

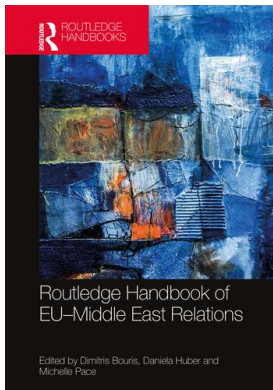
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21

POPULIST POLITICS IN EUROPE AND THEIR IMPACT ON EU RELATIONS WITH THE MIDDLE EAST

EU–Turkey relations as a case study

Ayhan Kaya

Introduction

The populist *Zeitgeist* (Mudde, 2004) has reinforced Manichean understandings of the world in the antagonistic dichotomies of “us/them”, “pure people/corrupt elite”, “privileged/under-privileged”, “Christians/Muslims”, “believers/unbelievers” which are interpolated and hailed by populist discourse. This chapter will first aim to assess what populism is. Subsequently, it will discuss the current state of populism in Europe in general – and Islamophobia and migrantphobia more specifically – based on the findings of a recent study analysing the rise of right-wing populism in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.¹ Furthermore, one of the venues of co-radicalisation and co-extremisation between Turkish and some European state actors will be depicted with reference to the antagonistic discourses and actions which were mainly performed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) elite who politicised, polarised and consolidated the Turkish diaspora before the constitutional referendum of 16 April 2017, which resulted in the introduction of a presidential system in Turkey. The exposure of these polemics demonstrates the way in which a populist political style works by dividing, polarising and co-radicalising societal and political groups. The last section of this article will reveal how the AKP’s leadership has instrumentalised the populist *Zeitgeist* in Europe by trying to consolidate Turkish voters in the diaspora through aggressive, polarising, religious, occidentalist and neo-Ottomanist discourse.

The term co-radicalisation has become a salient term in social psychology. It stems from the observation that intergroup hostility generates intergroup conflicts through ideological extremism (Pyszczynski et al., 2006), and that these intergroup conflicts have a propensity to perpetuate themselves through cycles of reciprocal threat, violence and/or extremism (Kteily et al., 2016). The process of co-radicalisation can take different forms and can take place in different contexts. It can be observed between white supremacists and radical Islamists who co-radicalise each other. Key drivers of intergroup violence among such social groups may range from emotions such as anger and perceptions of meta-dehumanisation to norm perception and symbolic threats (Kteily et al., 2016). Co-radicalisation processes can also be observed

among different political and societal groups by way of reciprocally becoming more and more religiously essentialist, such as the process of co-religionisation between some Christians and some Muslims in Europe. Another telling example of co-religionisation processes is the main focus of this chapter, which claims that the populist *Zeitgeist* in Europe based on Islamophobia and migrantphobia has reinforced boundaries between the EU and the Middle East in general, and between the EU and Turkey in particular.

What is populism?

Definitions of populism vary. Drawing on Edwards Shils (1956) work in the aftermath of World War II, some scholars define it as a “thin-centred *ideology*” (Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2016, emphasis added). For others, populism is a *strategy* adopted by sundry political parties to generate and sustain power by means of plebiscites, referenda and a distinctive public rhetoric (Barr, 2009). For other scholars, it is a *discourse*: Populist politicians instrumentalise this part-time phenomenon whenever they want to build a stronger link with “the people” (Wodak, 2015). Influenced by Antonio Gramsci, yet other scholars see it as a *political logic* (Laclau, 2005) that is essential to politics in general, as well as a potential emancipatory force because it mobilises marginalised sectors of society (Mouffe, 2018).

In his seminal work, the Marxist scholar Peter Worsley (1969: 247) argues that populism is not specific to a particular world region, nor is it the unique bastion of any ideological side of politics. Rather, it is an aspect of a variety of political cultures and forces. Building on Worsley, important works on populism define it as a *political style* (Taguieff, 1995; Moffitt, 2016). Unlike socialism, communism, environmentalism, feminism, social democracy or fascism, populism is not a fully-fledged ideology because it does not present a coherent, unified vision of the world, articulate a set of norms and values or offer a set of policies (Bonikowski, 2016). There are various national and regional manifestations of populism across the world. The ideology of individual leaders and political parties might be, say, communist, socialist, Islamist, nationalist, fascist or ecological, but their *discourse*, *strategy*, *political logic* or *political style* can still be populist.

