

December 2017

## **Right-Wing Populism in Europe and Israel: Common Challenges and Policy Options**

Barcelona, Spain, 15-16 October 2017

*Edited by: Dr. Jan Busse, Dr. Rem Korteweg, Dr. Roby Nathanson, Dr. Werner Puschra and Mr. Yanai Weiss*

The annual European meeting of the Israeli-European Policy Network (IEPN) in Barcelona focused on the rise of right wing populism in Europe and in Israel discussed the causes for this rise and the actions that could be taken to contain its rise.

There's a growing consensus that populism represents an important challenge for traditional parties and democracy as a whole. Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 American presidential elections has been the clearest example of the recent rise of right-wing populism across Western states. Other expressions have been, for instance, the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and the Italian referendum of the same year. Right-wing populists have been successful in mobilising popular discontent with the political establishment and elites, and presenting themselves as the only alternative that speaks on behalf of 'the population'.

So doing, right-wing populists challenge existing democratic institutions and embrace referenda and direct democracy as instruments to promote their agenda. The populist movement thrives when the duality between democracy and politics becomes more prominent. Whereas democracy possesses a positive connotation in public debate, politics has negative or even pejorative implications. One of the roots of populism lies in the distinction between "them" and "us", often distinguishing political elites (them) from the people (us). Populism can be therefore defined as politics telling people what they want to hear, so that populists make unfulfillable promises. One important

misperception lies in the claim that the people is a coherent unit. Rather, the population is very diverse.

Also, populists are often seen to question the Euro-Atlantic consensus built around the EU and NATO, and the principles of the liberal international order. They rely on half-truths, amplified through social media in general and Twitter specifically. That is, the capacity for manipulation by right-wing populists is supported by social media. Moreover, collective emotions play an important role for populism as voters only listen to what they want to hear.

Populism is mainly considered as an anti-institutional technique rather than an ideology. It is important to note that populist movements are not confined only to right wing nationalist parties. Populist movements can also be found on the left side of the political map or could wear a transnational shape. The unifying force of all the shapes populist movements wear is the threat that they pose for parliamentary democracy.

Surely, the recent success of right wing populism is highly correlated to cultural, economic, or structural factors (such as the electoral system. That is, the American electoral system makes it easier for populists, as populist needs only to win several key states and not necessarily are depended on the popular vote), as well as anti-immigration sentiments. The issue of what caused the rise of right-wing populism requires further examination in the near future, but it is already possible to share insights and compare lessons learned between the Israeli and European examples. In addition, the progressive and social-democratic camps around the world have been particularly vulnerable to the rise of right-wing populism. They should organize to formulate strategies for how to

respond to this trend. If right-wing populists are to be stopped, the focus needs to be on the leadership. Along the lines of political scientist Ivan Krastev's thinking, preaching liberal values alone is not going to work. Any attempt to trivialise the crisis in our politics and revert to 'business as usual' will be ineffective and backfire.

2017 has been an election year for several key European countries, such as the Netherlands (March), France (April-May) and Germany (September). Following the elections in the Netherlands, the '*Party of Freedom*', led by the Dutch nationalist Geert Wilders, strengthened and became the second biggest party in the Dutch parliament; in France, Marine Le Pen, the leader of the 'National Front Party' rose to the second round of the elections for the first time since 2003 by gaining 21.3% of the votes. In Germany the right-wing nationalist party, '*Alternative for Germany*' (AfD), founded in 2013, won 12.6% of the votes and arrived at the third place, entering the German Bundestag for the first time. However, one of the assumptions following those elections has been that the right-wing populist tide in Europe reached its peak and is currently receding.

As mentioned, the rise of populism might be associated both by economic grievances and by identity politics. There is a growing concern and dissatisfaction among many Europeans that the fruits of globalization and the growth associated with it are being distributed unequally and unfairly. Education is suggested as one of the ways out of this problem, as it is was originally considered a vehicle for social progress. However, there is a revolt against education and a growing concern that jobs are going away as a result of globalization. While in the past, people were certain that they could financially take care of their family, regardless of having a college degree, this has changed. Also, a key issue that brought identity politics to the fore in Europe was the immigration crisis and the perceived decline in security following the

terror attacks in Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Manchester, Brussels, etc.

