the bourgeoisie because the working class in France are living with the difficulties due to immigration and thus voted mostly for the radical right.⁸³

⁸⁰ Buzan, et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Waeber, "Securitization and Desecuritization,".

⁸¹ Bigo, "Security and Immigration,".

⁸² For further detail, see Norris, P. and R. Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and The Rise of Authoritarian Populism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

⁸³ Piser, "How Marine Le Pen is Making a Comeback,".

In November 2019, Macron's government introduced strict new laws regarding immigration and asylum applications, designed to discourage asylum seekers from even attempting to reach France. These laws require that asylum-seekers wait three months before becoming eligible to receive non-urgent health care while the government will introduce annual quotas for skilled immigrants. Since coming into force in January 2020, the new laws have made it more difficult to obtain asylum in France and increased detention periods for new arrivals.⁸⁴

Thus, Marine Le Pen's securitization of migration influenced France's governing party, particularly in its policies on migration and Macron's discourse. Le Pen was aware of this and accused him of using migration to win votes in the 2020 local elections, as she stated openly in an interview on *Radio France*.⁸⁵

Germany also exemplifies this tendency. With the rising influence of AfD, the Christian Social Union (CSU), CDU's junior partner, joined this anti-immigrant tendency as well. On 26 August, 2018, a fight broke out in Chemnitz, Saxony, resulting in the death of a Cuban-German man and serious injuries to two other people. Two Kurdish immigrants, one Iraqi, and one Syrian were named as suspects. In response, groups of German citizens staged mass anti-immigration protests, which spawned riots and counter-demonstrations. While AfD and the PEGIDA movement are particularly strong in Chemnitz, critically, Horst Seehofer, CSU leader and Federal Interior Minister, voiced understanding for the protesters, echoing the radical right logic that the presence of foreigners was to blame. "Migration is the mother of all problems", Seehofer claimed.⁸⁶

Such developments indicate that securitization of migration has indeed moved to the mainstream. Indeed, the fact that mainstream parties also started looking at migration as a societal security threat underlines the focus given to state executives as the important securitizing actor within the Copenhagen School of Securitization. Salter,⁸⁷ for example, proposes that securitization is 'successful' only when (1) the identification of a threat that

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *Euronews*, "France Debates Immigration after Macron Says Country Shouldn't be 'Too Attractive' to Migrants," (9 October 2019). Retrieved on 18 November 2019: <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/08/france-debates-immigration-after-macron-says-country-shouldn-t-be-too-attractive-to-migran>.

⁸⁶ Jegić, "Germany's Far Right AfD Exploits Passivity,"

⁸⁷ M. B. Salter, "When Securitisation Fails : The Hard Case of Counter Terrorism Programs," in, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. Balzacq, T., (Routledge Pub., 2011): 121.

justifies a response (securitizing move) is followed by (2) a *change of behaviour (action)* by a relevant agent (that is, the securitizing actor or someone instructed by the same), and (3) the action taken is justified by the securitizing actor with reference to the threat they identified and declared in the securitizing move, as seen by the changing attitudes of mainstream parties.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Migration in Europe has been securitized through its presentation as a danger to public order, cultural identity, and labour market stability. This securitization frames irregular migrants as a “threat to the integrity of the state and society or to the identity of the society”.⁸⁹ As Huysmans argues, securitization of migration in the EU and its member states has developed in relation to three linked issues: internal security, cultural security, and the crisis of the welfare state.⁹⁰

Discourses presenting migration as a cultural challenge to social and political integration have mobilized security rhetoric and institutions. European integration is involved in both the development of and struggle against the perception of migration as a cultural danger. For welfare chauvinists, irregular immigrants are ‘illegitimate recipients or claimants of socio-economic rights’. Metaphors such as an ‘invasion’ or a ‘flood’, portray immigrants and refugees as a serious threat to the survival of the socio-economic system.⁹¹

⁸⁸ However, one still has to be careful when concluding that all mainstream politicians and actors have followed this approach. In Germany, for example, the CDU government led by Angela Merkel did not stop measures to boost work opportunities for refugees that would help them integrate. Along with the SPD, she also refused to securitize the issue despite challenges by the CSU within the coalition and AfD. Nonetheless, extensive media attention to radical right protests and ultra-right electoral mobilization did push Merkel to give in to some CSU demands. She was also supported by the unshaken commitment of major economic actors to the benefits of immigration (such as the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), the German Employers’ Association (BDA), the rights-protecting court rulings from sub-national to EU level, and the persistence of non-governmental organizations defending asylum (*Deutsche Welle*, 2014).

⁸⁹ Irina Angelescu, “All New Migration Debates Commence in Rome: New Developments in the Securitization of Migration in the EU,” *Across Fading Borders: The Challenges of East-West Migration in the EU*. (2008): 4. www.eumap.org.