Left-wing populism is an altogether different political phenomenon from the right-wing version, despite some superficial similarities in style. For left-wing populists, class is the glue of the people; for right-wing populists, culture and heritage play that role but in a way that makes them subtle code words for “race”. Another feature differentiating left-wing populism from right-wing populism is that the former is not anti-intellectual and is in favour of a vanguard political party to educate the people for the establishment of a new political hegemony (Mouffe, 2018). Right-wing populism entails anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism and anti-establishment positions; the celebration of religion, myths, heroisms and past history; racism, nationalism, nativism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-immigration ideologies; the promotion of the ideal of a socially, economically and culturally homogenous organic society; frequent mobilisation of conspiracy theories to understand the world we live in; faith in a leader’s extraordinariness and simultaneously in their ordinariness, bringing the leader close to the people; statism; and the sacralisation of “the people” (Ghergina et al., 2013: 3–4).

Ways of understanding populism

There are various approaches to analysing populism. The most common political science approach explains populism with socio-economic factors. It argues that populist sentiments emerge from the detrimental effects of neoliberal modernisation and globalisation which force the working classes into conditions of precarity, unemployment, marginalisation and

structural *outsiderism*. Accordingly, the “losers” of modernisation and globalisation respond by rejecting mainstream political parties and generating a sense of ethnic competition against migrants (Fennema, 2004). For such groups, globalisation has various connotations such as “greedy” bankers; international trade; migrants and refugees “exploiting” social services; robots making factory jobs obsolete; tourism making the disparities between the locals and the tourists very visible; and emigration leading to the flight of young generations from their home towns.

The second scholarly approach tends to explain right-wing populism as resentment against cosmopolitan constructions of national and/or transnational communities that are perceived as elitist. This approach highlights how right-wing populists foreground the nation as a homogeneous ethnicity. They want to return to “traditional values” as the only way to engage with challenges and “threats” coming from outside “enemies” – be they globalisation, Islam, the European Union, the USA, Russia or refugees – and emphasise an “ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past” (Rydgren, 2007: 242). These are also sentiments which have been shared by left-wing populism on various occasions. For instance, Jeremy Corbyn’s Euroscepticism is rooted in the view that the EU is a neoliberal project of global corporations (Room, 2019: para. 1). This approach could be named an anti-elitist approach. A third approach does not see populist political parties and movements as a response to outside factors, but rather underlines the *strategic means* employed by populist leaders and parties to appeal to their constituents (Laclau, 2005). Here, populism is depicted as a style employed by some political leaders. This approach assumes that the relative success of right-wing populist parties lies in their ability to utilise ethnicity, culture, religion, the colonial past, tradition, masculinity/femininity and myths to politically mobilise lower-middle-class and working-class people alienated by globalisation, de-industrialisation, unemployment, poverty, socioeconomic-political deprivation, forced mobility and increasing inequality. All these issues pertain to both right-wing and left-wing populist sentiments. Right-wing populist leaders tend to be politically incorrect, overly demonstrative and colourful, and use swear words and slang language – as opposed to being rigid, rational, technocratic, intellectual and politically correct. The rationale here is to present themselves to the people as being “one of them” and very close to their values, codes, norms and priorities. These kinds of performative acts undertaken by populist politicians are staged to show a kind of “ordinariness” to the people. This does not mean that populist leaders only stage such performative acts of “ordinariness”: in addition, they stage alternative performances to convince their followers that they are also extraordinary leaders with special merits such as proving their virility and masculinity for male leaders, and femininity and maternalism for female leaders (Moffitt, 2016: 66).