The rise of right-wing populism did not skip Israel. The current government, led by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu demonstrates far more right-wing populist views than any Israeli government in the past, including a populist stand against the judicial system and against the media. In addition, journalists are being politically associated with the government, and the media in general is being politicized by the country's political leadership. Further, the traditional foreign policy of the Israeli government to boycott extreme right wing parties in Europe has eroded and the Israeli media now paints those parties in lighter colors compared to the past. While the populist movement in Europe is associated both to economic motives and identity politics, the Israeli movement is mainly related to security issues and the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

Another root cause for the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and in Israel is that the traditional parties representing views from the right and the left have become indistinguishable. This is exemplified by the creation of grand coalitions between conservatives and social-democrats. Furthermore, the constant race for public opinion and the need to win elections leads traditional parties both from the right and the left to aim their message to the median voter. Examples could be found in Austria, Germany and Israel, countries in which the public felt that there is no real competition going on between left and right. This played into the hands of populists.

#### Minutes and Conclusions of the Seminar

There was no consensus among participants agreed that the populist tide in Europe has reached a peak following the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump and that it has been contained following the elections in the Netherlands, France and Germany. It has been argued that one of the reasons

for that upsurge of right-wing populism in Europe is the growing dissatisfaction of many Europeans regarding a perceived unfair distribution of the benefits of globalization. Another reason is the focus on identity politics as a result of immigration into Europe and the cultural insecurity that it has triggered. This was exacerbated by the recent migration crisis. Many right-wing populists tapped into this insecurity and drew a link between the migration crisis and recent terror attacks, sparking a decline in the perception of personal security.

The Israeli case, by contrast, suggests a somewhat different cause for the rise of right-wing populism in the country. While in Europe the rise of populism is highly correlated to economic reasons and identity politics, Israeli participants suggested that in Israel it is chiefly associated with the narrative that peace with the Palestinians is unattainable. Those tendencies lead to a radicalization of criticism – including by the senior leadership - on the judicial system, the media, and sometimes even the military and the police.

There were various opinions about the preeminent approach required for the near future in order to reduce the power of right-wing populist movements and to strengthen the power of traditional parties in Europe as well as in Israel.

#### The European Perspective:

Following the election of President Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom right-wing populists received a significant boost. On the one hand, the election of President Emmanuel Macron in France marked a changing point and dented the populist rise. On the other hand, in Germany the AfD entered the Bundestag and in Austria the '*Freedom Party of Austria*' (FPÖ) might enter government. Whether the populist peak is behind us or not, one thing is clear – there is a structural shift in mainstream political discourse to the right. In October 2017 the Catalans expressed

more critical views compared to their normally pro-European Union positions, which suggests that they are becoming less interested in remaining a part of the mainstream. Also the EU expressed its dissatisfaction from the Catalanian ambitions and signalled to the Catalans that any further cooperation of the EU with the region would be possible only if it remains a part of Spain.

One of the reasons for the upsurge of right-wing populism is the lack of satisfaction with the uneven and unjust distribution of the benefits of globalization. Based on a sample of European respondents, Bertelsmann Foundation explored attitudes to globalization. 65% of respondents are economically confident, 35% economically anxious. 45% see globalization as a threat, and 55% see it as an opportunity. These results suggest that the increase of populism in Europe is associated with economic concerns. Particularly following a financial crisis, where the dominant position among Western elites was to embrace austerity. Though people believe that globalization benefits mankind in general, there is a sense that it just does not benefit them in particular. In the Netherlands the high level of self-employment and part time workers makes people feel more vulnerable and economically insecure. Along with cultural insecurity as a consequence of the inflow of non-Western migrants, this could help explain the growing support for Wilders' party.

In general it appears that populism thrives on different types of insecurity such as economic, cultural and physical. Those assumptions make Spain an interesting exception. As Spain suffers from high unemployment, high inequality and high levels of migration, it might be considered as a fertile ground for right-wing populist movements. However, this is not the case. Instead of migration or inequality, most people blame corruption and political parties for the recent economic crisis: 91% of Spaniards do not trust political parties. Some of the factors that



soften the tendency of the population to be drawn into right-wing populism are a weak national identity, compared to a strong regional one; Franco's heritage, less anti-Muslim and anti-migration notions compared to other European countries; and the fact that the financial crisis harmed people's national self-esteem. Having said that, Spain may not remain immune for long. National populists might be able to channel national sentiments that rose following the Catalan referendum. It is also worth mentioning that there are more Spanish flags in the streets and that the 2017 national day celebrations were larger than many years previously.