⁹⁰ Jef Huysmans, “The EU and the Securitization of Migration,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no.5 (2000): 758.

⁹¹ Huysmans, “The EU and the Securitization of Migration,” 762-769.

Migration is usually connected to security problems, such as crime and riots in cities, domestic instability, and transnational crimes.⁹² This connection can be observed especially in the discourse of populist radical right parties. Securitized discourses have legitimized practices that constitute migrants as the ‘threatening Other’.⁹³

Since the EU’s migration crisis in 2015, populist radical right parties have moved from the margins to the mainstream of European politics. Their party manifestos and their leaders’ speeches declare their opposition to immigrants and refugees, particularly those who are culturally different, and perceived as threatening jobs, social benefits, security, culture, and the lifestyle of the natives. Their anti-immigrant rhetoric has pushed these issues to the forefront of debate and discourse across Europe.⁹⁴ This has been reflected in both national and EP election results.

As Mudde argues, the strengthening of the populist radical right is the most visible aspect of the fundamental transformation of European politics.⁹⁵ As Mudde argues, the last EP elections show how much the radical right has become *mainstreamed and normalized*.⁹⁶ Despite remaining divided on many issues, populist radical right parties are connected at the European level through their anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, particularly securitization of migration, especially after the migration crisis. Their most prominent political figures, such as Marine Le Pen, Matteo Salvini, and Bernd Lucke, have all increased their visibility and popularity while serving as MEPs.⁹⁷

The governing mainstream parties have also securitized migration as a ‘relevant’ threat to increase or maintain their votes to cope with the rising influence of populist radical right. Despite populist radical right parties’ shared dislike for immigration, multiculturalism, and the EU, they remain divided on other key issues. The main glue connecting them at the European level is their anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, particularly securitization of migration, especially after the migration crisis.

⁹² Ibid., 770.

⁹³ Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity*.

⁹⁴ Sarkar, “The Right Matters in European Politics,” 170-174.

⁹⁵ Cas Mudde, “The Far Right May Not Have Cleaned Up, But Its Influence Now Dominates Europe,” *The Guardian*, (28 May 2019a). Retrieved on 12 September 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/28/far-right-european-elections-eu-politics>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Thilo Janssen, “A Love-Hate Relationship Far-Right Parties and The European Union,” Brussels: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (2016): 6.

Of these three cases, NR has focused on anti-immigrant policies and consistently securitized migration. The Northern League focused on internal immigrants from southern Italy and anti-Eurozone policies before shifting its focus towards securitization of non-European migration, particularly African and Muslim immigrants, after the migration crisis. Finally, AfD was established as an anti-Eurozone party but shifted its focus towards securitization of migration after the migration crisis. These populist radical right parties have selectively securitized migration according to their own national concerns. While NR has been nativist and securitized migration from the beginning, the League and AfD only securitized migration strategically after the migration crisis. Since the crisis, all three parties have securitized primarily non-European, Muslim immigrants. The League specifically securitized African immigrants, especially through the discourse of its leader Salvini, by referring to their migration as an 'invasion' and visualizing them as arriving on boats across the Mediterranean, as was frequently shared on his and the League's social media accounts.

Both Salvini and Le Pen increasingly view the EU as an area in which to advance their respective agendas.⁹⁸ Accordingly, rather than leaving the EU, their recent rhetoric focuses on transforming it by giving back sovereignty to member states and changing its migration policy.

In conclusion, securitization of migration is one of the most influential issues dominating European politics. The so-called 'migration crisis' has provided a suitable atmosphere for populist radical right leaders to frame migration as a security threat. By adopting anti-immigrant discourse and policies, they have recently increased their visibility and influence in European politics, as reflected in the results of the EP elections. The growing support for populist radical right parties in many member states and at the EP elections legitimizes the securitization of migration.⁹⁹ As a result, not only governing elites but opposition political actors can influence the securitization of migration. This in turn can determine governing parties' rhetoric and policies while triggering securitization of migration at national and European levels. The governing mainstream parties have also securitized migration as a 'relevant' threat to increase or maintain their votes to cope

⁹⁸ *Global Risk Insights*, "Italy after the EP Elections: The Populists Prevail," (14 June 2019). Retrieved on 30 January 2020: <https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/06/italy-after-the-european-parliament-elections-the-populists-prevail/>.

⁹⁹ Susana Ferreira, "From Narratives to Perceptions in the Securitisation of the Migratory Crisis in Europe," *E-International Relations* (2018). Retrieved on 23 November 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/09/03/from-narratives-to-perceptions-in-the-securitisation-of-the-migratory-crisis-in-europe/>

with the rising influence of the populist radical right. They have copied the discourse and tactics of the radical right on migration. As a result, especially since the migration crisis, securitization of migration has become a binding factor for populist radical right parties, bringing them together because they see migration as a common security threat. This was reflected at the last EP elections, which led to their rising presence and influence in the EP.

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