The working definition of populism in this chapter is that it is a response to and rejection of the order imposed by neoliberal elites, an order that fails to use the resources of the democratic nation-state to harness global processes for local needs and desires (Mouffe, 2018). Such populism originates in the deep-rooted structural inequalities and general impoverishment that mainstream political parties – both on the liberal right and the liberal centre left – have actively contributed to in their embrace of neoliberal governance. In this sense, an anthropological approach can be more explanatory in understanding populism: “the moods and sensibilities of the disenfranchised who face the disjuncture between everyday lives that seem to become extremely anomic and uncontainable” (Kalb, 2011: 14). Bringing together socio-economic and cultural dimensions, anthropological approaches focus on “those left behind by the march of neoliberalism” – those essentially abandoned by social democrats and the traditional centre left that have embraced neoliberalism since the 1990s – and stress many continuities between liberalism and illiberalism.

Socio-economic deprivation is not the only factor explaining populism's appeal. Cultural and memory factors play a crucial role too. Populist parties' voters are dissatisfied with and distrustful of mainstream elites, who are perceived as cosmopolitan, and they are hostile to immigration and growing ethno-cultural and religious diversity. While some of these groups feel economically insecure, their hostility springs from a combination of social-economic deprivation and nostalgic deprivation (Gest et al., 2017) resulting from their belief that immigrants and ethno-cultural and religious minority groups threaten societal and national security (Reynié, 2016).

The politics of fear and right-wing populism in Europe: stigmatising and securitising Muslim migrants

At the very heart of the rise of right-wing populism lies a disconnection between politicians and their electorates. Right-wing populist parties have gained greater public support in the last decade in the midst of two global crises: the financial crisis and the so-called refugee crisis. The former, combined with neoliberal governance, has created socio-economic deprivation for some Europeans, while the latter has helped opportunistic political groups in triggering nostalgic feelings about identity, nation, culture, tradition and collective memory. The populist moment has both strengthened many of the former far-right-wing parties and created new ones. Some of these right-wing populist parties include the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, the Danish People's Party in Denmark, the Swedish Democrats in Sweden, the Front National (now National Rally) and *Bloc Identitaire* in France, *Vlaams Belang* in Belgium, the Finns Party in Finland, *Lega* and *CasaPound* and the Five Star Movement² in Italy, the Freedom Party in Austria, the Alternative for Germany in Germany, Victor Orban's *Fidesz* and *Jobbik* Party in Hungary, the English Defence League, the British National Party and the UK Independence Party in the UK, Golden Dawn in Greece, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, and AKP in Turkey.

Populists often construct a racialised enemy. They feed on a culturally constructed antagonism between the "pure people", "the corrupt elite" and other "enemies". In Europe, populists largely define "the people" in ethno-religious terms while more or less openly rejecting the principle of equality. Despite national variations, populist parties are characterised by their opposition to immigration; a concern for the protection of national culture and European civilisation; adamant criticism of globalisation, multiculturalism, the EU, representative democracy and mainstream political parties; and the exploitation of a discourse of essentialised cultural difference, which is often conflated with religious and national difference.

Right-wing populist parties and movements often exploit the issue of migration and portray it as a threat to the welfare, social, cultural and even ethnic features of a nation. Most populist leaders also tend to blame a soft approach to migration for some of the major problems in society such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, drug trafficking and human trafficking. This tendency is reinforced by the use of racist, xenophobic and demeaning rhetoric: use of words like "influx", "invasion", "flood" and "intrusion" are just a few examples. Public figures like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Heinz-Christian Strache in Austria and others have spoken of "foreign infiltration" of immigrants, especially Muslims, in their countries. Geert Wilders even predicted the coming of *Eurabia*, a mythological future continent that will replace modern Europe (Carr, 2006), where children from Norway to Naples will allegedly learn to recite the Koran at school, while their mothers stay at home wearing *burqas*.