In France, Emmanuel Macron managed to restrain the rise of the '*National Front Party*', led by Marine Le Pen. One element of his success was the fact that he confronted Le Pen directly and did not ignore her during the campaign. In addition, as Macron's party was the newest force in French politics, the populists did not enjoy the tail wind as being the newcomers. Macron signified political renewal. When Le Pen lost control on the issue of the Euro, Macron showed his competence on economic issues, and took the opportunity and inundated the political scene with many policies concerning the French identity – reducing inequality, migration and borders, linking between migration and terrorism, as well as presenting tough anti-terrorism policies. Rather than adopting populist policies, Macron took popular concerns serious and came forward with proposals that resonated with voters.

#### The Israeli Perspective:

Right wing parties have dominated the Israeli political discourse for almost 20 years in a row. The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 has put the progressive camp in Israel in a state of shock, which many believe, continues to this day. Many left-wing political figures find themselves

unable to adequately answer right-wing populists and are afraid of confronting right-wing politicians. The 2011 social uprising in the country might have helped in changing some of the discourse, however it did not change the tendency of many left-wing politicians to use right-wing terms on national and security issues. Meaning, also the discourse among left-wing parties in Israel 'winks' to the right, and the left in Israel adopted the narratives that the right accused them of, instead of attacking the right.

Moreover, during the years of tenure of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister it is noticeable that he has been radicalizing in many of the issues under public discourse. Netanyahu has demonstrated increasing populist views in aspects such as the judicial system, the Israeli media and even in some controversial issues against the military and the police. Many find similarities between Turkish President Erdoğan's and Netanyahu's approaches and the way they use populist notions in the public to their benefit.

The main parts of Israel's right-wing politics are based on populism. Over the last couple of decades the right has completely taken over the left's traditional ownership of the security dossier and ignores the fact that Zionism started in Labour circles and most war heroes came from the Labour. Consequently, it is suggested that the rule of right-wing populism in Israel is chiefly associated with the narrative that peace is unattainable, and that the emphasis must be on security. As mentioned, this is in contrast to the sentiment in many European countries that the upsurge of populism is associated with the narrative that globalization and market forces could not be stopped.

One of the characteristics of right-wing populism in Israel, as well as in Europe, is that it focuses on short-termism and the emphasis is on winning the next election, whatever the costs, and not on

creating a new attractive and sustainable message. Collective emotions play an important role for populism. In Israel, a good example of this is the fact that big parties do not provide a real alternative to one another on issues such as the One-State Solution vs. the Two States Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another characteristic of the rise of right-wing populism is the change in the Israeli media landscape – some commentators and journalists are now pro-government political activists. That is, the media in Israel is increasingly politicised by political leaders. The implication is that they become fair game as political opponents.

Furthermore, the rise of right-wing populism in Europe aroused great interest in the Israeli media, which tends to be more favourable of right-wing politicians such as Heinz-Christian Strache, Greet Wilders and Marine le Pen, compared to European media outlets. One example of this more positive coverage that those figures receive in the Israeli media is a 30-minute interview with Marine le Pen on the primetime of mainstream Israeli television.

In the Israeli political arena, there is also a shift in values. In the past, Israeli official policy was to boycott any right-wing populist party in Europe as they generally touted an anti-Israeli or anti-Jewish bias. In the last couple of years, however, this is much less the case. The relatively positive treatment from the press and the change in the Israeli foreign policy could be explained by two main reasons. First, right-wing populists in Europe and in Israel meet ideologically. Second, the right wing populists in Europe are perceived in Israel as fighting an alleged 'common enemy' – Islam – and as figures that better understand that Israel is under a perceived threat from Islam. By contrast, many Israelis believe that Europeans are naive when it comes to Muslims. In turn, right-wing populists in Europe generally support Israel's settlement policy.

#### Conclusion: Policy recommendations

Much can be learned from the previous years in order to understand the root causes of the rise of right-wing populist movements and steps that can be taken in response. Most European countries face internal conflicts between populist and non-populist politics. Those conflicts offer insights into the lessons that should be learned.