Diversity has become one of the challenges perceived by a section of the European public as a threat to the social, cultural, religious and economic security of European nations. There is apparent resentment growing against the discourse of diversity and multiculturalism

which is often promoted by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, many scholars, politicians and NGOs. Initially, the idea of multiculturalism involved conciliation, tolerance, respect, interdependence, universalism, and it was expected to bring about an “inter-cultural community”. Over time, it has begun to be perceived as a way of institutionalising difference through autonomous cultural discourses. The debate on the end of multiculturalism has existed in Europe for a long time. It seems that the declaration of the “failure of multiculturalism” has become a catchphrase not only for extreme-right wing parties but also for centrist political parties across the continent (Kaya, 2010). In 2010 and 2011, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy heavily criticised multiculturalism for all the wrong reasons (Kaya, 2012). Geert Wilders, leader of the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, made no apologies for arguing that “[we, Christians] should be proud that our culture is better than Islamic culture” (Der Spiegel, 11 September 2011). Populism blames multiculturalism for denationalising one’s own nation. For right-wing populist crowds, the answer must be simple as they need to be able to place the blame on readily available scapegoats. The scapegoats could be the “Others”, foreigners, Jews, Roma, Muslims, sometimes Eurocrats, sometimes nongovernmental organisations. Populist rhetoric certainly pays off for those politicians who engage in it.

Islamophobia as a new ideology in the hands of right-wing populists

These populist outbreaks contribute to the securitisation and stigmatisation of migration in general, and Islam in particular. In the meantime, they are deflecting attention from constructive solutions and policies widely thought to promote integration including language learning and increased labour market access – which are already suffering due to austerity measures across Council of Europe Member States. Islamophobic discourse has become mainstream in the West since 11 September 2001 (Kaya, 2015a). Rogers Brubaker (2017) suggests that the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and elsewhere indicates that the nation is no longer defined by social groups and politicians based on civic, republican, secular, multicultural, intercultural or multidimensional criteria, but rather on the basis of religious and civilisational parameters. It seems that the shift to a civilisational perspective in the European context goes back to the “clash of civilisations” paradigm of the 1990s. Since then, there has been continuity in the empowerment of a civilisational rhetoric which became more visible following 9/11. This civilisational turn has contributed to the reinforcement of a societal alliance among nativist groups against Muslims, migrants and refugees (Brubaker, 2017). Hence, one should be reminded that contemporary right-wing populist parties took root in an Islamophobic and anti-multiculturalist context, which was originally generated by the mainstream parties and political leaders in Europe.

Thus, the construction of a contemporary European identity is partly built on anti-Muslim racism, just as other forms of racist ideology played a role in constructing European identity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Delanty, 1995). Uses of the term “Islamophobia” assume that fear of Islam is natural and can be taken for granted, whereas use of the term “Islamophobiaism” presumes that this fear has been fabricated by those with a vested interest in producing and reproducing such a state of fear, or phobia. By describing Islamophobia as a form of *ideology*, I argue that Islamophobia operates as a form of *cultural racism* in Europe which has become apparent along with the process of *securitising* and *stigmatising* migration and migrants in the age of neoliberalism (Kaya, 2015a). One could thus argue that Islamophobiaism as an ideology is being constructed by ruling political groups to foster a kind of false consciousness, or delusion, within the majority society as a way of covering up their own failure to manage

social, political, economic and legal forces and consequently the rise of inequality, injustice, poverty, unemployment, insecurity and alienation.

Home-state politics vis-à-vis Turkish emigrants: instrumentalising emigrants

The growth of Islamophobia and right-wing populism immediately found resonance in the political discourse of the leading Turkish political elite who have recently shaped the diaspora politics of the Turkish state in Europe. The AKP government has become even more outspoken since the eruption of the “refugee crisis” in Europe in the summer of 2015 by blaming the EU for being Islamophobic and for not being attentive enough to refugees, while Turkey has been generously accommodating around three million refugees during the same period. President Erdoğan spoke the following words on 24 June 2016:

The European Union is reluctant to accept Turkey as a full member due to its Islamophobic motives. . . . The EU bloc’s bad humanitarian and immoral approach to immigrants has led to a serious debate about the trustworthiness of the European Union.

(Daily Sabah, 2016)

Erdoğan’s scepticism towards European leadership has amplified in the last few years in parallel to his Islamist and repressive ways of ruling the country. His political style is also based on populism which seeks to divide the nation between “pure people” and “corrupt elite”, or between “good” and “evil”, or “believers” and “infidels”, or the “majority” and the minority” or “friends” and “foes” (Kaya, 2019). The co-radicalisation process takes place on two levels: One is at state level – the polarisation of the relationship between EU Member States and Turkey. The other is at the domestic level – instrumentalising emigrants in a context in which they are discriminated against.

The populist style is also visible in his approach towards the Turkish emigrants in the diaspora. However, there has been a continuity in the ways in which state actors have perceived the Turkish diaspora (Kaya and Kentel, 2005). The Turkish state’s framing of these emigrants can be analysed in three distinctive epochs: a) 1960s–1980s: as economic agents providing Turkey with remittances; b) 1980s–2000s: as political agents acting as an extension of the Turkish state to defend its interests against centrifugal groups abroad; and c) 2000s–present day: utilisation of Turkish emigrants as lobbying agents.

Turkish state policies towards the management of emigrants began in the 1980s, however, its gaining of impetus in line with global phenomenon took place in the early 2000s. Prior to the 1980s, emigrants were simply perceived and instrumentalised by the Turkish state as economic agents who transferred their remittances to Turkey. Remittances were regarded as a major source of external financing that offset trade deficits, particularly in the 1960s (Aksel, 2018). Subsequently, the period that followed the 1980 military coup in Turkey which resulted in the emigration of thousands of asylum seekers such as Kurds, Alevis, radical left-wing individuals and Assyrians, was mostly juxtaposed with the securitisation of the Turkish state’s relations with its citizens living abroad, Turkey’s insertion into the global economy, and the consolidation of a state-led Kemalist republicanism that incorporated a stricter emphasis on Turkish-Islamist historical and moral values (Kaya and Adaman, 2012).

In the 1980s, Turkish emigrants were politically instrumentalised by the Turkish state to make sure that centrifugal ethno-cultural and religious elements abroad such as the Armenians,

Assyrians, Kurds, Alevi and Islamists, could be contained by these “decent Turkish citizens living abroad”.

The latest period, starting with the 2000s, was marked by a shift in the governance of Turkey towards increased market liberalism and European integration in economic, legal, social and political terms. More importantly, this period was shaped by the AKP’s ascendance to power that has so far lasted for three consecutive terms, creating incremental breaches with the former governance models and official state ideology in Turkey (Kaya, 2015b). In the current phase, the Turkish state tends to perceive emigrants as active lobbying agents who are expected to contribute to the growing hegemony of the Turkish state in the European space. This kind of diaspora strategy also tends to see emigrants as electoral constituents to be incorporated into the national electoral body. In this period, the Turkish state has founded new institutions to help emigrants mobilise as active lobbying agents such as the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD, *Avrupalı Türk Demokratlar Birliği*).

In the context of mass demonstrations in Belgium and Germany, the UETD has recently gained public attention. The UETD was founded in Cologne in 2004 as a lobby group supporting the Turkish government in the organisation of campaign events such as rallies and live broadcasts (Aksel, 2018). The UETD was recently mobilised by the Turkish government to organise the public rallies of President Erdoğan in Cologne, Brussels and Strasbourg where he gave public speeches in the framework of the general elections held in 2015.³ External voting in 2015 was enabled by an amendment of 18 May 2014 to the Law on the Fundamental Principles of Elections and Electoral Registries. It improved the political rights of Turkish emigrants and enabled them to vote from abroad in parliamentary elections, presidential elections and referenda (Abadan-Unat et al., 2016). Prior to this change initiated by a constitutional court ruling in 2012, Turkish expatriates had to travel to polling stations in the customs section of airports and borders to participate in domestic elections. The new rules were first applied with the direct presidential elections of 10 August 2014. President Erdoğan’s close ties with the UETD have always been visible: on 10 May 2015, the President addressed the Euro-Turks in Karlsruhe at a public event organised by the UETD, where he recommended that Euro-Turks protect their religion and culture:

You should first preserve your religion, faith and culture strongly and accept that you are a full citizen of the country you reside in. Then, you will make others accept it. If you do not put up this struggle, nobody else will grant a right to you. You will strongly preserve your mother tongue, the Turkish language. Let me say this clearly, one who loses his mother tongue loses everything. Do not forget the language you speak.