First and foremost, it became clear that a mere adherence to liberal values while ignoring populist phenomena is not enough in order to respond to right-wing populism. Both in the UK during the Brexit debate and in the US during the 2016 presidential election race, populists were considered as a negligible phenomenon that do not really threaten the hegemony of traditional politics. This was a mistake. Therefore it is recommended that non-populist party leaders should confront populists head on, as, for instance, Macron did in France.

Moreover, at a certain point in the 2016 American presidential campaign, the democratic candidate Hillary Clinton stated about her contender Donald Trump: "He's much more obsessed with me than what I am with him", and when she was asked if he intimidates her, she sharply replied "no". This could be an example for how the traditional leadership has been trivialising the populist challenge and not confronting it as equal. It is possible that many voters that saw her reply felt that their concerns about globalization and immigration are dismissed the same way she is dismissing Trump, and therefore ended up voting for him or not voting at all. Macron's strategy in France to treat the populists as equal, instead of dismissing them, serves as the counterpoint.

Evidently, this means that just like Merkel did not give up on her immigration policy, even when populist opposition grew stronger, other leaders in other countries should preserve their positions in a determined manner. A tactical change of message

to make electoral gains is unlikely to be successful, but policies should not underestimate concerns raised by the public about issues such as immigration, globalization, security, terrorism, etc. Politicians should address those concerns and highlight to the public that they are not being taken lightheaded. The sustainable messages should be knowledge-based and sharply explained to the public. Staying on message is important as social-democrat leaders try to avoid confrontation with right-wing populist in their home court. Meaning, social-democrat leader should avoid from shallow their message, as right-wing populist would gain the upper hand in those situations.

Another main recommendation is to focus the criticism also on the populist leadership. Unlike other voters, those that vote for a right-wing populist do so much because of the leadership capabilities of the party leader. Other party members, and the specific programme, are less important. Therefore, focusing on the leadership of a right-wing populist movement and presenting them in a negative light could eventually harm them and their message during a campaign. However, this negative campaign alone, without an attractive and sustainable message, tackling the issues as well and adhering to liberal values alone, will not be enough.

In Israel, for example, the opposition has been personally attacking Netanyahu for years, but has been failing time after time in creating sustainable and convincing alternative messages. Hence, in Israel in particular, but also in Europe, it is important for others, including social democrats, to distinguish themselves from the populist right and create a conceptual alternative. When voters have no idea what are the real differences between traditional right and left-wing parties, the tendency to be drawn to right-wing populism grows. Voters should be presented with credible and distinguishable alternative between

left and right in order to avoid a resort to populism. In Israel the 2011 social protests demonstrated that the public is desperate for a change, which has not yet been completely translated into the political sphere. The Labour leadership should pick up that card and use it as it confronts the right-wing populist movement in Israel.

## **Bankers, Suicide Bombers and the 'Real People': a Comparative Analysis of Israeli and European Right-wing Populism**

*Yonatan Levi, London School of Economics and Political Science*

### **Executive Summary**

The unprecedented rightward shift in Israeli politics has been repeatedly lamented by foreign commentators. However, it has rarely been mentioned in one breath with the recent rise of right-wing populism across the west. This paper offers a preliminary comparative analysis of Israeli and European right-wing populism. It highlights striking structural similarities between the two variants in terms of arguments, policy and political imagination. First, in the way politics is conducted, i.e. argumentation, rhetoric, policy and political imagination. Second, in the way both populisms emerged, i.e. the conditions that paved their way to success.

The resemblance, however, is limited: even if Israeli populists sound a lot like their European counterparts, it does not follow that they speak about the same things. That is, there are also points of crucial difference of content: whereas most European populist movements focus on economic and cultural grievances, their Israeli equivalent concentrates almost exclusively on security issues – primarily, on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from which it derives the anxieties, insecurities and tribal impulses that fuel its success.

Another similarity has to do with the political circumstances that gave rise to right-wing populism

in Israel and Europe. Both variants, it argues, emerged as a result of a dramatic ideological convergence; that is, a blurring of the left-right distinction. The European convergence, which took place in the 1980s-1990s, was economic and consisted of social democratic parties adopting the basic principles of Neo-Liberalism. The Israeli case of divergence, which received very little academic attention so far, had to do with national security. Meaning, whereas the rise of populism in Europe was closely related to ideological convergence over economic issues, the rise of Israeli populism had to do with a convergence over national security questions.