(TCCB, 2015)

In the same speech, the President stressed the importance of the Turkish diaspora, even calling them the “most important source of Turkey’s regional and global power” (TCBB, 2015). Not long after, PM Ahmet Davutoğlu gave a similar public speech in Dortmund on 3 May 2015 in which he underlined Turkey’s perspective on integration:

You should get involved in the social, political and economic life of the country you are living in. . . . We do not need anyone telling us about integration. We are achieving integration. But as we have always said, we will never accept assimilation. . . . You should preserve your culture, identity, language and religion.

(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, 2015)

These statements by Turkish politicians appealing to the Turkish diaspora reveal that the ruling political elite fosters a religious-cultural closeness with Turkey. This aspect, paired with the recurrent rejection of “assimilation” has become one of the main *topos* that AKP politicians and President Erdoğan have employed in their speeches. Revitalising the Ottoman heritage, past, myths, memories and Islam, Erdoğan gave many migrants of Turkish origin the power to stand up to the earlier feelings of humiliation created by the migrant receiving states and native populations. However, there is also evidence indicating that the official lobbying activities of the Turkish state among migrants of Turkish origin are likely to be more destructive than constructive in the way in which they make the Euro-Turks compete on ideological grounds (Aksel, 2018; Kaya and Kentel, 2005). The destructive nature of the polarisation initiated by the home-state actors became visible not only for polarised segments of the Turkish diaspora, but also for the native populations of the European countries prior to the constitutional referendum in Turkey held on 16 April 2017. Campaigning activities of the AKP were mostly blocked by the German, Dutch, Austrian, Swedish, Belgian and Danish local and national state actors on the basis that the campaigns were disrupting public order in their countries. This tension between EU Member States and the Turkish state worsened after statements made by President Erdoğan in which he used the analogy of “Nazis” to refer to the acts of the Dutch and German states banning the referendum campaigns of the AKP abroad.⁴

The AKP elite became more civilisationist, occidentalist, Islamist, culturalist and neo-Ottomanist in the current international context which is characterised by Islamophobia and populism. Such political extremities displayed by the AKP elite as well as some members of the Turkish diaspora in European cities have shaped political debates in Europe – particularly among right-wing populist parties – concerning the loyalty and dual citizenship rights of Turkish-origin members of the European space. For instance, while the junior partner in the Austrian government, the right-wing populist FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) orchestrated a campaign to investigate thousands of Turkish-origin Austrian citizens on suspicion of illegally holding dual citizenship,⁵ the Dutch government has started to display acts of intolerance against migrants and dual citizens of Turkish origin who receive benefits in the Netherlands without being completely transparent about their financial situation and property.⁶ It would appear these reciprocal acts are different illustrations of a co-radicalisation of politics between Turkish and European states. Such reciprocal acts and discourses harmed EU–Turkey relations as well as EU–Middle East relations by prompting some parts of the political elite on both sides to become co-radicalised against each other.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the growing popularity of Islamophobic and populist tendencies in some EU Member States has had a direct resonance with the Turkish political elite, partly leading to the rise of Eurosceptic, occidentalist, and populist discourses and policies. This is detectable in the contemporary diaspora politics designed and implemented by the AKP. The analysis has highlighted that such populist and Islamophobic attitudes in the European space prompted the Turkish political elite to become more Islamist and occidentalist in their discourses, instrumentalising populist tendencies to consolidate their pious Muslim constituencies at home and abroad. This chapter focused on the changing patterns of diaspora politics of the Turkish state, which has lately become more neo-Ottomanist and Sunni-Islamist in a way that extended the polarising discourse of the Turkish state at the domestic level to the diaspora groups. This chapter revealed that there is a dialectics of the increasing tide of civilisational political rhetoric since 9/11 which has brought about a process of co-radicalisation between European and Turkish

political elites. In this sense, the chapter argues that relations between the two sides are becoming polarised as a result of the processes of co-radicalisation.