In recent years, the Israeli left has given up on putting forward an alternative to the right's positions regarding the most crucial issue to the electorate and for Israel's future: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The paper outlines the process whereby this surrender, and the elimination of political competition over security issues that followed, paved the way for the takeover of the Israeli political mainstream by far-right populists.

Although the current political situation in Israel seems rather grim, the preliminary analysis presented here offers some hope. First, it points at concrete reasons for the success of the Israeli right, avoiding the usual despair which attributes the Israeli left's dismal state to some metaphysical damnation. Second, it underlines the fact that the left had a hand in its own loss of authority over security issues; and that the right reinforced this process using coordinated action. Since this was a contingent process – subject to political influence and agency – it could also, potentially, be reversed.

This suggestion seems even more plausible



considering the following facts.

1. A majority of Israelis have been showing consistent support for the two-state solution throughout the past two decades, in spite of the left's electoral failures.
2. The issue that troubles most Israelis regarding an agreement with the Palestinians is indeed national security – not religious attachment to Judea and Samaria.
3. There is an overwhelming consensus within the Israeli Security Forces – IDF, Shin Bet and Mossad – in support of the two-state solution on security grounds.
4. Although Netanyahu and Bennett enjoy speaking in the name of 'the people', their share of the vote amounts to little more than 30%. This is not a majority of Israelis and it is certainly not 'the people'.

As the cases of Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn indicate, when political competition is reintroduced into mono-ideological systems, the public reacts with enormous enthusiasm. To be sure, the Israeli case is profoundly different from the British and American ones. However, as this paper attempted to show, it is also similar enough in terms of political structure and conditions to provide us with some cautious optimism.

For the full-text article: [goo.gl/D2H7QU](https://goo.gl/D2H7QU)



## How Does Spain Escape the Rightist Populist Wave?

*Carmen González-Enríquez, Elcano Royal Institute*

### Executive Summary

Very few European countries have proven immune to the appeal of right-wing populism. Spain is one of the few exceptions: despite economic crisis and fast-eroding political trust, Spain has not seen any right-wing populist party obtain more than one percent of the vote in national elections in recent years. The main factor explaining the lack of appeal of this kind of parties is the weakness of Spanish national identity, a factor that can be altered now as a consequence of the Catalan autonomous government's attempt to secede from Spain.

The extreme right was disconcerted by transition to democracy and unable to react: soon it was divided into several groups, each of them claiming to be the true heirs of Falange Española, losing a common leadership. They gradually lost their few voters and have not gained near 1 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections since. During the last two decades they have not even reached 0.5 percent in those elections. Their most salient success was the 2 percent of all votes obtained in the 2014 European elections by a new party, Vox, led by a former Partido Popular leader, who almost managed to obtain a seat. But this same party won less than 0.3 percent in the 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections.

Looking at the severe impact of the economic crisis, the high unemployment and poverty rates, and the rapid pace of immigration in Spain, it becomes all the more surprising that Spain has not seen a successful

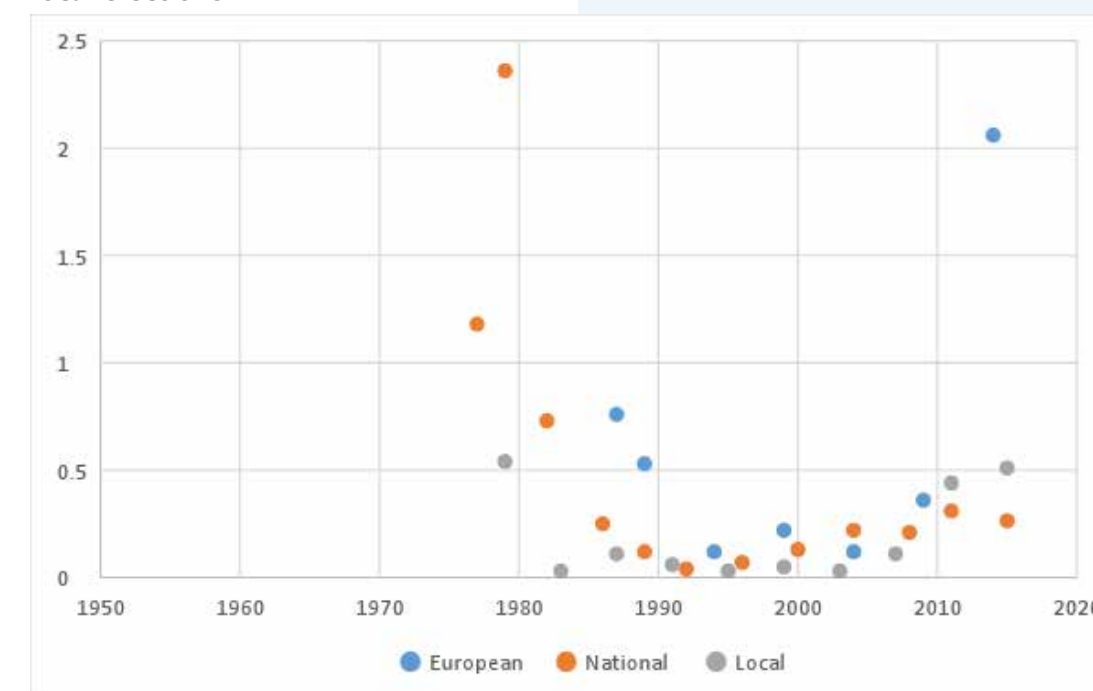
anti-European, anti-globalization, xenophobic or extreme right-wing movement. The main explanatory factor is the relative weakness of Spanish national identity. The abuse of national symbols and national identity during Francoism caused a counter-movement during the transition which still persists. Also, the strong peripheral nationalist movements in different regions, mostly in Catalonia and the Basque Country, have further contributed to erode a shared Spanish identity.

Other European countries experienced authoritarian regimes during the twentieth century but are now cradles of successful nationalist-xenophobic movements. The key of Spanish peculiarity, which it shares with Portugal, is that the authoritarian past is more recent than in Germany or Italy, with around half of the population who lived during that period

still alive. Contrary to what happened in communist countries, nationalism was the main ideological tool used to legitimise the regime, while internationalism was used in communist European countries to justify their alliance or submission to the Soviet Union. This communist past now allows and favours the blossom of nationalist parties in Eastern Europe, but nationalist authoritarian past prevents it in Spain and Portugal.

A second important aspect is the dominance of the centre-periphery divide as a political issue throughout the history of Spanish democracy. This has left little space for populist parties to put their own issues on the agenda. The conflicts between Basque and Catalan nationalist parties on the one hand and the central government and the rest of the Autonomous Communities on the other have been the permanent ideological battlegrounds of Spanish political life.

**Voter's percentage for extreme right parties in Spain in European, national and local elections.**



Source: Spanish Ministry of Interior

Public opinion is deeply divided on this issue, with a quarter of the population supporting the centrifugal tendencies and a third opting for the recentralisation of power. More recently, corruption has become a major political issue, with politicians, rather than migrants, becoming something of a scapegoat for the economic crisis.

The hypothesis that an authoritarian, rightist and nationalist recent past acts as a vaccination against extreme right parties in the present is given further weight by the similarities between Spain and Portugal: both shared a similar experience of four decades of nationalist, Catholic, and corporatist authoritarianism, and both countries have until now been immune to this wave of right-wing populist parties, despite the grave economic and political crisis they have suffered.

But the very recent events in Catalonia have prompted an upsurge in Spanish national feeling, made evident by the unprecedentedly massive display of Spanish flags in the windows and balconies of apartments and houses in the rest of the country. Even in Catalonia, for the first time ever, the usually silent citizens who oppose secessionism (around half the Catalan population) have demonstrated in the streets to affirm their Spanish identity. Attendance in Madrid at the annual military parade that commemorates Spain's National Day (12 October) has been in 2017 far greater than usual. And small ultra-right-wing populist groups are using the Catalan conflict to stir up hatred for –and violence against– separatism. These are signs that something is changing and that the widespread rejection in the rest of the country of the Catalan government's attempt to create an independent state could be reinforcing the sense of Spanishness, feeding what is a relatively weak sentiment by identifying an enemy that threatens Spain's territorial integrity. The

conflict provoked by Catalan populist nationalism can legitimise resurgence in Spanish nationalism, which now, in this new scenario, would be free from the stigma it acquired through its association with Francoism. On the other hand, the terrorist attack in Barcelona on August 17th, conducted by Moroccan immigrants, might boost the hitherto low Islamophobia among Spaniards, widening the social base for a xenophobic party.