This chapter has focused on the case study of EU–Turkey relations to demonstrate the impact of these processes of co-radicalisation emerging between the European right-wing political elite and the AKP on EU–Turkey relations. Whether similar dynamics might impact EU relations with other Muslim-majority Middle Eastern states could be the concern of another work. One could for instance investigate if similar co-radicalisation dynamics are at work when it comes to EU relations with for example Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia or Syria, especially those ME states which have large emigrant communities in Europe. The Turkish case study also shows that rising populism in Europe makes European political elites more likely to cooperate with authoritarian leaders outside the Union. The most contemporary illustration of this is the EU–Turkey deal to end irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU, which came into force on 18 March 2016.⁷ Prior to the signing of the Statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Ankara and Istanbul several times to meet the Turkish President and PM to make sure that Turkey would seal off its borders to keep illegal migrants in Turkey and prevent them from travelling to Greek islands. Many critical Europeanist Turkish citizens then blamed EU leaders, especially Angela Merkel as well as the EU Commission, for not reacting to President Erdoğan's authoritarian moves towards freedom of speech, academics, journalists, as well as other voices of opposition in the country criticising his political manoeuvres to monopolise power. This set the stage for more Europhobia in Turkey not only among the conservative segments of the nation, but also among Europeanist groups. Likewise, populist politics in Europe continue to impact relations between the EU and the Middle East in general – and with Turkey in particular – due to the ongoing securitisation of debates on refugees, migrants and Islam. Hence, populist politics continue to polarise the EU and the Middle East in Manichean ways reproducing civilisational, religious and ethno-cultural divides.

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Notes

- 1 M5S has an ambiguous character. Public surveys reveal that supporters of the M5S come from the right, the left and the centre (Biorcio, 2014). However, Ceccarini and Bordignon (2016: 149) find that M5S is located towards the right-side of the political spectrum in terms of widely discussed issues. Accordingly, like other right-wing political parties in Italy, and elsewhere, the M5S generates a critical stance towards the EU and the euro; a policy favouring tax evasion; a conviction that democracy can do without political parties; mistrust of trade unions; a hostile attitude against the state; and an acceptance of the idea that immigrants constitute a security threat. Conversely, the political inclinations that bring the M5S closer to the left are significantly fewer than those underlining the right-wing characteristics of the party. Its emphasis on civil liberties, citizenship, income for the unemployed, direct democracy and criticism of global capitalism place the M5S closer to the left.
- 2 For a current discussion on the lobbying activities of the Turkish government see www.dw.com/en/the-lobby-behind-turkeys-prime-minister/a-17652516.
- 3 For a detailed account of the UETD see www.uetd.org/cms/front_content.php accessed on 15 May 2019.
- 4 For a detailed discussion on this issue see *The Guardian* (15 March 2017), www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/15/recep-tayyip-erdogan-rails-against-dutch-in-televised-speech-netherlands-srebrenica.

- 5 For a detailed discussion on the Austrian government's effort to strip off Austrians of Turkish origin with dual nationality see *The Telegraph* (24 November 2018), www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/11/24/dual-nationality-turks-stripped-citizenship-far-right-austrias/.
- 6 Dutch citizens or people with a residence permit, who have property or capital, mostly do not have the right to receive benefits. Keeping these things hidden from the authorities is fraud. For a detailed explanation of the fraud claims about migrants and dual citizens with Turkish origin, who are claimed to have kept their property and capital hidden from the Dutch authorities see the report <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2255954-miljoenen-aan-buitenlands-bezit-verzwegen-bij-aanvraag-uitkering.html>
- 7 For the content of the Statement see www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/

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