The challenge ahead is how to channel this revitalised Spanish national identity and increased concern about Islamist violence through moderate mainstream parties, avoiding its use to nourish extreme right-wing populist movements.

For the full-text article: [goo.gl/xrBVYf](https://goo.gl/xrBVYf)



## Peak Populism - How the Populists Can Be Beaten

*Caroline de Gruyter, European Affairs correspondent for NRC Handelsblad and regular contributor to Carnegie Europe*

### Executive Summary

Following the Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, many people predicted that Norbert Hofer would become president of Austria, Marine Le Pen president of France, and Geert Wilders would win the Dutch elections. Parallels were made between the period prior to the First World War when globalization went full steam ahead and nowadays. The time prior to World War I was also considered a period when all kinds of inventions succeeded one another with dazzling speed, when everything became more complex and interconnectedness was a key factor. Just like now, society and politics were loaded with stress and crazy with anxiety.

However, the following year has changed the discourse, which became much more optimistic. There could be many explanations for this shift in mood. First is that the economy has picked up, especially in the Euro-zone – while in the US and the UK it contracted. The second explanation is that continental Europeans know better than the Americans and the British that things actually can go wrong. Europeans have their dark past and after all cannot say: it doesn't happen here. Well, it happens there, too – and Brexit and Trump are reminders of that. The third factor is that many people vote for populist parties just to give the establishment the middle finger for various reasons. But they do not want them to become the establishment.

The big problem that Europe faced last year was that the populists were dominating the whole political field. Mainstream parties were so afraid of them that they never really answered the populists. And then Emmanuel Macron arrived. He was the only one who dared to counter Le Pen head-on, not only with arguments but also with perspective. In Austria, a Green professor, Alexander van der Bellen, did what very few politicians in their right minds would have done just before elections at the end of 2016: he started explaining, on camera, how Austria profited from the EU and the Euro like no other country. As freedom of speech is not going to change, those examples demonstrate that the problem might not be the populists themselves, but the fact that so few people answer them.

Populists see that current levels of governance are not functioning well in an interconnected world, so we start inventing new, more global levels to deal with modern problems and challenges. People are afraid of losing control. They backtrack, demanding protection. To bring this about, the populists advocate "closure": go back to the old structures of government and governance, and seal off the borders. What mainstream politicians have failed to do initially is offer them protection without closure: protection in an open society. It is possible, and once that message got out, things started to change for the better in the whole of Europe.

For the full-text article: [goo.gl/bUFXfQ](https://goo.gl/bUFXfQ)





**IEPN**  
Israeli European Policy Network

[www.iepn.org](http://www.iepn.org)

©All Copyrights belong to Dr. Roby Nathanson, The Macro Center for Political Economics, and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

The commercial use of media published by FES without written permission by FES is strictly forbidden.

IEPN coordinators and editors of the working paper series:

Jan Busse:  
[jan.busse@unibw.de](mailto:jan.busse@unibw.de)

Roby Nathanson:  
[robym@macro.org.il](mailto:robym@macro.org.il)

Werner Puschra:  
[werner.puschra@fes.org.il](mailto:werner.puschra@fes.org.il)

Rem Korteweg:  
[RKorteweg@clingendael.org](mailto:RKorteweg@clingendael.org)

ISBN 978-965-7523-43-8



9 789657 523438

**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG**

Israel Office:  
Tel: +972 9 9514760  
Fax: +972 9 9514764  
[fes@fes.org.il](mailto:fes@fes.org.il)  
[www.fes.org.il](http://www.fes.org.il)

**מאקרו**  
**MACRO**

המרכז לכלכלה מדינית  
THE CENTER FOR POLITICAL ECONOMICS

[macro.org.il/en](http://macro.org.il/en)

 **Clingendael**  
Netherlands Institute of International Relations

der Bundeswehr  
Universität  **München**